

WRITINGS OF J DULLE

by J. Dulle

A collection of theological writings, sermons, and essays by J. Dulle, compiled for study and devotional reading.

11 Chapters

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S. Acts 2:38 and the Purpose of Baptism

Acts 2:38 and the Purpose of Baptism by Jason Dulle

When it comes to determining how Acts 2:38 informs the doctrine of baptism, there are two theological controversies: the relationship of baptism to forgiveness, and the meaning of eis. Let me describe and respond to both in turn. The Relationship of Baptism to Forgiveness

Peter said to them, "Repent, and each one of you [humon] be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ for [eis] the forgiveness [aphesin] of your [humon] sins [hamartion], and you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit. (Acts 2:38)

A plain reading of the English text gives one the impression that both repentance and baptism are for the forgiveness of sins. This sits well with Oneness Pentecostal soteriology (OPS), but not with traditional Protestant soteriology (TPS). TPS maintains that forgiveness, and hence salvation, is obtained when one believes on Christ and repents of sin. Baptism-while important-is not salvific, and hence cannot be for the purpose of forgiving sins.

So how does TPS interpret Acts 2:38, then? Advocates of TPS argue that an examination of the Greek grammar demonstrates that forgiveness of sins is connected only to repentance, not baptism. They correctly observe that "repent" is second person plural in form, while "baptized" is third person singular in form. Furthermore, the pronoun, humon, translated "your" in "for the forgiveness of your sins," is second person plural. Since pronouns must agree in number and person with the antecedent they modify, it is argued that forgiveness of sins is grammatically tied to "repent," not "baptized."

Building on the grammatical observation above, some propose the following logical argument: individual baptism (singular form) cannot bring about corporate forgiveness (plural humon), so the second humon must be modifying "repent" (plural form). Greg Koukl represents this line of argumentation:

In Acts 2:1-47, the command to repent is in the plural, as is the reference to those who receive the forgiveness of sins (i.e., "All of you repent so all of you can receive forgiveness"). The command to be baptized, however, is in the singular (i.e., "Each of you should be baptized"). This makes it clear that repentance, not baptism, leads to salvation, since an individual's baptism cannot cause the salvation of the entire group. Individual (singular) baptisms do not result in corporate (plural) salvation. As it turns out, then, the phrase "for the forgiveness of sins" modifies repentance, not baptism. A more precise rendering might be, "Let all of you repent so all of you can receive forgiveness, and then each who has should be baptized."

How can the defender of OPS respond to these arguments? Several points should be made.

First, even if Acts 2:38 does not connect the forgiveness of sins with baptism, other passages do: 1 Peter 3:21, Acts 22:16, and Mark 16:16 (John 3:5 and Titus 3:5 also come to mind, but are not as clear as other verses).

Second, the argument hinges on a textual variant. In the Textus Receptus and Majority Text, the second humon is absent. If the Textus Receptus and Majority Text reflect the original wording at this point, the TPS argument crumbles into dust. Considering the fact that the entire case against the OPS interpretation of Acts 2:38 is grounded on this textual variant, TPS advocates need to demonstrate that the second humon is original to the text. For the sake of argument, however, I will assume the critical text is correct, and the second humon is original.

Third, the argument ignores a crucial point: the use of humon in "the forgiveness of your sins" is not the first appearance of humon in this passage. It is the second appearance. The first appears in let "each one of you be baptized." The antecedent to the first instance of the plural humon is clearly the singular verb, "baptized." Earlier I noted that pronouns must agree in number and person with the antecedent they modify. And yet here we have a plural pronoun modifying a singular verb. While an explanation for this anomaly is in order, it should not distract us from the larger point to be made: If the first instance of humon has a singular antecedent, why think the second instance of humon cannot have a singular antecedent? Indeed, the antecedent of a pronoun is usually the closest antecedent, and in this case, the closest antecedent of the second humon is the singular "baptized." It is accepted without controversy that the first instance of humon modifies a singular verb, so why should there be any controversy over the claim that the second instance of humon also modifies the same singular verb? Indeed, there is no grammatical argument to say Peter could do so in the first instance, but not in the second. The only grounds for objection are the theological presuppositions one brings to the text.

I have yet to explain this grammatical anomaly. Why does humon differ in number and person from its antecedent? The most likely explanation is that Peter used the plural pronoun throughout, regardless of the person and number of the verb, because everything he said was directed to all those present as a group. Of course one might wonder, then, why Peter switched from the second person plural when discussing repentance, to the third person singular when discussing baptism. One possible explanation is the Jewish perception of repentance as a corporate act, whereas baptism was viewed as an individual act. Whatever the reason for the shift in person and number, the fact remains that a plural pronoun modifies a singular verb in the beginning of the verse, and thus there is no reason to rule out the same phenomenon in the latter half of the verse when Peter discusses forgiveness of sins. The first instance is without controversy, and so should plural pronoun are used because everything Peter said applied to the entire group present.

Even earlier in Acts 2:1-47 we see an interplay of the singular and plural being used. Acts 2:6 reads, "When this sound occurred, a crowd gathered and was in confusion, because each one heard them speaking in his own language." (NET) "Each one," heis hekastos, is nominative singular masculine, corresponding precisely with "each one" in Acts 2:38. The verb "heard," however, is third person plural. It would be just as fallacious to argue that the shift from singular to plural in Acts 2:6 means all the onlookers could not have heard the disciples speaking in tongues, as it is to argue that the shift from plural to singular in Acts 2:38 means baptism is not for the remission of sins. The Meaning of Eis

Peter said to them, "Repent, and each one of you be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ for [eis] the forgiveness [aphesin] of your sins [hamartion], and you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit. (Acts 2:38)

The Greek preposition *eis* can mean “for the purpose of,” or “with reference to,” among other things. How it is being used here in the phrase, *eis aphesin ton hamartion* (“for the forgiveness of sins) largely determines whether OPS or TPS is the correct soteriology. If *eis* means “for the purpose of,” then baptism is causally connected to forgiveness of sins alongside repentance, and TPS is undermined (which holds that baptism is not part of salvation). If *eis* means “with reference to,” then there is no reason to think baptism is causally connected to the forgiveness of sins (at least in this passage). Only the context can determine the meaning. I will argue that the context clearly favors the OPS interpretation, but before I do, I think it would be instructive to read what some TPS advocates have to say about the meaning of *eis* in this verse.

In his book, "Jesus Only" Churches, Cal Beisner wrote, "Grammatically, the command to be baptized is not connected with the promise of remission of sins. ... [T]he grammatical connection is between repent and for the remission of your sins, not between be baptized and for the remission of your sins." (p. 58) He goes on to say, "[E]ven if water baptism is connected with remission of sins, the sense is not that baptism is in order to obtain but rather with reference to (i.e., as a sign of, or because of) the remission of our sins. In other words, *eis* would denote only that baptism is related somehow to the remission of sins; it would not tell us the nature of the relationship." (p. 59)

While Beisner thinks his grammatical argument shuts the door on the OPS interpretation, apparently for the sake of argument he considers how we should understand this verse if baptism is connected with the forgiveness of sins. If that were so, he insists *eis* should be understood to mean "in reference to." If *eis* is only connected to repentance, however, he is willing to define *eis* to mean "for the purpose of." This is an instance of one's theology dictating one's translation, rather than allowing the proper translation to dictate one's theology. As A.T. Robertson noted, "One will decide the use here according as he believes that baptism is essential to the remission of sins or not." Beisner is doing just that. He is willing to admit a causal force to *eis* so long as it applies only to repentance, but if it is connected to baptism he rules a causal force out, and adopts a referential force instead. The reason for the shift is not grammatical or contextual, but theological in nature.

Some TPS advocates are more honest with the text. For example, Bauer's lexicon cites Acts 2:38 as an example where *eis* denotes "purpose in order to."

How should we understand *eis*, then; in a causal or referential way? Only the context can decide, and I argue that the context favors the causal interpretation. Peter had just finished proclaiming to the onlookers that they were responsible for crucifying their promised messiah. This realization convicted their heart of sin, prompting them to ask the disciples, "Men and brethren, what shall we do?" They were not asking for an itinerary of the day's activities, but seeking to know what they could do to be forgiven of the sin they came to recognize they were guilty of. Peter's response is recorded in Acts 2:38. What were they to do? They were to repent and be baptized for the remission of their sins, and then receive the Spirit. If *eis* means "in reference to," we must conclude that Peter never answered their question. As Daniel Segraves wrote, "If *eis* does not mean at this point "in order to obtain," nothing in this verse is connected with the purpose of obtaining forgiveness, including repentance. In this case, would the command to repent mean something like "repent...with reference to the remission of your sins"? It is contextually evident

from the general tenor of Peter's sermon that he is commanding his hearers to take specific action that will result in the forgiveness of their sins. At the point he made his commands, their sins were not yet forgiven." Only if eis expresses purpose would their question have been answered.

It is also noteworthy that the Greek phrase in question—eis aphesin ton hamartion—appears in Matthew 26:28, Mark 1:4, Luke 3:3, Luke 24:47, Acts 10:43, and Acts 26:18, in which all agree that eisis being used causally to refer to the effecting of forgiveness. Why think, then, that in this one instance it does not carry this force?

One might argue that eis does express purpose, but restrict its application to repentance based on the argument that the pronoun and the verb it modifies must be in grammatical agreement. As we saw earlier, however, this argument is not sound. Peter used a plural pronoun with a singular verb earlier in the verse, and thus there is no reason to think he is not doing the same thing later in the verse. Furthermore, if eis refers only to repentance, then Peter never provided a reason to be baptized. This seems highly unlikely.

For these reasons I think it is best to understand eis to express purpose, to view repentance and baptism together as being for the purpose of the forgiveness of sins, and hence to prefer OPS over TPS.

S. Jesus' Prayers

Jesus' Prayers by

Jason Dulle

Why?!? This is one of the first questions raised in the minds of those who begin to realize that Jesus not only prayed, but He also led a religious life with God. Why did Jesus pray? If He was God He wouldn't need to pray would He? Yes He would! He would because He was also flesh.

Under the discussion of Jesus' humanity we saw Him as growing "in favour with God" (Luke 2:52). This means he had a progressive and ongoing relationship with God. This was a relationship He acquired. He did not bypass the need for a relationship with God because He was God in the flesh. His deity was divinely limited so that His human life might be lived in the same manner as ours. Jesus had to grow into a relationship with God, and of the many things this included, prayer was one of them. That Jesus had a relationship with God is evidenced by statements He made such as, "For I do always those things that please him," and, "I know him, and keep his saying" (John 8:29, John 8:55). This need for a relationship with God arose out of the genuineness of His humanity. Truly Jesus learned to love, obey, and know God (John 8:55; John 10:15, John 10:17, John 15:10; Hebrews 5:7-9).

Jesus prayed because He was human. If He would not have had need for prayer, indeed we would be justified in doubting the genuineness of His humanity because it is said in the Psalms, "O thou that hearest prayer, unto thee shall all flesh come" (Psalms 65:2).

Some attempt to "play off" or even deny the genuineness of Jesus' prayers to protect His deity. This camp relegates Jesus' prayers to a mere moral example given by Jesus for us to follow. They contend that Jesus had no real need for prayer. Is this Scriptural?

If Jesus was not praying because He truly needed divine assistance, then His prayers were deceptive because He made them seem like genuine prayers. Jesus was nothing more than a good actor, a hypocrite. If He faked His prayers for the sake of being an example, then did He fake His love and compassion toward those who came to Him seeking help for their souls? Jesus was not deceptive, and neither were His prayers. The author of Hebrews attested to the genuineness of Jesus' prayers when He said, "Who in the days of His flesh, when He had offered up prayers and supplications with strong crying and tears unto him that was able to save him from death, and was heard in that he feared" (Hebrews 5:7 italics mine). The author validated that Jesus did indeed pray, and those prayers were prayed to the One Who was able to save Him from death (God). Jesus did not pray to Himself, but He prayed to the Father. These prayers were with strong crying and tears. Clearly these adjectives and verbs demonstrate true action on the part of Jesus, and intense action at that. There would be no reason for such expressive language if Jesus' prayers were not real. To explain the prayers of Jesus as the human nature of Jesus praying to the divine nature of Jesus poses problems. For one, natures do not pray, people do. Secondly, the Scripture declares that He prayed to the Father, not Himself. It would make no sense for Jesus to

pray to Himself. Surely if this was the case, there would have been no need for verbal expressions of prayer because Jesus could have communicated to the deity within Him in some transferable, telepathic manner. This is not the view of Scripture. To explain the prayers of Jesus as one divine person praying to another poses even greater problems. If this were the case, then there is a subordination of one divine person to another. Prayer is addressed to one who is superior in power and ability, or else there would be no need for prayer. If this is a case of deity praying to deity, then there is a hierarchy in the Godhead, and a ditheistic Godhead at best.

It seems best to understand the prayers of Jesus in light of His humanity. Jesus possessed a complete human psyche through which He communicated with man and with God as all other human beings do.² The verse quoted above demonstrates this well when it explains Jesus' prayers as being prayed "in the days of his flesh." This does not mean that the body Jesus possessed during His earthly ministry was dissolved somehow upon His glorification and ascension, but was speaking of the days in which Jesus walked in this earth before His ascension into heaven. It was during that time that Jesus prayed in the manner the author described. The best place to demonstrate the genuineness and sincerity of Christ's prayers, and His real need for prayer is in His own personal prayer life. One of the first indications given that Jesus' prayers were genuine and sincere is that they were prayed in solitary places in the midst of the night or at other times (Mark 1:35; Luke 5:16). John chapter seventeen is the prayer Jesus prayed to the Father just before His betrayal and subsequent suffering. The prayer is filled with personal and intimate statements made by a man to His God. If Jesus' prayers were mere moral examples He performed for our benefit there would have been no need for Him to pray alone. Not only did Jesus pray alone, but He prayed all night long at times (Luke 6:12). For Peter, He prayed that his faith would not fail (Luke 22:31-32).

There is probably no greater example of the genuineness of Jesus' prayers than those recorded of in the Garden of Gethsemane before His betrayal and crucifixion. It was here that Jesus prayed so earnestly that it is said "his sweat was as it were great drops of blood falling down to the ground" (Luke 22:44).³

Those who contend that Jesus' prayers were only for an example to others often cite John 11:41-42 for support. Jesus prayed, "Father, I thank thee that thou hast heard me. And I knew that thou hearest me always: but because of the people which stand by I said it, that they may believe that thou hast sent me." This prayer was just prior to the raising of Lazarus from the dead. The mourners and family members around the tomb were the audience of this prayer (John 11:19, John 11:31-32, John 11:39, John 11:41).

I do not believe that the prayer at Lazarus' tomb gives evidence to the idea that Jesus prayed as an example for others. This is not to say that Jesus never intended to be an example of a praying man to His disciples, but this would only be a secondary, not a primary purpose. It might be compared to a prayer leader in a church, who prays before the church as an example. The purpose of this is to help the church/newcomers know how to pray, and/or to help them pray. Even so, however, the prayer leader's prayers are sincere and genuine. They are directed first to God, and only secondarily to the people.

If Jesus' primary purpose for praying at Lazarus' tomb was for an example to the people, then Jesus' prayer was a deceptive charade. He addressed the prayer to the Father as though He was

actually praying to Him. If Jesus was not sincerely praying to the Father, then He was only acting. The Scriptures do not portray Jesus' prayers in this light. I confess that Jesus may have had secondary purposes for His prayers, but His prayers were genuine nonetheless. At first glance, the Lazarus episode does seem to indicate that Jesus' prayer was for an example. Looking more closely at the passage, however, it indicates otherwise. There are two probable interpretations of this prayer. The first sees the prayer as consisting of two parts. Although the text does not make this distinction, it appears to be possible that the prayer was broken up into public and private portions. Jesus spoke the phrase "Father, I thank thee that thou hast heard me" where those gathered around could hear Him. The second phrase, "And I knew that thou hearest me always: but because of the people which stand by I said it, that they may believe that thou hast sent me," was spoken privately to the Father. If the latter part of the prayer was spoken publicly, it might lay Jesus open to the charge of being a shallow phony. In modern vernacular Jesus said: "Dad, I am really glad that you always hear and answer every prayer I pray, this one being no exception. I did not pray it because I do not believe you are going to answer it, but because of the people standing around Me. I want them to believe that You have truly sent Me, and that I am here doing Your will." If we were to hear a minister pray a prayer like this we would be turned off. Our response would be, "Does he think his faith is so big that he does not need to pray?". It seems that Jesus might have spoke this last part quietly to the Father, saying "I am not doubting you, just reassuring the people," whereas the first part He prayed so that all could hear. It was a prayer of honesty and intimacy with God, private in its very nature. The other interpretation, and more likely of the two, understands the purpose of Jesus' prayer to be a genuine prayer of thanksgiving to the Father, but that it also served as a confirmation of Jesus' identity as the Son of God. This view sees Jesus as praying the entire prayer publicly so that the onlookers would hear Jesus praying to the same Father that they prayed to, thanking Him for what He was about to do, and when the Father did do what Jesus had just thanked Him for, it would serve to confirm the message and person of Christ, that He was truly sent by the Father. The purpose of Jesus' prayer was not for an example to the onlookers, but to serve as confirmation to the message of Jesus, and bolster faith in Him, that He was indeed the Son of God.

Jesus had no reason to pray for the raising of Lazarus. This was due to the fact that He already knew it was the will of God to raise him from the dead. When Jesus received word of Lazarus' condition, He purposely lingered around in the place where He was at for two days (John 11:6, John 11:15). After two days, He decided to journey to Bethany with His disciples, knowing through the word of knowledge that Lazarus had died two days previous (John 11:11-15). It must have been a two day journey to Bethany from where Jesus was at, because Lazarus had been dead for four days when Jesus arrived (John 11:17).

Jesus purposely allowed Lazarus to die (John 11:11) and waited to arrive in Bethany until four days had expired since His death, so that He might raise him from the dead. He specifically waited for four days because the Jews believed it was possible for a man to be resurrected from the dead during the first three days after his death, but impossible thereafter because the body starts to decompose after three days.¹ Jesus wanted to demonstrate the power of God to them by raising a decomposing body from the dead, thereby confounding the Jews' wisdom and glorifying God through those who would believe on Jesus through the miracle. When Jesus arrived at Bethany He did not have to pray to get the Father to raise Lazarus from the dead. Jesus knew that it was

His purpose for being there. He was being obedient to God's direction, not seeking after it. This can be the only reason why Jesus said what He did in His prayer to the Father.

Since Jesus knew it was the Lord's will to raise Lazarus from the dead, there was no real purpose in praying for it to happen. Just as with us, the Lord knows what we have need of before we ask Him (Matthew 6:8). Maybe Jesus prayed simply because it is a Scriptural principle that we will receive an answer when we ask for it (James 4:2). Jesus demonstrated His faith in God by addressing Him in a word of prayer before performing His will. If you notice, Jesus never asked the Father to raise Lazarus from the dead. He thanked God that He was always heard by Him. Jesus was assured of the Lord's will, and was merely giving thanks for it. This is what He said for the Jews' sake. He prayed to the Father to demonstrate to the Jews that, indeed, what was about to transpire was a work of God done through Him, and not a work of His own apart from God. If they believed it was done by God, then Jesus' claims as to His identity would be justified and believed too. In conclusion, Jesus needed to pray as much as we do, and He did. We should follow His example, but He did not pray merely for the purposes of His actions being exemplified by others. He prayed because He needed a relationship with God, and depended upon God's strength and power that comes from His anointing to minister to the world and finish the works the Father gave Him to do (John 4:34; John 5:36).

Footnotes

1. Jesus was raised within three days. The Scripture said concerning Him, "Thou wilt not leave my soul in hell, neither wilt thou suffer thine Holy One to see corruption" (Acts 2:27; See also Acts 13:34-37). The reference to "hell" means the state of death and not the place of the wicked dead. The Greek word can mean "death" or "hell," but it is best understood here to mean "death" since the resurrection of Jesus' physical body from the dead is in view. Since he was raised within three days His flesh did not see any corruption, thus the Scriptures were fulfilled.
2. Daniel L. Segraves, Systematic Theology I (Stockton, CA: n.p., 1997), 52.
3. It is not said that Jesus actually sweat blood. Luke said His sweat "was as it were great drops of blood falling down to the ground." The Greek hosei means "nearly or similar to." Jesus' perspiration was so abundant that its drops fell to the ground as do drops of blood. Although it is medically possible to be in such agony as to burst the capillaries in the upper layers of skin, thereby "sweating blood," this does not seem to be what Luke intended to say Jesus experienced.

S. Plural Pronouns Used for God

Plural Pronouns Used for God by

Jason Dulle

In Genesis 1:26 God said, "Let us make man in our image, after our likeness...." Who is being referred to by the use of the plural pronoun our? Does this imply that God is more than one? Does it indicate that Jesus pre-existed the incarnation as the second person of the Trinity? Considering the strict monotheism of the Old Testament this does not seem likely. This is not the only occurrence in the Bible where a plural pronoun is used of God. The plural usage is found in three other places. In Genesis 3:22 God said, "Behold, the man is become as one of us, to know good and evil." At the building of the Tower of Babel God said, "Go to, let us go down, and there confound their language, that they may not understand one another's speech" (Genesis 11:7). Isaiah heard the Lord say, "Whom shall I send, and who will go for us?" (Isaiah 6:8). How do we explain these verses?

Four major theories have been proposed to explain this plural usage in reference to God. The first theory claims that God counseled with His own will, or deliberated within His mind as to what He would do. This is based primarily on Ephesians 1:11 where it is said that God works "all things after the counsel of his own will." God is compared to a human that reasons in his mind saying something like, "Let me see...." This view does not seem to be correct when the Hebrew grammar of these verses are examined more carefully. The grammar indicates that God was speaking to somebody besides Himself. The second theory is that the plural pronouns are used as a "majestic plural." This type of language was typically used by royalty, but not exclusively. Biblical examples include Daniel's statement to Nebuchadnezzar, "We will tell the interpretation thereof before the king" (Daniel 2:36). Daniel, however, was the only one who gave the king the interpretation of his dream. King Artaxerxes wrote in a letter, "The letter which ye sent unto us hath been plainly read before me" (Ezra 4:18). The letter was sent to Artaxerxes alone (Ezra 4:11), yet he said it was sent to "us," and was read before "me." Clearly the letter was only sent to, and read to Artaxerxes. When Artaxerxes penned another letter to Ezra he used the first person singular pronoun "I" in one place and the first person plural pronoun "we" in another (Ezra 7:13, Ezra 7:24). This view, although not beyond the realm of possibility, does not seem very credible. The question arises as to why God would use singular pronouns of Himself in thousands of places in the Bible, yet would choose four occasions to use plural pronouns in a majestic plural sense? It would seem that God would either use singular pronouns exclusively, or plural pronouns exclusively when speaking of Himself. The small number of plural pronouns seems to suggest that there are some special reasons attached to its usage. The third theory explains these passages by saying that although not present physically in the flesh at these times, God spoke to Jesus in a prophetic manner, having foreknowledge of His future arrival. It is reasoned that since God calls those things which are not as though they were (Romans 4:17), He spoke to the Son even though He was not physically present. God could do so because He does not live in time as we do, and does not view

time as we do (2 Peter 3:8). The Son was present in the mind of God as the Word (John 1:1). In defense of this 1 Peter 1:19-20 and Revelation 13:8 are cited which show that the incarnation and crucifixion were always in the plan and mind of God.

Specifically as it relates to the creation of man in Genesis 1:26, it is said that God made man in the appearance that Jesus would have in the future. It is reasoned that God made man in the image of what He knew Jesus would look like. This relegates God's reference to "our" to be spoken to Jesus in a prophetic sense. He was not actually there, but because He was the lamb slain from the foundation of the world, His presence had always been in the mind of God (not in the physical, real world until the incarnation), and therefore can be spoken of as being present at the creation (1 Peter 1:19-20; Revelation 13:8). The other basis for this view arises from the Biblical teaching that Jesus created the worlds, and that all things were created for His purpose (John 1:1-3, John 1:10; Colossians 1:16-17; Hebrews 1:2-3). It is argued that since Jesus created the worlds, He was present at the creation and therefore must have been the One God was speaking to. When the Bible says that Jesus created all things, it cannot mean that Jesus was present at the creation. When speaking of Jesus, we are specifically referring to God's existence as a man. This existence did not begin until His incarnation in approximately 6-5 B.C. Jesus (God made flesh) did not exist before this time. Jesus did preexist the incarnation as it pertains to His deity, for Jesus' deity is none other than that of Yahweh Himself, the omnipresent self-existing Spirit. John called this preexistence of Jesus the Word: "In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. The same was in the beginning with God. All things were made by Him [Word]; and without him was not any thing made that was made. ... And the Word was made flesh and dwelt among us, (and we beheld his glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father,) full of grace and truth" (John 1:1-3, John 1:14 italics mine). The same Word that existed at the creation of the worlds was the Word that became flesh (Jesus Christ). John identifies the Word as being God Himself, not some other God or person.

Speaking in natural terms, a person's word cannot be separated from their person. Their words do not have an identity separate from their person, but are expressions of their person. Likewise, Jesus (as the Word) is spoken of as being with God, but not in the sense as though He was separate from Him. God's word cannot be separated from Him any more than our word can be separated from us. The Word is the expression of God's person. John did not stop at the identification of the Word as being with God, but went on to point out that the Word was in fact God Himself.¹

Jesus existed at the creation in His deity as God, but not in flesh as a human. These Scriptures have nothing to do with another "person" of the Godhead being present at the creation. They merely assert Jesus' preexistence as Yahweh. Henceforth we are still lacking the identity of the person(s) to whom God was speaking in these passages. Although not beyond the realm of possibility, there is not much Biblical merit to the idea that God was speaking to the Son "prophetically."

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

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

Directly following God's use of plural pronouns in verse twenty-six it is said that "God created man in his own image, in the image of God created he him...." (Genesis 2:27 italics mine) Clearly it was one image in which man was created. He was not created in two or more images.

It appears that God was speaking to angels in these passages. The grammar of these verses support this view. The grammar of Genesis 1:26 is as follows: God (plural)² said (third person masculine singular), Let us make (first person common plural) man (singular masculine noun) in our image ("image" is a first person common plural suffix), after our likeness ("likeness" is a feminine singular noun with a first person common plural suffix).³ The plural pronouns "us" and "our" must be referring to someone other than God because the verb used in connection with "God" is singular. If God was speaking to Himself in a plural form, or performing self-talk as some say, the pronouns would also need to be singular to modify the verb. Because the pronouns are plural in form, God was truly speaking to someone else. The very fact that God uses singular pronouns when speaking of Himself in thousands of cases causes us to question why He chose to use plural pronouns in this passage and in the other three I mentioned earlier. In the verses preceding Genesis 1:26 which speak of the creative acts of God, singular pronouns are used exclusively in reference to God, and in verse twenty-six a singular verb is used. There must be some reason for this peculiar usage in these passages. In verse twenty-six two plural pronouns and a plural verb are used in connection with God. This change in usage indicates that God is now including others in His address. The only beings created at this point were the angels, so it seems best to understand angels to be the recipients of God's address. The Jews have always believed that angels were the ones being addressed by God in these verses. We know that the angels were present at creation (Job 38:4, Job 38:7), so it is very possible that God was speaking to them. He addressed the angels in a courteous manner, acknowledging that they too had an image like His. God created man in the image of Himself, an image shared by the angels also.

Two objections might occur at this point: 1. How could angels be said to have an image or likeness to God?; 2. How could angels help God create man? In response to the first objection, it seems best to see the "image" in which man was created to be one of moral, spiritual, intellectual, and emotional qualities rather than any physical qualities or similarities. God and angels both possess all of these attributes that men have. Sometimes we view angels as android beings created by God that have no choice but to serve Him in holiness and righteousness, being emotionless, and have no way of thinking for themselves. This is an unbiblical view. Peter said angels are interested in the activities of the church when he said concerning the gospel being preached with the Holy Ghost sent down from heaven, "which things the angels desire to look into" (1 Peter 1:12). We see from this verse that angels do have a will of their own by the fact that they desire to look into these things. God does not command them to do this, but they have a desire to do so. This indicates that

angels have an emotional spectrum and intellectual independence. They have spiritual qualities in that they worship God and moral qualities in that they choose to stay pure.⁴

Regarding the second objection, angels did not participate in any way with the creation of man, but they did participate in some way in the making of man. The Hebrew word translated "make" in Genesis 1:26 is *asah*. The Hebrew word meaning "create" is *bara*. Angels do not have the power to create anything, but might have shared in the making of man from the dust of the ground. Vine's comparison and contrast of the two Hebrew words is helpful here: In Genesis 1:26-27...`*asah* must mean creation from nothing, since it is used as a synonym for *bara*'. The text reads, "Let us make [*asah*] man in our image, after our likeness.... So God created [*bara*'] man in his own image...." Similarly, Genesis 2:4 states: "These are the generations of the heavens and of the earth when they were created [*bara*'], in the day that the Lord God made [*asah*] the earth and the heavens." Finally, Genesis 5:1 equates the two as follows: "In the day that God created [*bara*'] man, in the likeness of God made [*asah*] he him." The unusual juxtaposition of *bara*' and `*asah* in Genesis 2:3 refers to the totality of creation, which God had "created" by "making."

It is unwarranted to overly refine the meaning of `*asah* to suggest that it means creation from something, as opposed to creation from nothing. Only context can determine its special nuance. It can mean either, depending upon the situation.⁵ That the creation consisted of creating and making can be seen in Genesis 2:3-4 : "And God blessed the seventh day, and sanctified it: because that in it he had rested from all his work which God created [*bara*] and made [*asah*]. These are the generations of the heavens and of the earth when they were created [*bara*], in the day that the LORD God made [*asah*] the earth and the heavens." The TWOT is also helpful here. The significant interchange between the words *bara* "create" and *asah* is of great interest. The word *bara* carries the thought of the initiation of the object involved. It always connotes what only God can do and frequently emphasizes the absolute newness of the object created. The word *asah* is much broader in scope, connoting primarily the fashioning of the object with little concern for special nuances. The use of *bara* in the opening statement of the account of creation seems to carry the implication that the physical phenomena came into existence at that time and had no previous existence in the form in which they were created by divine fiat. The use of *asah* may simply connote the act of fashioning the objects involved in the whole creative process. The word *asah* is also used elsewhere in Scripture to describe aspects of the creative work of God (Psalms 86:9; Psalms 95:5; Psalms 96:5).⁶

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

Because angels could not actually create man, it might be wondered why God even bothered speaking to them concerning man. The reason might be two-fold. First of all, God might have addressed them in a courteous manner because of their intimate presence at this amazing time. Secondly, He addressed them to declare His intentions of making man in their image as well as His: a moral, spiritual, intellectual, and emotional image. After God allowed the angels to

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

Genesis 3:22

Genesis 3:22 has a similar grammatical structure to that of Genesis 1:26 : "God (plural) said (third person masculine singular), Behold, the man is become as one of us (first person common plural), to know good and evil."⁷ Here again we see a singular verb being used with plural pronouns.

Thus far we know that those to whom God spoke had an image that was like His, and could be considered to be enough like God to the extent that He could say, "Behold, the man is become as one of us, to know good and evil." It might be argued that angels do not know the difference between good and evil, or that at least before the fall of man they didn't know the difference. Again, this type of response is based off of the idea that angels are holy androids with no will of their own. If angels could not sin, then Lucifer and the other multitudes of angels that rebelled against God could have never actually done so. God would have had to have made them rebel against Him. Angels knew the difference between good and evil before man ever sinned. This knowledge was just as much a part of their nature as it was God's. They did not have to commit evil to know evil, just as God never had to commit evil to know the difference between evil and good. In support of the idea that God addressed His angels in this passage, notice that immediately after man's disobedience and sin God evicted them from the Garden of Eden and stationed cherubims at the east end of the Garden to block its entrance from man. Angelic activity surrounded God's new creation. That God was addressing angels in Genesis 3:22 flows with the rest of the context, not being hindered by it whatsoever.

Genesis 11:7 The grammar of Genesis 11:7 is even more conclusive that God must must have been addressing angels when He spoke using the first person plural pronoun "our" or "us." The grammar of this verse is as follows: "Go to (second person masculine singular), let us go down (first person common plural) and there confound (first person common plural) their language."⁸

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

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

to have angels accompany Him, remember the story of Abraham's encounter with God (Genesis 18:1-33). He was visited by three men: one of which turned out to be a theophany of the Lord, and the other two were angels (Genesis 18:10, Genesis 18:13-17; Genesis 19:1).

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

It might seem strange to think that God would ask the angels for a plan of action to take against the rebels at the Tower of Babel. God does not need anyone else's advice does He? Even though God does not need advice, it is evident that He does sometimes seek after it. There is a detailed account of God corresponding with angels to come up with a plan of action in 1 Kings 22:19-23. In this passage Micaiah the prophet told Ahab and Jehoshaphat that he "saw the LORD sitting on his throne, and all the host of heaven standing by him on his right hand and on his left" (1 Kings 22:19). This is clearly an assembling of the angels. The purpose for this meeting was to discuss a plan of action to bring about Ahab's death. The Lord posed the question to the angelic host, "Who shall persuade Ahab, that he may go up and fall at Ramoth Gilead?" (1 Kings 22:20). That there was actual debate is indicated by the phrase, "And one said on this manner, and another said on that manner" (1 Kings 22:20). Finally an angel came up with a way to persuade Ahab that God was pleased with (1 Kings 22:21). His plan was to be a lying spirit in the mouth of the prophets. The Lord gave him permission to do this saying, "Thou shalt persuade him, and prevail also: go forth, and do so" (1 Kings 22:22). If the Lord wants the input of His angels before executing His plan, that is His prerogative. All we know is that God does on some occasions, and for whatever reasons, consult with His angels and involve them on His "missions." In conclusion, it seems best to understand the plural references in Genesis 1:26, Genesis 3:22, Genesis 11:7, and Isaiah 6:8 to be referring to angels whom the Lord addressed. Although not beyond the realm of possibility, the first three theories do not carry enough Biblical or grammatical support to be considered valid explanations. When considering the Hebrew grammar behind these verses, angels seem to be the best candidates for the identity of those included in the "us" and "our" statements made by God.

Footnotes

1. In 1 John 1:1-3 John spoke in similar terms as he did in his gospel. He spoke of the beginning of time (1 John 1:1 compared with John 1:1), called Jesus the "Word of life" (1 John 1:1 compared with John 1:1, John 1:14), and declared that this life was manifested to men resulting in man's ability to come into contact with God (1 John 1:2 compared with John 1:10-11, John 1:14). Verse three says, "And this life was manifested, and we have seen it, and bear witness, and shew unto you that eternal life, which was with the Father, and was manifested unto us." (italics mine) John identified the Word as the Word of life that was with the Father, and spoke of this Word as being manifested into the world. Can God's life be separated from His person? Can our life be separated from our person? The answer to both questions is a resounding no! Our life gives us our existence

and identity. Likewise the Word of life is God, and God is the Word of life. Jesus is none other than the life and word of God, in no way having an existence separate from Him.

2. Although God (elohim) is in plural form, it does not indicate that God is more than one. I already explained this earlier in the paper. Although elohim can mean more than one, if it was intended in this way here, the connecting verb would also have to be plural. In this sentence, however, the verb is singular indicating that the elohim who is speaking is one in number.

3. Segraves, Daniel L., *Theology of the Church II* (Stockton, CA: n.p., 1995), p. 45.

4. R. Laird Harris, Gleason L. Archer Jr., Bruce K. Waltke, *The Theological Wordbook of the Old Testament*, originally published by Moody Press of Chicago, Illinois, Copyright 1980, as found on BibleWorks, 1998, version 4.0.

5.. Some teach that angels have no choice but to serve God, and that they have no epistemological knowledge of good and evil. Instead of actually possessing an internal knowledge of the difference between good and evil, they only observe it. If this is true how did Lucifer and the other angels fall from heaven? There must have been the possibility of sinning among angels just as there was the possibility of sinning among Adam and Even. Both man and angels fell, but the difference between the two is that God has offered salvation to humans, whereas He has not to angels (Hebrews 2:14-17). Satan and all the other fallen angels are destined for the Lake of Fire without a hope for salvation and the mercy of God, but we have hope through Jesus Christ for complete redemption and salvation.

6. Vine's Expository Dictionary of Biblical Words, as found on PC Study Bible. Computer Software.

7.Segraves, 49.

8. Ibid.

S. The Believer's Union With Christ

The Believer's Union With Christ by

Jason Dulle

The Problem The Scripture not only speaks of Christ being in believers, but of believers being in Christ. Although believers are very familiar with the former concept, most are not familiar with the latter. The concept of being in Christ is represented by such Biblical phrases as "in Christ," "in the beloved," and "with Christ." This concept appears some 164 times in the NT, but only in the writings of Paul and John. Although this doctrine is strongly attested to in the New Testament, most believers quickly pass over the passages and statements which teach it without thinking much of them. It receives very little recognition from theologians, teachers, preachers, and the laity.

Although the fact that there is a union between the believer and Christ is clear, Scripture has little to say in the way of direct statements about how the union with Christ is established. 1 Corinthians 6:17 refers to the fact of being joined to Christ, but Paul does not elaborate on the manner of the joining, or the meaning of such. This lack of direct and clear statements has caused several interpretations of the union. In what way are we to understand the nature of the union? What is the significance of our union with Christ? These questions will be answered in this paper. First, however, we will examine the various interpretations of the union.

Alternative Interpretations in the Church Metaphysical Union

Those who confess that the believer's union with Christ is metaphysical claim that the identity of the believer is changed into the identity of Christ. We receive the essence of Christ's person, and as such the believer's distinction from Christ is not preserved.¹ This view is essentially pantheistic, viewing humans as partaking of the divine essence. The Scripture used to support this view is 2 Peter 1:4 where Peter said, "By which have been given to us exceedingly great and precious promises, that through these you may be partakers of the divine nature, having escaped the corruption that is in the world through lust.." (NKJV)

Mystical Union This view understands the union between Christ and believers to run so deep that believers literally lose their personal identity while taking upon themselves the person of Christ. Jesus controls the individual believer so that any manifestation of individual human personality is, practically speaking, obliterated.² It is not a matter of imitating Jesus' actions, but having Jesus literally take over the life of the believer, living his/her life for them.³

Scriptures used to support this view include Galatians 2:20 where Paul said, "I have been crucified with Christ; it is no longer I who live, but Christ who lives in me; and the life I now live in the flesh I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave himself for me." (RSV) **Psychological Union** This view of the believer's union with Christ sees Christ and the believer as being united only in influence. The union is similar to that which exists between a teacher and his/her students, or

friends. It only extends to the arena of influence. There is no real oneness other than that of the sharing of ideals and practices.

Sacramental Union This view claims that we are unified with Christ through partaking of the bread and wine of the Lord's Supper. It takes literally Jesus' words, "This is my body.... This is my blood (Matthew 26:26-28; Mark 14:22-24; Luke 22:19-20). Coupled with this are Jesus' words to the Jews, "Truly, truly, I say to you, Except you eat the flesh of the Son of man, and drink his blood, you have no life in you. Whoever eats my flesh, and drinks my blood has eternal life; and I will raise him up at the last day. For my flesh is meat indeed, and my blood is drink indeed. He that eats my flesh, and drinks my blood, dwells in me, and I in him" (John 6:53-56). When one takes of the bread and wine of the Lord's Supper, they become unified with Christ and receive of His life. One must continue to partake of the bread and the wine in order to continue to have life in Christ. If they do not partake of the sacrament of holy communion, they will not have Christ's life in them. This is the position of the Catholic Church.

Judicial/Spiritual Union This view of the believer's union with Christ sees two aspects to the union: judicial, spiritual. The believer is judicially declared to be one with Jesus Christ, and shares in all that Christ possesses: eternal life, righteousness, glory, etc. God looks at the believer as he looks at Christ, and looks at Christ as he looks at the believer. He sees the two as one in the sight of the law. This identification results in certain aspects of Christ's person and work being attributed to the believer.⁴ Whatever Christ did, the believer is also declared to have done. This does not extend to personal attributes of God, but only those which are communicable to man. This phenomenon is similar to that of a marriage in which the assets and debts of each party are mutually assumed. The believer is also spiritually unified with Christ. It is a vital union whereby Christ becomes part of the believer, and the believer becomes part of Christ, but the individual personality and essence of each is still distinguishable as it pertains to their respective natures. Jesus does not become the believer, and the believer does not become Jesus, but rather the believer shares in the life of Christ by virtue of a spiritual connection with Christ. This connection is between the human spirit and the divine Spirit (1 Corinthians 6:17). It is not a physical bonding like welding two pieces of metal together, nor is it a mixing of God's Spirit with our spirit, and neither does the union make us semi-divine. Rather, the union is a spiritual interpenetration of Christ and the believer which produces a new spiritual vitality and life in us that we could not have apart from Christ.⁵

Biblical Teaching

Because the concept of being "in Christ" is found exclusively in the writings of Paul and John, only their contributions will be examined.

Pauline Corpus Of the two apostles, Paul is by far the most prolific writer on the subject of being in Christ. The verses which could be cited are numerous. In Paul's theology, believers are buried in Christ (Romans 6:4; Colossians 2:12); sanctified in Christ Jesus (1 Corinthians 1:2); joined with Christ's Spirit (1 Corinthians 6:17); made one in Christ Jesus (Galatians 3:28); baptized into Christ (Romans 6:3; Galatians 3:27); clothed with Christ (Galatians 3:27); all equal in Christ Jesus (Galatians 3:28); heirs of the Abrahamic promise in Christ (Galatians 3:28); free from the necessity of circumcision in Christ Jesus (Galatians 5:6); receive all spiritual blessings in Christ (Ephesians 1:3); chosen in Him (Ephesians 1:4); receive the glory of His grace (Ephesians 1:6); made accepted in the Beloved (Ephesians 1:6); all things will be gathered in one in Christ (Ephesians

1:10); have an inheritance (Ephesians 1:11); made alive/resurrected with Christ (Ephesians 2:5-6; Colossians 2:12); sit in heavenly places in Christ (Ephesians 2:6); created for good works in Christ (Ephesians 2:10); grow in Christ (Colossians 2:7); complete in Christ (Colossians 2:10); died with Christ (Romans 6:3-5; Colossians 3:3; 2 Timothy 2:11); have their lives hidden in Christ (Colossians 3:3); will be raised from the dead in Christ (1 Thessalonians 4:16); have the promise of life in Christ (2 Timothy 2:2); receive God's purpose and grace in Christ Jesus (2 Timothy 2:9); and are baptized into Christ's body (1 Corinthians 12:12-13).

Johanine Corpus

Although Paul deals with the subject of union with Christ more than John, John is most definitely aware of the concept. John recorded Jesus' words, "At that day you will know that I am in my Father, and you in me, and I in you" (John 14:20). This was the first time (historically speaking) that the concept of being "in Christ" was ever mentioned, and it was mentioned by Christ Himself.

Jesus was even more explicit in explaining the relationship of this union when he compared it to the relationship between a vine and its branches, saying, "I am the true vine, and my Father is the vinedresser. Every branch in me that does not bear fruit he takes away: and every branch that bears fruit, he prunes it, so that it may bring forth more fruit. Now you are clean through the word which I have spoken unto you. Abide in me, and I in you. As the branch cannot bear fruit of itself, except it abide in the vine; no more can you, except you abide in me. I am the vine, you are the branches: He that abides in me, and I in him, the same brings forth much fruit: for without me you can do nothing" (John 15:1-6). Jesus made it clear that everything the believer has spiritually is directly based on their continual connection (abiding) with Him, and His abiding in them.⁶ Just as a branch derives every bit of its sustenance by virtue of its being "in" the vine, likewise the believer will draw every bit of his/her spiritual strength by virtue of being in Christ. Conversely, just as the branch cannot bear fruit if it becomes detached from the vine, a believer cannot bear spiritual if it is detached from Christ. In John's first epistle he employs similar terminology, saying, "He who says he abides in him ought to walk in the same way in which he walked" (1 John 2:6). Being in Christ necessarily implies imitating Christ. John went on to give his readers assurance of knowing that they dwelt in Christ, and He dwelt in them, by reminding them that Christ had given them His Spirit (1 John 4:13).

Systematic Formulation The Biblical concept of being "in Christ" consists of two aspects: positional truth, spiritual reality. When we are born again, we are united to Christ both positionally and spiritually. We are united to His person and His work in such a way that whatever can be said of Christ can also be said of us. Our very life and identity are bound up in Christ's identity. Paul said, "If you were raised with Christ, seek those things which are above, where Christ sits on the right hand of God. Set your affection on things above, not on things on the earth. For you are dead, and your life is hid with Christ in God. When Christ shall appear, who is our life, then you will also appear with him in glory" (Colossians 3:1-4). We are dead. Our life is not our own, neither is it self-generated. Rather our life is bound up in Christ's life. Our life is now hid with Christ's life in God, in the heavenlies. Paul made similar sentiments in Galatians 2:20 saying, "I have been crucified with Christ; it is no longer I who live, but Christ lives in me; and the life which I now live in the flesh I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave Himself for me." (NKJV). After Paul's union with Christ he could no longer say that he lived his own life. He was crucified with

Christ, dying to the old man, and living to the new man in Christ Jesus through faith.

Positional Truth The first aspect of our union with Christ is positional. All of humanity has one of two positions in the sight of God. They are either unrighteous or righteous; condemned or justified; guilty or innocent. Which position one stands in before the sight of God is determined by their relationship with one of two individuals. Those who are in Adam are the unrighteous, condemned, and guilty, and thus have spiritual death working in them. Those who are in Christ are those who are the righteous, justified, and innocent, which have spiritual life working in them. This is why Paul said, "For as in Adam all die, even so in Christ shall all be made alive" (1 Corinthians 15:22). Our position before God depends on who we are "in." This truth is most clearly defined in Romans 5:12-21.

Paul argued that through Adam all of humanity sinned, and as a result experiences spiritual death (Romans 5:12). This spiritual death affects all of humanity even though they did not personally commit Adam's sin (Romans 5:14). He went on to contrast Adam to Christ, showing how their respective actions have affected the human race. Although the many died through Adam's transgression, the many also had the grace and gift of God multiplied to them through Christ (Romans 5:15). Whereas Adam brought the human race into a position of judgment, condemnation, and death, Christ brought to us justification, righteousness, and spiritual life (Romans 5:16-17). Just as Adam's one transgression brought all of humanity into a place of condemnation before God, so through Christ's one righteous act at Calvary He brought spiritual life for all people (Romans 5:18). Through Adam all were made sinners, and his sin reigned in death over all, but through Christ grace reigns through righteousness, and many will be made righteous (Romans 5:19, Romans 5:21).

Sin rules over us because of our union with Adam, bringing spiritual death and eternal condemnation. Jesus Christ, however, came to reverse the consequences of Adam's disobedience, bringing spiritual life and justification effecting both our present and future relationship to God. Adam is our natural representative head. In him we experience sin and its consequence, death. But just as Adam was our representative in his sin, so Christ was our representative in His sinless life and atoning death. As Adam's sin brought condemnation and death to all in Adam, so Jesus' act of righteousness brought justification and life to all those who believe. As A.H. Strong said, "...as there is one source of spiritual life in Christ, so there was one source of corrupt life in Adam; and that as we are justified by reason of our oneness with the justified Christ, so we are condemned by reason of our oneness with the condemned Adam."⁷ This can be likened to the power of attorney. When someone gives another person the power of attorney, that individual can make business transactions, sign documents, and other binding activities for the said person. Whatever is signed by the appointed individual through the power of attorney is legally binding on the one who was being represented. God has given two individuals the power of attorney over humankind: Adam, Christ. Through Adam's transgression, a document of judgment, condemnation, and eternal death was signed in our stead. To many this sounds unfair because we did not appoint Adam as our representative. In our individualistic society this does seem unfair, but the fact remains that God appointed Adam to that position. It might be better to think of Adam's sin as a falling into a large hole with no way of escape. All of Adam's descendants are then born in this hole and are also confined to its depths, even though they were not the ones who originally fell into the hole. However it is conceptualized, this is the truth of the

Scripture. As children of Adam, all of us have inherited condemnation, judgment, and death.

We are not left in this destitute position, however. Christ also signed a document in our stead. God appointed Him to be the second representative over humanity to succeed where Adam failed. Christ's obedience secured righteousness and eternal life for all of those who would put their faith in Him. When we are born into Christ we legally become one with Christ in God's sight, partaking of Christ's obedience. All our responsibilities rest upon Him and all of His merit is accrued to us. Just as Adam's sin is charged to us without us having actually committed it in the flesh, so Christ's righteousness is as much ours as had we performed it ourselves. It is as though we were the ones who died on the cross. God sees the believer in Christ's merit, not one's own merit. This is so eloquently stated in 2 Corinthians 5:21 where Paul said, "For he made him [Jesus] to be sin for us, who knew no sin; that we might be made the righteousness of God in him." Jesus takes our sin upon Himself even though He did not commit the sin, while we take His righteousness upon ourselves even though we did not perform it. Our position before God has been changed because we have changed our allegiance from Adam to Christ. Whereas we were under the umbrella of Adam's disobedience which sheltered us from a relationship with God, we are now under Christ's umbrella of grace, righteousness, and life which secures for us a relationship with God. Our relationship to Adam has been severed because we have placed our faith in Christ. Now that we are positionally unified with Christ, our relationship with God has been changed from one of condemnation to one of righteousness. Because Christ's work and merit is accrued to us by virtue of our being in Christ, God sees us as He sees Christ. He no longer sees us in Adam, or even in our own personal sin, but in Christ's righteousness and life. Our position in Christ is not a conscious experience anymore than our position in Adam was a conscious experience. Apart from revelation we would not know why we are sinners, or why we are now considered righteous. Our feelings or perception of this positional union with Christ does not change the fact that we are now in Christ. It is an objective truth to be received by faith, not a subjective truth to be judged by experience, or the lack thereof. It is a spiritual fact that need only be known by faith, not felt by the emotions, to be considered true. Although our perception of this truth does not change the fact that it is true, our knowledge of this truth is important in order to existentially experience the benefits of being in Christ.⁸

Unlike spiritual growth and maturity (sanctification), our union with Christ is not progressive.⁹ From the moment we experience regeneration (born-again) we are in Christ. We can never be in Christ anymore than we already are. Our union is static, not fluctuating. It is complete, lacking nothing. Every spiritual blessing that is necessary for our spiritual life and salvation was given us in Christ, and remains with us because of that union. Although the union is not progressive, our understanding and perception of the union does grow. As our perception grows, it will affect the way we relate to God and others, but the union itself does not become stronger or weaker based on our perception and application of it in our daily lives.

Spiritual/Vital Union Our union with Christ is not a mere external, legal union which brings about a change of our position before God, but it is also a spiritual union with Christ which is internal and vital. Christ not only works from without, being separate from us, but works spiritually from within. Our position in Christ is an external pronouncement, but the union extends beyond this to include an internal reality. He is in us and we are in Him. According to Paul our spirit is joined with His Spirit (1 Corinthians 6:17). It is an interpenetration of spirits. We not only stand positionally in His

righteousness and grace, but we actually partake of it through our spiritual union with Him. Just as the vine gives all things necessary to life to the branches (John 15:1-6), so Christ is our source for of every spiritual blessing and eternal life. Because of our union with Him we have the same life, united in such a way as if the same blood ran through both our veins.¹⁰ Our spiritual life flows from His. Apart from our connection to Him we cannot bear spiritual fruit, nor can we have life. But by virtue of our spiritual connection with His person and work, whatever can be said of Christ can be said of us.

Whereas Romans 5:12-21 speaks of our positional union with Christ in regards to the condemnation of the law and our justification, Romans 6:1-23, Romans 7:1-25, Romans 8:1-39 speaks of a spiritual union with Christ's person which goes beyond a forensic status and positional union; it is an organic union.¹¹ Most passages which speak of the union mention it in passing without much explanation as to its meaning or significance. Romans 6:1-23, Romans 7:1-25, Romans 8:1-39 speaks more of the nature and practical results of our spiritual union with Christ than any other Biblical passage, and therefore will receive special attention, examining the key points of this passage.

Romans 6:1-23, Romans 7:1-25, Romans 8:1-39 : The Believer's Relationship to Sin in Light of the Union In order to understand the literary purpose of this section of Romans it is necessary to establish Paul's argument up to this point. In Romans 1:1-32, Romans 2:1-29, Romans 3:1-31 he demonstrated that both Jew and Gentile were sinners who had not lived up to the revelation given them by God. The Gentiles did not live up to the revelation of conscience and nature, while the Jews did not live up to the revelation of the Law of Moses. Paul made it abundantly clear that God's righteousness does not come through obedience to the Law, but through faith in Jesus' atonement for our sins. In Romans 4:1-25 and Romans 5:1-21 Paul argued so strongly that God justifies the sinner apart from good works even in the face of sin, that he anticipated the natural human response—If where sin abounds, God's grace abounds all the more (Romans 5:20-21), why not continue in sin so we can receive more grace? Knowing that some would misunderstand the implications of justification and new life through Christ apart from the law, Paul argued that a Christian should not sin (Romans 6:1-23), and then explained how they were able to not sin (Romans 7:1-25, Romans 8:1-17).

Romans 6:1-23 is divided up into two arguments. The first argument is that believers should not sin because they have been unified with Christ in His death, burial, and resurrection (Romans 6:1-11). Paul's second argument against continuing in sin is that this leads to enslavement to something other than Christ (Romans 6:12-23). The Romans, being unaware of what happened to them at salvation, thought it good to sin so that grace may abound (Romans 6:1). Paul's answer to this ludicrous idea was the believer's spiritual union with Christ. Not only should a Christian not continue to sin, but the believer's union with Christ makes such a situation logically impossible. Paul's answer was not, "How can you think of such a thing," but, "That's impossible!"¹² Christians are not only forgiven of sin, but they also die to sin's dominion.¹³ Through baptism we are baptized into Christ's death and burial, and therefore are dead to sin (Romans 6:2-4 a). Because we have been identified with Him in His death and burial by means of baptism we will also walk in the new life of resurrection with Him (Romans 6:4-5). As death frees people from committing sin, those who have been unified with Christ through baptism have died with Christ, destroying the sinful body that enslaved us to sin (Romans 6:6-7). Calvin observed that "through baptism Christ

makes us share in his death, that we may be engrafted in it. And, just as the twig draws substance and nourishment from the root to which it is grafted, so those who receive baptism with right faith truly feel the effective working of Christ's death in the mortification of their flesh, together with the working of his resurrection in the vivification of the Spirit.."14

It should be pointed out that all of Paul's references to our death or crucifixion with Christ are in the aorist tense, indicating that this is a past event. Our death to sin became an accomplished reality when we were baptized into Christ. There is no need to continue to die to sin, for we have already died to sin. We can never be more dead than we were when we were initially born-again.

Just as we have died with Christ, we also know that we will be raised from the dead to live with Him forevermore (Romans 6:8-9). Since Christ's resurrection means that death does not have dominion over Him (He died once to sin), we also, by virtue of our union with Him in His death and resurrection, are to consider ourselves dead to sin (Romans 6:9-11 a). We die to the ruling power of sin in our lives through our union with Christ. Because sin and death cannot rule over Christ, neither can they rule over us. The great truth that Paul was emphasizing was that what Christ did, we did.¹⁵ We were not the ones who died or were resurrected, but by virtue of our union with Christ God considers us to have performed what Christ performed. To illustrate this notice that Paul said in verse ten that Christ died to sin, and in verses six through eight he said that we died to sin through Christ. Because Christ died, we died.

If Christ had no sin, how can it be said that He died to sin? This dilemma is easily resolved when we understand that Paul is not speaking of dying to specific acts of sin, but to the legal reign of sin. Christ, although sinless, was subjected to its legal reign, or dominion at Calvary. He was made to be sin for us. He was charged with our sin. By virtue of our union with Christ we also die to the ruling power of sin over our lives, even as a dead individual is free from sin's rule over them. We are not, however, free from the sin-principle, or from ever sinning again. Paul's argument in Romans 6:11-23 makes this abundantly clear.

Paul said, "He [God] made Him [Jesus] to be sin for us, who knew no sin, that we might become the righteousness of God in Him" (2 Corinthians 5:21). Jesus was subjected to the legal reign and punishment of sin in our place, even though He committed no acts of sin, being righteous. Conversely, we being sinners by nature and committing many acts of sin, are blessed with Christ's righteousness. His righteousness and life are not rightfully ours, just as our sins are not rightfully His, yet God imputes His righteousness and life to us as though they were truly ours, and imputes our sin to Christ as though it was truly His. All of this transpires by virtue of our union with Christ. Apart from this union we would necessarily be bound by the power of sin. Not only are we to consider ourselves dead to sin through Christ, but we are also to consider ourselves as alive to God from the dead, in Christ (Romans 6:11 b). Paul's reference to being "alive" to God in Christ speaks of a vital union. Because we died to sin and have been raised in newness of life we are not to let sin continue to reign supreme in our lives, obeying its lusts (Romans 6:12). We are not to present our bodies as instruments of unrighteousness, but as instruments of righteousness to God seeing that sin no longer has control over us (Romans 6:13-14). Sin cannot control us because we are under grace, and not under law (Romans 6:15). At this juncture Paul argued that to continue in sin is to willingly subject ourselves as servants to it, rather than as servants of God and to His righteousness (Romans 6:16). We are not slaves to sin, but to God, so that we can be slaves to

righteousness, having our fruit in holiness and eternal life (Romans 6:17-23). The legal reign of sin is replaced by the legal reign of righteousness and life that Christ possesses (Romans 5:21). Now the believer is dead to sin, but alive to God with righteousness.

We cannot continue to sin because we have been unified with Christ and have received of His grace. Whereas before we were only unified with Adam, now we are unified with Christ in His death, burial, and resurrection, by means of baptism. Now whatever can be said of Christ can also be said of us. Just as He died to sin, but lives to righteousness, likewise we must consider ourselves dead to sin and alive to righteousness, experiencing a new life. Sin has no more power over us because we are in Him, and sin has no power over Him. Sin could only control us as long as we were in Adam, but it cannot control those who have died, been buried, and resurrected with Christ through baptism. Now we live in new life, being enslaved to righteousness as we await the bodily resurrection.

Turning to the subject of how not to sin (Romans 7:1-25, Romans 8:1-17) Paul used the analogy of the marriage covenant to explain how a believer is freed from sin. Just as a spouse is freed from the bonds of marriage when their partner dies, and can then marry another person, so likewise we have died to the law and to the dominion of sin so that we might serve God in the spirit and bear fruit to Him (Romans 7:1-6). A momentary break in thought is utilized to dwell on the purpose of the law, which was to increase the sinfulness of man (Romans 7:7-20). After explaining his own losing battle with sin when he relies on the law of his mind or the Law of Moses, Paul exclaimed that the battle could only be won through the Spirit (Romans 7:21-25, Romans 8:1-4). Whereas the law could not help us to overcome our sin (because it actually increased our sinful desires) because of the weakness of our carnal nature, the Spirit of life set us free from sin and death and allows us to fulfill God's will (Romans 8:1-4). As a result the church is admonished to not live after the flesh because we are under obligation to the Spirit who gives life, and not to the flesh that brings us spiritual death (Romans 8:5-14). The truth of Romans 5:12-21, Romans 6:1-23, Romans 7:1-25, Romans 8:1-17 is that whereas we received the sin nature as a result of being born in lineage of Adam, and hence became separated from God, being reborn causes us to inherit a new lineage and a new nature. We died to old man and have been resurrected into Christ's life and therefore a new relationship to God. Our union with Christ changed the dominant affections of our soul.¹⁶ Like a wife who is no longer under obligation to her husband if he dies, our relationship with Adam has been severed.¹⁷ We are no longer under any obligation to our relationship with Adam because we died a death made possible by the resurrection of Christ. Our sin has been bonded with the blood on the cross. Now through the Spirit we are no longer condemned, or under bondage to sin and death, but receive the victory over sin (Romans 8:1-8), death (Romans 8:9-11), and slavery (Romans 8:12-17).¹⁸ Biblical Imagery of the Union The Bible presents several images or figures to help us understand the nature of our union with Christ. The union is compared to a building wherein Christ is the corner-stone in the foundation, holding the building together (Ephesians 2:20). The most notable analogy is that of the body. Paul said, "Do you not know that your bodies are members of Christ? ... Or do you not know that your body is the temple of the Holy Spirit who is in you, whom you have from God, and you are not your own?" (1 Corinthians 6:15 a, 1 Corinthians 6:19, NKJV). The most elaborate analogy is that of 1 Corinthians 12:1-31 where Paul compares the church to Christ's body, of whom Christ is the head. Verse twelve is telling where Paul said, "For as the body is one, and has many members, and all the

members of that one body, being many, are one body: so also is Christ." Ephesians 4:15-16 is equally vivid: "But speaking the truth in a loving manner, let us grow up into Him in all things, who is the head, even Christ, from whom all the body tightly framed and united together through each joint's supply, according to the operation in the measure of each one's part, making increase of the body to the building up of itself by means of love." The imagery is that just as the head and members of a body are all part of one body, believers are part of Christ. Just as the human head is the source of all activity and control of the body, Jesus is the source of all benefit for the spiritual body of Christ.¹⁹

Paul, who commonly used imagery to explain spiritual truths, used yet another figure in Ephesians 5:25-30. While exhorting husbands to love their wives, Paul spoke of Christ's love for the church as the ultimate example of how husbands should love their wives. He argued that the women should be loved as the man loves his own body, even as Christ loves the church (Ephesians 5:28-29). We are said to be members of Christ's body, flesh, and bones (Ephesians 5:30). The way a man becomes one flesh with his wife is a picture of how Christ is one with His church, and hence the individuals in His church, which is His body (Ephesians 5:31-32). Paul considered this a great mystery. Just as a man and his wife can be considered one flesh, and yet they remain distinct, so spiritually Christ becomes one with believers, yet remains a distinct person from them. A more modern figure may be that of electricity. Being in Christ is like an appliance plugged into an electric socket. If an appliance is not plugged into the source, although it has the capability of functioning, it cannot. The electricity, although always present, is useless to the unplugged appliance. Once the appliance is plugged into the source, however, it works as it was intended, drawing all of its energy from the electric source.

Another figure might be that of an embassy. Just as those living in a foreign country can obtain shelter and immunity from danger by seeking refuge in their own country's embassy, so believers have a shelter and immunity from their sin, condemnation, and death by virtue of being in Christ.

Spiritual Blessings from the Union The spiritual ramifications of our union with Christ are numerous. Many of them were named when we examined the Pauline corpus of Biblical teaching, but they were not explored. Although I do not wish to be repetitious, it would be in order to review a few of the implications of the union as discussed by Paul.

Our regeneration is in Christ.

Therefore if any man be in Christ, he is a new creature: old things are passed away; behold, all things are become new (2 Corinthians 5:17).

Our spiritual blessings and election flow from being in Christ.

Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us with all spiritual blessings in heavenly places in Christ: According as he has chosen us in him before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and without blame before him in love (Ephesians 1:3-4).

Our resurrection is in Christ.

I thank my God always on your behalf, for the grace of God which is given you by Jesus Christ; That in every thing you are enriched by him, in all utterance, and in all knowledge (1 Corinthians

1:4-5). For the Lord himself shall descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of the archangel, and with the trumpet of God: and the dead in Christ shall rise first (1 Thessalonians 4:16). As in Adam all die, even so in Christ shall all be made alive (1 Corinthians 15:22).

We have a spiritual inheritance, and will be glorified in Christ.

And if children, then heirs; heirs of God, and joint-heirs with Christ; if so be that we suffer with him, that we may be also glorified together (Romans 8:17).

We are free from condemnation in Christ.

There is therefore now no condemnation to them which are in Christ Jesus, who walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit (Romans 8:1).

We are free from the Law in Christ.

Wherefore, my brethren, you also have become dead to the law by the body of Christ; that you should be married to another, even to him who is raised from the dead, that we should bring forth fruit unto God. For when we were in the flesh, the sinful passions which were aroused by the law, did work in our members to bring forth fruit unto death. But now we are delivered from the law, that being dead wherein we were held; that we should serve in newness of spirit, and not in the oldness of the letter (Romans 7:4-6).

We have been made the wisdom of God, righteousness, sanctification, and redemption in Christ.

But of Him you are in Christ Jesus, who became to us God's wisdom, righteousness, and also sanctification and redemption (1 Corinthians 1:30).

In Christ we are no longer condemned in God's sight.

There is therefore now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus (Romans 8:1). The great truth of being in Christ is that our relationship to Adam has been broken, and God has established in us a new relationship with Christ, in which and by which we relate to God. We no longer stand before God in Adam's guilt, condemnation, and death, but in Christ's obedience, righteousness, and life. We no longer have God's wrath directed toward us, but rather we stand in Christ's person, in Christ's stead. He met the demands of justice on our behalf, and gave us of His righteousness. We have been clothed in Christ by being baptized in Him (Galatians 3:27), and thus stand before God as though we were Christ Himself. It is a whole new way of relating to God that has been fully secured on our behalf by Christ. All that we have spiritually is dependent on Christ's work on our behalf, and our relationship to Christ. We do nothing but believe that it is true, and act accordingly. We are now saved and accepted by God because of our position in Christ; because of Christ's work, and not our own.

Apologetic Interaction Metaphysical Union

If we understand the union to be metaphysical, this is nothing short of pantheism, i.e. all is God. The Scripture is clear that there is a metaphysical distinction between God and His creation. God's nature is wholly Spirit while our nature is flesh and spirit. Those who wish to worship God must worship Him in Spirit and truth (John 4:24). If we become god by virtue of our union with Him, there would be no need for the Christian to worship God, for in essence he would only be worshipping

himself. Our union with Christ is not one of essence, but of spirit. God is wholly other than man, and remains wholly other even in our union with Him.

Mystical Union The view that the union between Christ and believers runs so deep that believers literally lose their personal identity is a gross misrepresentation of salvation. A common theological maxim is that grace never destroys nature. Salvation does not consist of God replacing the human identity, or human faculties with that of Christ's. Christ does not control us, or take over our identity, but transforms it. We imitate Him, we do not become him. When Paul said he was crucified with Christ He did not mean that he had actually been crucified with Christ, but that he was considered to have been crucified with Christ. This is clear because Paul testified that he still lived, but that he lived by faith in the Son of God (Galatians 2:20). When Paul said that it was no longer he who lived, he did not mean that the Son of God took over his life, but that he lived his life as though he were dead, and now alive to God. The Son of God did not take over Paul's life, but rather Paul lived his life through the Son of God.

Psychological Union That the union of Christ and believers is not a mere psychological union as between friends is evident by Jesus' statement in John 17:26 : "That they all may be one; as you, Father, are in me, and I in you, that they also may be one in us: that the world may believe that you have sent me." Just as the Son's union with the Father was no mere psychological union, neither is the believer's union with Christ a mere psychological union. Although it is true that Christ's union with us influences us, the union surpasses a mere psychological connection.

Sacramental Union The understanding of our union with Christ as being dependent on the sacrament of communion is not Biblically tenable. Of all the statement made concerning our union with Christ and its effects on us, not one of them connects the union with partaking of the bread and wine of communion. When Jesus said, "This is my body.... This is my blood (Matthew 26:26-28; Mark 14:22-24; Luke 22:19-20), Jesus did not mean that the bread and wine were actually His body and blood anymore than that Jesus meant He was actually a door or a vine when He said that He was the door (John 10:7, John 10:9), or when He said that He was the true vine (John 15:1). Jesus used the bread and wine as symbols for the breaking of His body, and the pouring out of His blood for the deliverance of people, just as they had been used as symbols for the Passover. When Jesus told the Jews, "Truly, truly, I say to you, Except you eat the flesh of the Son of man, and drink his blood, you have no life in you. Whoever eats my flesh, and drinks my blood has eternal life; and I will raise him up at the last day. For my flesh is meat indeed, and my blood is drink indeed. He that eats my flesh, and drinks my blood, dwells in me, and I in him" (John 6:53-56), it is obvious from the context that He was not meaning this literally. In explaining these words to His disciples Jesus said, "It is the spirit that give life; the flesh profits nothing: the words that I speak to you, they are spirit, and they are life" (John 6:53). If the flesh profits nothing, then there is no reason to believe that we must eat Christ's physical body in order to have life. Jesus' point was that we must believe His words (which were spiritual) if we are to have life. The life was not in the eating of Jesus' body, but in the believing of His words.

Relevance to Life and Ministry Of all the prominent doctrines of the Scripture, the doctrine of the believer's union with Christ is probably the most neglected. Even many systematic theologies tend to pass over it, only making brief comments here and there concerning its nature and relevance to the Christian life. Although it has not received much attention, the truth behind the doctrine is

absolutely foundational to the Christian life. Our union with Christ is the basis of our spiritual life. The doctrine of the believer's union with Christ is very relevant to the everyday life of the believer. Although we may be unconscious of this union as were the Romans, this does not make it any less real or relevant to our lives. Just as we are often unconscious of the blood which flows through our veins, yet the truth and importance of the fact is essential to our existence, even so we may be unconscious of our spiritual union with Christ, but it is the very life of the Christian believer. It is the basis for our self-worth, assurance of salvation, power over sin, approach to God, and acceptance before God.

Self-Worth and Self-Perception

There is much talk in today's world of personal worth. Usually it is spoken of in terms of self-worth or self-perception. Although there is great truth in the secular concept of self-worth, it is also a distortion of Biblical truth. We know from Scripture that all of mankind has fallen in sin, no one does good or is righteous in himself (Romans 3:10, Romans 3:12), and therefore all are deserving of God's judgment (Romans 6:23). However, we also know that we are made in the image of God, and thus have infinite value to God. The doctrine of our union with Christ illuminates to us the true source of our worth. It is not generated in our self, but in the self as it is unified with Christ. Our self-worth and self-perception should be viewed through the lens of Christ, not our personal successes or short-comings, strengths or weaknesses. Only when we see how God views us can we really see who we are, and our true worth.

Assurance of Salvation

People are always trying to assure themselves of their salvation. There are so many reasons to doubt. Usually we doubt because we examine our own life to see if it matches up with Christ's life. Because none of our perfect our life never matches up with Christ's, which leaves us with doubts and worries about our personal salvation. Such doubts loom over the minds of sincere believers. The doctrine of our union with Christ, however, gives us assurance that we will be saved because we know that God views us as He views Christ. If we possess Christ's righteousness and life, there is nothing that can thwart God's love from being lavished upon us. We can agree with Paul that nothing shall separate us from "the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord" (Romans 8:39). Because of our union with Christ we can be assured that He will see us to the end!

Freedom From Sin

Because we have died with Christ to the dominion of sin, we no longer need to be enslaved to sin. People spend all sorts of time looking for the perfect step-program that will help them overcome sinful habits and live a victorious life. What we must realize is that our union with Christ has already broken the dominion of sin. There is no need for a program. It is by virtue of our union with Christ in baptism of the water and Spirit that we have had the power of sin's rule over us broken, and have received the power of the Spirit to live a righteous life. Some not realizing this have gone about trying to do all sorts of things to overcome sin. Although our death to sin need not be known to be true, it does need to be known to be useful to us.²⁰ Once we realize that sin does not have the power to rule over us because of our union with Christ, and we put our faith in Christ to overcome habitual sins, we will naturally yield our members as instruments of righteousness to God. We will not continue to sin because we have died to it, and been made alive to God through

Christ.

Performance/Approach to God Our union with Christ makes our relationship with God complete and static. This is not to say that we cannot grow in grace, or that we can never displease God. What it is to say is that God's view of us and relationship with us does not change from day to day. Because we are in Christ, His righteousness has become our righteousness, and therefore our standing before God is not affected by our good-day/bad-day performances. But unless we learn to live daily by faith in and reliance upon His righteousness, however, our perception of our standing will vary depending upon our good/bad-day performance. We know by faith that our union with Christ secures us in our relationship with God. The way that God views Christ, He also views us.. As Christ pleased the Father in all things (John 8:29), likewise we have been made pleasing to God, because we believe on His Son and have been unified with Him. We have boldness to enter into God's presence, not because of our own good works or performance, but because of Christ's performance, Christ's blood (Hebrews 10:19). While coming before God's throne with Christ's blood we can have a "full assurance of faith" (Hebrews 10:22).

Accepted in God's Family

We live in a world in which we are constantly trying to be accepted by people. Whether it be in our families, at our jobs, or even in the church, sometimes we do not feel accepted by people, or sometimes we actually are not accepted. We live in a world where our acceptance is based on our performance. When we do good we are accepted. When we do bad we are rejected. One's performance affects the amount of love they will receive from family, friends, and co-workers. When we come to God we often carry this work-for-my-acceptance mentality over with us, and thus are always working to be accepted by God. The good news is that by virtue of our union with Christ we are accepted before God. Because God accepts Christ, He accepts us. Being in Christ means that God's favor rests on us. We are not accepted because we are good, but because we are in Christ. In Christ we have free access to God. Paul said that God "has made us accepted in the Beloved [Christ]" (Ephesians 1:6), and that in Christ we "have boldness and access with confidence through faith in him" (Ephesians 3:12). Christ is our life-line to God. Our spiritual life flows from His. Our blessings come from His virtue. As in a blood transfusion, the life of blood flows from a healthy person to a dying person, so does His life flow into our dying existence, bringing new vitality and hope.

Because of union with Christ we are now God's children. Paul said, "For you are all sons of God through faith in Christ Jesus. For all of you who were baptized into Christ have been clothed with Christ" (Galatians 3:26-27). God does not conditionally accept us based on our good behavior. He fully accepts us because we have accepted His Son Jesus Christ. We have been accepted by God. He is our Father, and we are His children. He does not require us to work for our acceptance before Him, but accepts us based on our union with His Son, Jesus Christ. Christ has met all of the demands necessary for there to exist a relationship between God and men. By virtue of our union with Christ we have been made acceptable to God, and can now rest in this fact. There is no more need to perform to be accepted. God's acceptance of us is unconditional in Christ!

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4. Walter A. Elwell, ed., Evangelical Dictionary of Theology (Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1984), 542.

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10. Stong.

11. Daniel B. Wallace, "Romans: Introduction, Argument, and Outline," as found at <http://www.bible.org/docs/soapbox/romotl.htm> 12. Jerry Bridges, The Discipline of Grace (NavPress: Colorado Springs, CO, 1994), 63.

13. Ibid., 61.

14. John Calvin, Institutes of the Christian Religion, book III, ch xv, sec 5. John T. McNeil, ed. (The Westminster Press: Philadelphia, 1960), 1307.

15. Ibid., 53.

16. Strong.

17. Keathley.

18. Wallace.

19. Strong.

20. Bridges, 64.

S. The Biblical Significance of Names, Particularly as it Relates to Prayer and Baptism

The Biblical Significance of Names, Particularly as it Relates to Prayer and Baptism

by

Jason Dulle

What's in a name? This question has become a cliché in our culture. The significance of a name is found in its ability to confer affluence and reputation. If one has a famous last name, they are treated with respect and honor. If they have a last name that has been associated with ill-repute, they will be disrespected and dishonored. But typically we use names as mere designators to distinguish one person from another. They do not have much significance to us, and any meaning attached to that name is either unknown to the bearer of that name, or the bearer is not concerned with such trivialities. In the West we name our children particular names because the name sounds nice (euphony), or because the name holds certain sentimental value to us. This was not the way they view or use names in the East. Easterners attach a much greater significance to names. The fact that the Hebrew word *shem* and the Greek word *onoma*--both of which mean "name"--appear over 1000 times in the Bible should give us an indication of the significance of a name. To the Hebrews a name was not a label, or a tool to distinguish one person from another; a person's name was viewed as equivalent to the person himself. A person's name signified their person, worth, character, reputation, authority, will, and ownership. In Revelation 3:4 it is said that there were a "a few names even in Sardis which have not defiled their garments...." The reference is to the people in Sardis, but they are called "names." Many modern translators, understanding the meaning of *onoma*, simply translate it as "people." Proverbs says the "name of the Lord is a strong tower: the righteous run to it and are safe" (Proverbs 18:10). Does this mean there is a large tower in the shape of the letters "LORD" that the righteous run into? No. The point is that the Lord Himself is a strong tower. Other Scriptures also confirm the idea that God's name is equivalent to God's person (Psalms 18:49; Psalms 86:12; Malachi 3:16; Matthew 10:22; Matthew 19:29; John 3:18).

Speaking and writing in "the name" signified authority (Exodus 5:23; 1 Kings 21:8); naming something indicated one's ownership of that person/thing (Genesis 1:5, Genesis 1:8, Genesis 1:10; Genesis 2:19-20; 2 Samuel 12:28; Amos 9:12); to forget God's name was tantamount to departing from Him (Jeremiah 23:37); acting in someone's name was to represent them (Deuteronomy 25:6); to blot out someone's name is to destroy that person (Deuteronomy 9:14; 2 Kings 14:27; Isaiah 14:22; Revelation 3:5); one's name signified their reputation (Mark 6:14; Revelation 3:1), and their character (Ecclesiastes 7:1; Matthew 6:9). Christ is said to have manifested the Father's name, meaning that He has made His person known to humanity (John 17:26). To believe on the name of Christ is to believe in the person of Christ (John 1:12; John 2:23). To be gathered in Jesus' name is to be gathered together in His mind, will, and purpose

(Matthew 18:20). With this basis let us examine some passages in which the significance of "name" brings to light theological meaning that is often overlooked. In Acts 4:7 the Sanhedrin asked Peter and John concerning the healing of the lame man, "By what power, or by what name, have you done this?" The response was that it was done by the name of Jesus Christ (Acts 4:10). The apostles did not mean that when they said, "In the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth rise up and walk," (Acts 3:6), that the phrase itself had any inherent power. It was not a magical formula. It was faith in Jesus' person that healed the man (Acts 3:16). That the name of Jesus is not a mystical formula is evidenced by the seven sons of Sceva. These men were attempting to cast out devils in Jesus' name, but the people in whom the devils resided jumped on the men and beat them and one of the devils said, "Jesus I know, and Paul I know, but who are you?" (Acts 19:13-16). Although they attempted to cast out devils in the right name, because they were not believers in Christ, and thus did not represent His person, they were in effect attempting to cast out the devils in their own authority and were unsuccessful. The devils recognized this and would not submit. There is no magic in saying, "in Jesus' name." Humans have no power to cast out devils. When we cast them out "in Jesus' name" we are declaring to be standing in Jesus' place, casting them out in His personal authority, not our own. Paul cast out devils in Jesus' name and they obeyed, not because of what Paul said, but because of Who he represented (Acts 16:18).

There are two important practices the church is commanded to do in the "name of Jesus." These practices--prayer and baptism--have great theological significance, and deserve special attention.

Prayer

Jesus made some statements concerning prayer that have brought about a misunderstanding concerning how we are to pray. Jesus said, "Whatever you ask in my name, I will do it" (John 14:13; See also John 14:14; John 15:16; John 16:23). Shortly after Jesus said again, "Until now you have not asked for anything in my name; ask and you will receive, that your joy may be full" (John 16:24). Most have understood these verses to mean that we are to end our prayers by saying, "In Jesus' name" or some similar statement. Although such a practice is not harmful it misunderstands what Jesus was teaching us in these passages. Jesus did not intend for us to actually say the words "in Jesus' name" in conjunction with prayer, but rather to pray in His stead, with His authority, and in accordance with His will.

Some have come to understand that saying "in Jesus' name" seals the prayer, guaranteeing that it will be answered. This is not much different than sorcery, viewing "Jesus' name" as a magical phrase like "abra-cadabra-ala-cazam." To pray in Jesus' name is to pray according to His will, character, and purpose. It is to pray in His stead, and act in His authority as His representatives on earth. It is similar to the notion of power of attorney. We can give someone else the legal right to our name. In this capacity, they can obtain information otherwise unavailable to them, and make decisions on our behalf in our stead.

It might also be likened to a police officer who declares, "Stop in the name of the law." He means that he is representing the law, and acting in its authority. God has given us Jesus' name so we can act in His person, in His stead, carrying out His will here on earth in His physical absence. On a practical level, many view "in Jesus' name" to be the way we let everyone know when we are finished praying. In effect, what is being said is, "And now we're finished praying, let's eat" or "let's move on to something else." That Jesus never intended for us to say "in Jesus' name" during or at

the conclusion of prayer is evident from the fact that there is no prayer in Scripture that records anyone actually saying, "In Jesus' name." This does not mean they were not praying "in Jesus' name," because according to the Eastern understanding of "name," they were praying in Jesus' name by praying according to His will and purpose. The best example of a NT prayer is found in Acts 4:24-30. The account of this prayer is given from the standpoint of a bystander dictating what was spoken. In this episode, however, we will not find anyone saying "in Jesus' name" at any point of the prayer. If Jesus meant for His church to actually say "in Jesus' name" after our prayers, surely we would find His apostles doing so. The same could be said for the prayers found in Ephesians 1:17-23 and Revelation 22:20. We pray in Jesus' name when we pray in His authority and will, not when we merely utter "in Jesus' name!"

Baptism The Scripture connects baptism with Jesus' name on multiple occasions. Unlike prayer, we have Biblical examples where the name of Jesus is verbally spoken during baptism. It seems that in baptism, God does intend for us to verbally speak "in Jesus' name" or some similar formula. The question is why? The purpose of this article is not to be a polemic for Jesus' name baptism, as opposed to "Father, Son, Holy Spirit" baptism. I will assume that the reader already understands that the Bible teaches baptism is to be administered "in Jesus' name," and not "in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit." What I want to focus on is the reason we are to be baptized in Jesus' name, and why speaking that name is important. First, however, I would like to deal with the understanding we should derive from Matthew 28:19 in light of the theological significance of a name.

Jesus commanded His disciples to go and make disciples of all nations "baptizing them in the name of the Father, of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit" (Matthew 28:19). We understand Jesus' reference to a singular 'name' to be the name of Jesus Christ. I believe we are correct in maintaining this, seeing that the apostles themselves interpreted Jesus' command in this way. But what exactly did Jesus mean by this? Why didn't He just come out plainly and say that baptism was to be done in the name of Jesus Christ? It is often said that Jesus' purpose was to demonstrate that Jesus is the name of the Father, the name of the Son, and the name of the Holy Spirit. I think this is a wrongheaded approach for various reasons. I am persuaded that Jesus was trying to demonstrate that He encapsulates the various ways in which God manifests Himself to humanity (as Father, Son, and Holy Spirit). When we encounter Jesus Christ we encounter all of God. His deity is none other than that of the Father. He is the Son of God. And since the Holy Spirit is the way Scripture refers to God's one holy spirit performing special actions we can just as easily say that we encounter the Holy Spirit in the person of Jesus Christ.

Let me demonstrate what I mean when I say Jesus encapsulates our encounter with the Father and His Spirit. Jesus commonly spoke of His relationship with the Father as "I am in the Father, and the Father in me" (John 10:38; John 14:10-11; John 17:21). The deity of the Son is none other than that of Yahweh Himself, having come down in the form of a servant and in the likeness of men. This is why we find statements like "He that believes on me, believes not on me, but on him that sent me. And he that sees me sees him that sent me" (John 12:44-45), or "He that receives me receives him that sent me" (John 13:20). How is believing on Jesus tantamount to believing in the Father? Is it not possible to believe in Jesus, but not believe in the Father? Or how is it possible to have seen God when one has, in reality, only seen Jesus' physical body? Can't one accept Jesus without accepting the Father? According to Jesus the answer is no. Other similar

statements include, "I am the way, the truth, and the life: no man comes to the Father, but by me. If you had known me, you should have known my Father also" (John 14:6-7), and, "He that hates me hates my Father also" (John 15:23). Not only is Jesus the way to the Father, but the Father can only be known through the Son. It would seem to us that the Father could be known apart from the Son, but according to Jesus it is not possible. Probably one of the best examples is found in 2 John 1:9 where John said, "Whoever transgresses, and abides not in the doctrine of Christ, has not God. He that abides in the doctrine of Christ, he has both the Father and the Son." (See also 1 John 2:23-24). If you accept Christ's person you will have the Father and the Son.

All of these Scriptures relay one common truth: knowing the Father is bound up in knowing the Son. When we have Jesus Christ, we have the Father, Son, and Holy Ghost. The point of this is not to demonstrate that Jesus' name is the name of the "Father" and "Holy Spirit," although we know that Jesus' deity was that of the Father. What it does demonstrate is that all of the ways in which we encounter God are encapsulated and found in the person of Jesus Christ. This is why the name of Jesus is the name of Matthew 28:1-20, rather than God the Father, or Holy Spirit. In essence what Jesus was saying is, "Baptize them into my person, in my authority, for I, in myself, encapsulate the various ways in which you have come to know God's self-manifestation.

Jesus intended for us to baptize believers in His name. But what exactly does this mean? Why is it important that we baptize into any name? Is it a purposeless ritual? Is it a magical formula? I do not believe so. There is a theological reason why we are to baptize in "Jesus' name."

Baptism is no mere "outward sign of an inward work" as many Evangelicals are proclaiming today. Baptism performs a spiritual work in the believer. It is part of the new-birth experience (John 3:5; Titus 3:5). Romans six explains the spiritual work that is accomplished at baptism. Here Paul explained that in baptism, one is identified with Jesus Christ's death, burial, and resurrection. We die with Christ in baptism, and in such a capacity, we become dead to the ruling-power of sin in our lives

Paul anticipated from his previous emphasis on justification by faith apart from works that the Romans might believe they should keep sinning in order to receive more of God's grace (Romans 6:1). Paul countered such an idea on the basis of our identification with Christ's death, burial, and resurrection by means of the rite of baptism (Romans 6:2-4). At baptism we become unified with Christ, and in God's eyes experience death and resurrection with Christ (Romans 6:4-7). Paul's argument is that what Christ did for us at Calvary becomes effective in our lives by being identified with Christ through baptism. Death did not have mastery over Jesus, so neither will it conquer us. We too will rise from the dead (Romans 6:5-7). Having died with Christ, sin no longer controls us, but rather righteousness (Romans 6:6-7, Romans 6:10-11, Romans 6:14, Romans 6:17-20). If, after we have died to sin we yield to the ruling-power of sin it is because we choose to do so (Romans 6:16).

How does the above truth transpire in the life of the Christian? How do we identify with Christ in this capacity? According to Paul, it is by being baptized "into Christ," or "with Him," an obvious allusion to Jesus name baptism (Romans 6:3-4). The significance of being baptized "in Jesus' name" is that we are actually being baptized into the person of Jesus Christ, to receive the benefits of the redemption He accomplished for us. Saying, "In Jesus' name" is no magical formula, but it is symbolic of what is transpiring in the water as the believer exercises His faith in the spiritual work

that God is doing at baptism. As Paul said, "And [you] having been united with him [Jesus] in baptism, you also have been raised with him through your faith in the working of God, who raised him from the dead" (Colossians 2:12). Naming the name of Jesus over a baptismal recipient is like using the power of attorney. We are acting in another's stead. In this case, we are acting in, and identifying with the work of Jesus Christ at Calvary.

Some have used various Scriptures as proof-texts for Jesus' name baptism that, when interpreted according to the theological significance of a name, are found to express something quite different than proof for Jesus name baptism. One such verse is Colossians 3:17. Here Paul told us that whatever we do, we are to do so "in the name of the Lord Jesus." It is reasoned that since baptism is something we do, this is proof that baptism should be administered in Jesus' name. Paul did not have in mind for us to say, "in Jesus' name" in everything that we do or say. The meaning here is that we are to live our lives as to Jesus Christ Himself, acknowledging Him. What we do and say should be in accordance with His character, purpose, and will.

Another passage commonly cited as a proof that we are to baptize in Jesus' name is Acts 4:12 : "And there is salvation in no one else, for there is no other name under heaven given among men by which we must be saved." Others see in this verse that the spoken name of "Jesus" itself has the power to save us. What makes salvation effective is not the pronunciation of the Messiah's name, but faith in the Messiah. His name is not mystical. There is nothing about His name that has the ability to save in and of itself. The focus here is Christ's person, not His name per se. What Peter meant in Acts 4:12 is that there is no other person in whom men can find salvation other than Jesus Christ. When one is baptized in Jesus' name they take the name of Christ upon them in baptism, showing that He is their Lord and that they belong to Him. Paul made it clear that one is baptized in Jesus' name to show that they are a disciple of Jesus. This is witnessed in 1 Corinthians 1:12-15. Here Paul recounted that various believers were claiming to be followers of either Paul, Apollos, Peter, or Jesus. Paul, angered by the fact that the church would claim to be followers of men rather than of Christ asked if they were baptized into the name of Paul, or if Paul had been crucified for them. This rhetorical question would only make sense if we understand the name one is baptized into to indicate that this is the person the baptismal recipient follows as their teacher and master. Baptism is an identification with someone. Christian baptism is an identification with Christ, and with the victory over sin and death that He accomplished for us at Calvary. Being baptized in Jesus' name results in a spiritual work, not because Jesus' name is a magical formula, but because we are putting our faith in Him, being identified with Him in His death, burial, and resurrection, and allowing Him to become the owner of our temple of flesh.

Conclusion This brief study opens up a whole new world of meaning to the Bible. Passages we might have passed over before now come alive with insight. The concept of the name is so significant in the Bible, and yet this Eastern concept is so hard for us to grasp because our culture's view of a name is so much different. Let this new understanding shed light on the many passages we could not mention, bringing to the forefront of your minds an awareness of Biblical concepts that were heretofore untapped.

S. The Development of the Doctrine of the Trinity

The Development of the Doctrine of the Trinity by

Jason Dulle

Introduction

There has never been a doctrine so widely embraced as that of trinitarianism. The majority of Christendom accepts this doctrine as divine truth. Although the majority do embrace this doctrine nominally, there are a variety of ways in which it is understood. There are the opposite extremes of tritheism and the modern oneness belief, and then there is the orthodox belief as stated in the ancient creeds.

What is the relationship of YHWH, Jesus Christ, and the Holy Spirit? How are we to understand the Scriptural teaching of monotheism, and yet confess the divinity of the Father, Son, and Spirit? How are we to maintain monotheism, and still maintain the Scriptural distinctions spoken of as existing between the Father, Son, and Spirit? Our generation is not the first in its attempt to find a way to explain the Scriptural injunctions as stated above. The church has been attempting to understand the nature of the Godhead since its inception. How did the early church understand this? Where did the doctrine of the trinity come from? This paper will address these very questions. In the following I will attempt to demonstrate the progressive development of the trinitarian doctrine up to the Council of Constantinople in AD 381. This will be accomplished by examining the ways in which the Godhead was explained in the various generations leading up to the 381 council, as witnessed by the writings of the early theologians.

Post-Apostolic Age (AD 90-140)

There are not many extant documents from this period of time. We only possess an epistle from Clement of Rome, seven epistles of Ignatius of Antioch, one epistle by Polycarp of Smyrna, The Shepherd by Hermas, The Didache, and some pseudonymous writings. These writings are very important for our studies due to the proximity in time in which they were written in relation to the apostles. The men who penned these works were alive when some of the apostles were still ministering abroad. Their teachings are very likely to be closely allied to the common first-century understanding of the Godhead, as taught by the apostles. In the Epistle to the Corinthians, Clement of Rome confessed the deity of Jesus Christ, saying, "Our Lord Jesus Christ [is] the Sceptre of the majesty of God."¹ He did recognize a distinction between the Father and Son. He wrote, "Have we not (all) one God and one Christ? Is there not one Spirit of grace poured out upon us?"², an apparent allusion to Ephesians 4:6.

Ignatius' writings are somewhat difficult to decipher simply because of the many obvious interpolations to his texts by later copyists. It is believed that the original versions are found in a Syriac translation. Ignatius also confessed the deity of Christ in a profound manner. Jesus is none other than the eternal God made manifest in the flesh: "Look for Him who is above all time, eternal

and invisible, yet who became visible for our sakes; impalpable and impassible, yet who became passible on our account; and who in every kind of way suffered for our sakes."³ Not only was Jesus said to have been the preexistent God, but He is also said to have suffered for us: "The passion of my God."⁴

Polycarp was in possession of Ignatius' writings, and endorsed his theology. ⁵ It is to be expected, therefore, that Polycarp's theology would resemble that of Ignatius. The only statement Polycarp made that would lend itself to the trinitarianism states, "The God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, and Jesus Christ Himself, who is the Son of God, and our everlasting High Priest, build you up in faith and truth."⁶ Some see in this statement an incipient trinitarianism, but it does not advocate modern trinitarianism. Polycarp merely asserted that which the Scriptures assert, i. e. a distinction between the Father and Son. His statement was quite Scriptural, and did not reflect later theological developments. The author of *The Shepherd* was a man named Hermas who resided in Rome. He was not a bishop, and did not hold an official office in the church, but *His Shepherd* became very popular among Christendom. Hermas made a statement that seems to imply the preexistence of the Son as a separate person from the Father, saying, "The Son of God is older than all His creatures, so that He was a fellow-councillor with the Father in His work of creation."⁷ However, he may have simply meant that the Son existed as the plan or wisdom of God before the incarnation, and not as a separate person.

Hermas viewed the Holy Spirit to be the manifested Son of God: "The holy, pre-existent Spirit, that created every creature, God made to dwell in flesh, which He chose. The flesh, accordingly, in which the Holy Spirit dwelt, was nobly subject to that Spirit, ... and after labouring and co-operating with the Spirit, and having in everything acted vigorously along with the Holy Spirit, He assumed it as a partner with it. ⁸ In another place he said, "I wish to explain to you what the Holy Spirit ... showed you, for that Spirit is the Son of God."⁹ The Post-Apostolic Fathers maintained that there was one God, and that Jesus Christ was God. They did distinguish between the Father and Son, using language much like that of the NT. The Spirit did not receive much attention, but when He did, He was spoken of as being God's Spirit, revealed to humanity through the person of Jesus Christ. There is no distinctively trinitarian language or concepts conveyed in the writings at this point in time. In fact, some teachings, such as equating the Holy Spirit with the Son, are not consistent with the doctrine of the trinity.

Greek Apologists (AD 130-180) This age is so called because it was characterized by Greek teachers/philosophers who wrote literary works to be read by pagans, in order to defend and explain the Christian faith to unbelievers. It was an attempt to demonstrate that Christianity was good philosophy, so that it would be accepted by the pagan contemporaries. The primary author of this time period was Justin Martyr, whose works were numerous. Other important writers from this period include Marcianus Aristides, the anonymous author to the *Epistle to Diognetus*, Tatian, and Melito.

It was during this period that the doctrine of the Logos was propagated and developed. The idea of the Logos was already popular in the Hellenistic culture and philosophy. The apologists adopted this philosophy, tailoring it where necessary, in order to make the gospel acceptable to the general population, who saw Christianity as foolishness. To the Greeks, the Logos was reason as the controlling principle of the universe. It was impersonal, existing in the realm of ideas. It was this

realm that was an intermediary between The Ineffable One and physical reality. Edward Hardy explained how the apologists, and Justin in particular, took the Hellenistic Logos doctrine and incorporated it into Christian theology: The idea of God's Logos could be found in a variety of sources. It was floating in the air of popular Greek philosophy and Hellenistic Judaism. . . . Justin's use of it is partly Biblical and partly apologetic. The Logos being divine, and yet not the Father himself, accounts both for the divinity which Christians have found in Jesus, and by retrospect for the divine appearances in the Old Testament. 10.

Justin Martyr was the first prolific writer to clearly teach a plurality within the Godhead. He even numbered them, saying, "We reasonably worship [Jesus Christ], having learned that He is the Son of the true God Himself, and holding Him in the second place, and the prophetic Spirit in the third."¹¹ Again he said, "There is ... another God and Lord subject to the Maker of all things; who is also called an Angel, because He announces to men whatsoever the Maker of all things-above whom there is no other God-wishes to announce to them. ... He who is said to have appeared to Abraham, and to Jacob, and to Moses, and who is called God, is distinct from Him who made all things-numerically, I mean, not (distinct) in will."¹² The Logos was the second person next to the Father, and was subordinate to the Father. In fact, he was the first creation of God: "The Word ... is the first-birth of God."¹³ The Spirit is not mentioned much, but when He is, He seems to be equated with the Logos. There is no clear theology of the Spirit. Justin's primary focus was on Jesus' relationship to the Father. His perspective seems to be that of binitarianism or ditheism. The Logos was second to the Father in time and sequence, and in authority, but not in will. Justin's teachings closely resemble that of Arianism which was to flourish a century later.

Justin's disciple, Tatian, made it clear that the Logos was not equal to the Father, but was His first creation. He existed in God, but emanated forth from Him before the creation of the world, and eventually became revealed physically in the person of Christ: "God was in the beginning; but the beginning...is the power of the Logos. ... With Him, by Logos-power, the Logos Himself also, who was in Him, subsists. And by His simple will the Logos springs forth; and the Logos, not coming forth in vain, becomes the first-begotten work of the Father. ... The Logos, begotten in the beginning, begat in turn our world."¹⁴ This was in essence, the very heart of the Arian heresy that evolved later.

Athenagoras thought of God in some sort of a triad.. He wrote, "[Christians desire] this one thing alone, that they know God and His Logos, what is the oneness of the Son with the Father, what is the communion of the Father with the Son, what is the Spirit, what is the unity of these three, the Spirit, the Son, Father, and their distinction in unity."¹⁵ The Apologists' doctrine was anything but orthodox trinitarianism. The Biblical doctrine of the Logos was explained in terms of Greek philosophical thought rather than that of Scripture, which lead to a false understanding of Christ and His relationship to the Father. The Son was seen to be divine reason, which existed in the mind of God without personal existence, until He emanated from God as the first creation of the Father, for the specific purpose of creation. 16 It was at that point that the Son had personal divine existence which was distinct from the Father's, albeit dependent upon the Father. 17 Tatian compared this to our thoughts, and the utterance of those thoughts. We can have a thought, but it does not have an existence until it is spoken. Likewise, the Son was in the mind of God as His Wisdom and Reason, but was birthed from God at the beginning of God's creation. The Apologists' spoke of a Jesus Who was ontologically subordinate to the Father. They did not

believe that the Father and Son were coeternal, consubstantial, and coequal. As in the days of the Post-Apostolic Father, not much attention is given to the Holy Spirit. "Some passages seemingly identify the Holy Spirit with the Father, with the Logos, or as an impersonal force. When the Spirit is clearly differentiated from the Father and the Logos, He is a divine being of even lesser rank than the Logos, perhaps similar to an angel."¹⁸ For this reason, it seems best to view the Apologists' view of God as that of a triad, rather than a trinity.

What was the reason for such misunderstandings? "...The scriptural distinction between God and His Son, which related to the incarnation, was wrongly imputed to the divine nature of God Himself."¹⁹ The term "Son" was seen to indicate a deity distinct from that of the Father, a lower emanation, instead of God's revelation to man in human form.

Old Catholic Age (AD 170-325) This period enjoyed the greatest amount of theological growth. Much of the terminology and theological concepts of this period were adopted at the Nicene and Constantinopolitan Councils, being used to define orthodox trinitarianism. This growth was spawned on by theologians such as Irenaeus, Tertullian, Clement of Alexandria, Origen, and Cyprian.

Irenaeus, in *Against Heresies* (182-188), seemed to affirm a pre-existent Son when he said the faith of the church was belief "in one God, the Father Almighty, Maker of heaven, and earth, ... and in one Christ Jesus, the Son of God, who became incarnate for our salvation; and in the Holy Spirit..."²⁰. In contrast to the Apologists who taught that the Logos was created in time, Irenaeus taught that the He "coexisted"²¹ with the Father and was "eternal."²² Irenaeus did, however, make the same blunder as Justin in not distinguishing the terms "Son of God" and "Logos" as it relates to the incarnation. The Logos was God's visible manifestation, and self-revelation even before the incarnation. ²³. The Holy Spirit was equated with the Father (5:6:1), or God's Wisdom as spoken of in the OT. This was in contrast with the Apologists who equated Wisdom with the Logos. The Father, Son, and Holy Ghost are seen as having three separate activities, or aspects to accomplishing one goal, but each aspect is carried out by a different member of the triune God: "the Father planning everything well and giving His commands, the Son carrying these into execution and performing the work of creating, and the Spirit nourishing and increasing (what is made)."²⁴.

Tertullian (150-225) was the first to speak of God as a trinity, and as three persons in one substance. God is "the 'Trinity,' which consists of 'three persons.... (2)' God is 'one only substance in three coherent and inseparable (Persons)' (12). ... The Father and the Son are 'two separate Persons; (4), 'two different Beings' (4), and 'distinct but not separate' (11). The Son is 'another' from the Father 'on the ground of Personality, not of Substance-in the way of distinction, not of division' (12)."²⁵.

Tertullian was so insistent on the distinction between the persons that he even ranked them according to order, saying, "...how comes it to pass that God should be thought to suffer division and severance in the Son and in the Holy Ghost, who have the second and the third places assigned to them, and who are so closely joined with the Father in His substance...."²⁶ When "Father" was used alongside of "Son," Tertullian would only call the former "God," while the latter would be called "Lord." Only when the Son was spoken of separately could He be referred to as "God."²⁷.

He spoke of the three Persons as parts of the whole Godhead: "The Father is the entire substance, but the Son is a derivation and portion of the whole. ... The Father is...greater than the Son."28 The Son of God is "a portion of the whole Godhead."29.

Although he continually denied that the three Persons are separate, he consistently spoke of them in such a manner, and even called them separate: "Now, from this one passage of the epistle [1 Corinthians 15:27-28] of the inspired apostle, we have been already able to show that the Father and the Son are two separate Persons, not only by the mention of their separate names as Father and the Son, but also by the fact that He who delivered up the kingdom, and He to whom it is delivered up---...---must necessarily be two different Beings."30 He even declared that they are unified in substance, but not in number: "Thus the connection of the Father in the Son, and of the Son in the Paraclete, produces three coherent Persons, who are yet distinct One from Another. These Three are, one essence, not one Person, as it is said, 'I and my Father are One,' in respect of unity of substance not singularity of number."31. His subordinationistic terminology when speaking of the Godhead can not be ignored. The Son is clearly subject to the Father, and the Holy Ghost is subject to the Son:

Now the Spirit indeed is third from God and the Son; just as the fruit of the tree is third from the root, or as the stream out of the river is third from the fountain, or as the apex of the ray is third from the sun. Nothing, however, is alien from that original source whence it derives its own properties. In like manner the Trinity, flowing down from the Father through intertwined and connected steps, does not at all disturb the Monarchy, [13] whilst it at the same time guards the state of the Economy.

Now if He too is God, according to John, (who says.) "The Word was God," then you have two Beings--One that commands that the thing be made, and the Other that executes the order and creates. ... I have already explained, on the ground of Personality, not of Substance--in the way of distinction, not of division. But although I must everywhere hold one only substance in three coherent and inseparable (Persons), yet I am bound to acknowledge, from the necessity of the case, that He who issues a command is different from Him who executes it. For, indeed, He would not be issuing a command if He were all the while doing the work Himself, while ordering it to be done by the second. But still He did issue the command, although He would not have intended to command Himself if He were only one; or else He must have worked without any command, because He would not have waited to command Himself. 32. In regards to the Spirit, Tertullian seemed to connect Him with the Logos:

Now, by saying "the Spirit of God" ... and by not directly naming God, he wished that portion of the whole Godhead to be understood, which was about to retire into the designation of "the Son." The Spirit of God in this passage [Luke 1:35] must be the same as the Word. For just as, when John says, "The Word was made flesh," we understand the Spirit also in the mention of the Word: so here, too, we acknowledge the Word likewise in the name of the Spirit. For both the Spirit is the substance of the Word, and the Word is the operation of the Spirit, and the Two are One (and the same). 33.

He also explained the Holy Spirit as "proceed[ing] from no other source than from the Father through the Son. 34.

Origen (185-254) was the greatest contributor to the development of the trinitarian doctrine in the Eastern church, as Tertullian was in the Western Church. He was the first to teach "an eternal trinity of persons."³⁵ The Son was not only eternal, but was eternally begotten by the Father. ³⁶ Although He spoke of equality in the trinity saying, "Nothing in the Trinity can be called greater or less,"³⁷ He also said that God the Word is a separate being and has an essence of His own."³⁸ Only the Father is o[geoj (the God), while the Son is only geoj (God). This is made very clear when Origen said, The Father is the one true God, but...other beings besides the true God...have become gods by having a share of God.... The Father is the fountain of divinity, the Son of reason.... There was God with the article and God without the article, then there were gods in two orders, at the summit of the higher order of whom is God the Word, transcended Himself by the God of the universe. And, again, there was the Logos without the article, corresponding to God absolutely and a god; and the Logos in two ranks. ³⁹.

He concluded that there are three hypostases [persons], the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit; and at the same time we believe nothing to be uncreated by the Father.... The Holy Spirit is the most excellent and the first in order of all that was made by the Father through Christ.... The Holy Spirit seems to have need of the Son, to minister to Him His essence, so as to enable Him not only to exist, but to be wise and reasonable and just. ⁴⁰. This terminology presents a skewed view of that which would later become the orthodox view of the trinity. Instead of complete equality between the three Persons, there is a codependency and order of rank. The Logos and the Spirit are creations of God, and can not be spoken of as being The God, but only God. In fact, Origen called Jesus a "second God"

⁴¹ and said that He was "inferior" to the Father: "For we who say that the visible world is under the government of Him who created all things, do thereby declare that the Son is not mightier than the Father, but inferior to him."⁴². The major contributions to the theology of the trinity from this time were the ideas of one God in three persons, the coinage of the word "trinity," and the idea of personalities in the Godhead, coming from Tertullian; the eternal generation of the Son, coming from Origen.. Both men saw the Logos and the Spirit as being subordinate to the Father ontologically, and not functionally as it pertained to the incarnation. The doctrine of coequality, although spoken of by Origen, was limited to the Son and the Father. The Spirit was the first creation of the Father through the Son. Up to this point, we still do not have a definitive doctrine of the coequality, or coeternal nature of the three Persons. Instead we have very tritheistic language being used to explain the relationship between the one God and the three Persons of which He consists. What was agreed upon was that the Persons of the trinity were consubstantial.

Arianism and the Road to the Council of Nicea In AD 318 in Alexandria, Egypt, a conflict broke out between a certain presbyter named Arius, and the bishop of Alexandria, Alexander. Arius taught that the Logos was created out of nothing before the beginning of the world, and therefore was not of the same substance of the Father. In fact, He was the first creation of God. Jesus was a demigod of the Father. Both groups agreed that the Son preexisted the incarnation. The central issue was the eternity of the Son of God. Alexander claimed that the Son was coeternal with the Father, but the rallying cry of the Arians was that "there was a time when He was not." In AD 321, Alexander held a local synod which condemned Arius' teachings and excommunicated him and his friends. In turn Arius petitioned support from other bishops to help him in his cause. He gained the support of Eusebius of Nicomedia and a few others. Together they continued to spread the

Arian doctrine, and continued to cause dissension among the churches. This dissension reached the ears of Constantine, who had just become the sole emperor of the Roman Empire in AD 324, after having defeated Licinius in the East. Constantine, who was the first emperor to embrace Christianity, was interested in settling this theological dispute, probably to ensure the unity of the empire. In response, he sent his advisor, Hosius of Cordova, to Alexandria to settle the dispute. When it was apparent that the issue could not be easily solved, Constantine called for a council of all the bishops to meet in Nicea (modern day Isnik, Turkey), twenty miles north of Nicomedia, in Bithynia. In AD 325, approximately 300 bishops from various cities journeyed to Nicea at the expense of the emperor. This was only about 1/6 of the total number of bishops in Christendom. Each bishop brought others with him, so the total number present was probably upwards of 1500 to 2000 people. 43 The majority of these bishops were from the Eastern, Greek-speaking part of the empire. The Council lasted approximately six weeks.

There were three major groups of individuals represented at the council. There were a small minority who were convinced of the Arian doctrine. Eusebius of Nicomedia was the spokesman for this view, rather than Arius. This was because Arius, being only a presbyter, could not sit in on the council. There were also another small minority of bishops who believed Arianism threatened the core of the Christian message, i. e. the full deity of Jesus Christ. The majority of those present, however, were convinced of neither view. Eusebius of Nicomedia presented his case before the council, reading a speech he had prepared. He believed this would be all that was necessary to convince the majority of he and Arius' views, and thus become the champion of orthodoxy over Alexander. He was gravely mistaken. When the bishops present heard him portray the Son as a creature of God, they angrily began shouting "You lie! Blasphemy! Heresy!" Eusebius' voice was quickly drowned out, and his speech was rent from his hands and torn to shreds, then to be trampled underfoot. 44 The mood of the undecided majority had now shifted against Arius' views, and towards those of Alexander.

Convinced that they needed to definitively reject Arianism, the council sought the terms to define its faith. The Scripture alone was not adequate, because both Arians and those who confessed that Jesus was coeternal with the Father, used various proof-texts to no avail. A statement of faith was deemed necessary.

Eusebius of Caesarea, the first church historian, suggested a compromise creed which he used for the church in his city which said that Jesus is "the Word of God, God of God, ... the first-born of all creatures, begotten of the Father before all time."45 Most of the bishops were satisfied with this. Even the Arians agreed to adopt it. It was Alexander's party who strongly opposed it because it did not resolve the issue. Prompted by Hosius, Constantine suggested the inclusion of homoousios to the statement, meaning "of the same substance."46 To this the Arians strongly reacted, and those who followed Origen's teachings, it seemed too much like modalism, which taught that Jesus' deity was actually the Father Himself. They proposed that homoiousios be used, meaning "of similar substance." Through Alexander's eloquence his views prevailed. The Creed that was presented in its final form reads:

We believe in one God, the Father Almighty, Maker of all things visible and invisible. And in one Lord Jesus Christ, the Son of God, begotten of the Father, the only begotten; that is, of the essence of the Father, God of God, Light of Light, very God of very God, begotten, not made,

being of one substance [homoousios] with the Father; by whom all things were made both in heaven and on earth; who for us men, and for our salvation, came down and was incarnate and was made man; he suffered, and the third day he rose again, ascended into heaven; from thence he shall come to judge the quick and the dead. And in the Holy Ghost. But those who say: "There was a time when he was not"; and "He was not before he was made"; and "He was made out of nothing," or "He is of another substance" or "essence," or "The Son of God is created," or "changeable," or "alterable"-they are condemned by the holy catholic and apostolic church.

"Of the essence of the Father" and "of one substance with the Father" clearly refuted any idea that the Logos was less than full deity. "Begotten, not made" clearly refuted the Arian denial of the coeternal existence of the Logos with the Father. The final paragraph, also known as the condemnatory clause, condemned the various ways in which Arius' teachings were spoken of. In the end, only two bishops would not sign the statement of faith, and Eusebius of Nicomedia refused to sign the condemnatory clause. As a result, they were banished by the emperor, along with Arius. The council's contribution to the development of the trinitarian doctrine is very important. It firmly rejected the idea that the Logos was created and non-eternal with the Father, and established that the Logos was of the same substance with the Father. This latter affirmation, however, caused division once again in the ensuing years. Even at the council many bishops were hesitant about the inclusion of homoousios because of it lent itself to modalism. The council's decision can not be referred to as trinitarian, however, since it did not deal with the Holy Spirit. There is only one sentence in the creed regarding Him, but it only affirmed that they believed in the Holy Ghost. The issue at this council was the relationship of the Logos to the Father, not to the Father and to the Holy Ghost. This issue would be taken up at the next ecumenical council.

After Nicea: The Road to Constantinople

After the Council of Nicea adjourned, the bishops went back to their respective churches and many continued to teach the way they had before the Nicene Creed was adopted. The wording of the creed allowed the bishops to interpret it in various ways.

Arianism, although defeated by creed and imperial decree, quickly arose again and soon became the dominant view in the East. In three short years, Eusebius of Nicomedia (who was related to Constantine in some manner) managed to gain a hearing before the court of Constantine to present his views once again. Constantine was sympathetic to Eusebius this time, and allowed Arius and the deposed bishops to return in AD 328. Eusebius of Nicomedia played a crucial role in the rest of Constantine's reign. He even baptized Constantine on his deathbed in AD 337. Two years after Constantine's death, Eusebius was made bishop of Constantinople upon the death of the former bishop.

Alexander died in AD 328, who was succeeded by Athanasius, a die-hard defender of the Nicene position. He became the champion of trinitarian orthodoxy. The political milieu that developed between the Council of Nicea in AD 325 and the Council of Constantinople in AD 381 had much to do with the development, and acceptance of trinitarian orthodoxy. Constantine had embraced Arianism after the Council of Nicea. After his death, his son Constantius II, who ruled in the East while Constans and Constantine II ruled all of the West, continued on with his support of Arianism. He became very pro-active for Arianism and against the Nicenes in AD 353, just three years after becoming sole emperor of the empire. Constantius II continued as emperor until his death in AD

361. Arianism enjoyed a time of flourishing from AD 328-379. Many bishops signed Arian Creeds of confession, including Hosius of Cordova.

While Arianism dominated the theology of the empire because of the emperors' acceptance and approval, Athanasius and a few others continued to fight for the Nicene position.. Athanasius was deposed from his bishopric in Alexandria no less than five times, but he continued the theological struggle even in exile.

Athanasius was aware of the hesitancy of many to accept the homoousios terminology because it lent itself toward modalism, so he came to accept the use of the term homoiousios, meaning "of similar substance," to speak of the relationship of the Son to the Father. This was a very important step, since he had previously argued that the use of homoiousios was just as heretical as Arianism. 47. In AD 362, at a local synod in Alexandria, Athanasius declared that it was acceptable to refer to the Father, Son, and Holy Ghost as "one substance" as long as this was not understood to mean an obliteration of distinction between the three persons, and it was acceptable to speak of the Father, Son, and Holy Ghost as "three substances" as long as this was not understood to separate the three as three individual gods. 48.

Athanasius died in AD 373, just eight years before his basic views would be adopted as orthodoxy at Constantinople. He did not live to see his victory, but his work was carried on by the Great Cappadocians: Basil of Caesarea, Gregory of Nyssa, and Gregory of Nazianzus. They refined some of the terminology of the Nicene Creed, and that of Athanasius, to make it more acceptable. It is their work that is reflected in the synthesis of the modern trinitarian doctrine. Their main contribution was in their use of ousia and hupostasis. At Nicea, these terms were used synonymously, but the Cappadocians distinguished between them as Tertullian had over 150 years before. They said that the Godhead existed as one ousia, but in three individual hupostasis. In Latin it was termed one subsantia and three personae. They did allow the Greek word prosopon to be used in place of hupostasis, but did not prefer it because "it originally meant face, countenance, or mask, and Sabellius had used it to mean manifestation or role."49.

While Athanasius was alive he argued against distinguishing between ousia and hupostasis, because Nicea did not distinguish them. He did not like to say "three hupostasis because it made too great of a distinction between the persons. He did not like the term prosopon because it made too little of a distinction. 50 At the AD 362 synod, however, he did accept "three hupostasis" as orthodox language, although he still advocated for the older Nicene language.

Although "three hupostasis" was acceptable to many, many others viewed this as tritheism. Hebrews 1:3 was cited which taught that Jesus was the express image of God's hupostasis, and not of a second hupostasis. Athanasius contributed to this misunderstanding by saying that all men have the same substance, just as the Father, Son, and Holy Ghost have the same substance. The Cappadocians elaborated upon this by comparing the trinity to three men. Just as Peter, James, and John were homoousios with one another, yet three persons, so the Father, Son, and Holy Ghost were homoousios with one another, yet three Persons Who had the same divine nature. 51. To deal with this misunderstanding, Gregory of Nyssa admitted that the language employed was a customary abuse of language. He said that unlike three men, each member of the trinity participates in the other's work: "Every operation which extends from God to the Creation ... has its origin from the Father, and proceeds through the Son, and is perfected in the Holy

Ghost."⁵² The Cappadocians continued to use the subordinationistic language of the third-century when speaking of the Son and Spirit. Basil taught that we are "to perceive three, the Lord who gives the order, the Word who creates, and the Spirit who confirms," and "the natural Goodness and the inherent Holiness and the royal Dignity extend from the Father through the Only-begotten to the Spirit."⁵³ Gregory of Nyssa said, "Grace flows down in an unbroken stream from the Father, through the Son and the Spirit, upon the persons worthy of it."⁵⁴ Gregory of Nazianzus even declared, "I should not like to call the Father the greater, because from him flows both the Equality and the Being of the Equals (this will be granted on all hands), but I am afraid to us the word Origin, lest I should make Him the Origin of Inferiors.... The word Greater...does not apply to the Nature, but only to Originator."⁵⁵ In summary, the Three Cappadocians taught that The one God-head subsists in three coequal, coeternal, coessential persons, and this truth is an incomprehensible mystery. There is communion of substance but distinction of personhood. This trinity is a perfect, inseparable, indivisible union, and the persons work together in all things. The unique distinguishing characteristics of the persons are as follows: the Father is unbegotten, the Son is begotten (generated), and the Holy Spirit is proceeding (spirated). The generation of the Son and the procession of the Holy Spirit are mysteries, however. While the persons are coequal and coeternal, the Father is in some sense the head and the origin. ⁵⁶ The Council of Constantinople In AD 379, Theodosius I became ruler of the Roman Empire. He was a staunch supporter of the Nicene doctrine. It was under his direction the second ecumenical council was called in AD 381 to meet in Constantinople. There were only about 150 bishops present, and none of these were from the West. Gregory of Nyssa and Gregory of Nazianzus were the primary spokesman, Basil of Caesarea having died a few months before. The creed which the council adopted stated:

We believe in one God, the Father, the Almighty, of all that is, seen and unseen. We believe in one Lord, Jesus Christ, the only Son of God, eternally begotten of the Father, God from God, Light from Light, true God from true God, begotten, not made, of one Being with the Father. Through him all things were made. For us and for our salvation he came down from heaven: by the power of the Holy Spirit he became incarnate from the Virgin Mary, and was made man. For our sake he was crucified under Pontius Pilate; he suffered death and was buried. On the third day he rose again in accordance with the Scriptures; he ascended into heaven and is seated at the right hand of the Father. He will come again in glory to judge the living and the dead, and his kingdom will have no end. We believe in the Holy Spirit, the Lord, the giver of life, who proceeds from the Father [and the Son]. ⁵⁷ With the Father and the Son he is worshipped and glorified. He has spoken through the Prophets. We believe in one holy catholic and apostolic Church. We acknowledge one baptism for the forgiveness of sins. We look for the resurrection of the dead, and the life of the world to come. Amen. This council, rather than Nicea, is where the first definitive, orthodox, universal creedal statement was made which discussed the relationship of the Father, Son, and Spirit. Nicea's primary concern was the relationship of Jesus to the Father, but Constantinople added to its creed the full, coequal, coeternal, consubstantial deity of the Holy Spirit. For this reason it is regarded as the first, truly trinitarian creed. The council is important for two other reasons. First, it was the final theological blow to Arianism, although it would not be until the sixth century that it would finally be stamped out. Secondly, Apollinarianism was defeated, which taught that Jesus had an incomplete human nature.

Conclusion The Bible is content to speak of the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit as being God, without explaining how it is so. The doctrine of the trinity was the attempt to defend three Biblical teachings all at the same time: monotheism; the divinity of the Father, Son, and Spirit; and the Scriptural distinctions between the Father, Son, and Spirit. The doctrine developed slowly over a period of over 200 years, and continued to be refined in the way it was explained for hundreds of years after. Its development began by an attempt to understand the nature of God in terms of Greek philosophical concepts, i. e. the idea that God is impassable and immutable. Since God could not suffer or change, the Son of God was declared to be an emanation from the Father, His first creation by which all else was created. Though He was divine, the Logos sprang forth from the Father, became incarnate, suffered, died, was buried, and rose again. Slowly the ideas of coeternality and coequality were adopted between the Father and the Son, and eventually the Holy Spirit was added to this understanding. The final result was the belief in One God who exists in three distinct essences (Persons). The Father is unbegotten; the Son is begotten; and the Spirit is proceeding. Each Person in the trinity has a certain function in the divine Economy, although Each Person participates in the work of the other two. The Father is seen in creation, the Son in redemption, and the Spirit in sanctification. These three are coeternal, coequal, and consubstantial. The trinity is an indivisible unity, the Persons being distinct, yet not separate.

Relevance to the Modern Believer The nature and being of God is the most incomprehensible idea known to man. How are we to think of that which has no beginning, which is omnipotent, omniscient, omnipresent, and eternal? Though the concepts can be known by the mind, they can not be fully comprehended. We have no experience in this world with which these elements can be seen or grasped. With such an idea as that of God, it must be confessed that there is no one who can adequately explain His nature and being. Every man, though he contemplates it and seeks to discover it, will always come short and develop deficiencies in his theology. Understanding this, we need to watch ourselves lest we elevate a certain creedal statement, a certain author's explanation, or our own understanding of God to the place of untouchable orthodoxy. Just as the doctrine of the trinity developed over time, and the individual's theologies (who were crucial in its development) developed over time, so too our understanding of God develops over time. The creeds of Nicea and Constantinople, though they may be beneficial to the Christian, are not the final word on the nature of the Godhead. The development of the trinity was in steps. Some of the ideas that were purported by earlier theologians were later condemned as heresy, even though they were the basis for later developments which were accepted as orthodoxy. Frank Stagg spoke of the deficiencies in the development of the trinitarian doctrine when he said, "But what began as insistence upon tri-unity eventually became an emphasis upon the threeness and increasing jeopardy to the belief in oneness. ... To the term trinity were soon added the terms "persons," "three persons," "three persons of the Godhead," and even the ranking of the persons as first, second, and third. Thus trinitarianism was fast on the way to tritheism, a de facto belief in three distinct gods.. This the New Testament never anticipated and does not support."⁵⁸.

Since the development of the trinity was in stages, and those who advanced the doctrine had deficiencies in their theology, I must believe that even the councils and their definitive creeds did not bring an end to the pursuit of understanding God, nor an end to theological deficiencies. Although we may build from the early pioneers of the faith, we must seek to perfect it. I believe it is the duty of the modern believer to re-examine his beliefs about God to be sure they are Biblically

based. There is no creed or tradition as important as truth, and no truth as important as God. The modern church must seek to perfect its understanding of God. This may indeed necessitate the re-examining of the doctrine of the trinity as it has developed over the centuries. There are today, many trinitarian authors who are, in fact, attempting a fresh explanation of trinitarianism that seeks to rid the reader of subordinationistic and tritheistic conceptions of God that conventional trinitarianism has brought about in the minds of various individuals. As did the early church, the modern church must continue to seek out a manner in which to understand and explain the Biblical teaching of monotheism, the Biblical language that puts distinctions between the Father, Son, and Spirit, and the Biblical teaching of the divinity of the Father, Son, and Spirit. Are we to understand how three Beings are yet one God, or are we to understand how One being can be spoken of in three different ways? Which emphasis are we to have? The answer to this question will determine our understanding of God, and our relationship to that God, which is the ultimate purpose for all of mankind. May God be with us in the pursuit of this grand and glorious purpose!

Footnotes 1. Clement of Rome, Epistle to the Corinthians 16.

2. Ibid., 46.

3. Ignatius, Epistle to Polycarp 3.

4. Ignatius, Epistle to the Romans. 6.

5. David K. Bernard, Oneness and Trinity A. D. 100-300: The Doctrine of God in Ancient Christian Writings (Hazelwood, MO: Word Aflame Press 1991), 38.

6. Polycarp, Epistle to the Philippians 12.

7. Hermas The Shepherd, Similitude 9:12.

8. Ibid., 5:6.

9. Ibid., 9:1.

10. Cyril Richardson et al., trans. and ed., Early Christian Fathers (New York: Macmillan 1970), 233.

11. Justin, First Apology 65.

12. Justin, Second Apology 56.

13. Justin, First Apology 21.

14. Tatian, Address to the Greeks 5.

15. Athenagoras, Plea for the Christians 12.

16. Berkhoff, The History of Christian Doctrines (Grand Rapids: Baker 1937), 58, as found in David K. Bernard, Oneness and Trinity A. D. 100-300 (Hazelwood, MO: Word Aflame Press 1991), 87.

17. Bernard 86.

18. Bernard 88-89.

19. Bernard 175.
20. Irenaeus, Against Heresies 1:10:1.
21. Ibid., 2:25:3.
22. Ibid., 2:13:8.
23. Bernard 100.24. Irenaeus 4:38:3.
25. Tertullian, Against Praxeas 2, 12, 4, 11, 12, quoted in David K. Bernard, Oneness and Trinity A. D. 100-300 (Hazelwood, MO: Word Aflame Press 1991), 107.
26. Tertullian, Against Praxeas 3.
27. Ibid., 13.
28. Ibid., 9.
29. Ibid., 26.
30. Ibid., 4.
31. Ibid., 25.
32. Ibid., 8.
33. Ibid., 26.
34. Ibid., 4.
35. Bernard 112.
36. Origen, On the Principles 1:3:4.
37. Ibid., 1:3:7.
38. Origen, Commentary on John 1:23.
39. Ibid., 2:3.
40. Ibid., 2:6.
41. Origen, Against Celsus 5:39.
42. Ibid., 8:15 .
43. David K. Bernard, The Trinitarian Controversy in the Fourth Century (Hazelwood, MO: Word Aflame Press 1993), 15.
44. Justo Gonzalez, The Story of Christianity. Volume 1: The Early Church to the Dawn of the Reformation (New York: Harper Collins Publishers 1984), 164.
45. Bernard, The Trinitarian Controversy in the Fourth Century, quoting from The Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers 2d ser. (Reprint, Grand Rapids: Eerdmans 1976), 4:74; 14:3.

46. Homoousios comes from homo meaning "the same," and ousia meaning "substance."
47. Gonzalez 179.
48. Ibid.
49. Bernard, The Trinitarian Controversy in the Fourth Century 40.
50. Ibid.
51. See Basil, Letters 38; 8:137.
52. Gregory of Nyssa, On "Not Three Gods," 4:84.
53. Basil, On the Spirit 16:38, 47.
54. Gregory of Nyssa, On the Holy Spirit 5:323.
55. Gregory of Nazianzus, Oration on Holy Baptism 7:375-76.
56. Bernard, The Trinitarian Controversy in the Fourth Century 45.
57. The phrase "and of the Son" (called the filioque) was not part of the original creed, but was an addition by the Western church at the Synod of Toledo in 589. This addition came to be fully accepted by the Roman Catholic church, but has always been denied by the Eastern Orthodox church. While the filioque is not part of the original creed I have inserted it in brackets because it is the most widely form of the creed espoused by Trinitarians at large today.
58. Frank Stagg, The Holy Spirit Today (Nashville: Broadman Press, n. c.), 14-15.

S. The Dual Nature of Christ

The Dual Nature of Christ by

Jason Dulle

The Problem

Believers and unbelievers alike have speculated over the identity of Christ for the past two millennia. Jesus asked Peter who men said that He was. Peter's reply evidenced the confusion of Jesus' identity among the populace. Finally Jesus asked Peter who he thought He was. Peter replied, "You are the Christ, the Son of the living God (Matthew 16:13-16). Jesus' question still rings in our ears today as we consider the man from Galilee who has changed the course of human history. Who was this Jesus? Was Jesus divine? Was Jesus human? Was He both? If Jesus is both divine and human, how do we understand these two natures to function together? Is there a metaphysical union (ontological) between Christ's humanity and deity, or is the union one of function only (behavioral)? Is a metaphysical union logically absurd? These are just a few of the many problems that have surfaced through the centuries by those examining the person of Christ. These questions and others will be examined in this paper. We are not stopping at mere faith in Jesus for salvation, but we are seeking understanding to the nature of His being.

Alternative Interpretations in the Church

There are three strands of historical understandings of Christ. The first category consists of those who deny Christ's genuine deity. The second denies Christ's genuine humanity. The third category consists of those who confess Jesus' genuine deity and humanity.

Deny Genuine Deity

Ebionism The Ebionites were a very early Jewish sect who maintained that the Logos was not preexistent. Jesus was a mere man who perfectly kept the Law of Moses. He was the Messiah, but in no sense was He divine. He was born to Joseph and Mary in a normal fashion, but had the Spirit of God descend on Him in a special way at His baptism in reward of His perfect obedience to the Mosaic Law. Jesus was not born divine, but was adopted into divinity, though not the divinity of the Father.

Dynamic Monarchianism

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

the humanity of Christ progressively, resulting in eventual deification.¹ The founder of this view was Theodotus of Byzantium. Its most famous proponent, however, was Paul of Samosota. This teaching is akin to Ebionism.

Deny Genuine Humanity

Docetism This group of Christians took their name from the Greek word dokew meaning "to seem, appear." They maintained that Jesus was divine, but not human. He only "appeared" to be a genuine human being. His sufferings and death were mere illusions. There was no substance to his humanity, nor any real human nature. This teaching was an early form of Gnosticism.

Gnosticism

Gnosticism encompasses many diverse views, but certain teachings common to all veins of gnosticism can be gleaned. Working with a Platonic framework which equated matter with evil and spirit with good, they taught that the material man was evil. Some men, however, had the divine spark of "The Ultimate Death" within them, but were unaware of the divine spark. In order to become aware of their divinity they needed someone to manifest to them this knowledge (Greek gnosis, hence Gnosticism). Jesus Christ is identified as the one who came to bring this awareness to men. Since matter is evil, Jesus Christ could not have had a physical body, but was a spirit body instead. In this respect Gnosticism models Docetism.

Arianism

Although this teaching had its origin in Lucian of Antioch, its most famous propagator and developer was Arius of Alexandria, from whence it bears its name. Arius taught that because God is immutable, His essence cannot be communicated to any other.² This being so, the Son could not be considered to be God. Jesus was said to be the first creation of God. In turn, Jesus created everything else. The famous cry of the Arians concerning Jesus was, "There was once when he was not." He was divine, but not deity. Only the Father was eternal and immutable. The Son was not consubstantial, coeternal, or coequal with the Father. Essentially the Son is a demigod, being neither God, nor man. He serves as a buffer between the physical realm and the heavenly realm, belonging completely to neither.

Apollinarianism

Apollinarius is the father of the theological position named after him. Apollinarius believed Jesus to be one person, both divine and human, but believed that the divine Logos replaced the rational spirit (nous) as the animating principle in the human Christ. In his Christology, then, a human body and soul were joined to the divine Logos. The Logos was the interior of Christ that had been fused to human flesh.³ As a result of the fusion, Christ had only one nature, not two.

Confessed Full Humanity and Deity

Nestorianism The main proponents of this view were Nestorius and Theodore of Mopsuestia. Theodore confessed the full humanity and deity of Christ, but suggested that the union of the divine logos and the humanity of Jesus was not an essential unity, but a moral unity. The union was functional, not ontological. The full humanity of Christ obeyed the full deity of the logos, thus resulting in a behavioral unity.

Nestorius also confessed the full humanity and deity of Christ. He identified each nature of Christ with the Greek *prosopon* (person), thus splitting Christ into two persons.. He refused to attribute to the divine nature the human acts and sufferings of the man Jesus. He did not see any *communicatio idiomatum* (a Latin term meaning "communication of attributes) between Christ's two natures. The two natures of Christ were only joined by will.

Eutychianism

Also known as Monophysitism (mono = one; physis = nature), this teaching was espoused by Eutyches, a monk who lived in Constantinople. Eutyches taught that the Logos had two natures before the incarnation, but after the incarnation Jesus only had one nature which was clothed in human flesh. He maintained the full deity and humanity of Christ, but in explaining the unity of the two natures he denied that Jesus' humanity was essentially the same as all others' humanity because in the incarnation the Logos absorbed the human nature. The result was that neither nature retained its respective properties, i.e. that which makes each nature (divine and human) what it truly is metaphysically. Rather a *tertium quid* (third substance) resulted, which was neither purely Logos or human, but something wholly other. In the incarnation then, both the divine nature and human nature fused into one new nature. This new nature was not "not God" because the deity of the Logos subsumed the humanity in the union of the two.

Critique Dynamic Monarchianism

Dynamic Monarchianism must be ruled out because it espouses a personal subsistence (state of existing in reality) of the humanity of Christ apart from deity. The hypostatic union demands that we understand Christ's humanity and deity as being mutually interdependent, i.e. Christ's person was dependent on His deity for His personal existence. God fathered a child. He did not merely indwell a human being, but He became a human being. The Word was made flesh (John 1:14). There was a metaphysical union between deity and humanity.. According to the Scriptures, Jesus was divine from His birth (Micah 5:2; Luke 1:32-35). There was never a time when Jesus was not God.

Ebionism

Ebionism would follow in this same vain because its views of Jesus Christ are nearly identical to Dynamic Monarchianism. Its view of Jesus Christ is nothing more than that of a moral example for men to follow, not the sinless God-man who accomplished salvation on our behalf as the Scripture teaches.

Docetism

Docetism fails to account for the numerous Scriptural affirmations to the authenticity of Jesus' humanity. Jesus was not a hologram. John claimed that He could be seen and touched 1 John 1:1-3). Scripture also teaches that Christ suffered (Romans 8:17; Php 3:10; Hebrews 2:9; Hebrews 5:8-9; 1 Peter 2:19; 1 Peter 3:14), which according to Docetism, Christ could not suffer.

Apollinarianism

Apollinarianism fails to explain the accounts of Jesus' temptation. If Jesus did not have a human mind it would make His temptations meaningless. Jesus also grew in wisdom (Luke 2:52). He

learned obedience through suffering (Hebrews 5:8). He had His own will, not just the will of God (Luke 22:42).

Apollinarianism also limits humanity to the physical. In the end we end up having God peering out into the world through a human set of eyes. It makes God into the driver of a taxi-cab; the flesh of Jesus was just the vehicle for God to redeem the world. But human skin is not the essence of humanity. We are much more than skin. If Jesus was a genuine man as the Scriptures speak of Him and portray Him as being, then He must have had a human mind, will, spirit/soul, and emotions in addition to human flesh.

One of the most important deficiencies of this doctrine is soteriological (having to do with salvation). As the Cappadocian maxim says, "What He did not assume He can not heal." What this means is that Jesus can only redeem the aspects of humanity which He Himself took upon Himself in the incarnation. If Jesus did not have a human mind and spirit, then He cannot redeem mankind in their totality because we have a human mind and spirit. Jesus could only redeem that which He became. If He did not have a human spirit/mind, then He cannot redeem this aspect of man. From a Biblical perspective, if Jesus was to be the last Adam (1 Corinthians 15:45) His humanity had to be like Adam's in every respect (Romans 5:12-21; 1 Corinthians 15:21-22). Paul's argument in Romans is that just as sin entered the world through one man, causing all men to die a spiritual death because of God's condemnation on sin, righteousness was gained for mankind through the one righteous act of Jesus Christ. Jesus came to reverse the effects of Adam's sin. Whereas Adam brought death and condemnation to man, Jesus brought life and righteousness. In the Corinthians passage Paul made a similar argument, namely that since death was brought into the world by man, the resurrection from the dead also had to be brought into the world by a man. All of those who are born from Adam will die both physically and spiritually; however, those who are in Christ, though they will physically die (except those that are still alive at the resurrection of the dead), they will be resurrected from the dead to spiritual life. The point of both passages is that since death and condemnation was brought on by man, spiritual life, righteousness, and the resurrection from the dead to life everlasting also had to come from a man. Whatever Adam was, the last Adam, Jesus Christ, had to be. Only a man like Adam could reverse what Adam did. If Adam had a human spirit/mind, then Jesus had to have a spirit/mind. This is especially telling since Adam succumbed to temptation with his mind/will. If Jesus was to objectively overcome temptation, He likewise had to resist it with a human mind. God cannot be tempted, but if the divine Spirit/mind replaced the human spirit/mind, then Jesus, as God, was tempted.

If Christ did not possess a human mind/will, then certain Biblical statements about Christ would be rendered meaningless. He could not be tempted, since God cannot be tempted (James 1:13), but we find that He was in fact tempted (Hebrews 4:15). Temptation occurs in the mind of man. If Jesus did not have a human spirit/mind, He could not have been tempted.

It is also said of Jesus that He "increased in wisdom" (Luke 2:52). If Jesus did not have a human mind, then we would have to confess that God was increasing in wisdom. This cannot be true because God is all-knowing and full of wisdom. He gives wisdom to man; He does not receive wisdom from man (Romans 16:27; 1 Timothy 1:17; James 1:5; Jude 1:25).

It is also said that Christ "learned obedience through what he suffered" (Hebrews 5:8). A moral improvement is not in view here, but Christ's increasing capacity which He gained for the

fulfillment of His office. What needs to be emphasized is that Jesus learned. There is nothing for God to learn. He knows all things. Only a human mind can learn.

Hebrews 2:11, Hebrews 2:14-18 is very clear as the completeness and genuineness of Christ's humanity. The author said, "For indeed he who makes holy and those being made holy all have the same origin, and so he is not ashamed to call them brothers and sisters.... Therefore, since the children share in flesh and blood, he likewise shared in the same as well, so that through death he could destroy the one who holds the power of death (that is, the devil), and set free those who were held in slavery all their lives by their fear of death. For surely his concern is not for angels, but he is concerned for Abraham's descendants. Therefore he had to be made like his brothers and sisters in every respect, so that he could become a merciful and faithful high priest in things relating to God, to make atonement for the sins of the people. For since he suffered and was tempted, he is able to help those who are tempted" (NET Bible). The author argues that Jesus shared in the same flesh and blood that all other humans possessed. He is of the same origin. He had to be made like all the rest of humanity in every respect if He was to be able to suffer and overcome temptation, in order to represent humanity as a priest, to help those who are tempted. The phrase in every respect most assuredly includes a human spirit/mind.

Nestorianism

Nestorianism is deficient because it makes Jesus into two persons. It is similar to Apollinarianism in that it paints a picture of Jesus as having God peering through human eyes. In contradistinction to Apollinarianism, however, Nestorius did maintain Christ's full humanity. He was correct in confessing Christ's complete dual nature, but was in error when trying to explain how His two natures functioned together. Instead of teaching a moral (behavioral) union between Jesus' divine and human nature, the Scripture teaches that the Logos became flesh (John 1:14). The Greek word *ginomai* means "to become." The Logos did not merely assume a human body, but became a human being. The union is metaphysical, not moral. In such a union, whatever can be said of Christ's divine nature, or of His human nature, can be attributed to Christ's whole person. This is known as the *communicatio idiomatum*. Christ's person is one unified whole, not two fragmented parts.

If Jesus' two natures are only joined by the will-the human nature in Christ always submitting to the divine nature in Christ-then theoretically, the man, Jesus Christ, and the Spirit of God could have existed apart from one another. But in the incarnation, God became a man. When God assumed a human existence, the deity and humanity of Christ became forever inseparable, joined in a metaphysical union in every respect. If this were not so, then Jesus did not truly become a man, but only indwelt a particular man. When one becomes something they cannot be separate from that something. If God truly became a man it would be impossible for divine nature to be separate from His humanity.

If God only indwelt a particular man, then at best, Jesus' sacrifice could only have accomplished a particular salvation, i.e. His own. His death could not have saved all of humanity. It is by virtue that God became a man, identifying with the human race as a whole, that Jesus can be a mediator between God and men. What makes Jesus' death of infinite value is not merely His sinlessness, but the fact that He was God manifest in the flesh. If Jesus was not metaphysically God Himself, then His death could not save us. The infinite God became a man to die for us. This is the reason

for the efficacy of Calvary. If the humanity of Christ was separate from His deity, however, this could not be true.

Nestorianism's insistence on the separate natures in Christ fails to provide a satisfactory explanation as to the sense in which Jesus can be spoken of in the Scripture as one person, rather than two. Jesus always speaks of Himself, and is spoken of by others in the singular, not the plural as we would expect if there are two separate persons in one body. Neither can Nestorianism provide an adequate explanation as to how it can be said that the logos became flesh if Christ's divine nature is separate from His human nature. Finally, Nestorianism's portrait of separate natures connected only by will displaces the idea of a true incarnation of God, denegrating it to a mere possession of Jesus' human body. If there is no essential, metaphysical unity between Christ's deity and humanity then Christ cannot be considered God anymore than Spirit-filled believers can be considered God. The difference between the Nestorian Jesus and all other believers is limited only by the fact that Jesus is filled with the Spirit in a special way, and was conceived miraculously.

Eutychianism

Eutychianism came close to being the orthodox teaching of the early church. It was so close to the Biblical teaching because it affirmed two complete, authentic natures in Christ, and even confessed that there was a metaphysical union between the two, thus avoiding the soteriological problem that Nestorianism faced. Where this teaching falls into error is in claiming that the two natures blended together to form a third substance, which is neither of the original two. Such a mixture would necessarily produce a confusion of the natures, and thus the individuality of each nature is destroyed. In the end Jesus is no longer God and man, but other than God and other than man. If this were true, Jesus could not identify with the sons of Adam, nor could He identify with Deity. He would be in a class of His own, thus not fit to be a mediator between God and men (1 Timothy 2:15). This teaching also ignores the many Biblical statements that portray Christ as having ministered as a man anointed by the Holy Ghost. The divine nature of Christ did not subsume or overwhelm His human nature. Jesus was metaphysically, and functionally a man. A Eutychian understanding of Christ ignores the Biblical portrayal of Christ as a genuine human being with genuine human emotions and characteristics. The Incarnation is a Contradiction

Although not proposed as an alternative interpretation in the above section, some have contended that the idea of an incarnation of God is a contradiction. Soren Kierkegaard has proposed this view, saying that God and man are two infinitely different things. The world of God and the world of man are as different as fire and ice.

What must be remembered is that a contradiction is between two propositions; the one denying the claim of the other. For example to say that a man is a spiritual being, and that he is not a spiritual being at the same time is a contradiction. To say that a man is a spiritual being in one sense, and not a spiritual man in another sense is not a contradiction; nor is it a contradiction to affirm that a man is a spiritual and a material being at the same time.

There are many aspects concerning the mechanics of the incarnation that we do not understand, but mystery is not the same thing as contradiction. God's existence and man's existence are not wholly other as Kierkegaard has claimed. It must be remembered that man is made in God's

image, and therefore resembles God. If God's image can be found in man, why is it so hard to image that God could assume a human existence while still retaining His Godhood?

4 Although we may not have full understanding of the way in which deity could unite metaphysically with humanity in the one person of Jesus Christ, it is not a contradiction to believe such a thing. Rather it is a paradox, or a seeming contradiction that can not be adequately explained, but nonetheless is within reason.

Systematic Formulation The Scriptures are very clear in their portrayal of Jesus as being both man and God. He plays the role of the divine and of the human—two roles which had been heretofore worlds apart, calling for two different actors, and requiring two different stages.⁵ In Jesus, however, the infinite Spirit united with finite humanity to become the Son of God. These two natures seem mutually exclusive. Deity is infinite in knowledge, power, and presence. Humanity is limited in knowledge, power, and presence. How can the two distinct worlds of God and man come together into one existence? This is the very question Christology attempts to answer.

Although the Bible infers that there is a relationship between the deity and humanity of Christ (called the hypostatic union), no one passage was specifically penned to explain its mechanics. The New Testament writers simply affirmed that it was true. What we must do, then, is meticulously scrutinize all that Jesus said about Himself relating to His identity (His self-concept), and statements made by the writers of the New Testament concerning His dual nature in order to understand in what ways Christ's two natures can or cannot relate to one another.

Since Jesus was from the lineage of Abraham and David (John 7:42; Acts 13:22-23; Romans 1:3; Hebrews 2:16), by necessity He received human DNA, genes, and chromosomes. Since Jesus' genetic makeup was received from the lineage of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, not only was Jesus human, but He was also Jewish because His mother and her descendants were Jewish. Jesus was born to a Jewish woman, in the nation of the Jews, with Jewish customs, habits, and culture. Jesus was a Jew! He looked and acted like any other Jewish person would. Surely Jesus danced in the folk dances, attended social events (John 2:1-2), and played with other boys in His village.

Although His conception was miraculous, Jesus was born like any other human being is born. He grew physically, intellectually, socially, and spiritually like any other man (Luke 2:40, Luke 2:52). Sometimes we have the concept that Jesus came out of Mary's womb, looked at Mary and said, "Hi mom, I'm God!," then cut off His umbilical cord, and taking off running, He preached to the world. Jesus did not know He was God manifest in the flesh when He was born. His human mind had not come to know or understand that yet. He came to realize this at some point in the future. When and how this occurred is not discussed in the Bible, but we do know that Jesus understood His identity at least by the age of twelve. It was at this time He told Mary, "Do you not know that I must be about my Father's business?" (Luke 2:42, Luke 2:49).

Jesus lived a childhood like every other Jewish boy. He had to learn and memorize the Hebrew Scriptures, be potty-trained, fed, taught how to speak, learn a trade, walk, and all the other things children must do. Jesus surely drooled on Mary's shoulder, and wet His pants. As a carpenter, surely He received splinters, and when hitting His hand with the hammer of His day He must have yelled because of the pain.

Jesus had a complete human nature, differing only from ours in that He was spared the sin nature by way of the virgin birth and conception by the Holy Ghost. This does not make Him any less human than we, because we know Adam and Eve to be true human beings, and they existed without the sin nature previous to their transgression. If anything, Jesus was more human than we are, because we are tainted by the sin nature. We live an existence that limits our relationship with God. Jesus was not limited by this sin principle or bound by its effects: alienation from God, sickness, disease.

Although He was born into this world like any other man, Jesus was conceived in a very unique way. He did not have a human father, but was begotten by the Holy Ghost (Matthew 1:20; Luke 1:34-35). God was His Father. Jesus received His deity from His Father. He did have a human mother, but she conceived in her womb in a way different from any other (Galatians 4:4). Instead of sexual intercourse and fertilization by the sperm of a male, the power of the Highest overshadowed her (Luke 1:35). It was at that point that God became a human as a fetus in Mary's womb. Jesus received His deity and part of His humanity from the Father, and part of His humanity from Mary (Luke 1:34-35; Galatians 4:4). This will never be fully understood or comprehended, but must be accepted by faith.

Because Jesus was conceived by the Holy Ghost, and not of man, He is called the Son of God. Although we too are called sons of God (1 John 3:2), our sonship is different than Jesus'. Whereas we are adopted as God's sons (Romans 8:14-17), Jesus was born as God's Son (Luke 1:35). His very being came into existence by the Holy Ghost. Jesus would have never existed without the contributions made by His Father. Since God physically fathered Jesus through the miraculous conception He is God's Son in a physical sense. We are only God's sons in a spiritual sense. Our existence is not dependent on Him. Our being results from the physical union of two human parents. It is only after this that we can become sons of God through the adoption by His Spirit. The difference between Jesus and us, then, is that Jesus' existence has its dependence on the Father while ours does not. Daniel Segraves expounded on this truth when he said: The miracle of the virgin conception means that deity and humanity were as inseparable in Jesus as the genetic influence of a mother and father is inseparable in their son or daughter. Just as no human being could exist if all that was contributed to his existence by either his father or his mother were removed, so Jesus could not have existed as the Messiah apart from either His deity (contributed by the Holy Spirit [Luke 1:34-35]) or his humanity (contributed by Mary [Galatians 4:4]).⁶ This union demonstrates the permanence of the incarnation. Once God assumed humanity at His conception in Mary's womb, He acquired an identity He would retain for the rest of eternity.. Jesus' humanity is not something that can be discarded or dissolved back into the Godhead, but He will always and forever exist in heaven as a glorified human, albeit God at the same time. His humanity is permanently incorporated into the Godhead.⁷ God did not just live in flesh as a man, but the "Word became flesh" (John 1:14). God is now a man. This does not mean He no longer exists as the omnipresent Spirit, but it does mean that His existence as a man is both authentic and permanent.

Jesus did not merely put on a "robe of flesh" when He came to this earth. He was more than "God with skin on." These types of statements imply a Nestorian view of Christ—a separation of natures within Jesus as though He is two separate individuals living in one body. They imply that the flesh was a mere shell that Deity moved within. The humanity of Jesus was not independent of the deity

of Jesus. The deity and humanity comprising Jesus' existence should not be viewed as some sort of "room-mate situation" in which two entities exist in the same area, but are separated from one another in reality. In Christ "the Spirit of God was inextricably and inseparably joined with the humanity...."⁸ An example from chemistry might demonstrate this well. A mixture or blend can be separated into its original substances after being blended. Whereas mixtures (physical compounds) can be separated again, chemical compounds form a new substance of which the original substances can never again be separated from the compound. The two natures in Christ should not be viewed as blended or mixed together. His two natures cannot be separated.

Unfortunately, every analogy breaks down at some point, this one being no exception. This analogy can only demonstrate the permanence of the incarnation, not the metaphysical union of the two natures of Christ. The deity and humanity of Christ did not form a new substance from the two, known as *tertium quid* (which Eutyches espoused), for each nature retained all of their respective "properties." The deity was uncompromised by the humanity, and the humanity was uncompromised by the deity; both being perfectly preserved in their wholeness and genuineness, yet united in every way. The deity was not obscured by the complete humanity, and neither was the humanity overwhelmed by the fullness of the deity.⁹ The fullness of God's deity was manifested in every aspect of His genuine humanity; integrated, and not segregated. The nature of God was not changed in the incarnation, but rather that God personally united to Himself a human existence-not by merely adding flesh to His existence, but by the two natures being brought together into a vital union so as to speak of Christ as being one person, yet still having two distinct natures. The Evangelical Dictionary of Theology sums this up saying, "In the incarnation ... a human nature was inseparably united forever with the divine nature in the one person of Jesus Christ, yet with the two natures remaining distinct, whole, and unchanged, without mixture or confusion so that the one person, Jesus Christ, is truly God and truly man."¹⁰ Common Misconceptions of the Union

It is commonly said of Jesus that He has a "divine side" and a "human side," or that sometimes He acted as God, and at other times as man. It is explained that as a man Jesus prayed, ate, and slept. As God He healed the sick, raised the dead, and calmed the storms. This seems to imply some sort of duality in Jesus as though He is two persons in one body. This is the teaching of Nestorianism. These activities give indication of the reality of each nature, but it must be understood that Jesus' natures never worked independent of one another. His two natures exist "without confusion, without change, without division, without separation; the difference of the natures having been in no wise taken away by reason of the union, but rather the properties of each being preserved...."

¹¹ The *communicatio idiomatum* of Christ's two natures demands that whatever can be attributed to either the human or divine nature of Christ can be attributed to Christ's one person. Whatever is true of either nature is true of the whole person.¹² James White commented on this saying that

...when Jesus spoke, He spoke as one Person, not two. One cannot say that, when claiming deity, Jesus' "deity" spoke, or when He referred to His humanity, it was His "human nature" that spoke. It can be seen from this that natures don't speak - only Persons do.. And, since Jesus is one Person, not two, He speaks as a whole Person. ... He had two natures, but those natures were made personal by only one Person, the Word made flesh. Hence, though Jesus may say things that

indicate his two natures, what he says represents His whole being, not a certain part thereof.¹³ This is important because the *communicatio idiomatum* is often misunderstood to mean that whatever can be said of one nature can be said of the other. This is not so. The divine attribute of omnipresence alone demonstrates this fact. Jesus' humanity could not be omnipresent because of the nature of the human existence. Humanity is limited by nature. The *communicatio idiomatum* means that whatever can be said of one nature can be spoken of as applying to the whole of Christ's person. For example, we would not say that the divine nature died on the cross. God did not die, but the humanity which God assumed died. Likewise, the Scripture says that God cannot be tempted (James 1:13), yet Jesus was tempted. If we apply the *communicatio idiomatum* to mean that whatever can be said of one nature can be said of the other, then we have God's essence being tempted and dying. Such a conclusion is absurd. This is explained by saying that God as He exists in a genuine human existence was tempted. How exactly this could be without splitting up the union of the two natures I cannot adequately explain. This is where our understanding breaks down. Even Chalcedon could not pinpoint the truth; it could only draw a box around it by saying what can and cannot be true, and let the truth lie somewhere inside the box. I am also asserting what must be true, and what cannot be true (insofar as it is knowable), and leaving the rest to the box of mystery. The typical way of explaining Jesus' natures splits up their unity and integration, insinuating that one could be "operated" apart from the other. It almost reduces Jesus to Superman who is sometimes Kent Clark and other times Superman after a quick change in a telephone booth somewhere. Jesus does not change over from acting in one nature to acting in the other. He is not like the Wild E. Coyote who holds up a sign saying, "Now I'm acting as a man," and at other times He holds up another sign saying, "Now I'm acting as God." Everything Jesus did, He did as God manifest in the flesh (Son of God). There can be no separation of Jesus' natures. "The union of the two natures meant that they did not function independently. Jesus did not exercise his deity at times and his humanity at other times. His actions were always those of divinity-humanity."¹⁴ Jesus is unitary being. He is unipersonal, not multipersonal. Whatever can be said of His divine nature or human nature can be said of His whole person. Gordon Lewis explained it this way:

What unites the natures is that both may be predicated of the one actual person. The two natures exist not merely in a functional harmony, nor are they in a nonmetaphysical way merely communicated to each other. The divine nature is not simply the indwelling Holy Spirit as is the case in all Christians. Nor did the human nature lose anything by its assumption into the person of God's Son. In the God-man we find a complex of two distinct natures, but not a confusion of the two sets of attributes.¹⁵ The metaphysical union of Christ's two natures does not mean that we cannot make a distinction between them, but only that we cannot make a separation between them. Because in the union, each nature was preserved in its fullness and not blended into a third substance, we can recognize a distinction between Christ's deity and His humanity, but we cannot make a separation. We may understand that Jesus did certain things because He was a genuine human being, or because He was God, but we cannot say that He only does those things in the respective nature. To do so would be to destroy the metaphysical unity of the two natures, and hence the unity of the person of Christ. The way in which we can differentiate but not separate Christ's two natures may be compared to the way in which Paul differentiated between our inner and outer man. He said, "Though our outward man perish yet the inward man is renewed day by day" (2 Corinthians 4:16). In another place he noted, "For I delight in the law of God after the

inward man: but I see another law in my members, warring against the law of my mind, and bringing me into captivity to the law of sin which is in my members" (Romans 7:22-23). Both of these references make a distinction between our spirit-man and our fleshly-man, yet such a distinction was never intended to teach that we are two people. In a similar way we can attribute the cause of certain activities or sayings of Christ to one of His natures, but we cannot say that these only occur in one nature to the exclusion of the other because of the fact that Christ is one whole unified person. Whatever He does He does as God unified to humanity. A Nestorian understanding of Christ, which divides Christ into two distinct persons dwelling in one body, is also witnessed in the way one defines the Biblical title, "Son." Many attribute "Son" strictly to Jesus' humanity, avoiding any attribution to His deity. Such a use of "Son" is foreign to the NT text. The Bible uses the term to refer to Jesus' whole person, both deity and humanity, never to refer to one-half of Jesus' person. "Son" most certainly originated with the incarnation, and thus does not imply a preexisting divine person of a Trinity, but "Son" cannot be said to refer only to Jesus' human nature. The term "Son" incorporates Jesus' whole person, both deity and humanity conjoined into one indivisible person. To say that "Son" only refers to Jesus' human nature is Nestorian at heart, separating Jesus into two persons in one body. The Scripture, however, presents Christ as one whole person.

It has been common to hear Jesus' dual nature explained as "roles." It is said that in the role of a man Jesus did such and such, and in His divine role Jesus did this and that. Sometimes it is even asserted that Jesus was acting in both roles simultaneously. It must be made clear that roles do not have person-hood. They cannot act in and of themselves. A person can act in a role, but a role has no personal existence. If it is true that Jesus could act in one role and not in another at any one given time, this indicates that only one nature in Jesus was acting. This makes Jesus into two individual persons, one divine and one human dwelling in a physical body simultaneously, which are only unified functionally. Everything that Jesus did He did as God manifest in the flesh. There is no Biblical support to say that Jesus ever acted in a human role sometimes, in the divine role other times, and both simultaneously yet still at other times.

We should not even say of Christ that as a man He was tempted, ate, slept, and felt emotion; and as God He had power over life and death, performed miracles, and forgave sin. Instead we should say that the fact that Jesus was tempted, ate, slept, and felt emotion indicates that He was a genuine human being. It could also be said that Jesus was tempted because of His authentic humanity. Likewise the fact that Jesus forgave sin demonstrates His genuine existence as God, or it could be said that His power over life and death was due to His complete deity. However it is explained, it must not be understood that when Jesus did something that demonstrates His humanity, that it was done strictly in His human nature, but not in His divine nature. Such an explanation is clearly Nestorian, making Christ two persons in one body. If some things Jesus says and does are only in His human nature, and other things He says and does are in His divine nature, then we have two parts of Jesus that are only unified in geographical area, not essence or even necessarily function. God was not in Christ peering through human eyes like a child who peers through the mask of the costume at Halloween, but God became a man in the person of Christ. The Nestorian portrayal of the incarnation is little more than the Spirit possession of a created human being, whereas the Biblical portrayal of the incarnation is that of God becoming the man, Jesus Christ. The orthodox understanding of Christ's two natures is that in the incarnation

the deity and humanity were joined in such a way that they are united into one, and not divided; inseparable, yet distinguishable; the properties of each being present in Christ in their fullness, yet united as one person. The Spirit of God and the human spirit of Jesus were not blended to form a third substance that was not purely God or purely man, nor was either spirit overshadowed by the other so that one was dominant over the other. The deity was not compromised or obscured by the humanity, and neither was the humanity compromised or obscured by the deity; both being perfectly preserved in their wholeness and genuineness, yet united in every way. Neither were His two natures separated in any way, but were unified in every way. The best analogy to demonstrate this truth is that of grafting. In grafting, a branch is cut from one tree and attached to another. This is done by splicing the recipient branch, and then taping the spliced foreign branch to the area the recipient tree. Various methods are employed to hold the foreign branch on the recipient tree. Over time, the two branches will grow together into one branch. If we were to graft a plum branch onto a peach tree, when they grew together we would have one branch bearing both plums and peaches. It would not produce "pleaches" (the Eutychian view of Christ), for each fruit continues to exist on that one branch unchanged. The one limb would not produce hollow fruit (the Apollinarian view of Christ), and neither could we distinguish the two branches any longer (a Nestorian view of Christ), for the two have come together into one unified branch. Each branch retains its respective properties, continuing to be what it had always been, yet it is essentially united in every way to the other branch (the orthodox understanding of Christ), and will continue to bear two respective fruits, both unchanged from the time when they existed on two separate branches.

Conclusion

Jesus was both God and man. That this is so, is known from the revelation of the Scripture. How exactly this is so, is a mystery. Mystery, however, is not the same as contradiction! Although the incarnation is the greatest of mysteries, and we will never fully comprehend how Jesus can be both God and man, we can confess that Jesus is both fully God and fully man and yet be one person. The Scripture speaks of Him in this manner, and so must we. Harold O.J. Brown has spoken a fitting word concerning the understanding and explanation of mysteries: The New Testament message confronts believers with a number of formidable mysteries and at the same time calls upon them to use their minds in the effort to proclaim and interpret them. There is a point in the proclamation of the mystery where human understanding reaches its limit. To stop too soon in the effort to understand and to interpret leaves the believer facing a contradiction or an absurdity; to go too far often leads him into a logical impossibility. One of the greatest challenges to the Christian witness is to explain as much as can be explained, and thus not to leave believers in ignorance where clarification is possible, but to stop when the limits of understanding have been reached, and thus not trespass the mystery of God. 16

We must be careful in our attempt to explain how Jesus could be both God and man that we do not under-explain or over-explain it. Both of these tendencies will lead us into error. We can affirm what we know is true, and affirm what we know cannot be true about Christ's person, but we can never pin our theological tail right on the donkey. We can box in the truth to a smaller dimension of understanding by affirming certain things and negating other things about Christ, but we can never pinpoint the exact nature of the hypostatic union. The box of limitation which surrounds the exact truth of the union cautions us that we must not deny either the fullness of His deity or the fullness of His humanity, and that we be careful to not explain the unity of His two natures in such a fashion

that it makes Jesus into two separate persons in one body, one unified person that compromises either nature, or one person who is some third substance that is neither God or man. Jesus, although both fully God and fully man, is nevertheless one unified person. This is the mystery of the incarnation, and oh what a mystery it is!

Footnotes

1. Louis Berkhof, *History of Christian Doctrines* (Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1937), 78, quoted in David Bernard, *Oneness and Trinity: A.D. 100-300* (St. Louis, MO: Word Aflame Press), 99.
2. Gordon L. Lewis and Bruce A. Demarest, *Integrative Theology* (Grand Rapid: Zondervan Publishing House, 1996), 252.
3. Alan F. Johnson and Robert E. Weber, *What Christians Believe: A Biblical & Historical Summary* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1993), 130.
4. Lewis and Demarest, 350-1.
5. Alister E. McGrath, *Studies in Doctrine* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1987), 254.
6. Segraves, 7.
7. Ibid.
8. Ibid., 7.
9. Ibid., 49.
10. Walter A. Elwell, ed., *Evangelical Dictionary of Theology* (Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1984), 540.
11. This is a quote from the Chalcedon Creed adopted in A.D. 451 at Chalcedon. This creed has been the orthodox statement concerning Christology ever since.
12. *Evangelical Dictionary of Theology*, 257.
13. James White, "The Trinity, the Definition of Chalcedon, and Oneness Theology," found at <http://www.aomin.org/CHALC.html>.
14. Millard J. Erickson, *Systematic Theology* (Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1985), 735.
15. Lewis and Demarest, 343.
16. Harold O.J. Brown, *Heresies: Heresy and Orthodoxy in the History of the Church* (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson Publishers, Inc., 1984), 320.

S. The Evidentiary Basis for Affirming the Resurrection of Jesus Christ

The Evidentiary Basis for Affirming the Resurrection of Jesus Christ by

Jason Dulle

Introduction

Christianity is rather unique among the world's religions in that it is based on God's activity in history. Christianity is not a philosophy, a way of knowledge, or faith for the sake of faith, but a particular understanding and acceptance of the significance of particular historical events. The setting of the Gospels is not in a land far-far away, in a time long-long ago, but in first century Palestine. The histocentric nature of Christianity can be an advantage or a liability. It can be a liability because if the historical accounts in Scripture are proven historically unreliable, the spiritual claims tied to those historical accounts are undermined as well. As such, Christianity is vulnerable to falsification. If, however, we can establish the historical reliability of the Biblical accounts, we can establish the credibility of the theological claims beyond reasonable doubt as well. Our challenge is to demonstrate that the Biblical accounts are tied to history, not wild imagination. If we can do so, we will have taken an enormous stride toward verifying the theological claims of Christianity. The Resurrection of Jesus The capstone of God's activity in history is the person of Jesus Christ, and His resurrection from the dead. The resurrection of Jesus stands at the heart of Christian theology. It was central to the preaching of the early church, and remains the centerpiece of our message today. But why should we believe the Gospel claim that Jesus was raised from among the dead? What reasons do we have to think such a thing occurred? After all, we know from experience that dead men stay dead. Why think something different happened to Jesus, other than a prior commitment to the veracity of Scripture? The question before us is not so much a theological question as it is an historical question. The Gospels, as well as many other New Testament (NT) books proclaim Jesus' resurrection as an event occurring in space-time history. As such, it is open to historical investigation in the same way other purported events of history are. Using principles of historiography, is there evidence that a man named Jesus lived in first century Palestine, died by crucifixion at the hands of the Romans, and rose again from the dead? Yes, there is.

Reason, Faith, and the Resurrection

Some Christians are uncomfortable at the mention of "reason" or "evidence." To them, faith and evidence/reason are diametric opposites. To have reasons to believe X is to eliminate faith, they say. This understanding of faith (called fideism) is not rooted in Scripture. Faith is not a decision we make divorced from knowledge, reason, and evidence. It is not psychological confidence without corresponding evidence, or a commitment of the will in the absence of reason. The Biblical notion of faith involves placing our trust in what we have reason to believe is true to reality; a persuasion based on reasonable evidence.¹ And reasonable evidence there is!

Some might object, "But didn't Jesus tell Thomas, 'Blessed are those who believe without seeing?'" Jesus expected us to believe without evidence." This is a misreading of the text in John 20:29. Jesus did not say those who believe without evidence are blessed, but rather those who believe without seeing the resurrected Christ as Thomas had will be blessed. While we have many reasons to believe in Jesus' resurrection, we are doing so without having seen Him alive from the dead, and thus we are in the company of the blessed. Jesus is speaking to those who claim they cannot be expected to have the faith of Thomas apart from the experience of Thomas, not to those who seek evidence for Christ's resurrection prior to believing on Him as the Messiah. Jesus is clear that faith is not contingent on such an experience. *The Existence of Christ: Examining the Historical Record*

While it would be tempting to jump right into the evidence for Christ's resurrection, this would presuppose His existence as a real historical figure. Some skeptics challenge the notion that there ever was a man, Jesus of Nazareth, yet alone that He said and did the things ascribed to Him in the New Testament. If we are going to believe Jesus rose from the dead, we must first establish His genuine existence in history.² After all, if Jesus never existed, He could not have risen from the dead!

There are 10 extra-biblical sources³ within 150 years of Jesus' death, that confirm His existence in history, as well as certain details about His life and teachings that are congruent with the Gospels. From a modern perspective that may not sound impressive, but from a historical perspective it is utterly amazing. While literature abounds in our own day, such was not the case in antiquity. Only a small percentage of the populace was literate, and writing materials were expensive, so there was not a lot of literature being written. Furthermore, time has a way of destroying ancient works. So to find 10 sources that speak of Jesus—a man who was relatively unimportant in His day outside of Palestine—is astonishing. To see how astonishing this is, compare the fact that only nine sources mention Tiberius, the Roman emperor contemporaneous to Jesus. The abundance of sources is important, because historicity is cemented by multiple, independent attestations. The more independent witnesses you have to an event, the more likely it is to be true. Let us, then, examine some of the more important source witnesses.

Josephus

Josephus was a prominent first century Jew. He was a court historian for Emperor Vespasian, who wrote about the history of the Jewish people. Two very important references to Jesus are found in his work, *The Antiquities* (~A.D. 90-95). Josephus writes: "He [Ananias] convened a meeting of the Sanhedrin and brought before them a man named James, the brother of Jesus, who was called the Christ, and certain others. He accused them of having transgressed the law and delivered them up to be stoned." And again:

About this time there lived Jesus, a wise man, if indeed one ought to call him a man. For he was one who wrought surprising feats and was a teacher of such people as accept the truth gladly. He won over many Jews and many Greeks. He was the Christ. When Pilate, upon hearing him accused by men of the highest standing among us, had condemned him to be crucified, those who had in the first place come to love him did not give up their affection for him. On the third day he appeared to them restored to life, for the prophets of God had prophesied these and countless other marvelous things about him. And the tribe of Christians, so called after him, has still to this

day not disappeared." (The Antiquities 18.63-64)⁴ The text in red reflects what many scholars believe to be later Christian interpolations, while the text in black reflects what most agree is original to Josephus. Not only does Josephus confirm Jesus' historical existence, but adds other details that comport with the New Testament witness:

1. Jesus had a brother named James
2. Jesus was considered both wise and a teacher
3. Jesus worked miracles (amazing feats)
4. Jesus' teachings converted many Jews and Gentiles
5. Jesus was condemned to death by crucifixion by Pilate
6. Jesus' followers remained faithful to Him even after His death Phlegon (born A.D. 80)

While the works of Phlegon are lost to antiquity, they are referred to by Julius Africanus and quoted by Origen. According to Origen, "And with regard to the eclipse in the time of Tiberius Caesar, in whose reign Jesus appears to have been crucified, and the great earthquakes which then took place, Phlegon too, I think, has written in the thirteenth or fourteenth book of his Chronicles." Origen quotes Phlegon as saying, "Jesus, while alive, was of no assistance to himself, but that he arose after death, and exhibited the marks of his punishment, and showed how his hands had been pierced by nails." Not only does Phlegon affirm Christ's historical existence, but he also adds other historical details that accord with the New Testament witness:

1. Jesus was crucified during the reign of Emperor Tiberius Caesar
2. There was an earthquake in Jerusalem at the time of Jesus' death
3. Jesus rose from the dead.
4. Jesus presented Himself to others after His resurrection
5. Jesus' resurrected body still contained the marks of His crucifixion Pliny the Younger (AD 111, governor of Bithynia) In A.D. 111 Pliny the Younger, governor of Bithynia, wrote a letter to Emperor Trajan regarding some Christians he had arrested, saying:

They asserted, however, that the sum and substance of their fault or error had been that they were accustomed to meet on a fixed day before dawn and sing responsively a hymn to Christ as to a god, and to bind themselves by oath, not to some crime, but not to commit fraud, theft, or adultery, not falsify their trust, nor to refuse to return a trust when called upon to do so. When this was over, it was their custom to depart and to assemble again to partake of food--but ordinary and innocent food. Even this, they affirmed, they had ceased to do after my edict by which, in accordance with your instructions, I had forbidden political associations. Accordingly, I judged it all the more necessary to find out what the truth was by torturing two female slaves who were called deaconesses. But I discovered nothing else but depraved, excessive superstition." (Pliny the Younger Letters 10.96)

While not explicit, Pliny assumes Christ to be a historical man. He also reveals a couple other facts about early Christian faith:

1. Early Christians worshipped Jesus as God.

2. Christians believe Jesus rose from the dead ("excessive superstition"; the resurrection was thought to be a superstitious belief) Tacitus (A.D. 115) In his Annals, the Roman historian Tacitus wrote: But not all the relief that could come from man, not all the bounties that the prince could bestow, nor all the atonements which could be presented to the gods, availed to relieve Nero from the infamy of being believed to have ordered the conflagration, the fire of Rome. Hence to suppress the rumor, he falsely charged with the guilt, and punished Christians, who were hated for their enormities. Christus, the founder of the name, was put to death by Pontius Pilate, procurator of Judea in the reign of Tiberius: but the pernicious superstition, repressed for a time broke out again, not only through Judea, where the mischief originated, but through the city of Rome also, where all things hideous and shameful from every part of the world find their center and become popular. Accordingly, an arrest was first made of all who pleaded guilty; then, upon their information, an immense multitude was convicted, not so much of the crime of firing the city, as of hatred against mankind.

Tacitus refers to Jesus Christ as a genuine figure of history. He adds the following details that confirm the New Testament account:

1. Early Christians were persecuted
2. Jesus was crucified by Pontius Pilate during the reign of Emperor Tiberius
3. Jesus' followers believed Jesus rose from the dead ("pernicious superstition")
4. Belief in Jesus' resurrection began in Judea, and spread to Rome

Lucian

Lucian was a second century playwright and satirist. In his play "The Passing of Peregrinus" the hero of the tale, Peregrinus, was a Cynic philosopher who became a Christian, rose in prominence in the Christian community, and then returned to Cynicism. The first lines tells of Peregrinus, who learned "the wondrous lore of the Christians," became one of their leaders and was revered as a god, lawgiver, and protector, "next after that other, to be sure, whom they (the Christians) still worship, the man who was crucified in Palestine because he introduced this new cult to the world." [Harm.Luc, 13] He also said, "Then, too, their first lawgiver persuaded them that they are all brothers...after they have thrown over and denied the gods of Greece and have done reverence to that crucified sophist himself and live according to his laws."

Lucian confirms the historical existence of Jesus, and adds the following details:

1. Jesus was crucified in Palestine
2. Jesus started a new religious movement
3. Jesus was worshipped as God. The Talmud (completed in the 6th century AD) The Jewish Talmud says the following about Christ:

"On the eve of the Passover Yeshu was hanged. For forty days before the execution took place, a herald went forth and cried, "He is going forth to be stoned because he has practiced sorcery and

enticed Israel to apostasy. Any one who can say anything in his favor, let him come forward and plead on his behalf." But since nothing was brought forward in his favor he was hanged on the eve of the Passover." (Sanhedrin 43a) While no friend of Christianity, this Jewish source confirms the following details found in the New Testament:

1. The time of Jesus' death: the eve of the Passover feast.
2. The means of Jesus' death: crucifixion
3. Jesus was a miracle worker (a false miracle worker in the Jews' eyes)
4. Jesus had a trial
5. No one testified on His behalf.

Letter of Mara Barsarapion (A.D. 73) This first century letter was written by a father to his son, Serapion. He mentions Jesus and His execution by description, although not by name: "What benefit did the Athenians obtain by putting Socrates to death? Famine and plague came upon them as judgment for their crime. Or, the people of Samos for burning Pythagoras? In one moment their country was covered with sand. Or the Jews by murdering their wise king?...After that their kingdom was abolished. God rightly avenged these men.... The wise king...lived on in the teachings he enacted."

1. Jesus was killed by the Jews
2. Jesus was a wise man
3. Jesus was a teacher, whose teachings survived His death Suetonius (A.D. 69-140)

Suetonius was a Roman historian and annalist of the Imperial House under Emperor Hadrian. He refers to Christ, Christians, and the "disturbances" they caused, namely not worshipping idols and loving all, including their tormentors. In his Life of Claudius 25:4 he wrote, "Because the Jews at Rome caused constant disturbances at the instigation of Chrestus [Christ], he [Claudius] expelled them from the city [Rome]." (The expelling of Jews from Rome took place in A.D. 49). Suetonius believes Jesus to be an historical figure. In Life of the Caesars 26:2 Suetonius wrote about the fire that devastated Rome in A.D. 64 under Emperor Nero. Nero blamed the Christians and had many of them executed in inhumane ways: "Nero inflicted punishment on the Christians, a sect given to a new and mischievous religious belief."

There is, then, an abundance of historical evidence for the existence of Jesus of Nazareth. The Gospel Records

While there are a lot of extra-biblical sources confirming the existence and characteristics of Jesus, our primary source for information about Jesus is the New Testament Gospels. Are they reliable accounts of the life of Christ?

Authorship

It is generally agreed on that the four Gospels in the New Testament were written in the mid- to late-first century, either by eyewitnesses, or those familiar with the eyewitnesses. The Gospels are anonymous (the present-day titles are not original), but early Christian tradition affirms Matthew,

Mark, Luke, and John as the authors.⁵ No church father records competing authorial traditions. In addition to church tradition, every extant manuscript of the Gospels includes a title, and the title always bears the traditional authorial attribution. There is not a single manuscript of the Gospels in which a title is missing, or bears the name of someone other than the author traditionally associated with the book. We would not expect this if the Gospels were late, or if the early church was not sure who wrote the Gospels. This argues for an early composition, and common knowledge of the authors. How else can we explain how the four Gospels were accepted as authoritative so quickly? It is too far fetched to suggest the Gospels circulated anonymously for 60 years before someone attached the current names to them (without competition from other authorial attributions), and were able to get everyone across the Empire to accept those names as genuine.⁶

Many works of antiquity were written anonymously. Tacitus' Annals was written anonymously. The work was not ascribed to him for 100 years after he wrote it, and yet no scholar doubts that Tacitus is the author. They trust the record of early tradition. The Gospels should not be treated any differently. By the same standards we can be confident that the Gospels bear the names of the actual authors, two of whom were eyewitnesses to the events they wrote about.

Early Date For the Gospels to be reliable historical accounts, however, they need not be written by those whom tradition has ascribed them to. They only need to have been written early by credible witnesses. While it was once popular in liberal theological circles to claim the Gospels (as well as most of the NT) were written in the second century, and included a mix of historical and legendary information about Jesus, an abundance of evidence has forced even liberal scholars to date the Gospels in the mid- to late-first century. The new dating casts serious doubt on the plausibility of the Gospels-as-legend hypothesis.

Here are some of the reasons to believe all four Gospels were written within 25-60 years of Jesus' death:

1. Most NT books were quoted by A.D. 150, which means they had to have been written and widely distributed prior to that time. a. Norman Geisler wrote: "Earlier, Clement of Rome cited Matthew, John, and 1 Corinthians, and 95 to 97. Ignatius referred to six Pauline epistles in about 110, and between 110 and 150 Polycarp quoted from all four gospels, Acts, and most of Paul's epistles. Shepherd of Hermas (115-140) cited Matthew, Mark, Acts, 1 Corinthians, and other books. Didache (120-150) referred to Matthew, Luke, 1 Corinthians, and other books. Papias, companion of Polycarp, who was a disciple of the apostle John, quoted John. This argues powerfully that the gospels were in existence before the end of the first century, while some eyewitnesses (including John) were still alive."⁷

b. Clement, Ignatius, and Polycarp quoted passages from 25 of 27 NT books between 95-110

c. Clement of Rome (A.D. 95) and the Didache (early 2nd century) speak of "the Gospel," quote portions of all three Synoptic Gospels, and refer to them as the words of Jesus.

d. Ignatius (A.D. 110-115) quoted Luke 24:39 as words of Jesus in Smyrnaeans

e. The Epistle of Barnabas (A.D. 135) refers to Mt 22:14 as Scripture.

2. A comparison of the prologue of Luke and Acts reveals that the two works were written by the same author, with Acts following Luke. Internal evidence suggests that Acts was written prior to A.D. 62. According to Josephus, James (half-brother of Jesus, and leader of the church at Jerusalem) was martyred in A.D. 62. If Acts was written after A.D. 62 we would expect for the author to record this important event, just as he recorded the martyrdom of other important leaders (Acts 7:59; 12:2).

Additionally, the book ends with Paul on house arrest in Rome awaiting his trial before Caesar. Given the prominence of Paul's legal journey in Acts, had Paul went to trial before Acts was completed, surely it would have been included. Indeed, the book seems incomplete without it. Why does Acts end the way it does, then? The most reasonable conclusion is that it ends where it does because it was written while Paul was in Rome, prior to his trial in A.D. 62.

If Acts was written prior to A.D. 62, and Luke was written prior to Acts, then Luke must have been written in the late 50s or early 60s.⁹ Most scholars believe Mark was the first Gospel. If Mark's Gospel preceded Luke's, it must have been written no later than the mid- to late 50s. That places it no later than 23-26 years removed from Jesus' death.

3. A fragment of John's Gospel (p52) containing verses John 18:31-33, John 18:37-38, was discovered in Egypt. It has been carbon-dated to ~A.D. 125. For a copy of John's Gospel to reach Egypt in A.D. 125 would require that the original from which it was derived be penned much earlier.

4. Luke details 84 historical details that could only have been known by eyewitnesses. John has 59 such references. This places the Gospels of Luke and John squarely in the first century.

5. The church's widespread acceptance of these-and only these-Gospels is not feasible unless the Gospels were written early, and distributed quickly. It is unreasonable to think the church would have accepted Gospel accounts of the life of Christ purporting to be written by apostles or their associates if those Gospels were not written and widely circulated early in the church's history. Someone wanting to create a pseudopigraphal Gospel in the second century, portending it to be a first century eyewitness account, would have to explain where they got the Gospel from, and why no one had ever heard of it previously.

How would previously unknown Gospels that show up after the apostles are dead circulate the empire so quickly, and be accepted by the church at large in such a short period of time? Eyewitnesses, or first generation descendents of those eyewitnesses would not have permitted it. As Craig Blomberg wrote, "[T]he assumption that someone, about a generation removed from the events in question, radically transformed the authentic information about Jesus that was circulating at that time, superimposed a body of material four times as large, fabricated almost entirely out of whole cloth, while the church suffered sufficient collective amnesia to accept the transformation as legitimate."¹⁰

6. The Gospels do not address contentious issues that surfaced in the early church such as circumcision, Jew-Gentile relations, and women in the ministry. If the Gospels were written late, and the authors fabricated sayings and deeds of Jesus, we would expect for them to put words into Jesus' mouth that would put these controversial issues to bed. We find no such thing, which argues for an early date, as well as honest reporting of Jesus' words and deeds.

Former liberal, William F. Albright wrote concerning the dating of the New Testament, "We can already say emphatically that there is no longer any basis for dating any book of the New Testament after about A.D. 80, two full generations before the date between 130 and 150 given by the more radical New Testament critics of today."¹¹ Again he writes, "In my opinion, every book of the New Testament was written by a baptised Jew between the forties and eighties of the first century (very probably sometime between about A.D. 50 and 75)."¹²

Some may think a 23 year gap between the historical events and the recording of those events is still too large a time gap. Why not record those events in writing earlier? Some believe this gap is sufficient to allow for legendary elements to creep into the story. Such fears are unfounded. Compared to other biographies of major historical personalities, a 23 year gap is quite small. The two earliest biographies of Alexander the Great, written by Arrian and Plutarch, were written more than 400 years after his death, and yet scholars do not believe they are legendary accounts. A biography of Muhammad was not written until 212 years after his death, and yet scholars consider it historically reliable. So why doubt the historicity of the Gospels? Why think they contain legendary accounts of Christ's life? The fact of the matter is that the geographic and temporal gap between the actual events and the first written accounts is insufficient to allow for legendary development. At least two generations are required for legendary development to begin to creep in.

Historically Reliable An early composition by eyewitnesses (or their close companions) is only good if what those witnesses wrote is historically reliable. What reasons do we have to believe the Gospels are accurate historical records of the events they purport to have happened?

Judging historical reliability is a science called historiography. The same principles historians employ to judge the historicity of other ancient events recorded in history can be applied to Scripture as well. Marks of historicity include the following elements: (1) multiple, independent attestation; (2) the presence of elements that would bring embarrassment to persons the author holds in esteem; (3) dissimilarity to preceding and subsequent cultural or religious influences; (4) internal coherence; (5) preconditions sufficient to explain what led to Jesus' crucifixion. The Gospels satisfy all of these requirements. Let's examine each in turn.

Multiple, Independent Attestation

While it's tempting to think of the four Gospels as a single witness to the life of Christ, the canonical Gospels were written by four different authors, and originally distributed as individual works. Only later were they distributed as a group, and then later incorporated into a canon of 27 books. The Gospels, then, are multiple, independent witnesses to the life of Christ. While the Synoptic Gospels (Matthew, Mark, Luke) have significant amounts of content overlap, they are also different (arrangement of material, words used to convey the same event, etc.). Each Gospel author adds his own unique contribution.

Differences in wording and details between the Gospels demonstrate the independent nature of each account. When people collaborate to make up a story they try to eliminate divergent details. The fact that one author adds details another does not does not make the testimony unreliable, but believable.¹³ Consider how modern news agencies report on the same story. If you were to read an Associated Press, Reuters, Fox News, and CNN version of the story, you will find differences of

details and perspectives. One might include some detail they considered important to the story that the others do not. Each of the reports are complimentary, not contradictory. The same is true of the four Gospels. The presence of divergent details confirms the apostles did not try to smooth out their testimonies before committing them to writing.

Embarrassing Details The Gospels also contain a significant number of embarrassing details, particularly about the apostles. Jesus' own family failed to believe on Him, questioning His sanity. Even those in Jesus' hometown rejected Him. The apostles are depicted as stupid, uncaring, doubters, and cowards. When Jesus tells His parables, they do not understand what He is talking about. They fall asleep on Him at His greatest hour of need (in the Garden of Gethsemane). Jesus rebukes Peter, and calls him Satan. One of the most prominent of the apostles, Peter, denies Jesus in the end. The other apostles run away during Jesus' trial. The apostles doubted the women's report about seeing Jesus alive from the dead, even though Jesus told them in advance that He would rise again from the dead. Is this the way you would depict the leaders of your religious movement if you were making up stories? No. The only reason to include such embarrassing details is because that is what happened, and the author was committed to accurate reporting of historical details, even if it hurt.

Matthew tells us the apostles doubted even after seeing Jesus alive from the dead (Matthew 28:17). If later disciples were inventing, or embellishing history it is highly unlikely that they would include an embarrassing detail like this. What purpose would it serve to report that the very pillars of the church-the apostles-doubted the resurrection of Jesus even after He appeared to them personally? At best it could only detract from the witness of Christ's resurrection. After all, if some of Jesus' own chosen apostles were not convinced that Jesus had risen from the dead after having seen Him alive, how can those who have not seen Him alive be expected to believe on Jesus through the mere testimony of the apostles? If the author was writing historical fiction, we would expect the apostles to emerge as the exemplars of unswerving faith. Instead, we find just the opposite. Matthew was so committed to an accurate portrayal of history that he even recorded events that were incriminating and embarrassing. Such honest and transparent historical reporting argues powerfully for the historical veracity of everything else the author had to say about Jesus, including His resurrection from the dead. In addition to embarrassing facts are hard sayings. Jesus said certain things that were difficult to understand, and appear to contradict certain teachings of the church. For example, Jesus said He did not come to destroy the Law, but to fulfill it. This seems to run contrary to the church's teaching that Jesus replaced the Mosaic Covenant with the New Covenant. Or consider Jesus' statement in Matthew 11:27 that no one knows Son except the Father, and no one knows Father except Son. This seems to say the identity of the Son is unknowable, and yet Christians claimed to know who He was.

Jesus said, "The Father is greater than I" (John 14:28). That is unlikely to be an invention of the church because it seems to contradict their belief that Jesus was fully God. Or consider Jesus' statement in Matthew 24:34 in which He seemed to predict His return within one generation. That is a hard saying because Jesus did not return. Then there is Matthew 24:36 where Jesus confesses ignorance about the timing of His return. It is unlikely that a group of people proclaiming Jesus to be God would invent a saying in which Jesus is ignorant of some fact, seeing that God is omniscient. Finally, Jesus asked the young rich ruler, "Why do you call me good? ... No one is good except God alone" (Luke 18:19). On the face of it this statement appears to be a self-avowed

denial of Jesus' deity. Such problematic sayings of Jesus were surely not invented. They were recorded because that is what Jesus taught, and the apostles were concerned with passing on what the historical Jesus actually did and taught.

Dissimilarity The principle of dissimilarity states that if a saying expresses an idea that is different from both prior Judaism and later Christianity, then it probably does not derive from either but belongs to the historical Jesus.¹⁴ For example, Jesus' favorite designation for Himself was "son of man." Outside of a few references in the Old Testament, this was not a particularly Jewish term. Interestingly enough, the early church did not use it either. It only appears once in the book of Acts. These are good grounds for accepting the phrase as historical, then. Of course, the principle of dissimilarity is limited in its usefulness. While it can establish historicity, it cannot disqualify historicity. Such is the case with many principles of historiography. If an event is only recorded in one source, it does not render it ahistorical. Neither does something have to be embarrassing to be historical. Likewise, something need not be dissimilar to prior Judaism and later Christianity to be historical. If the principle of dissimilarity is used to disqualify sayings and deeds of Jesus, then we would be forced to make the absurd conclusion that Jesus was not influenced by the cultural milieu in which He lived, and neither did He impact the movement He began. Darrel Bock said it well: "While it is helpful for determining where Jesus differed from his cultural heritage, it cannot be used to disqualify sayings/deeds of Jesus. If Jesus must differ from both Judaism and the early church, then Jesus becomes a decidedly odd figure, totally detached from his cultural heritage and ideologically estranged from the movement he is responsible for founding."¹⁵

Coherence The principle of coherence states that the internal details of a true story will exhibit a maximal amount of coherence with one another, with few or no remaining details that avoid assimilation. This applies to both each Gospel, as well as a comparison of the four Gospels. This principle does not guarantee that an account be true (fictional stories such as *The Lord of the Rings* would qualify as true if that were so), but it can weed out those stories that cannot be true.

While there are some apparent contradictions between the Gospels, the vast majority are easily explained and assimilated with the rest of the coherent narrative. Those that are not so easy to explain do not pose a serious problem to the historicity of the Gospels. Arguably, they may pose a problem to the notion of inerrancy, but inerrancy is not the concern of historians. No historian rejects wholesale an ancient document because it contains some inconsistencies or inaccuracies. If they did, there would be little left to know about history because most major historical works contain such. What is important from the perspective of historical reliability is that a document be generally accurate, particularly in its salient details. Applying normal historiographical principles to the Gospels, they pass with flying colors. The accounts cohere in an astounding way.

A true story will not only cohere internally, but it should also cohere externally with information gleaned from other sources when such sources are available. How well do the details of the story comport with what we know about the political, geographical, and cultural context from other sources? These are the areas in which later forgers are likely to get wrong. The Gospels abound in such details. Luke named 11 political/historical figures in the first three chapters of his Gospel whose existence on contemporaneity has been confirmed from other sources. We know from his prologue that he took special care to make sure his portrayal of Christ's life was accurate to history (Luke 1:1-4). Many of the political, geographical, and cultural details provided by Luke have been

confirmed by other sources. None have been contradicted. The historicity of John's Gospel has been confirmed in 59 points as well. Between Luke and John there are more than 140 historical details, and 30 historical characters¹⁶ that have been confirmed by other sources. The confirmation of an abundance of historical details shows that the Gospel writers were accurate reporters of historical events, even to fine points of detail. In further confirmation of Luke's skill and expertise in historical reporting, consider the book of Acts. Luke details 84 historical facts in Acts 13:1-52, Acts 14:1-28, Acts 15:1-41, Acts 16:1-40, Acts 17:1-34, Acts 18:1-28, Acts 19:1-41, Acts 20:1-38, Acts 21:1-40, Acts 22:1-30, Acts 23:1-35, Acts 24:1-27, Acts 25:1-27, Acts 26:1-32, Acts 27:1-44, Acts 28:1-31 that have been confirmed by historical and archaeological finds.¹⁷ Roman historian, A.N. Sherwin-White says, "For Acts the confirmation of historicity is overwhelming.... Any attempt to reject its basic historicity even in matters of detail must now appear absurd. Roman historians have long taken it for granted."¹⁸ Archaeologist, William M. Ramsay wrote, "I began with a mind unfavorable to it [Acts].... It did not lie then in my line of life to investigate the subject minutely; but more recently I found myself often brought into contact with the book of Acts as an authority for the topography, antiquities, and society of Asia Minor. It was gradually borne in upon me that in various details the narrative showed marvelous truth."¹⁹ And again, "Luke's history is unsurpassed in respect to its trustworthiness," and "Luke is a historian of the first rank.... [He] should be placed along with the greatest of historians."²⁰

If Luke was so accurate in his historical reporting, on what logical basis can we assume he was not concerned with accuracy, or purposely lied about far more important matters such as Jesus' teachings, His miracles, and His resurrection? A historian who has been found trustworthy on matters that can be tested should be given the benefit of the doubt on those matters that cannot.

What Could Have Led to Jesus' Crucifixion?

Jesus' crucifixion is so indisputably established as an anchor-point of history that the historicity of His words and deeds can be assessed in terms of their likelihood of leading to His crucifixion. Using this test, again the Gospels prove themselves historically reliable. Jesus challenged the theology and practices of the religious authorities, cleansed the temple, claimed to be the Son of God, and caused political uneasiness between Israel and Rome. Surely, these are sufficient to explain why Jesus was crucified. This principle is devastating to liberal Christians who doubt the historicity of most of Jesus' words and deeds, such as the Jesus Seminar. The Jesus Seminar version of Christ is so bland that there was no reason why anyone should have wanted to kill Him. He would not have threatened anyone if all He did was travel the countryside telling nice religious parables. As John Meier wrote, "A tweedy poetaster who spent his time spinning out parables and Japanese koans, a literary aesthete who toyed with 1st-century deconstructionism, or a bland Jesus who simply told people to look at the lilies of the field—such a Jesus would threaten no one, just as the university professors who create him threaten no one."²¹ Other Reasons to Think the Gospel Writers Accurately Recorded History, not Concocted Legends

It seems unlikely that the NT authors embellished Jesus' words, or invented some sayings and deeds of Jesus? If the apostles were into fabricating saying of Jesus, surely they would have fabricated sayings that would have solved some theological debates circling the early church. They did not. Furthermore, we find apostles like Paul clearly distinguishing his words/teachings from those of Christ (1 Corinthians 7:10-12). This demonstrates a high respect for the teachings of

Christ, and a refusal to put words into His mouth that He did not speak. In short, the early church was concerned to accurately record what Jesus actually said and did, not what they would have liked for Him to have said or done. The Gospels also lack theological reflection and apologetic intentions-telltale marks of religious fiction and embellishment. The miracle accounts, including the resurrection, is stated in basic terms, unadorned with flowery details or nuanced reflection. If the resurrection was an historical invention of the early church, we might expect the Gospel writers to connect Jesus' resurrection with the fulfillment of some Old Testament prophecy as they did with other aspects of Jesus' life. If Jesus' resurrection was invented for theological purposes we would expect for the Gospel writers to mention its theological importance to us: e.g. Jesus' resurrection is proleptic of our own resurrection. No such phenomena exist.²² In fact, the Gospels do not even record any details about how Jesus was raised from the dead. There were no witnesses of His actual resurrection-only of His death, and postmortem appearances. His resurrection was merely inferred (and rightly so) from these. Surely if one were inventing a resurrection story, it would be best to claim there were actual witnesses to the event as it transpired, and to provide details. Interestingly, we find no such thing. To demonstrate the last point, let me quote two second century Apocryphal gospels. As expected, both attempt to describe the resurrection event, and do so in flowery, and rather unbelievable detail:

Now in the night in which the Lord's day dawned, when the soldiers, two by two in every watch, were keeping guard, there rang out a loud voice in heaven, and they saw the heavens opened and two men come down from there in a great brightness and draw nigh to the sepulcher. The stone which had been laid against the entrance to the sepulcher started of itself to roll and gave way to the side, and the sepulcher was opened, and both the young men entered in. When now those soldiers saw this, they awakened the centurion and the elders - for they also were there to assist at the watch. And whilst they were relating what they had seen, they saw again three men come out from the sepulcher, and two of them sustaining the other, and a cross following them, and the heads of the two reaching to heaven, but that of him who was led of them by the hand overpassing the heavens. And they heard a voice out of the heavens crying "Thou hast preached to them that sleep?", and from the cross there was heard the answer, "Yea". (Gospel of Peter 8:35-42)

Gabriel, the Angel of the Holy Spirit, and Michael, the chief of the holy Angels, on the third day will open the sepulcher: and the Beloved sitting on their shoulders will come forth. (Ascension of Isaiah 3:16) That is what legends look like. The Resurrection of Jesus Christ: Historical Evidence

Christianity began in the first century, starting in Jerusalem. Within a couple of decades the message of Christ's resurrection had spread all the way to Rome. Christianity did not just grow; it multiplied at an alarming rate. As with any major historical movement, the task of the historian is to propose some X that got it going. This is particularly so with Christianity, given the fact that most Christians were Gentiles, and the Gentile world found the idea of resurrection philosophically repulsive. How did Christianity begin, and why did it grow in that context? Some historians have concluded-and I am going to argue-that the X is exactly what the earliest disciples said it was: a bodily resurrection of Israel's Messiah. Apart from the bodily resurrection of Jesus Christianity would not have begun, and would not have flourished.

William Lane Craig argues for the resurrection of Jesus using four facts about the historical Jesus and the earliest disciples accepted by mainstream historians as historical 23

1. Jesus was buried in the tomb of Joseph of Arimathea
2. Jesus' tomb was found empty by a group of women followers on the Sunday morning following the crucifixion
3. On multiple occasions and under various circumstances, different individuals and groups of people experienced appearances of Jesus alive from the dead
4. The disciples believed Jesus rose from the dead despite every predisposition not to.

Jesus was Buried in the Tomb of Joseph of Arimathea

Victims of Roman crucifixion were normally buried in a shallow grave. It was not uncommon for dogs to dig up the bodies, and eat the flesh of the victims. According to the Gospels, however, Joseph of Arimathea and Nicodemus asked for, and were given permission by Pilate to bury Jesus' body in Joseph's tomb.

Historians believe the burial account is unlikely to have been invented for the following reasons:

1. There are no other competing post-mortem burial traditions.
2. The burial accounts are simple, lacking the theological reflection and apologetic development typical of legendary accounts.
3. Jesus was not said to be buried in a tomb, but in a very specific tomb: Joseph of Arimathea's personal family tomb. Such a detail is not necessary to the Gospel story.
4. Joseph of Arimathea was a member of the Sanhedrin. This makes him an unlikely candidate to be named as the owner of the tomb, and portrayed as a Jesus sympathizer. The Sanhedrin was the ruling body who tried Jesus for blasphemy, found Him guilty, and turned Him over to the Romans for execution. Why would the disciples invent a story in which a member of the group responsible for Jesus' execution was also responsible for giving Him an honorable burial? Why not have His mother, brothers, or apostles giving Him an honorable burial? Having a non-relative, who was a member of the group responsible for condemning Jesus to death, makes Jesus' relatives and followers look bad.

Furthermore, inventors of historical fiction tend to avoid details that can be exposed as fraudulent. Using an individual with Joseph's political and social celebrity in the story would open the disciples' story to falsification. Joseph (or his descendents if he was deceased when the Gospels were circulating), the Sanhedrin, and other relevant eyewitnesses could have easily disputed the claim were it false. We have no record of such a response, however.

5. The city of Arimathea was not an important city. There would be no reason to say its owner was from that city, other than the fact that he was from that city.

John A. T. Robinson of Cambridge University sums up the scholarly consensus when he says the burial story is "one of the earliest and best-attested facts about Jesus."²⁴ The historicity of Jesus' burial in Joseph's tomb is important because it demonstrates that the location of Jesus' body was a matter of public knowledge. If the apostles lied or were mistaken about seeing Christ alive from the dead, skeptics could have investigated the tomb, found the body, and exposed the apostles'

message as false. The presence of an occupied tomb would have silenced the message of the resurrection before it ever spread outside the city of Jerusalem. The burial story, then, makes the apostles' claim falsifiable.

Jesus' Tomb was Found Empty by a Group of Women Followers on the Sunday Morning Following the Crucifixion The empty tomb is a very early tradition in Christian kerygma. Mark records it within 23-26 years of Jesus' death. Matthew, Luke, and John record it as well. Paul presupposes an empty tomb in 1 Corinthians 15:3-4 when he writes, "For I passed on to you as of first importance what I also received - that Christ died for our sins according to the scriptures, and that he was buried, and that he was raised on the third day according to the scriptures." (NET Bible) It would be pointless to say He was raised on the third day if Jesus' resurrection was not bodily, and He remained in His grave. Paul penned I Corinthians in A.D. 56, 22 years after Jesus' death, but 1 Corinthians 15:3-5 is a creedal statement Paul received earlier. Some scholars believe this creed dates to within a few years of Jesus' death.²⁵ Thus, there is no possibility of the account being legendary in nature. Too little time elapsed between the events in question, and the tradition. The initial discoverers of the empty tomb were a group of female disciples. This argues strongly in favor of the story's historicity. Unlike today, women were viewed as second class citizens. Their testimony was not considered reliable, nor admissible in a Jewish court of law. Josephus wrote, "From women let no evidence be accepted, because of the levity and temerity of their sex. (Antiquities 4.219) That women are said to be the principal witnesses of the empty tomb would be an embarrassment to the male disciples. Reporting women witnesses of the event was an apologetic liability, as evidenced by Celsus' (second century) response to the story. Celsus discredited the whole story, writing: "Who saw Jesus rise from the dead? A hysterical female." If one was creating historical fiction, surely it would have been male witnesses, not female witnesses who discovered Jesus' tomb empty. The Gospels, however, faithfully record what was for them, an embarrassing fact.

Even the earliest Jewish polemic against Christianity presupposed an empty tomb. Matthew reports that the Jews claimed Jesus' disciples stole His body from the grave while the guards slept (Matthew 28:11-15).²⁶ This polemic is a conclusion that assumes a logical history of assertion and counter-assertion following this pattern:

Christian: "The Lord is risen!"

Jew: "No, his disciples stole away his body."

Christian: "The guard at the tomb would have prevented any such theft."

Jew: "No, his disciples stole away his body while the guard slept."²⁷

Christian: "The chief priests bribed the guard to say this."²⁸ For the early Jews the question was not Is the tomb empty?, but rather What happened to the body?²⁹ Even the enemies of Christianity conceded the empty tomb, and felt compelled to offer an explanation of this fact in response to the Christians' claim that Jesus rose from the dead.

Some will object to using this as evidence in favor of the empty tomb on the grounds that only Matthew records this polemic. It is not found in any Jewish source. This objection is ill-founded. When it comes to ancient documents, we are fortunate when we can find a single reference.

Multiple attestations are a luxury. When determining historicity, what matters first and foremost is the quality of the source. What reason is there to believe Matthew's report, then?

We would expect for Matthew to address a popular polemic used by unbelievers against the Christian claim of Christ's resurrection. What we would not expect is for Matthew to invent a polemic his contemporaries were not advancing, and then respond to it. His detractors would have called him on it, countering, "Who is claiming you stole the body while the guards slept?" History records no such response. It is much more reasonable to conclude that Jesus' tomb was truly empty, and the Jews countered this fact with the tomb theft polemic, than it is to conclude that Christians invented the story of the empty tomb, and then invented a polemic against that invented story!

Others will argue that Matthew invented the presence of the guards as an apologetic against the charge of tomb theft. This seems unlikely. If there was no guard, the Jewish response would have been, "There was no guard", rather than, "The guards fell asleep." Again, we have no reason to think Matthew was inventing the story, or the polemic.

If the apostles had stolen the body as the Jews claimed, why didn't they admit to this upon pain of death? Liars don't make good martyrs. Tradition records without contradiction that all of the apostles except John were martyred for their profession of faith in the risen Christ. We would expect for at least one of them to confess their lie rather than be killed. Most people will not maintain a lie for which they will suffer great personal loss, with little to gain. The apostles had little to gain and much to lose, and yet nearly every one of them went to their graves for their proclamation that Jesus' tomb was found empty. While people may die for beliefs they hold sincerely, rarely will they die for that which they know is a lie. The empty tomb story lacks legendary and apologetic development as well. The story is stated in very basic terms without flowery elaboration. If the story was a late development (invention) we would expect to see exaggerated elements in the story, or the discoverers of the empty tomb to be portrayed in a heroic fashion. Instead, the Gospels portray the empty tomb and resurrection as completely unexpected. The women discoverers did not know what to make of it. The male disciples did not believe it. Furthermore, no one interpreted the empty tomb as evidence that Jesus had risen from the dead.³⁰ Only Christ's post-mortem appearances to them were sufficient to generate this belief. If the empty tomb had been invented by the apostles, it is highly unlikely that they would have portrayed themselves as being taken unaware by the event, and not understanding its significance. We would expect them to portend as if they knew it was going to happen all along.³¹ We find just the opposite, and this argues strongly in behalf of its historicity. The Austrian specialist in the resurrection of Jesus, Jacob Kremer, summed up the conclusion of the evidence well when he wrote, "By far most scholars hold firmly...to the reliability of the Biblical statements about the empty tomb."³² On Multiple Occasions and Under Various Circumstances, Different Individuals and Groups of People

Experienced Appearances of Jesus Alive From the Dead All four Gospels, as well as Paul, record at least 14 different appearances of the risen Christ:

1. Mary Magdalene (John 20:10-18)
2. Other women (Matthew 28:8-10)

3. Cleopas and another disciple (Luke 24:13-32)
4. Eleven disciples and others (Luke 24:33-49)
5. Ten apostles w/o Thomas and others (John 20:19-23)
6. Thomas and other apostles (John 20:26-30)
7. Seven apostles (John 21:1-14)
8. Disciples (Matthew 28:16-20)
9. Apostles at Mt of Olives before ascension (Luke 24:50-52; Acts 1:4-9)
10. Peter (Luke 24:33-34; 1 Corinthians 15:5)
11. Five hundred people (1 Corinthians 15:6)
12. James (1 Corinthians 15:7)
13. Paul (Acts 9:1-43; 1 Corinthians 9:1; 1 Corinthians 15:8)

14. Various others (Acts 1:21-22) Not only do we have multiple, independent attestations to Christ's post-mortem appearances, but these traditions appear quite early in Christianity. The first gospel was written within approximately 23-26 years of Jesus' death. Paul's first letter to the Corinthians was written 22 years after Jesus' death, but his list of appearances dates to within five years of Jesus' crucifixion. This is not enough time for legend to develop.

It is important to note that Jesus did not appear just once, but many times; not to just one person, but many persons; not just to individuals, but to groups; not at just one locale and one set of circumstances, but at various locales and under various circumstances; not just to believers, but to unbelievers, skeptics, and even His enemies.³³ When you have a group of credible people who have nothing to gain and a lot to lose, claiming they saw Jesus alive after His death, and were willing to die for that claim, you must find a valid way to explain that. Paula Fredriksen said, "I know in their own terms what they saw was the raised Jesus. That's what they say, and then all the historic evidence we have afterwards attests to their conviction that that's what they saw. I'm not saying that they really did see the raised Jesus. I wasn't there. I don't know what they saw. But I do know as a historian that they must have seen something."³⁴ Even radical skeptic Gerd Ludemann wrote, "It may be taken as historically certain that Peter and the other disciples had experiences after Jesus' death in which Jesus appeared to them as the risen Christ."³⁵ The Disciples Believed Jesus Rose from the Dead Despite Every Predisposition Not To The early disciples believed Jesus rose from the dead despite every predisposition not to:

1. Psychologically speaking, they had given up hope when Jesus died. The two disciples on the road to Emmaus said they had hoped Jesus was the Messiah, but His unfortunate turn of events caused them to abandon that hope (Luke 24:21-26). Their messianic hopes were crushed. They were not expecting for Jesus to rise from the dead. They were doing their best to return to ordinary life.

We have to understand that a crucified Messiah was a failed Messiah. Typically, followers of self-proclaimed messiahs whose hopes were dashed when their would-be messiah was killed,

either sought a new Messiah or gave up on the search for a Messiah altogether. No one responded to their would-be messiah's death by proclaiming God raised him from the dead. N.T. Wright said

I simply cannot explain why Christianity began without it [a real historical resurrection of Christ]. I've already said there were many other messianic or would-be messianic movements around in the first century. Routinely they ended with the violent death of the founder. After that what happens? The followers either all get killed as well, or if there are any of them left they have a choice: they either quit the revolution, or they find themselves another messiah. We have examples of people doing both. If Jesus had died and stayed dead, they would either have given up the movement, or they would have found another messiah. Something extraordinary happened which convinced them that Jesus was the Messiah."³⁶

What happened after Jesus' crucifixion that changed the minds of the apostles who had denied, disobeyed, and deserted Him?

2. There were many diverse Messianic expectations in first century Judaism, but no one was expecting a dying, yet alone rising Messiah.

3. Jewish beliefs about the afterlife precluded people rising from the dead prior to the general resurrection at the end of the age (Daniel 12:1-2; John 11:24; Mark 9:9-13). The apostles could not have anticipated, yet alone hoped for Jesus-and only Jesus-to be resurrected from the dead in the middle of history.

4. Proclaiming the resurrection of Jesus brought great personal loss to the disciples, and very little gain. They were excommunicated from Judaism, were abused on multiple occasions, and ultimately gave their lives.

5. According to Jewish law, Jesus' form of death (on a tree) showed He was accursed by God (Galatians 3:13). How could a condemned, crucified man come to be followed and worshipped if He had not been raised from the dead? One could argue that His most committed disciples might do so, but why would anyone else do so? Worshipping someone with Jesus' fate is comparable to modern men worshipping a man put to death by electric chair.

6. According to John 7:5 Jesus' brothers did not believe He was the Messiah. And yet we read in Acts 1:14 that His brothers were among the believing community. In fact, His brother James assumed leadership of the church at Jerusalem (Acts 15:1-41; Acts 21:18; Galatians 1:19). What could account for this dramatic change of opinion? Jesus' death at the hands of the Romans should have only solidified their doubt, not caused their conversion! Why did they come to believe their brother was a divine Messiah, and even die for that belief? Jesus' post-mortem appearance to His brother James (1 Corinthians 15:7) is the best explanation for this quick change of heart, under any but optimal circumstances.

7. The concept of bodily resurrection was philosophically repugnant to the Gentile world. How did the Jewish claim of Christ's resurrection attract such large numbers of Gentile adherents if the apostles did not provide a persuasive case for Christ's resurrection?³⁷ The Gentile mission also argues against those who think the resurrection was a later, legendary development within Christianity. It would not make sense for the church to invent a resurrection story to sell to the

Gentiles. Conventional wisdom would have told them the Gentiles would not buy it. So what would their motive have been to invent the story?

8. If the disciples invented the resurrection story, why would they say it was a bodily resurrection? Doing so opened up their story to falsification. It would make more sense to claim Jesus experienced some sort of spiritual resurrection, or ascension to heaven. And yet they boldly proclaimed His resurrection as bodily in nature.

Cambridge professor, C.F.D. Moule, got it right when he wrote, "We have here a belief which literally nothing in terms of antecedent historical influences can account for apart from the resurrection itself."

Inference to the Best Explanation

What is the best explanation of these four accepted historical facts? What can account for the empty tomb, the multiple and varied reports of Christ's post-mortem appearances, and the disciples' conclusion that Jesus was raised from the dead despite having no antecedent reason to conclude this? The best way to answer this question is to employ a principle known as the inference to the best explanation.³⁸ An inference to the best explanation considers six characteristics when judging the plausibility of a hypothesis:

1. Explanatory scope (can the hypothesis explain all, or only part of the evidence?)
2. Explanatory power (how well does it explain what it attempts to explain?)
3. Plausibility (is the hypothesis plausible given our background knowledge?)
4. Degree of ad hoc interventions (does the hypothesis require you to believe other things as true-for which we have no reason to believe are true-in order for the hypothesis to work?)
5. Is it disconfirmed by accepted beliefs? (does one have to deny or alter accepted beliefs in order for the hypothesis to work?)
6. It outstrips rival hypotheses in meeting conditions 1-5 The resurrection is one explanation of the historical data, but it is not without its challengers. Alternative theories have been proposed. We will examine each proposal to see how well it accords with the historical data and the six criteria above before we make a judgment as to which explanation is the best.

Alternative Theories

While most historians and critical Bible scholars accept the four historical facts discussed above, most reject the conclusion that Jesus rose from the dead. I would argue that they reject it-not because it is not the best explanation-but because of a bias against the supernatural. They either reject the existence of God, the notion that God actively participates in human history, or that the discipline of history is able to evaluate God's activity in history. Given any of these ideas, a bodily resurrection is ruled out a priori.

I would venture to say that most historians and critical scholars who reject the conclusion that Jesus' rose from the dead do so because they reject the existence of God and the supernatural. Christians will be the first to admit that the probability of Jesus' resurrection is directly connected to

the probability of God's existence. If God does not exist, Jesus' resurrection is so improbable as to almost be ruled out *prima facie*. After all, the likelihood of every cell in Jesus' body spontaneously and simultaneously reviving is too improbable to be considered a rationally credible possibility. It is simply too improbable to happen naturally by chance. Only a supernatural cause is sufficient to explain it. The more evidence there is for God, then, the more evidence there is for the resurrection of Jesus. As Norman Geisler and Frank Turek noted, "Since there's a God who can act, there can be acts of God."³⁹ So how do critical historians and Biblical scholars explain the historical facts without appealing to the supernatural?

Theft Hypothesis The theft hypothesis holds that the disciples stole Jesus' body from the tomb to fake a resurrection. This hypothesis was maintained by the early Jews, Deists, and Hermann Reimarus. While this can explain the empty tomb, it cannot explain (1) the many post-mortem appearances of Christ, (2) why the apostles suffered martyrdom rather than confess their lie, (3) and how the disciples were able to move a two ton boulder being protected by Roman guards without waking them. Thus, the theft hypothesis lacks explanatory scope and power.

Some have suggested that Jesus' body was stolen by grave robbers, unbeknownst to the apostles, causing them to believe Jesus rose from the dead. Not only is this explanation *ad hoc*, but it ignores the fact that the disciples did not infer Jesus' resurrection from His empty tomb⁴⁰, and fails to account for the post-mortem appearances. Furthermore, if grave robbers stole Jesus' body, why did they take the time to fold Jesus' grave clothes (John 20:6-7)? Thus, the theft hypothesis is not plausible given our background knowledge either.

Switcheroo This theory holds that it was not Jesus, but someone else who was mistaken for Jesus, that was crucified. Jesus, who remained unscathed, appeared to His disciples after the event and they interpreted this as a resurrection. This is the Muslim explanation. This assertion is not based on any historical data, and post-dates the event in question by 600. Why should this be given precedence over eyewitness testimony, and first and second century non-Christian testimony? It is a bit much to ask someone to deny all the first and second century evidence in favor of an assertion from one man who was 600 years removed from the events in question. The fact of the matter is that Jesus' death by Roman crucifixion is one of the best-attested historical facts of ancient history! Are we to believe that everyone-including Jesus' friends and mother-would fail to recognize that it was not Jesus on the cross? Furthermore, this theory fails to explain the empty tomb. It does not explain what happened to Jesus either. Where did He go? According to Scripture He showed Himself alive for 40 days. Where did He go after those 40 days? Did He go into hiding? If so, why? If He did it to fool His disciples, then Jesus was a deceiver.

We should also ask why Jesus did not clear the matter up with His disciples, disavowing their conclusion that He rose from the dead? Surely they would have asked Him, "But how are you alive? We saw you get crucified!" If Jesus would have denied that it was He who was crucified, it would have stopped the resurrection story in its tracks. Yet the apostles continued to proclaim the resurrection until their deaths. If Jesus led them to believe that it was He who was crucified, then Jesus was a deceiver. This is inconsistent with Jesus' character, even on the Muslim view of Jesus. The Switcheroo theory lacks explanatory scope, plausibility, and is disconfirmed by accepted historical beliefs.

Swoon Theory

Also known as the apparent death theory, the swoon theory holds that Jesus did not really die on the cross. He was drugged to feign death. Once He was put in the tomb, He was resuscitated and proclaimed as the resurrected Messiah. This theory was popular in the late 18th and early 19th centuries among German rationalists, including Friedrich Schleiermacher. It was discredited in the late 19th century by David Strauss in his book, *A New Life of Jesus*. So persuasive was Strauss' critique of the theory that most scholars abandoned it for good.

While this theory can explain Jesus' burial, the empty tomb, and Jesus' post-mortem appearances, it fails to provide a plausible explanation of the origin of the disciples' belief in Jesus' resurrection. As such, it lacks explanatory scope. Let me explain. The swoon theory is highly unlikely given the torture Jesus endured: Roman scourging, having a spear thrust in His side (presumably through His heart). Jesus was beat to a bloody pulp. Based on the description of His beatings in the Gospels, and knowing what we know about Roman scourging, Jesus' death was almost assured from the beatings alone. Hanging for six hours on cross, and having a spear thrust in His side would have sealed His fate.

Even if we assume He was able to survive all of this, the fact of the matter is that His body would be a mangled, bloody mess. Given His condition, why would the disciples have concluded that He was the Lord of life? Why would they proclaim that our resurrection will pattern Christ's? That is unreasonable. As such, the Swoon theory lacks plausibility as well. The theory also turns Christ, or His disciples into deceivers. If Christ alone concocted the plan, then He purposely deceived His disciples. This picture of Christ is not consistent with His moral character as found in Scripture. If one or more of His disciples were involved in the plot, then they are also found to be liars. As noted previously, they gave up their lives rather than deny the resurrected Christ. If they knew this claim was fabricated, why didn't they confess it rather than die? Liars do not make good martyrs. This idea is disconfirmed by other accepted beliefs.

Further problems with this theory are as follows:

Roman executioners were skilled in the art of crucifixion and death. They confirmed that Jesus was dead. It is highly unlikely that they would be mistaken in their assessment.

How could Jesus have moved the boulder that sealed His tomb given His physical condition? How could Jesus have exited the tomb without alerting the guards? (not plausible)

Even non-Christians such as Josephus, Tacitus, Thallus, and the Talmud affirmed that Jesus died. (disconfirmed by accepted beliefs)

Hallucination Theory The hallucination theory holds that Jesus' post-mortem appearances were illusory. Those who claimed to see Jesus alive after His death did see something, but it was not a bodily, physical Jesus. It was an intra-mental event brought on by wish projection, or guilt. This theory was popular in the 19th and early 20th century. David Strauss was a prominent proponent of this view. It is gaining ground once again in defenders such as Gerd Ludemann, who argues that the disciples were suffering from a guilt complex, causing them to hallucinate, and see visions of a living Jesus. This theory might explain Jesus' burial, post-mortem appearances, and origin of the disciples' belief in the resurrection, but it cannot explain the empty tomb. If they were only hallucinating when they saw Jesus alive after His death, then Jesus' body would still be in the grave. And yet everyone agreed the tomb was empty. The hallucination theory, like the others,

lacks explanatory scope.

Further problems with this theory include:

Hallucinations are individual occurrences, not group occurrences. No two people experience the same hallucination. Psychologist, Gary Collins, notes that "[h]allucinations are individual occurrences. By their very nature only one person can see a given hallucination at a time. They certainly are not something which can be seen by a group of people.... Since an hallucination exists only in this subjective, personal sense, it is obvious that others cannot witness it."⁴¹

Not only would one have to maintain that these hallucinations were experienced by many people in a given group, but also that the same sort of hallucination was experienced by others outside that group at different times, various locations, and diverse circumstances. Given what we know about hallucinations this is impossible. The theory is contradicted by accepted beliefs, and not plausible given our background knowledge of the cause and nature of hallucinations.

If the disciples had experienced post-trauma hallucinations, it is highly improbable that they would have projected a resurrected Jesus because hallucinations are tied to one's belief system, and the idea of a resurrected messiah was entirely foreign to their belief system. They did not expect a dying, yet alone rising Messiah. Furthermore, Jewish theology understood the resurrection as a corporate event occurring at the end of time. No one thought it possible, and thus no one expected for a single person to be raised from the dead in advance of this time. This also renders the theory implausible.

Alister McGrath wrote, "The idea of the resurrection Jesus being explicable as some sort of wish-fulfillment on the part of the disciples also strains the imagination somewhat. Why should the disciples have responded to the catastrophe of Jesus' death by making the hitherto unprecedented suggestion that he had been raised from the dead? The history of Israel is littered with the corpses of pious Jewish martyrs, none of whom was ever thought of as having been raised from the dead in such a manner."⁴²

Why did the hallucinations stop after 40 days? Why didn't other disciples claim to see Jesus alive after this point?⁴³

Wrong tomb This theory, proposed by Kirsop Lake in 1909, holds that the women disciples went to the wrong tomb. The tomb they went to was empty, causing them to falsely conclude that Jesus had risen from the dead. When the gardener said "Jesus is not here", he was stating a fact. The only historical fact this theory can explain is the empty tomb, so it lacks explanatory scope and power. Other than that, this theory is sunk with factual and logical problems.

First, the Bible does not say the gardener said "Jesus is not here," but that the women supposed he was the gardener. In fact, the supposed-gardener who appeared to the women identified himself as the risen Christ (John 20:14-17).

Secondly, we know from the Biblical testimony that the disciples did not interpret the empty tomb as evidence that Jesus had been resurrected. They were puzzled by it, not persuaded by it. It presented a problem to be solved, not an answer. N.T. Wright wrote:

Neither the empty tomb by itself, however, nor the appearances by themselves, could have generated the early Christian belief [in Jesus' resurrection]. The empty tomb alone would be a puzzle and a tragedy. Sightings of an apparently alive Jesus, by themselves, would have been classified as visions or hallucinations, which were well enough known in the ancient world."⁴⁴ "We are left with the conclusion that the combination of empty tomb and appearances of the living Jesus forms a set of circumstances which is itself both necessary and sufficient for the rise of early Christian belief. Without these phenomena, we cannot explain why this belief came into existence, and took the shape it did. With them, we can explain it exactly and precisely."⁴⁵

Thirdly, the Jewish authorities knew where Jesus was buried. They only had to point the disciples to the correct tomb, and the error would have been corrected.

Fourthly, the wrong tomb theory cannot explain the post-mortem appearances experienced by the disciples. This theory relies on a changing of the facts as recorded in the primary sources, and thus it is disconfirmed by accepted beliefs.

Twin Brother Theory

Dr. Greg Cavin of the University of California Irvine proposed that Jesus had an unknown identical twin brother who was separated from him at birth, came back to Jerusalem at the time of his brother's crucifixion, stole Jesus' body from the grave, and presented himself to the disciples, who mistakenly inferred that Jesus was risen from the dead.

While this theory accounts for all four strands of historical data, it is so far-fetched that one can hardly take it seriously. There is not a shred of historical evidence to suggest that Jesus had a twin brother, yet alone that they were separated at birth. And why should we believe that this long-lost brother would return to Jerusalem at precisely the time of Jesus' crucifixion? Why didn't he reveal his true identity to his brother's disciples? Furthermore, are we to believe that those closest to Jesus, who followed and lived with Jesus for three plus years, would not notice that this was not Jesus? This theory possesses explanatory scope and power, but fails miserably at plausibility, and relies too much on ad hoc historical inventions to be taken seriously as a historical explanation.

Copycat of Pagan Mythology The copycat theory holds that the disciples invented the story of Jesus' resurrection, patterning it after a combination of various elements in pagan mythology. This theory lacks explanatory scope in that it cannot explain the empty tomb or the post-mortem appearances. If the disciples fabricated the story, patterning it after pagan mythology (as if these simple fishermen were studied enough to do that), then Jesus' body would still be in the grave, and the skeptics could have exposed it. Like other theories, this one fails to explain why the disciples would die for what they knew to be a lie. The quality of the stories is different as well. "There is a marked difference between the Biblical stories and other mythological stories. While all of them have a moral to them, only the Biblical stories are clearly placed in a space-time context that one could falsify. Furthermore, the magic in those stories seem to be part of the world itself. The Biblical stories, however, present the world in exactly the same naturalistic way we all experience it, but introduce occasional divine intervention."⁴⁶

More importantly, the premise is mistaken on factual grounds. The first parallel of a dying and rising god does not appear until A.D. 150. The only pre-Christian pagan myth that is even remotely comparable to the resurrection of Jesus is the Egyptian account of the cult god, Osiris. In the myth,

Osiris was cut into 14 pieces, scattered throughout Egypt, and then brought back to life by the goddess Isis. But Osiris did not come back to physical life. He came back to a spiritual life in the shadowy underworld. The message of Christ's resurrection only finds parallels in Jewish ideas.

Some cite parallels to the cyclical dying and rising gods of pagan mythology. Scott Klusendorf explains why these are not true parallels: "Christian resurrection differs significantly from the dying and rising Gods (cyclical) of ancient mystery religions. These icons of mystery religions are not analogous to a historical Jesus. Many times they are not real people and most post-date Christianity. Hence, the comparisons to Christianity are unfair."⁴⁷ Some will cite Appollonius of Tyana as an exception to this rule. Klusendorf responds by nothing that there are serious historical and theological reasons to contest this. First, the author of the story, writing 120 years after Apollonius dies, has the alleged messiah figure visiting Ninevah and Babylon-cities that were destroyed hundreds of years earlier. Second, what we get with Appollonius is apotheosis-that is, a man who is elevated to a god-like figure after death-not bodily resurrection as early Christians understood and proclaimed it. Third, the Appollonius story is backwards to the Christian one. That is, Appollonius the man dies, then becomes god-like. Christ, meanwhile, first exists as God, eventually takes on an additional human nature, dies, gains a resurrected and transformed body, then finally returns to the Father. Hence, the alleged parallels between Apollonius and Christ are far from compelling.⁴⁸

Even if genuine parallels to the resurrection story existed in pre-Christian pagan mythology, it would not mean any similarities to these myths must be myth as well. The Star Trek myth predated our journey into space, but that does not render our journey into space mythic. A later reality is not invalidated by the presence of earlier myth.⁴⁹ Klusendorf concludes, "Simply put, Christian resurrection is unique. Neither the pagan world nor the Jewish one anticipated the bodily and transforming resurrection that was experienced by Christ and later proclaimed by his apostles. The early Greeks thought it absurd, later Greeks found it distasteful, and the Jews simply couldn't imagine it. Hence, there is no reason to suppose that the NT authors made the story up from borrowed sources. If critics aim to prove resurrection false because of its alleged parallels to the ancient world, they would do well to consult that world before discounting the claims of the New Testament writers."⁵⁰

While the copycat theory was popular in days past, today it has been abandoned by most scholars. C.S. Lewis, a historian and writer of mythology himself noted, "If anyone thinks the Gospels are either legends or novels, then that person is simply showing his incompetence as a literary critic." The Pagan Copycat theory lacks explanatory scope in that it fails to explain the existence of a genuinely empty tomb. It lacks explanatory power in that it does not explain why the disciples first believed in Jesus' resurrection, or why Christianity was born and flourished in such a short period of time. It is not plausible either, given what we know about the content of pagan mythology, and its temporal introduction to Palestine.

Spiritual Resurrection This theory asserts that the early disciples believed Christ experienced a spiritual-not physical-resurrection, and then ascended to heaven. Over time the tradition was enhanced to that of a physical resurrection. This theory is inadequate on Biblical, lexical, and logical grounds. Even if one might wish to deny a real bodily resurrection of Christ, a quick read of the Gospels makes it clear that the church proclaimed Christ's resurrection as bodily. In Acts

2:29-32 Peter contrasted David who was dead and buried and whose tomb was still with the Jews, to Christ whose flesh did not see corruption. Such a contrast only makes sense if Jesus' body was no longer in the grave (where it would be if Christ only experienced a spiritual resurrection). The early disciples said Jesus was raised from the dead "three days" after His death. This is a strange twist on the story if the disciples only believed Jesus was resurrected in a spiritual sense, for such an event could be had without any temporal interval.⁵¹ Furthermore, how would they have known Jesus attained this resurrection after three days? His body remained unchanged in the grave both before and after the three days. What was the objective event which clued them into the fact that Jesus experienced a spiritual resurrection on the third day? The objective event was the physical resurrection of Jesus. On the third day His body was gone, after which He began to appear to His disciples. Since Jesus' body was in the grave prior to three days, and He had not appeared to His disciples prior to the third day, they concluded that He rose from the dead on the third day. That Jesus' resurrection was physical, not spiritual in nature is also clear from 1 Corinthians 15:8 where Paul says he saw Jesus out of sequence. Why? Because there was a temporal end to His appearances (His ascension into heaven after 40 days), and yet Paul saw Him anyway. If Paul only thought of Jesus' resurrection as a spiritual resurrection, and the appearances as non-corporeal, there would be no reason to make such a statement. Every Christian could have a spiritual vision of the risen Christ, but not everyone could see Jesus in bodily form.⁵² The New Testament makes a distinction between appearances of Jesus, and visions of Jesus (such as Stephen in Acts 7:55). The story of the chief priests requesting guards to guard the tomb also shows that Jesus' resurrection was understood in physical terms. Guards could not prevent Jesus' spirit from ascending to heaven.⁵³ This theory also fails on lexical grounds. In both Judaism and paganism anastasis (the word translated "resurrection") always referred to "life after life after death". It was a two-tiered timeline; something that happened to the body after an interim period of disembodied life after death. It was not something that happened instantly after death. It was a reversal of death, not mere life after death.⁵⁴ No one in the ancient world used anastasis to refer to anything other than a return to bodily life after a period of death. The idea of a spiritual resurrection of Jesus is excluded by the very word used to describe the event. The theory, then, is disconfirmed by accepted beliefs.

It also fails to explain the empty tomb. If Jesus' resurrection was spiritual, his body would be in the grave. The spiritual resurrection hypothesis lacks explanatory scope. For those who think the original disciples only claimed that Jesus went to heaven when He died (such as Bultmann) or experienced a spiritual resurrection, one has to postulate that sometime in middle of the 1st century someone began using the word "resurrection" to describe this. Others, hearing the word and knowing its standard definition, misunderstood this to mean that Jesus rose physically from the dead. From there, legends were created about empty tombs and physical appearances. This misunderstanding, and the legends that flowed from it, overtook the church to the point that the original belief was entirely abandoned without a historical trace.

⁵⁵ All of this occurred within 15 years or so of Jesus' death. As with many other Bultmannian constructions, the sequence of moves required to support the hypothesis takes far more historical imagination than the thing Bultmann is trying to avoid.⁵⁶ Thus, the theory lacks plausibility, and requires too many ad hoc interventions to be taken seriously.

N.T. Wright explains how unlikely it would be for the disciples to begin with a spiritual resurrection model, and then evolve into a physical resurrection model:

Even if we suppose the very unlikely hypothesis that the early disciples, all of them of course Jewish monotheists, had come to be convinced of Jesus' divinity without any bodily resurrection having taken place, there is no reason to suppose that they would then have begun to think or talk about resurrection itself. If, somehow, they had come to believe that a person like Jesus had been exalted to heaven, that would be quite enough; why add extraneous ideas? What, from the point of view we are hypothesizing, could resurrection have added to exaltation or even divinization? Why would anyone work back by that route, to end up predicating something which nobody was expecting and which everybody knew had not happened?⁵⁷ Why These Alternative Theories Fail

How well do these theories satisfy the six criteria used in making an inference to the best explanation? Very poorly! They lack explanatory scope, explanatory power, plausibility, rely on ad hoc interventions, and are disconfirmed by accepted knowledge. James D.G. Dunn concluded that "alternative interpretations of the data fail to provide a more satisfactory explanation" than the resurrection hypothesis.⁵⁸ Philosopher Stephen Davis spoke to skeptics' inability to come up with a historical theory that is more plausible than the resurrection when he wrote, "[Critics] are unable to come up with a coherent and plausible story that accounts for the evidence at hand. All of the alternative hypotheses with which I am familiar are historically weak; some are so weak that they collapse of their own weight once spelled out.... the alternative theories that have been proposed are not only weaker but far weaker at explaining the available historical evidence...."⁵⁹

These alternative explanations of the historical facts are derived from an a priori philosophical objection to the supernatural. Those who espouse them do so, not because they offer a better explanation of the data, but because they eliminate the supernatural. Adherents object to the best explanation—the resurrection—on philosophic, not historical grounds.⁶⁰ But that philosophic bias itself must be questioned. When it comes to explaining the historical data, the best explanation is the one offered by the early disciples: Jesus' body was raised from the dead by supernatural power. This hypothesis has explanatory scope, explanatory power, is plausible, does not require ad hoc interventions, and is confirmed by accepted beliefs. C.F.D. Moule wrote, "If the coming into existence of the Nazarenes, a phenomenon undeniably attested by the New Testament, rips a great hole in history, a hole of the size and shape of the Resurrection, what does the secular historian propose to stop it up with? ... [T]he birth and rapid rise of the Christian Church... remain an unsolved enigma for any historian who refuses to take seriously the only explanation offered by the church itself."⁶¹

Jesus' resurrection cannot be proven beyond all doubt, but the facts provide adequate justification for concluding that Jesus did in fact rise from the dead as the earliest disciples proclaimed. The resurrection hypothesis is the best explanation for the facts. There is no historical reason to reject this hypothesis; only a philosophical bias against miracles. While it is absurd to believe a man can come back to life by natural means, it is not absurd to believe that He can do so with supernatural assistance. All that is necessary is that God exist—and there is good evidence for this conclusion. Given theism, the resurrection is very probable. The greater the evidence for theism, the greater the probability that Jesus was raised from the dead.⁶²

Conclusion

What do you do with a man who was raised from the dead, never to see death again? That was the question early Christians posed to an unbelieving world. It is the same question we must ask ourselves today. The historical evidence for Christ's resurrection compels us to consider the God of Christianity, because in the resurrection of Jesus, God has acted in time-space history in a decisive way.

Christians share a conviction that God raised Jesus from the dead as the forerunner and exemplar of our own eschatological resurrection. It is His resurrection that constitutes the factual foundation upon which the Christian hope is based. His resurrection (1) demonstrates that there is a God, and He is the God of the Bible; (2) confirms for us that Jesus is who He claimed to be; (3) confirms the veracity of His teachings; (4) confirms the coming of a future judgment; (5) and firmly establishes our own hope of future resurrection.

All of us have rebelled against God; all of us have rejected His will in favor of asserting our own. We have broken His just laws, and are deserving of punishment. But the God who is perfect justice is also perfect love. While His perfect justice demands punishment for sin, His infinite love desires mercy. What is God to do? How can He abstain from punishing us, and yet remain just? His solution was Christ. God's justice and mercy meet at the cross. Christ, whose sinless life made Him undeserving of punishment, accepted God's holy wrath in our stead. He volunteered to be our substitute. As God manifest in human existence, Christ's death was of infinite value, able to atone for the sins of the whole world. All He asks of us is that we accept what He did on our behalf; that we acknowledge our sin, and our lack of ability to fix the problem.

God has offered us a solution to our sin problem, but on His terms, not ours. Christ paid the penalty for our sin, receiving the punishment that ought to have been our own. No one else has done this—not Buddha, not Mohammed, or any other man. Now we have a choice. If we accept Christ, God considers our debt of sin as paid in full. If we reject Christ, however, we reject the only solution to our guilt, and elect to pay for our own crimes against God. If we choose to stand before God based on our own works we will surely face condemnation. If we choose to stand before God based on Christ's work on our behalf, however, we can expect mercy and grace. That's the Gospel. That's the meaning of Christ's death and resurrection.

Objections The Biblical Witnesses to the Resurrection are Disqualified Because They are Christians

Some argue that we cannot admit the testimony of Matthew, Mark, Luke, John, Paul, et al because they are Christians, and their testimony is recorded in the Bible. It is reasoned that as Christians, they are biased to believe in the resurrection, making their testimony unreliable. This sort of reasoning is misguided. It presumes that rational objectivity is impossible if one has taken a position on a matter (in this case, the resurrection of Jesus Christ). This confuses rational neutrality with rational objectivity. One is still capable of rational objectivity even if they are not rationally neutral (anyone who has some knowledge of a topic ceases to be rationally neutral). If that were not so, none of us would ever change our mind about anything we have come to believe. Clearly we have, and thus psychological bias does not preclude rational objectivity. Another way of saying this is that psychological objectivity (i.e. having formed no conclusions) is not a prerequisite for rational objectivity.

Furthermore, it ignores the fact that rational objectivity may be what led these individuals to believe in the resurrection in the first place. The evidence could have been so strong in favor of that conclusion that they were incapable of remaining intellectually honest without affirming that Jesus rose from the dead. The individual making this objection should be privy to the fact that the principle works both ways. Those who deny the resurrection have taken a position on the matter. If taking a position eliminates objectivity, and hence trustworthiness, then we should dismiss the evidence against Christ's resurrection presented by those who deny it. Their belief that Jesus was not raised from the dead makes their testimony against it unreliable. What's good for the goose is good for the gander! Of course, this is foolish reasoning. The objection presumes that the only valid, objective evidence for the resurrection of Jesus must come from those who do not already believe in the resurrection of Jesus. But if they do not believe in the resurrection of Jesus, why would they present evidence for the resurrection of Jesus? Those who do not believe in the resurrection are not going to provide evidence for that which they do not believe! Can you imagine this standard being applied to any other topic? What if I said the only valid, objective evidence for global warming must come from those who do not believe in global warming, because only they are rationally objective on the issue? That is nonsensical. We would expect the evidence for global warming to come from those who are convinced that it is a real phenomenon, and we weigh that evidence on its own merits.

Furthermore, if those who deny the resurrection knew the evidence for the resurrection, they might be compelled to believe in the resurrection as did the earliest Christians. At that moment we would have to reject their testimony as well. The skeptics have set up an impossible, self-serving standard, and then claim victory when it cannot be met. The testimony of those who believe in the resurrection is valid evidence, and needs to be evaluated on its own merits. The Resurrection Accounts Differ

It is true that the resurrection accounts differ in their details, but what follows from that? Does it follow that therefore nothing happened? As N.T. Wright wrote, "To put it crudely, the fact that they cannot agree over how many women, or angels, were at the tomb, or even the location of the appearances, does not mean nothing happened."⁶³ What matters most is that they are in basic agreement on the salient details. That they are is beyond question.

Many of the differences in the resurrection account have to do with wording, what is reported, and what is not reported. None of these are contradictions, however. If one writer chooses to provide more detail than another author (nothing the presence of additional women, or additional angels for example) they are free to do so. That is not a contradiction. Neither is it a contradiction for one author to include or leave out events another author includes, or even use slightly different words in his recorded dialogues. Writers in that day were not concerned with verbatim quotes or recording every detail. Neither were they consumed with chronological order. They would often arrange material thematically. We cannot impose modern standards of writing on ancient authors, and then cry foul because they do not conform to our literary expectations.

Consider a case in point. John depicts Peter and the beloved disciple both running to Jesus' tomb to investigate Mary's report that Jesus' body was missing. In Luke 24:12 Luke only names Peter. Is this a contradiction? In the immediate context Luke goes on to tell of the two disciples on the road to Emmaus to whom Jesus appeared. These disciples recounted the story to Jesus, telling

him how "some of our number" went to the tomb and discovered it empty. It is obvious that Luke was aware of the presence of more than one disciple at the tomb, but for whatever reason, he chose to only mention Peter. If Luke can say it was one person, and then turn right around a couple of verses later and say it was more than one without us thinking this is an internal contradiction (how could it be given the proximity of the passages?), then we should not think it a contradiction when one author records the presence of more women or more angels than another.⁶⁴ In fact, the number of women at the tomb is another case in point. In John 20:1, John only mentions Mary Magdalene as a witness to Jesus' resurrection. The synoptic writers all report a plurality of women. Some see this as a contradiction. Was John only aware of one witness, while the other Gospel writers were aware of others? No. In the very next verse John records Mary as saying to the apostles, "We do not know where they have laid him." While John only names a single witness, he is clearly aware of the fact that there were more present at the tomb than just Mary.

N.T. Wright explains how the differences in details-rather than arguing against the historical authenticity of the Gospels-actually argues for their authenticity as a reliable historical accounts: "The surface inconsistencies between Mark 16:1-8 and its parallels, of which so much is made by those eager to see the accounts as careless fiction, is in fact a strong point in favour of their early character. The later we imagine them being written up, let alone edited, the more likely it would be that inconsistencies would be ironed out. ... It strongly supports the idea that they were early, that they were not assimilated either to each other or to developed New Testament theology, and that the inconsistencies between them should not be allowed to stand in the way of taking them seriously as historical sources."⁶⁵

Recognizing the presence of differences should not cause one to lose sight of the amazing similarities in the testimonies. All four Gospels agree the empty tomb was discovered in the early hours of the first day of the week following Passover. All agree that Mary Magdalene, as well as at least one other woman discovered the tomb. All agree that the stone was already moved supernaturally prior to the arrival of the women. All agree that the resurrected Jesus appeared to His disciples over a period of time in various locations and under various circumstances.

Why Didn't Jesus Appear to Unbelievers?

Those who make this objection argue that if Jesus had been raised from the dead, He would have, or at least should have been seen by unbelievers as well as believers. Since He only appeared to those who already believed Him to be the Messiah, the credibility of the disciples' claim to have seen Jesus are seriously undermined. After all, it is rather convenient that Jesus would only appear alive to those who believed He was the Messiah before He was crucified. The most glaring problem with this objection is that its premise is factually mistaken. Jesus did appear to unbelievers. He appeared to His brothers, who did not believe He was the Messiah prior to His crucifixion. He also appeared to Paul, a persecutor of Christians. The objection is flawed in another way as well. It assumes that Jesus needed to appear to unbelievers to validate His resurrection, but why assume this? We tend to think (and skeptics often claim) that people would believe in God if only they saw a miracle. For some that is true, but not for most. They will do their best to explain the miracle away before confessing the Creator as their Lord. We underestimate the extent of the rebellion against God that is bound up in the human heart. As Jesus said in the

parable of the rich man and Lazarus, "If they will not hear Moses and the prophets, neither will they be persuaded even if one rises from the dead" (Luke 16:31).

Jesus' own apostles are a case in point. In Matthew 28:17 we read, "When they saw him, they worshiped him, but some doubted. (NET Bible) If Jesus' own apostles doubted upon seeing Him alive, how much more those who were not previously disposed to believe in Him? Call to memory the Jewish leaders' response to Jesus' raising of Lazarus from the dead (John 12:9-11). It appears that they believed Jesus really did raise him from the dead, but their response was not repentance. Their response was to kill Lazarus so as to prevent others from believing on Jesus due to this miracle. Jesus did not need to appear to unbelievers at large. Even if He had, it probably would not have had the effect of causing anyone to believe in Him who did not already believe in Him, or who would not believe in Him through the testimony of those who saw Him alive. The Disciples Invented the Resurrection of Jesus to Bolster Their Divine Claims of Him What would the connection be? Being raised from the dead does not make one God.

"Even if we suppose the very unlikely hypothesis that the early disciples, all of them of course Jewish monotheists, had come to be convinced of Jesus' divinity without any bodily resurrection having taken place, there is no reason to suppose that they would then have begun to think or talk about resurrection itself. If, somehow, they had come to believe that a person like Jesus had been exalted to heaven, that would be quite enough; why add extraneous ideas? What, from the point of view we are hypothesizing, could resurrection have added to exaltation or even divinization? Why would anyone work back by that route, to end up predicating something which nobody was expecting and which everybody knew had not happened?"⁶⁶ Why Didn't the Disciples Immediately Proclaim Christ's Resurrection?

After Jesus rose from the dead He appeared to His disciples several times over the course of 40 days, until He ascended to heaven. Why didn't the disciples proclaim the resurrection of Christ until after His ascension? Why, if they knew Jesus had risen from the dead three days after His crucifixion did they wait another 37 days to publicly proclaim it (at Pentecost)? The delay seems odd. If you saw someone alive who had previously been dead, would you hesitate more than a few moments to proclaim it abroad? Add to this His celebrity, the public nature of His death (many saw Him die), the disciples' close relationship with Him, and the fact that His resurrection would vindicate His messianic claims, and the disciples had every reason to instantly proclaim to everyone in Israel that they saw Jesus alive. The delay lapse in time between the resurrection of Christ and the disciples' proclamation of His resurrection argues against the credibility of the apostles' story. It would appear that they delayed their public proclamation because they fabricated the story, and needed those five weeks to corroborate the details among themselves. At least that's how the objection goes. As with the previous objection, the premise of this objection is factually mistaken. The disciples did proclaim the resurrection of Jesus prior to Pentecost. Recall the periscope of doubting Thomas. Before Thomas saw the risen Christ, he would not believe the report of the other disciples who said they saw Him alive. But then Jesus appeared to Thomas as well, and he believed. Jesus told Thomas, "Because you have seen me, you have believed: blessed are those who have not seen, and yet have believed." (John 20:29)

It's important to note that "believed" is in the aorist tense. Contrary to popular interpretation, Jesus is not referring to those in the future who would believe He rose from the dead without having seen

Him alive, but to those in the past who believed He rose from the dead without having seen Him alive. For Jesus to say there were people in the past who believed in His resurrection without having seen Him alive requires that the apostles/disciples were proclaiming the resurrection prior to Pentecost! If they had not been proclaiming the resurrection, no one except for those to whom Jesus had appeared to would believe in His resurrection. Of course, we don't know how many people the disciples told about the risen Christ, or who they told (only previous followers of Jesus, or unbelievers as well), but this passage is evidence that the disciples did not wait until after Pentecost to begin proclaiming the resurrection. That proclamation only intensified and widened after Pentecost. For the sake of argument, let's say the apostles limited their pre-Pentecost proclamation of Jesus' resurrection to existing followers of Jesus. Would this support the notion that the disciples used that time to fabricate their story? It could, but only if it could be demonstrated that they had no sufficient reason to delay their public proclamation to unbelievers. That would be a difficult case to make. I can think of at least one good reason they might do so: fear. Remember, Jesus only appeared to His followers and relatives. While His death was very public, His resurrection and resurrection appearances were not. He did not go to the temple and show Himself alive to the chief priests or temple-gatherers. He did not walk the streets of Jerusalem showing the people the nail prints in his hands and feet. He only showed Himself to His close associates and relatives. It is not a stretch of the imagination to think the disciples were afraid to proclaim the resurrection because they feared that they would be killed, just as Jesus had been. Indeed, Scripture portrays the disciples as fearing for their lives after Jesus' crucifixion (Mark 16:8).

Why would they begin proclaiming the resurrection at Pentecost, then? The answer is given to us in Scripture. During one of His post-mortem appearances Jesus told His disciples that they would receive power through the Holy Spirit to be witnesses of His resurrection, beginning in Jerusalem and then beyond (Acts 1:8). It was precisely when the disciples were filled with the Spirit in Acts 2:1-47 that they began a very public proclamation of the resurrection.

Another possible reason for the apostles' delay is because they were waiting on Jesus to reveal Himself as Israel's king. We know they were expecting Him to do so from Acts 1:6-7. Just prior to Jesus' ascension to heaven the disciples ask Him if He was about to restore Israel's national sovereignty. With such an expectation, maybe they were waiting on Jesus to make the next move, fearing that any proclamation of their experience may hinder His plans. In summation, it's not true that the apostles waited to proclaim the resurrection. While there may have been a delay in a widespread public proclamation to unbelievers, such a delay is quite reasonable. There is no need to resort to a conspiracy theory to explain it.

Matthew's Report of the Dead Coming to Life is Ridiculous

Matthew tells of some amazing events surrounding the death and resurrection of Jesus, among them being the resurrection of dead saints who were seen by many in Jerusalem. Some find this report so unbelievable that it renders the credibility of Jesus' resurrection story unbelievable as well.

Even if we agreed that this report is unbelievable, fails to bear the marks of historicity, and probably never happened, it does not detract from the details of Christ's resurrection that do bear the marks of historicity. One cannot throw out the baby with the bath water.

Beyond this, I see no reason to doubt that this happened. If God can raise one man from the dead, He can raise multiple people from the dead.

I leave you with some insightful thoughts N.T. Wright has to offer both believers and skeptics alike: "It remains the case that the events Matthew describes in Matthew 27:51 -, as well as being without parallel in other early Christian sources, are without precedent in second-Temple expectation, and we may doubt whether stories such as this would have been invented simply to "fulfill" prophecies that nobody had understood this way before. This is hardly a satisfactory conclusion, but it is better to remain puzzled than to settle for either a difficult argument for probable historicity or a cheap and cheerful rationalistic dismissal of the possibility. Some stories are so odd that they may just have happened. This may be one of them, but in historical terms there is no way of finding out."⁶⁷ **Tactic: Focus on the Resurrection, not an Inerrant Bible** The truth of Christianity does not depend on an inerrant Bible (no logical connection), but the acts of God in history to which the Bible is a historical record of. So long as the Bible is accurate in its salient details regarding Christ and His resurrection, Christianity is validated.⁶⁸ The Bible may inform our faith, and give us a starting point to come to faith, but our faith is not derived from, nor dependent on the Bible. It is dependent on the genuine existence of God and the resurrection of Christ from the dead. If Christ rose from the dead 2000 years ago, the game is over! The truth of Christianity is established. These two truths can be established beyond a reasonable doubt through non-religious tools such as philosophy and historiography. We do need the Bible, but we don't need to establish it as a spiritual authority before we can have faith. It need only be established as a historical authority. We can then investigate its historical claims. If those prove to be accurate it gives weight to its spiritual claims as well (spiritual authority). When we look at the historical evidence for the existence of Christ and His resurrection from the dead, the most reasonable conclusion is that Christ did rise from the dead. If He did, then Christianity is true, and Christ is an authority concerning the spiritual realm and we ought to listen to what He says about it. It doesn't matter if the Bible has contradictions in it--either ideological contradictions, or factual contradictions. So long as the salient details of Christ's teachings and resurrection are historically accurate, Christianity is established as true. How we deal with the rest of Christianity, including the interpretation of Christ's revelation to man through His apostles and prophets is another matter. One thing is for certain: Jesus rose from the dead and we cannot ignore that. To ignore this because of what we perceive to be Biblical problems is wrongheaded.

While there are many Biblical difficulties I have not yet resolved, I am at ease with my ignorance because I know that faith in the God of Christianity is the only reasonable place to put my faith.

S. Understanding the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit

Understanding the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit by

Jason Dulle

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

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

Milton Hall said, "Your ability to learn depends partly on your ability to relinquish what you've held." Although it is not possible to completely divorce one's prior understanding from influencing the reading of Scripture, the author has attempted to approach the Scripture from a non-biased position, not adhering to any theological system. Sometimes, when we receive or adopt a certain system of theology, we have the tendency to become intellectually dishonest with ourselves, explaining away all that does not fit our model instead of using it to seriously challenge our present understanding and paradigm. Rather than the theologian having a theology, the theology ends up having him, creating a stumblingblock or barrier to discovering truth. I have attempted to distinguish my beliefs from the teaching of the Scripture, not contending for my own personal theology, so that in the end, my theology does not speak more of who I am than of God, and what His truth is. In order to accomplish the above goal, this paper follows a specific theological method known as "integrative theology", which is intended for the exploration and presentation of truth, not for the defending of an already established theology. In order to understand the flow of this paper, a preliminary overview of the method and layout will be helpful. The first stage states the problem under consideration. The second stage identifies the various influential solutions to the problem that have arisen throughout church history. The third stage explores all relevant Biblical data addressing the problem, in its order of development. Instead of taking a systematic approach to the Scripture that would combine all information regarding the problem into one package, irregardless of the time it was written in, or the author who penned the information, a biblical theology approach is used, taking into consideration the time in history at which the information was revealed, and the author who penned such information.

There are two underlying assumptions behind this approach. The first is that revelation is progressive. As time progressed, the content of revelation also progressed, God revealing more information to us concerning certain topics. The second assumption is that each author commonly has his own emphasis or special contribution to the furtherance of this revelation, and therefore each authors' writings should be explored separately from the others to see what particular contribution(s) he gives to the rest of the Biblical revelation. The presentation of the Scripture is not biased so as to avoid problematic passages to a certain theological viewpoint. All relevant passages are referenced, but not necessarily exegeted. The purpose of this section is to do a Scriptural evaluation, constantly looking to see where the Scripture supports the various historical hypotheses, and where it contradicts the same. This section is not apologetical, defending any particular view and condemning any other, but is a simple exploration of the Scripture. There is no authorial statement of belief in this section. The fourth stage flows from the third-a systematic formulation of the Biblical presentation. After examining the relevant data, a position is taken as to which proposed view is closest to the Biblical revelation, with the fewest number of difficulties. One of the views may be adopted in its totality, modified, or a number of views may be synthesized into one. It is also possible that none of the views are regarded as being faithful to the Biblical data, and a new model will be adopted. The fifth stage attempts to defend the position adopted above from the attacks leveled against it by those who hold to the other historical views. A critique is also performed on the other views to demonstrate their weaknesses, and to define why they must be rejected as inadequate. The sixth stage attempts to demonstrate the practical implications of the view adopted in the systematic formulation for life and ministry. Finally, although not considered a separate stage, there is a section of concluding thoughts, leaving the reader with something to reflect on along with the material presented in the paper.

The center of any theistic religion is the god, or gods who are served. Understanding the nature and identity of the deity, or deities, is the heart of most religions. Judaism is no different. The basis of the Jewish faith is YHWH. Jews have always maintained that YHWH is one God, one being. With the advent of Jesus Christ and the subsequent inception of the Christian church, the Jewish understanding of monotheism was challenged. The teachings of Jesus and His apostles presented a complex problem to the young church, because they advocated that Jesus was God Himself, and yet maintained a distinction between Jesus and the Father. To add to the complication, the Holy Spirit was also spoken of as being distinct from the Father and the Son.

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

How are we to understand the ontological (the essence of being) and economic (function) nature of the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit? Are there three Gods, or is there one God? What is the relationship of the Father, Son, and Spirit? Is there an ordering relationship of subordinationism

among the three? These questions and many others will be addressed in this paper.

Alternative Interpretations in the Church

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

Dynamic Monarchianism

Also known as Adoptionistic Monarchianism, this view of the Godhead attempted to preserve monotheism by denying the absolute deity of Jesus Christ. Jesus was a mere man, but became endowed with the Holy Spirit in a special way at some point in His life (usually attributed to the time of His baptism). Jesus was the logos and was homoousios (of the same essence) with the Father, but in the same sense as a man's reason is homoousios to himself. The logos was not God in the strict sense however, for the same logos was present in all men in degree. The man Jesus merely experienced the operation of this power to such an extent that the logos penetrated the humanity of Christ progressively, resulting in eventual deification.¹ The Holy Spirit was an impersonal force like the logos, and was operative as the grace of God in the church.² The founder of this view was Theodotus of Byzantium. Its most famous proponent, however, was Paul of Samosata.

Modalistic Monarchianism This form of monarchianism existed side-by-side Dynamic Monarchianism, but took a different route. This form of Monarchianism embraced a strict monotheism, and opposed the Subordination doctrine of the day, particularly the logos doctrine espoused by the Greek Apologists. It maintained that God is absolutely one in number, and not one in unity; He is one being, one person. The terms, "Father," "Son," and "Spirit" are three titles for the one God as He reveals Himself to mankind relationally and functionally. There is a three-fold mode of revelation of God, but not a tripersonality within His being.³ The Son is not eternal, but is the Father manifest in flesh for the purpose of redemption. The Holy Spirit is not another personality in the Godhead, nor is He an impersonal force, but is the Father as He works among men for the purpose of sanctification. The major names attached with this teaching are Noetus, Praxeas, and Sabellius. The latter held to a form of Monarchianism which maintained that the divine monad projected Himself through expansion in successive modes.⁴ God was known as Father in creation, as Son in redemption, and as the Holy Spirit in bestowing grace on man. This form of Monarchianism became the prominent modalistic view, and thus the belief in Modalism became identified as Sabellianism.

Modalistic Monarchianism is sometimes referred to as Patripassianism, meaning that the Father suffered, because the Modalists said that the Son was the Father, and since the Son suffered on the cross, the Father suffered likewise. The historic position of Modalism is very similar to the doctrinal position of modern Oneness theology.

Arianism

Although this teaching had its origin in Lucian of Antioch, its most famous propagator and developer was Arius of Alexandria, from whence it bears its name. Arius taught that since God is immutable, His essence cannot be communicated to any other.⁵ This being so, the Son and Holy Spirit could not be considered to be God. Jesus was said to be the first creation of God. In turn,

Jesus created everything else. The famous cry of the Arians concerning Jesus was, "There was once when he was not." He was divine, but not deity. The Spirit was also created, receiving "his being from the Father through the Son."⁶ Only the Father was eternal and immutable. The Son and Spirit were not consubstantial, coeternal, or coequal with the Father.

Trinitarianism The Trinitarian doctrine states that there are three persons within one God: God the Father, God the Son, and God the Holy Ghost. According to this view monotheism is maintained by confessing God's one essence (ousia), but it is also said that this essence consists of three distinct persons (hypostasis), or subsistencies. "Trinity" simply means "triunity," expressing the nature of the three-in-one God. The Trinity is not viewed as three separate gods, but as one God with a three-fold personality.⁷ Each subsistence, or personality (person) is coequal, coeternal, and consubstantial with the other two. Each is fully God in His own right, yet God could not exist without the Father, Son, and Holy Ghost in unity. God's one essence is ontologically three-fold. As Calvin Beisner has said, "...there is one God who is a being composed of three individuals, the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit, all of who are to be worshipped as the same God, and who share in the same substance or essence."⁸ The Trinity is an inseparable, perfect union, in which each member shares in the work of the other, but there are some unique characteristics that belong to each member personally. The distinguishing characteristic of the Father is that He is unbegotten, the Son is begotten, and the Spirit is proceeding from the Father. Functionally, there is subordination in the Trinity, but only as God works among mankind for the purpose of redemption. The Father functions as the head. The Son is subject to the Father, and the Spirit is subject to the Son. Ontologically, however, the Trinity is coequal, with no one member of the Trinity being greater or less than the other two. Ultimately this triunity of God is said to be a mystery not fully comprehensible to man.

Tritheism

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

Biblical Teaching In order to determine which of the above views is closest to the Biblical presentation, we will examine the Biblical data in its progressive revelation. Due to the plethora of Scriptures pertaining to the topic at hand, only the most relevant passages will be cited.

Pentateuch The beginning of the Bible begins with God creating the heaven and the earth (Genesis 1:1). It is said that God's Spirit moved on the face of the waters. This is the first mention of the Spirit of God. Nothing much is said regarding the nature of God or the Spirit in this passage. The Book of Numbers speaks of God putting His Spirit on people so that they might prophesy the word of the Lord (Numbers 11:29). The Spirit is spoken of as belonging to YHWH. The heart of the Jewish faith is the Shema, "Hear O Israel, the LORD our God, the LORD is one" (Deuteronomy 6:4). YHWH was declared to be one, as opposed to the polytheism of the surrounding nations. The word translated "one" has given rise to serious debate. The Hebrew word is echad, appearing 977 times in the OT. The word can signify a unity, rather than an absolute numerical one. Trinitarians see this as an indication that God is not absolutely one in person, but only one in unity. There is only one essence, but the unity allowed by echad allows for three persons in unity. Of the 977

times this word appears, however, only a handful have the meaning of unity. One such example is when God said that man and woman would be one flesh (Genesis 2:24). It is obvious that one cannot be referring to one physical body, but rather a unity between the two. Another example is found in Genesis 11:6, where it is said that the people (plural) are echad. Again, unity is being implied.

It is definitely true that echad can refer to one in unity, but the overwhelming majority of the time it is used to refer to something singular in number, not in unity. The mere fact that this is the majority use does not demand that echad mean singular in number here in Deuteronomy any more than the fact that it can mean unity would demand that it must mean unity. If it does refer to a unity of persons, it could easily imply a plurality of Gods in unity just like a committee. God stressed His oneness to Israel, however, to guard against the polytheism of the surrounding nations. Echad, being interpreted as a unity would lend itself to a polytheistic conception of God, which would defeat God's entire emphasis for His singularity.

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

There is another Hebrew word for "one," namely yachid. This word is a strict numerical one. Had YHWH wanted to conclusively demonstrate that He is one in number, it is suggested that this word could have been used. Surely God could have used this word, but it should be noted that this word is used in a stricter sense for an only child, or for expressing the feelings of solitude, loneliness, and isolation (Genesis 22:16; Judges 11:34; Psalms 25:16; Psalms 68:7; Jeremiah 6:26). The first commandment of the Ten Commandments plainly prohibited the worship of any other gods (Exodus 19:3; Deuteronomy 5:7). YHWH alone was to be worshipped as God. Again, monotheism was being emphasized. The only other reference to God's Spirit in the Pentateuch is found in Genesis 6:3 where YHWH said, "My Spirit shall not always strive with man...." Here again the Spirit is identified as belonging to YHWH.

Historical Books

There is much more mention of the Spirit in the historical books than there is in the Pentateuch. The Spirit continues to be mentioned as belonging to God (Judges 11:29; 1 Samuel 19:20, 1 Samuel 19:23; 1 Kings 22:24). He is also directly connected to God. David said that the Spirit of YHWH spoke by him, and then goes on to say what elohim said (2 Samuel 23:2-3). The Spirit is clearly said to be God. The Historical books make often speak of the Spirit coming on men to prophesy the word of YHWH, anointing them for certain temporal utterances, just as the Spirit was given to men in the wilderness wandering for the building of the Tabernacle (Exodus 28:3; Exodus 31:3; Judges 14:6; 1 Samuel 10:6; 2 Chronicles 15:1). The phrase, "the angel of the LORD" appears twenty-five times in the historical books, second in number only to the Pentateuch. Sometimes the angel seems to be YHWH Himself (Judges 6:22), while at other times he appears to only be an angel (Judges 13:3). The OT data concerning this one identified as the "Angel of YHWH" is unclear, and not much can be gleaned from it. It may simply be an angel, or a theophany of YHWH.

Poetry and Wisdom As in the historical books, the poetry and wisdom literature speaks much more of the Spirit than does the Pentateuch. Job said that the Spirit of YHWH had made him, and the breath of the Almighty had given him life (Job 33:4). This is an example of a Hebrew poetic form known as parallelism. Job was equating the Spirit of God and the breath of God. What is important is that the Spirit is seen as the creator. In Genesis 2:7 God is said to have breathed into man His breath, and man became a living soul. Job identified *elohim* as the Spirit of God. The term "Spirit of God" appears many times in the OT, but the first appearance of "Holy Spirit" is in Psalms 51:11 when David pleaded with God to not take away His Holy Spirit from him, which was tantamount to being cast out of God's presence. This is one out of three occurrences of *qadosh ruach* in all of the OT. This Holy Spirit pertained to God, and was parallel to *elohim's* presence.

God is called the "Holy One of Israel" several times in the poetic books (Psalms 71:22; Psalms 78:41; Psalms 89:18). The context of these verses calls *elohim* this Holy One. This title for God arises out of the stress on God's oneness found in the Pentateuch. The Prophets Of all the prophets, Isaiah spoke the most concerning the person of God. Isaiah is famous for defending God's monotheism against the polytheistic idolatry of his day. YHWH said through Isaiah, "I am the LORD: that is my name: and my glory will I not give to another, neither my praise to graven images" (Isaiah 42:9). Again He said, "...before me there was no God formed, neither will there be after me. I, even I, am the LORD; and beside me there is no savior" (Isaiah 43:10-11). Yet still YHWH said, "I am the first, and I am the last; and beside me there is no God. ... Is there a God beside me? Yes, there is no God; I know not any" (Isaiah 44:6 b, Isaiah 44:8 c). YHWH made all things, having stretched forth the heaven alone, and spreading the earth abroad by Himself (Isaiah 44:24). God was making His point clear. He was the only true God, and He was alone. There was none else besides Him. He was unique in His singularity, for He said, "...I am God, and there is none else; I am God, and there is none like me..." (Isaiah 46:9 b). The language could not have been stronger. YHWH is unique, one, and alone in all that He does.

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

Isaiah did seem to distinguish YHWH from His Spirit when he said, "and now the Lord YHWH, and his Spirit, has sent me" (Isaiah 48:16). This seems to say that YHWH is different than His Spirit, and that the two sent Isaiah to the children of Jacob. It is important to notice, however, that the Hebrew verb for "sent" is singular. If YHWH was to be distinguished in person from His Spirit, the verb would need to be in the plural. A famous prophecy of the coming Messiah is very revealing, It was said, "For unto us a child is born, unto us a son is given: and the government shall be upon his shoulder: and his name shall be called Wonderful, Counsellor, The mighty God, The everlasting Father, The Prince of Peace" (Isaiah 9:6). The Son would be God. The author also identifies the Son as the everlasting Father, which is very telling as it pertains to the deity of the Messiah. Jesus was the Father of all creation. He was the source of origin from which all else has come. This view of Jesus is not conducive to Arianism who declare Jesus to be a creation of the Father, for Isaiah said the Son would be the everlasting Father Himself.

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

Synoptic Gospels

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

Peter's bold declaration to Jesus, "You are the Christ, the Son of the living God" (Matthew 16:16), demonstrates Peter's belief in the deity of Jesus. Jesus told Peter that flesh and blood had not revealed this truth to him, but the Father which was in heaven (Matthew 16:17). If "Son of God" here only refers to Jesus' humanity, no revelation from the Father would have been necessary. Anybody could have seen that Jesus was a human being by just looking at Him. Even the Jews understood that He was a genuine human being. It is what the Jews could not believe, that Peter understood by the revelation of God; Jesus was divine, being both God and man simultaneously.

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

Jesus claimed authority in respect to the Law of God. One such example is the law of the Sabbath. God established the Sabbath for Israel as one of the 613 commandments of the Law of Moses that they had to obey. Because God had made the Law, He alone had the power to alter or repeal it. We see Jesus, however, claiming the authority to alter the Sabbath when His disciples were questioned by the Pharisees for picking grain heads on the Sabbath. Jesus' response was to remind them of the time when David ate of the shewbread when fleeing from Saul (Mark 2:25-26). The shewbread was strictly for the priests. For anyone else to eat it was a violation of the Law of Moses, but God never punished David. In conclusion Jesus said, "the sabbath was made for man, and not man for the sabbath: Therefore the Son of man is Lord also of the sabbath" (Mark 2:27-28).. Jesus clearly claimed the right to redefine the Sabbath, or disregard it altogether if He found necessary, a right that clearly belonged to God alone. When John the Baptist made inquiry as to Jesus' identity, Jesus quoted Isaiah 35:5-6 which spoke about the eyes of the blind being opened, the ears of the deaf being opened, etc. He was implying that He was fulfilling this

Scripture. When examining that passage in Isaiah, it is to be noticed that the time of the fulfillment would be when Israel's God would come to them with a vengeance (Isaiah 35:4). Jesus, again, was claiming to be the elohim of the OT.

John the Baptist was preparing the way of YHWH God in fulfillment of Isaiah 40:3. John the Baptist fulfilled this prophecy when He came to the wilderness preparing the hearts of the people to receive Christ Jesus (Matthew 3:3). Jesus is YHWH. The Holy Spirit is not only seen to be the one who conceived Jesus, but He is also seen descending on Jesus at His baptism (Mark 1:10), revealing revelation to Simeon (Luke 2:26), leading Jesus into the wilderness (Luke 4:1), and teaching believers what to say when the occasion calls for it (Luke 12:12). This demonstrates a distinction in function of the Holy Spirit. In the Great Commission, Jesus said that all power was given to him in heaven and in earth (Matthew 28:18). This would make Jesus the Almighty. The fact that it says it was given to Him however, implies that there is one who gives, and one who receives. This draws attention to a distinction between the Father and the Son. Because Jesus had all power, He commanded His disciples to "teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost" (Matthew 28:19). This verse is believed to reveal the Trinity by Trinitarians, and the oneness of God by the Modalists. Both emphasize the singularity of name. To the Trinitarians this shows that Father, Son, and Spirit are a singular essence. To Oneness believers, the significance of the singular name is that the Father, Son, and Spirit are referring to different self-revelations of the same person.

Acts The Book of Acts is unique in that it is the only book in the NT that gives us the content of the message preached by the early church to the lost world. What is very interesting is that the apostles did not stress the deity of Christ, but rather, they stressed the humanity of Christ. There are numerable Scriptures which speak of the Father and the Son as being distinct. Peter said that Jesus was a "man approved of God among you by miracles and wonders and signs, which God did by him in the midst of you..." (Acts 2:22). This is definitely relational language being employed to describe the Father/Son relationship. It is said that God raised Jesus from the dead (Acts 2:32), and made Him Lord and Christ (Acts 2:36). This also shows a distinction between one who makes and one who is made.

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

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

lied to God (Acts 5:3-4). There is no mention of the Son. If, according to Trinitarianism, each member of the Trinity partook in the activity of each other member's activity, it would seem that Jesus should also be mentioned. The very fact that the Holy Spirit and God are used interchangeably seems to indicate that the Holy Spirit is God Himself. In Paul's final conversation with the Ephesian elders at Miletus he commanded them to guard the flock, and "to feed the church of God, which he has purchased with his own blood" (Acts 20:28). God is said to have had blood. We know that a spirit is not flesh, and therefore does not have blood, so this must be referring to the humanity of Jesus; yet it can be said that God, through Christ, shed His blood for the church. This is a strong case for the absolute deity of Jesus Christ.

Pauline Corpus

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

Jesus "is the image of the invisible God" (Colossians 1:15; See also 2 Corinthians 4:4). What did Paul mean when He declared Jesus to be God's image? We know that a physical likeness is not in view here because God is a Spirit and therefore cannot have a physical body.⁹ The Greek word translated "image" is eikon. Its root is eiko, meaning likeness, resemblance, or representation. Eikon denotes both the representation and manifestation of a substance. Notice that Paul contrasted Jesus' image to that of the invisible God. The point Paul was trying to convey to his readers was that Jesus is the visible representation of God to man. That is why Jesus could say, "he that has seen me has seen the Father" (John 14:9; See also John 12:45). For it to be said that Jesus is like God is to say that He is God. God is unique. What likeness could Jesus have had with God other than that of His divine essence? It cannot be speaking of the likeness in which all human beings bear of God (Genesis 2:7), because this would not have distinguished Jesus' likeness with God from ours. The likeness, then, must be that of divine essence. Because the divine essence of God cannot be changed, Jesus' deity cannot be any different than that of the Father's, because His divine essence cannot be fragmented.

Paul could have used other Greek words if he only meant to declare that Jesus was similar to God as Arianism contends. If Paul believed Jesus to possess a likeness to God, but not His very essence and being, being some sort of a different substance from Him, he could have used homoion. This word indicates a "likeness," but stresses "the resemblance to an archetype, though the resemblance may not be derived..."¹⁰ Or Paul could have use eidos, meaning "a shape, or form." This word, however, is only an appearance, "not necessarily based on reality."¹¹ Paul used eikon instead, to express that Jesus was the exact representation of the Father in His essence and being. In another place, Paul said, "For in him dwells all the fullness of the Godhead

bodily" (Colossians 2:9) The New International Version translates this verse as, "For in Christ all the fullness of the Deity lives in bodily form."¹² "Dwells" is the translation from the Greek word *katoikeo*, meaning "to permanently settle down in a dwelling." "Fullness" is from the Greek word *pleroma* indicating that which "is filled up." It is the fullness of the Godhead that dwells in Jesus, but what is the Godhead? The word is translated from *theotes*, meaning "divine essence, or the very person of God." Considering the Greek behind this verse, then, Paul said that the fullness of the divine essence has permanently settled in Jesus' body. This verse gives us some very important truths concerning Christ's deity in relation to His humanity. First of all, we know the fullness of deity in Jesus consisted of a completeness of divine attributes and characteristics, lacking nothing. Jesus did not merely possess some divine attributes, but rather He possessed every aspect of deity. This verse also demonstrates the permanence of the incarnation.¹³ Lastly, this verse declares that the deity resident in Jesus was resident bodily. This indicates a specific and defined form.¹⁴ In 1 Corinthians 11:3 Paul said the head of Christ is God. Christ is subjected to the Father. This is a clear indication that the Father and the Son are distinct. If Christ is to be equated with the Father, there could be no way of speaking of Christ as being subject to God. This would seem to back up the Arian claims that Christ is God-like, but not absolute deity. It must be noted that by distinguishing Christ from God, Paul is either denying any divinity to Christ, or is simply referring to Christ's subjected role to God the Father because of His humanity. The latter seems to fit the Biblical context. In his first letter to Timothy Paul declared that "God was manifest in the flesh" (1 Timothy 3:16). This statement was reminiscent of his earlier statement to the Corinthians that "God was in Christ reconciling the world to himself..." (2 Corinthians 5:19). Jesus was no ordinary man, but was God Himself, in the form of a man for the purpose of redemption.

Paul again affirmed that there is one God, adding that there is also "one mediator between God and men, the man Christ Jesus" (1 Timothy 2:5). Here again we see Jesus being separated from God, as though He were not divine. He is not identified with God, but is the mediator between God and men. This must be referring to Jesus' role as redeemer in His humanity. If not, then we have one person of the Godhead mediating for another person of the Godhead. If one member of the Godhead, the Father, needed a mediator between He and His creation, why would the Son also not need a mediator? God needs a mediator. If Jesus, as God, does not need a mediator, then He could not be God. This Scripture is not denying Jesus' deity as God, but is distinguishing Him from God in His role as our mediator.

Johanine Corpus

John said that "in the beginning was the logos, and the logos was with God, and the logos was God. The same was in the beginning with God. ... And the logos was made flesh, and dwelt among us, (and we beheld his glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father), full of grace and truth" (John 1:1-2, John 1:14). The fact that John says that the logos was with God implies a distinction between God and His logos. If the logos was to be exactly identified as the same as God, "with" could not be used. It implies that something is being compared. One cannot be with someone if they are that someone. You cannot be with yourself! At the same time, however, the logos is identified as being the very essence of God Himself. In the Johanine Corpus we find some of Jesus' own statements as to the nature of the relationship between He and His Father. They truly reveal who Jesus is. Jesus made some statements that overtly declared His deity.

Jesus made a very bold statement when He told the Jews, "Before Abraham was, I am" (John 8:58). Jesus did not say "I was," because He was referring to the name by which YHWH revealed Himself to Moses at the burning bush (Exodus 3:14). By this statement Jesus proclaimed Himself to be the YHWH of the OT, confirming His preexistence as God. On another occasion Jesus told the Jews, "He that sees me sees him that sent me" (John 12:45). A parallel to this statement occurred during Jesus' discourse with His apostles as found in John 14:5-9. Jesus declared to Thomas, "If you had known me, you should have known my Father also: and from henceforth you know him and have seen him" (John 14:7). Philip could not understand this statement, so he asked Jesus to show the Father to all the disciples, and then they would be satisfied. Jesus responded, "Have I been so long time with you, and yet have you not known me, Philip? He that has seen me has seen the Father; and how do you say then, Show us the Father?" (John 14:9). According to Jesus' own testimony, to see Him was to see the Father (God). One cannot get a much clearer statement than this as to who Jesus claimed to be. He was the Father in visible form.

It is particularly interesting to note the response of those to whom Jesus spoke these profound statements. After Jesus told the Jews, "My Father has been working, and I work" (John 5:17), the Jews sought to kill Him. John gave us their reasoning when he said, "Therefore the Jews sought the more to kill him, because he not only had broken the sabbath, but said also that God was his father, making himself equal with God" (John 5:18). The Jews understood that Jesus was laying a claim to be God Himself. The Greek word *isos* is translated here as "equal." It means to be "the same as" something. Jesus put Himself on the same plane, or grounds of deity as the Father. From our perspective, Jesus' terminology of "Son" and "Father" seem to imply some sort of subordination to God. It gives us the feeling that He is less than God. The Jews, however, did not view this terminology in the same manner. They believed that everything produced after its own kind, having the same nature as that which bore it.¹⁵ Jesus calling God His "Father" is tantamount to saying He is God. This is clearly witnessed in the above passage. When speaking to the Pharisees, Jesus said that He gives His sheep eternal life, and no man could pluck the sheep out of His hand (John 10:28). Then Jesus said that His Father gave them to Him, and no one was able to pluck them out of His Father's hand (John 10:29). Jesus had just claimed that the same sheep were in the Father's hand, and in His own. Jesus, knowing the apparent contradiction of this statement, confirmed the Jews' suppositions of the import of His statement, and immediately claimed that He and His Father were one (John 10:30). Immediately the Jews took up stones to stone Him (John 10:31). When Jesus asked them for what good work they desired to kill Him, they responded, "For a good work we stone you not; but for blasphemy; and because that you, being a man, make yourself God" (John 10:33). They understood that by Jesus claiming to have the Father's sheep in His hand, He was claiming to be God. The Jews did not understand Jesus' reference to God as His "Father" to mean that Jesus was less than God, or some sort of a second-rate god. Rather they understood His claim to be that of Yahweh God Himself. Their reasoning was that Jesus, who was a man, had made Himself God (John 10:33). This was blasphemy to the Jews and was deserving of the death penalty. They understood perfectly what Jesus was claiming. If Jesus was not declaring equality with the Father, it would have been the perfect opportunity to explain what He really meant. Instead He continued to back up His claim (John 10:34-38).

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

Although John has some of the most powerful testimonies to the absolute deity of Jesus Christ, he also makes many distinctions between the Father, Son, and Spirit. His gospel abounds with statements and terminologies that seem to imply an inferiority of Jesus to God, or the Son to the Father.. Even Jesus Himself said that His Father was greater than He Himself was (John 14:28). On another occasion Jesus said, "The Son can do nothing of himself, but what he sees the Father do; for whatever he does, the Son does likewise. For the Father loves the Son and shows him all things that he himself does" (John 5:19-20; See also John 5:32). He plainly said of His own ability, "I can of mine own self do nothing" (John 5:30). The Gospel of John abounds with statements like these. According to Jesus, even what He taught He received from His Father. The very words were taught to Him before He ever taught them to others (John 7:16; John 8:26, John 8:28, John 8:38, John 8:40; John 12:48-50; John 17:8). Jesus was the recipient, not the author of divine revelation. He spoke of the Father as being with Him (John 8:29), as proceeding from and being sent by Him (John 8:42; John 14:24; John 16:27-28; John 17:8, John 7:18), as returning to Him (John 16:5, John 16:7, John 16:10), and as being sanctified by Him (John 10:36). The Father is even said to honor the Son (John 8:55). The Spirit is spoken of as being distinct from the Father and the Son. Jesus said that He would pray to the Father to give the disciples another Comforter. This Comforter was identified as the Holy Spirit (John 14:16-17, John 14:26). The Holy Spirit would be sent by the Father to teach the disciples. Then Jesus said that He was that Spirit that would come to them by saying, "At that day you will know that I am in my Father, and you in me, and I in you" (John 14:20). He could not have been referring to being in them physically, for that would be impossible. He could only be referring to Himself as the Spirit. The Scriptures commonly refer to God and Jesus as though they are two separate individuals. Jesus continually spoke of His Father, and to His Father as though they were separate from one another. He told the Pharisees, speaking of His Father, "Of whom you say, that He is your God" (John 8:54). Jesus also said, "He that has my commandments, and keeps them, it is he that loves me: and he that loves me shall be loved of my Father, and I will love him, and will manifest myself to him. ... If a man love me, he will keep my words: and my Father will love him, and we will come unto him, and make our abode with him" (John 14:21, John 14:23).

Jesus' lengthy prayer to God for His disciples found in John 17:1-26 is overflowing with this type of terminology. In verse three He said, "That they might know you the only true God, and Jesus Christ, whom you have sent." Here Jesus called the Father "God," and the only God at that.. Even though Jesus was God, He acknowledged the Father as superior to Himself and spoke to Him in a manner like any human being would.

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

understand the peculiarities of these, and other Biblical statements.

Jesus also prayed that those who believed in Him would be one, even as He and the Father were one (John 17:11). The word translated one is the Greek neuter *hen*, which occurs as the predicate nominative to *eimi*, meaning "to be." In the neuter when *hen* does not modify a noun, the meaning is one thing, not one person. Jesus was not saying that He was one in person with the Father, but one in unity. Even the context displays that this was His meaning. Jesus not only said that He and His Father were one, but also prayed that the church would be one in the same manner as He and the Father were (again implying a distinction). It is impossible for the church to be one in any other way than a unified one. We are one when we have the mind of Christ. Jesus said that He wanted us to be one even as He and the Father are one. This must be one in unity, and not one in person.

Let it be remembered, however, that Jesus is praying. God does not need to pray, but men do. Jesus was praying because He was a man, albeit God manifest in flesh. He was unified with the mind of the Father. Jesus plainly declared that He always did that which pleased His Father, and that He only did that which the Father was doing, and said what the Father told Him to say" (John 8:29; John 5:19; John 8:26). Even Jesus said that His will was in unity with the Father's (Luke 22:42; John 4:34; John 5:30). The fact that Jesus said He was in unity with the Father does not belittle or differentiate Christ's deity from the Father's, but shows the genuineness of Jesus' humanity. Did John record all of these statements to show that Jesus' deity was in some way inferior to the Father or separate from Him? It would not seem likely since John's gospel also contains some of the most powerful assertions of Jesus' deity and equality with God. Such statements include "I and my Father are one," "Before Abraham was, I am," and "He who has seen me has seen the Father." The book of Revelation sheds some interesting light on the relationship of the Father to the Son. It is said that in the New Jerusalem "there will be no more curse: but the throne of God and of the Lamb will be in it; and his servants shall serve him" (Revelation 22:3). God and the Lamb, Jesus Christ, are both mentioned, but the singular pronoun *he* is used, denoting that one individual is in view. It further says that "they will see his face; and his name will be in their foreheads" (Revelation 22:4, *italics mine*). Jesus is identified as God Himself.

Other New Testament Writings The author of Hebrews said that Jesus is the "express image of his [God's] person" (Hebrews 1:3). The English phrase translated "express image" is from the Greek word *charakter*. It is this word from which we get our English word "character." This is the only occurrence of the word in the New Testament. It means "to impress upon, or stamp." It denotes an engraving from a tool, which impresses an image into that which is being engraved. This impression, then, is a characteristic of the instrument used to do produce it. What is produced corresponds precisely with the instrument. The Greek word translated "person" is *hypostasis*. Although rendered as "person," it is more properly understood as "essence of being, or the substance of a thing." The etymology of this word has to do with "the sediment or foundation under a building."¹⁶ It is that which underlies, makes up, or supports something. In this context, we are talking about what underlies, or makes up God, i.e. God's subsistence.

Jesus, therefore, is not just a representation of God, but is the very visible impression of God's invisible substance and essence. He is God's very nature expressed in humanity. To say it another way, He is the corresponding engraving of God's essence of being, in human form. Liddon

summed it up best when he said this verse implies that Jesus "is both personally distinct from, and yet literally equal to, Him of whose essence He is the adequate imprint."¹⁷

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

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

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

Peter references the Father, Son, and Spirit, attributing election to the Father; sanctification to the Spirit; and the sacrifice for redemption to Jesus Christ (1 Peter 1:2). He also said that it was the Spirit of Christ that testified to the prophets the things they wrote about (1 Peter 1:11). In his second epistle Peter attributed this role to the Holy Spirit (2 Peter 1:21). The Spirit of Christ is equated with the Holy Spirit.

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

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

Systematic Formulation The plethora of Scriptures which pertain to the problem at hand is exhausting. The above survey does not do justice to all the evidence that could be brought out. Looking at what has been presented, however, what are we to make of it? What is the ontological nature of God? What is the relationship between the Father, Son, and Holy The Spirit

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

We have seen that the Spirit is distinguished from the Father and the Son (John 14:16-17, John 14:26; John 15:26; John 16:13; Romans 8:26). We have also seen that the Spirit is equated with Jesus (John 14:20). The Spirit is also equated with the Father. It is said that the Holy Spirit caused Jesus' conception (Matthew 1:18-20; Luke 1:35), thus making the Holy Spirit the Father of Jesus. The Father, however, is spoken of as being Jesus' Father too. Jesus did not have two fathers, but one. It seems that the Holy Spirit was YHWH, who is spoken of after the conception as being Jesus' Father. In Romans 8:9, Romans 8:11, Paul said, "But you are not in the flesh, but in the Spirit, if the Spirit of the God dwells in you. Now if any man does not have the Spirit of Christ, he is none of his. ... But if the Spirit of him that raised up Jesus from the dead dwell in you, he that raised up Christ from the dead shall also give life to your mortal bodies by his Spirit that dwells in you." In Romans 8:15 we are said to be filled with the Spirit. If the Spirit of God is the Father as contrasted with the Spirit of Christ, and the Spirit of adoption, then we are said to be filled with the Father, Christ, and the Holy Spirit. These names are used interchangeably. It cannot be that we are filled with three Spirits, for there is only one Spirit (Ephesians 4:4). It seems that the Holy Spirit is the Father, and is the Spirit of Christ (See also 2 Corinthians 3:17; compare Acts 5:3 with Acts 5:4; Romans 8:26 with Romans 8:34; 1 Corinthians 3:16 with 1 Corinthians 6:19). Calvin, referring to Romans 8:9-11, said, "...the Son is said to be of the Father only; the Spirit of both the Father and the Son. This is done in many passages, but none more clearly than in Romans 8:1-39, where the same Spirit is called indiscriminately the Spirit of Christ, and the Spirit of him who raised up Christ from the dead."¹⁸ To this, McGrath also adds:

It is important to realize that the New Testament tends to think of the Holy Spirit as the Spirit of Christ as much as of God. The Spirit is understood to stand in the closest of possible relationships to Christ, so that his presence among the people of Christ is equivalent to the presence of Christ himself, just as the presence of Christ is treated as being that of God himself. In other words, to encounter the Son is to encounter the Father and not some demigod or surrogate. To encounter the Spirit is really to encounter the Son and hence the Father.¹⁹

There is a reason why the Scripture speaks of God as the Holy Spirit. God's Holy Spirit is "just God himself in the innermost essence of his being."²⁰ The references to God's Holy Spirit often speak of God in activity. The term serves to signify a certain aspect of God's self-revelation to man. As a result, the term "Holy Spirit" should not be overlooked, or substituted with "Father" or "Jesus." There is a reason why God is called the Holy Spirit. If terminology was not important, God would not have called himself by this name, and associated the Holy Spirit with certain activities such as sanctification.

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

Concerning the relationship of the Father and Son, the Scriptures seem to teach that the relationship is one of Spirit to flesh. I say "seem," because the Bible never defines it in this way, but the evidence best supports such a conclusion. God in His transcendence, the One who fathered His unique Son when He overshadowed Mary, relates to Jesus Christ as a Father, Who is God immanent in the world, being the prophesied Immanuel (Isaiah 7:14). As has already been shown, the Bible clearly teaches that there is only one God (Deuteronomy 6:4; Isaiah 45:21; Mark 10:18; Mark 12:29; John 5:44; John 17:3; Romans 3:30; 1 Corinthians 8:4, 1 Corinthians 8:6; Galatians 3:20; Ephesians 4:6; 1 Timothy 1:17; 1 Timothy 2:5; James 2:19; Jude 1:25). One fact that is commonly overlooked in our attempt to demonstrate that Jesus is God, is that God is not identified with Jesus, as being identically the same.²¹ Jesus said to the Father, "...that they might know you, the only true God, and Jesus Christ, whom you have sent" (John 17:3). Jesus prayed to the Father as being the only God, referring to God as someone other than He Himself. In 1 Corinthians 8:4-6 the Father is again identified as the only God, and Jesus Christ is distinguished from Him.

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

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

What are we to make of these things? Should we conclude that Jesus is not God? No, for we have already demonstrated that the Bible teaches that He is God. What this demonstrates is that God was not centralized in the person of Christ, so that God could no longer be said to be in heaven. As Alister McGrath points out: In one sense, Jesus is God; in another, he isn't. Thus Jesus is God incarnate-but he still prays to God, without giving the slightest indication that he is talking to himself! Jesus is not identical with God in that it is obvious that God continued to be in heaven during Jesus' lifetime, and yet Jesus may be identified with God in that the New Testament has no hesitation in ascribing functions to Jesus which, properly speaking, only God could do.²²

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

How can this be? It can be likened to the moon. When the Apollo team landed on the moon for the first time, they astonished the world. They walked on the moon that had been beyond man's grasp

for as long as man has existed. When they returned to the earth, they brought a sample of the moon with them. Scientists studied this sample as the moon, yet it was not really the moon. It was only a portion of the moon.²³ In a similar sense, when we encounter Jesus Christ, we do not encounter all of God, because no man has seen God, nor can see God (John 1:18; 1 Timothy 6:16; 1 John 4:12). God is too great to be seen. Jesus Christ, however, was seen by multitudes. How could Jesus be God if He could be seen then? In John 1:18 and 1 John 4:12 theos appears without the article, which is emphasizing God's essence. It is God's essence that no man can see, because He is invisible by definition of being a spirit. When we see Jesus Christ, we encounter the image of the invisible God, but do not see the essence of God Himself. Though the man Jesus is not all of God contained in a body to the exclusion of God existing beyond Jesus (transcendent), He is God's image, and therefore can be said to be God Himself. This does not mean that Jesus only is a portion of God. As it pertains to Jesus' deity, it is said that the fullness of the Godhead dwells in His body (Colossians 1:19; Colossians 2:9). The Scripture presents Jesus as being God on the one hand, and as being other than God (a mere man) on the other. Thus we see the paradox of the Scripture, and its bilateral way of referring to Jesus Christ. With this basis, let us examine the ontological and functional relationship of the Father and the Son. The name Jesus, or the term Son, specifically refers to the incarnation. These appellations are never used of God before the incarnation. This is very clear in Luke 1:35 when the angel told Mary, "The Holy Ghost will come upon you, and the power of the Most High will overshadow you: therefore also that holy thing which will be born will be called the Son of God." Notice the future tense of will. Only after the conception would Jesus be called the Son of God, because God would father His existence; not the existence of His deity, but of His humanity. "Son" was not a name of God before the incarnation. It is a relational term between God in His transcendence beyond His existence as a man, and God in His immanence as a human being. The term Father also begins to be used for God after the incarnation. Although God was known as a Father before this (Malachi 3:10), the term was used between God and His creation, not between God and God. God's fatherhood to Jesus Christ was of a different nature than that spoken of in the OT. He was still Father in reference to His relationship to man, but His relationship to the man, Christ, was much different than His relationship to any other man. The Jews clearly recognized Jesus' special use of the term (John 5:17-18; John 8:42, John 8:54-59; John 10:30-38), realizing that He claimed a special relationship to God that no one else could claim. God was Jesus' Father because it was God who caused Jesus' conception, i.e. His existence as a man. Jesus, the man, would have never existed without God's contribution to His humanity. We on the other hand, are born naturally, and only become the sons of God by adoption. That the Son was not preexistent is evidenced by the fact that Paul said, "But when the fullness of time came, God sent forth his Son, made of a woman, made under the law..." (Galatians 4:4). The Son came at a certain point in time, from a woman. The fact that Paul said the Son was sent does not imply that the Son preexisted the incarnation any more than that John the Baptist preexisted his physical birth, who is also said to have been sent by God (John 1:6). The sending of the Son was not the sending of a preexistent person of the Godhead, but rather YHWH making Himself known in the face of Jesus Christ. The Son was not eternally generated from the Father. Many have claimed that the Son was eternally begotten by God based off of Psalms 2:7 which says, "You are my Son, today I have begotten you." Charles Ryrie had this to say about the doctrine of eternal generation, which is connected with the idea of a preexistent son: "I agree with Buswell (A Systematic Theology of the Christian Religion, pp.

105-12) that generation is not an exegetically based doctrine. ... The phrase 'eternal generation' is simply an attempt to describe the Father-Son relationship of the Trinity and, by using the word 'eternal,' protect it from any idea of inequality or temporality."²⁴ Though Ryrie most definitely believes the Son to be eternal, even he confesses that the doctrine of eternal generation is not found in Scripture. For the illegitimate use of Psalms 2:7, which speaks prophetically of the Son, Ryrie said, "Least of all should generation be based on Psalms 2:7."²⁵ The Psalm is a coronation psalm, referring to the day a king is coronated, not the day of birth or time of origin. It is used of Jesus' origin in Hebrews 1:5, as contrasted with the angels. Whereas they were created, the Son was begotten by God. This is referring to the incarnation as the context shows (Hebrews 1:4, Hebrews 1:6). Psalms 2:7 is also used of Jesus' ascension in Acts 13:33, demonstrating that the verse is not strictly speaking of the conception of Jesus by God. The only way in which the Son of God preexisted the incarnation was as the logos. In John 1:1 the logos is identified as being God Himself, but He is also said to be with God. It was the logos who was made flesh (John 1:14). The logos is the self-expression, word, or thought (reason) of God. As David Bernard has said: The Logos is God's self expression, "God's means of self disclosure," or "God uttering Himself." Before the Incarnation, the Logos was the unexpressed thought or plan in the mind of God, which had a reality no human thought can have because of God's perfect foreknowledge, and in the case of the Incarnation, God's predestination. In the beginning, the Logos was with God, not as a separate person but as God Himself - pertaining to and belonging to God much like a man and his word. In the fulness of time God...expressed Himself in flesh.²⁶

According to Php 2:6, Jesus was in "the form of God" before the incarnation. "Who being in the form of God" is translated from *hos en morphe theou huparchon*. *Huparchon*, translated as "being" is from two Greek words, *hupo*, "under," and *arche*, "a beginning." It involves existence both before and after conditions mentioned in connection with it. In this case it is speaking of the preexistence of the "form of God." *Morphe*, referring to the preexistent "form" of God speaks of "that external form that represents what is intrinsic and essential. It indicates not merely what may be perceived by others, but what is objectively there."²⁷ The emphasis is primarily upon the essence behind the form, but recognizes the visible form also.. *Theou* is in the genitive case, indicating possession. This form was God's form. The word is also anarthrous, thus emphasizing God's person. In this context, then, Paul was pointing out that this existing visible form of God was His essential deity.

What exactly this form that God possessed was, we are not told. Nevertheless, it was existing in eternity probably until the incarnation, or possibly the ascension, at which time Jesus' body would have replaced the need for the visible form of God. From John we might gather that this form of God was the logos that was with God. This form was at least visible to the heavenly host, for they presented themselves before God in some manner (1 Kings 22:19; Job 1:6). Since God is omnipresent, there could not be any specific location at which to gather, unless, that is, God appeared in some type of visible, albeit spirit form. So the logos was the visible expression of God's invisible essence. "The Word was not merely an impersonal thought existing in the mind of God but was, in reality, the Eternal Spirit Himself clothed upon by a visible and personal form..."²⁸

God was always speaking His Word in the OT. It was through His Word that the worlds were created (Hebrews 11:3). Just as a man's words, or his reason are not a separate person from him, the logos is not a separate person from the Father (*theos*). We can distinguish between God and

His Word in that the Word was the thought of God, and had a visible form, but there is no Biblical evidence that the logos is a distinct person or personality in the Godhead.

Looking to John's first epistle helps shed some more light on John 1:1. John said, "That which was from the beginning...the logos of life; (For the life was manifested, and we have seen it, and bear witness, and show to you that eternal life, which was with the Father, and was manifested to us." This sounds very reminiscent of John 1:1-51. There is a reference to the beginning (John 1:1; 1 John 1:1), the logos (John 1:1, John 1:14; 1 John 1:1), and an identification of the logos with life (John 1:4; 1 John 1:1-2). If John could say that the life was manifested, after being with the Father, and not mean that life is a distinct person in the Godhead, likewise there is no reason to view the logos of life as being a distinct person in the Godhead. Not only is the life of God spoken of in distinction from Him, but so is wisdom. Proverbs 8:1-36 speaks of wisdom as being possessed by God, and present at creation (Proverbs 8:22, Proverbs 8:29-30). Wisdom is being personified as a person, speaking of itself as though it is an entity (or person) separate from God. Does this indicate that God's wisdom is another person from Him?

Another Biblical example is that of God's voice. God's voice is said to have walked in the Garden of Eden (Genesis 3:8). Psalms 29:3-8 attributes to God's voice the attributes of God Himself: power, majesty. Several times the author states a quality of the voice of YHWH, and then attributes the same to YHWH. This is another example of personification. The Hebrew people would not have understood the voice of YHWH to be a distinct person from Him. There is no reason to understand logos in any different manner. The logos can be said to be with God just as much as His wisdom and voice can be said to be with Him, and be spoken of as distinct from Him. The Aramaic Targums (Aramaic paraphrases of the Hebrew Scriptures) also shed light on the way we are to understand logos. The Targums used the word memra to refer to God, especially when referring to God's appearance in a form. Memra is the Aramaic equivalent of logos. They did not believe that the word was another person other than YHWH, but was YHWH manifest in a visible appearance.

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

How is believing on Jesus tantamount to believing in God? Is it not possible to believe in Jesus, without believing in God? How is it possible to have seen God when one has, in reality, only seen Jesus' physical body? Can one not accept Jesus without accepting the Father? According to

Jesus' words, the answer is a resounding "no."

Jesus made even more profound statements of this nature. Such include "I am the way, the truth, and the life: no man comes unto the Father, but by me. If you had known me, you should have known my Father also" (John 14:6-7). Not only is Jesus the way to the Father, but the Father can only be known through the Son. It would seem to us that the Father could be known apart from the Son, but according to Jesus this is not possible. To the Jews who hated Jesus because of what He said and did He cautioned them saying, "He that hates me hates my Father also" (John 15:23). Probably one of the best examples demonstrating this point is found in 2 John 1:9 where John said, "Whosoever transgresses, and abides not in the doctrine of Christ, does not have God. He that abides in the doctrine of Christ, he has both the Father and the Son." (See also 1 John 2:23-24) If you accept Christ's person you will have the Father and the Son. All of these Scriptures relay one common truth-knowing the Father is bound up in knowing the Son. This can be compared to the father/son identities we experience. When a man is born he experiences the role of a son. Although He knows the role of father exists, he has no personal experience of it. Through the process of time he can add the role of fatherhood to his identity. Then he is both a son and a father. His added identity as a father does not negate his identity as a son, but simply adds a role with its corresponding characteristics to his existing role as a son. In the same way, but in reverse, God added another identity to Himself when He became a man. God has always been deity, but in the process of His plan to redeem man he added humanity to his deity. His deity was not compromised or mitigated by adding this role to His identity, but nevertheless, His existence as exclusive deity and Spirit was changed. God never gave up His eternal, unlimited deity when becoming the Son, just as a father does not give up His identity as a son when he becomes a father. There is no change in his essential person, but there is a change in his life as he now experiences the role he once only knew by concept. The role of father went from being a priori (prior to and independent of experience) to a posteriori (proceeding from and dependent upon experienced reality). That which was once an abstract concept became an objectively understood reality, empirical (knowledge gained by experience) in nature.

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

It must be made clear that "the Son is not the same as the Father. The title Father never alludes to humanity, while Son does. ...We cannot say the Father is the Son."²⁹ Jesus, the man, is not the Father per se, but is the Son of God.. But it was YHWH, who is the Father, who became flesh, and then related to Jesus as a Father to a Son, because of the subsequent limitation on His deity by

the addendum of humanity to His previously unmitigated existence as exclusive Spirit.

It cannot be said that the Son is the Father, or that the Father is the Son. The Son by definition is both divine and human, while the Father is only divine. Although the deity of the Son is of the same essence as that of the Father, the deity of the Son is inextricably joined with the humanity to form an existence distinct from God's existence as a transcendent Spirit. The deity of the Father is in the Son, but the Son's existence is different from the Father's. There is, therefore, a distinction between the Son and the Father, but there is no separation. The deity of the Son is none other than that of Yahweh Himself, having come down in the form of a servant and in the likeness of men. This is why we find statements like, "He that believeth on me, believeth not on me, but on him that sent me. And he that seeth me seeth him that sent me" (John 12:44-45).

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

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

There can be no doubt about it, that the deity of the one Jesus related to as His Father was the deity that was in Christ; however, there is a vast difference in saying that the deity of the Father is in the Son, and saying that the Son, who is God manifest in the flesh, is the Father. Father specifically refers to God transcendent, without a human body, as he fills the heavens, being unlimited by the incarnation. The Son specifically refers to God immanent in a human body, as He is temporally located in the person of Jesus Christ, being limited by the incarnation. To confuse the terms is to confuse God's existence as Spirit, and God's existence as Spirit made flesh. I emphasize terms because we are not speaking about two different Gods. Let there be no mistaking it that the deity of Jesus Christ is the Father. Ontologically then (pertaining to the nature and essential properties of existence), Jesus is the same God identified as the Father. Functionally, however, because of the addition of a genuine human existence to God's person, Jesus is referred to as the Son of God. Jesus is the person of the Father, but in a distinct manner of existence because of the hypostatic union. In such a manner of existence He is known as the Son of God, Jesus Christ.

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

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

God's revealed name in the OT was YHWH, to which He is referred to over 6800 times. He is also referred to as *elohim* (God) over 2600 times, which is a generic term for YHWH. In comparison, God is only likened to a father, or calls Himself Father thirteen times in the OT (Numbers 11:12; 2 Samuel 7:14; 1 Chronicles 29:10; Psalms 68:4-5; Psalms 89:24-27; Psalms 103:13; Isaiah 9:6; Isaiah 63:16; Isaiah 64:8; Jeremiah 3:4, Jeremiah 3:19; Jeremiah 31:9; Malachi 2:10). God's role as a father is portrayed when the Bible speaks about Israel as being His children in a covenantal sense (Exodus 4:22; Deuteronomy 1:31; Deuteronomy 8:5; Deuteronomy 14:1; Isaiah 64:8; Malachi 2:10), and of David and Solomon as being His sons like a suzerain to a vassal (Psalms 2:7; 2 Samuel 7:14).

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

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

New Testament Usage of "Father"

While the NT continues to use Father to designate God as the Creator and/or covenant-maker, the NT adds two other dimensions to Father that were not seen in the OT. The first use of "Father" pertains to believers' adoption by God. Romans 8:15 speaks of us having received the spirit of adoption that makes us cry out to God, "Abba Father." Elsewhere Paul speaks of this same concept of adoption whereby we become the sons of God, and by implication, God becomes our Father. (Galatians 4:5; Ephesians 1:5). God makes us His children by faith, and we inherit all of His blessings for us. The second use of Father is that used by Jesus Christ in the gospels, when He was speaking about His relationship to God. It is this use to which we center our attention.

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

It is legitimate to call Jesus the Father in the first two uses of the name. Jesus preexisted the incarnation as YHWH, and therefore can be called Father in the sense of Creator because the deity of Jesus is the God of the OT who created the worlds.³⁰ Jesus can be called Father in the sense of our Adopter because in the NT, the Spirit of Christ is the Holy Spirit who adopts us as God's children. It is in the statements where Jesus identifies God as being His Father that we need

to be extremely careful. What I am specifically speaking to is the temptation to exchange the name "Jesus" for "Father" simply because we know that Jesus' deity is the deity of the Father. Jesus called God Father for a reason, and the Father called Jesus His Son for a reason. The Biblical terminology is there for a reason. What we must do is understand why different terminology is employed of God; not change the terminology to fit our theology.

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

We must ask ourselves why it is that Jesus is consistently identified as the Son of God, and Jesus consistently identified God as the His Father, as though the Father were someone other than Himself. God spoke down from heaven to earth and called Jesus His Son (Mark 1:11; Mark 9:7). The Son spoke from the earth up to heaven and called God His Father (John 11:41; John 17:1). We must ask ourselves, If Jesus is the Father, why didn't God call Him such when He spoke from heaven? If Jesus is the Father, why didn't He say that His name was the Father? He consistently called Himself the Son of God, the Son of man, the one sent from heaven, or some similar Messianic title.

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

All of the statements Jesus made about the Father would cease to make sense if we are to equate the Father and Son as being identically the same. Jesus said that His Father sent Him into the world. If it is argued that because Jesus is the Father we could just as easily say that the Father sent the Father into the world, then we have the Father sending Himself. If language means anything at all, this cannot be true. There is one sending, and one being sent. Jesus also spoke of His Father showing Him what to do (John 5:19-20), and telling Him what to speak (John 12:49-50). There is one showing, and one doing. There is one telling, and one being told. The Father in heaven did not tell the Father on earth; the Bible is very clear that the Father in heaven told the Son on earth. This is not implying two Gods. This phenomenon must be understood in light of the incarnation. With the assumption of humanity to God's deity, there arose a distinction between God in flesh, and God beyond flesh. This distinction is not in the Godhead, but is in, and due to the humanity. As a human being, God willingly limited the exercise of His divine attributes. To demonstrate the Biblical distinction between the use of the terms Father and Son, we will explore the Gospel of John which presents the relationship of Jesus to the Father like no other book in the NT. Although the same kind of statements can be found elsewhere in the NT, John gives us some of the best attestations to Jesus' absolute deity, and portrays Jesus' relationship to the Father like no other author/book does.

Jesus clearly portrayed Himself as being someone other than the Father. Concerning His doctrine Jesus said, "He that does not love me does not keep my sayings: and the word which you hear is not mine, but the Father's which sent me" (John 14:24). Jesus' words did not belong to Him, but they belonged to the Father. How can this be if Jesus is to be identified as the Father? What is very interesting is that Jesus made this statement in the same discourse after He said that

whoever had seen Him had seen the Father (John 14:7, John 14:9). After such a powerful statement, Jesus still maintained a clear distinction between He and the Father. (See also John 14:10, John 14:12, John 14:20-21, John 14:23-24, John 14:26, John 14:28, John 14:31)

Jesus also said concerning His will: "...I seek not my own will, but the will of the Father which has sent me" (John 5:30). The Father had a will, and Jesus had a will. Jesus sought the will of His Father, not His own will. If Jesus' will was not the same as the will of the Father, then how can Jesus be identical to the Father? If He was the Father, He would have had the Father's will, but instead He had His own will. On another occasion Jesus said, "My Father has not left me alone; for I always do those things that please him" (John 8:29). How could the Father leave the Father? One cannot leave themselves, yet Jesus said that the Father had not left Him. Jesus also said He always pleased the Father. Did He mean to say that He always pleased Himself, or that His human nature pleased His divine nature? It seems evident that Jesus was speaking of the Father as being someone other than Himself.

Jesus said that the Father was greater than He was (John 14:28). Did Jesus mean that He was greater than Himself? Jesus also said, "...even as I have kept my Father's commandments, and abide in his love" (John 15:10 b). Did Jesus command Himself and keep His own commandments? Did Jesus abide in His own love? The examples could go on and on, but these are sufficient enough to demonstrate that Jesus thought of the Father as being someone other than He Himself, though He also realized that the deity of the Father was in Him (John 10:38; John 14:10-11, John 14:20), and that He preexisted the incarnation as YHWH (John 8:56-59). What is important to notice is the distinction in terminology. Jesus is called the Son of God, and the Spirit of God who fills the heavens is called the Father. We do not understand these statements to mean that Jesus is a different God than the Father, nor a distinct aspect of deity in the Godhead, but rather understand these statements to show the genuineness of Christ's humanity. Jesus is differentiated from the Father because of His humanity, not because He is a distinct or separate deity from Him. Jesus is the Father, but the Father made known in the flesh. In this existence, although the deity of God is unchanged, the way He is known to us is by the name Jesus, the Son of God.

Some find evidence for equating the names of "Jesus" and "Father" in Isaiah 9:6. Here it is said that the coming Messiah's name would be called "eternal Father." This is not decisive because this verse is describing the ontological identity of the Messiah, not the name by which He would be called in His human existence (remember, the issue I am tackling is the name by which the Messiah was identified, not the identity of His divine nature, for it is clear that Jesus' deity is the deity of the Father). We know He was named "Jesus" at His birth. The Hebrew concept of a name is that it describes who a person is, their character, worth, and authority. Jesus would be the eternal Father. We must remember that this is in the OT context where the meaning of Father was that of Creator/covenant-maker. We have no reason to believe that Isaiah had any other concept in mind. The Messiah would be the everlasting Father who created the worlds. Isaiah was not envisioning the NT use of "Father" referring to God's fathering of a child by the Holy Ghost. The closest Jesus came to calling Himself the Father was when He told Philip, "He who has seen me has seen the Father" (John 14:9; See also John 14:7), or when He said, "He who has seen me has seen Him who sent me" (John 12:45). Jesus said time and time again that it was His Father who had sent Him, thus declaring that those who saw Him (Jesus) were seeing the Father. Notice,

however, that in both of these verses, Jesus does not identify Himself as being identically the same as the Father. Elsewhere Jesus said the Father was in Him. If "Father" can be attributed to Christ's person, which includes humanity, then there was another human inside of the human Jesus. It is obvious that when Jesus said the Father was in Him that He understood the Father to be Spirit only.

If Father is the way the Scripture speaks of God beyond His human existence in Christ, then how could Jesus say that the disciples had seen the Father? God, as Spirit, is invisible. The Bible is clear that no man can see God (John 1:18; 1 Timothy 6:16; 1 John 4:12). Though Jesus' deity was that of the Father, all that was visible to man was His humanity. Everybody who met Jesus recognized Him as a man, but not everybody recognized Him as Father. Since God's essence cannot be seen, Jesus must have meant that those who have seen Him were seeing the Father's image (Colossians 1:15; Hebrews 1:3). Jesus is the image of the invisible God. He was not saying that in His flesh He was the Father, but that the deity of the Father was in Him, thus making Him the only visible image of the Father. This claim is in stark contrast to the Trinitarian doctrine which says that Jesus is the second person of the Trinity made flesh. Jesus was clear that His deity was that of God the Father. One could not say that if you have seen them, you have also seen their spouse. The only way Jesus could say that those who had seen Him had seen the Father was if Jesus was the Father manifest in flesh, known to us as Jesus Christ, the Son of God. The point that needs to be made clear is that the disciples were seeing the deity of the Father manifest in flesh, yet they still did not refer to Jesus as Father. This name was reserved for God as Spirit beyond flesh. An analogy would be helpful here. This phenomenon could be compared to a balloon and air. Air permeates our atmosphere. This is likened to the Spirit of God who is invisible and omnipresent. Jesus is likened to the balloon that is filled with air. The air has no shape, but when it fills the balloon, it shapes the balloon into a certain size and appearance. When we look at the balloon, we are not viewing the air, but we are viewing that which contains the air. Without the balloon, we would not be able to see the invisible air; and without the air, the balloon would never have the shape and size that it does.

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

The distinction arises out of the humanity of Christ. The deity of the Son is in no way different than the deity of the Father. This is why Jesus could say that whosoever had seen Him had seen the

Father (John 12:45; John 14:9). This being so, Jesus still did not refer to Himself as being the Father, but always referred to Himself as being the Son, or the one whom was sent by the Father. We must maintain a distinction of terms because the Bible does so. Jesus is our Father in the sense of creation and adoption, but in His humanity, as He relates to God transcendent without humanity, He is called the Son of God, while the God in heaven is called the Father.³¹ The Reason for, and Significance of the Terms "Father" and "Son" The Biblical distinctions between Father and Son do not imply that there are two gods, or that Jesus is not God. What it demonstrates is the genuineness of Jesus' humanity, and the subsequent relationship that He had with God because of the willing limitations imposed on the exercise of the Father's deity that was in Jesus. Jesus operated within the limits of any other human being in order to experience all that we experience, so that He could be a faithful High Priest for our redemption. Jesus, the God-man, who was immanent on this earth, bound by time and space, finite and without all knowledge, related to God who was in Heaven, who was not bound by space or time, being infinite and omniscient. Jesus' ontological deity as the Father is not being objected to. What is being objected to is the designation of "Father" for Jesus, because the Biblical authors seem to use "Father" to refer to God's existence beyond flesh, and "Jesus" or "Son" to refer to God's existence in flesh. The terms Father and Son are relational terms that took on a new significance after God's incarnation in Mary. Although Jesus' deity was the deity of the Father, we cannot juxtapose the term Son with the Father, because Father is used of the Spirit alone, while Son is used of that Spirit made flesh. The Father is God beyond flesh, and the Son is that same God in flesh. Father is the appellation used by Jesus for God, because it was God who fathered Jesus' human existence. Jesus did not beget Himself, but was begotten of the Father, and therefore He is spoken of as being distinct from the Father; not in deity, but as it pertains to His assumption of humanity. It is because of the addition of humanity to God's existence as Spirit, that we cannot say that the Father and the Son are the same. The deity of the Father is in the Son, but the Son is a human being, and the Father, who is Spirit only, is not. The reason many have insisted on equating the names "Jesus" and "God the Father" is because they are attempting to show that the deity of Jesus is no different than that of the Father, and that Jesus is not a different person in the Godhead, but is God Himself. Although it is true that Jesus' deity is the deity of the Father, we need not confuse the Biblical terminology in order to protect this truth. Jesus referred to God as Father because of the fact that God fathered His existence in the flesh. This does not mean that He never spoke of God as Father in the sense of Creator, but that when Jesus was speaking of His own personal relationship to the Father, He spoke of Him in a paternal sense. If we understand that "Father" is a relational term that had a specialized use by Jesus because of the incarnation, which use it did not have before the incarnation, it is easy to preserve the truth that Jesus' deity is the same as the Father's without confusing the Biblical terms. We do not need to show that Jesus' name is "God the Father" to show that Jesus preexisted the incarnation as YHWH. "Father" became attributed to the Spirit of God in a different way in the NT because of the paternal relationship between God and Jesus, and to distinguish between God's existence as a man, and His existence as the omnipresent Spirit. The deity of the Son of God is that of YHWH, but His name is "Jesus." YHWH's existence beyond humanity, as the Father of Jesus' human existence, is called the Father.

Subordination of the Son to the Father

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

These types of statements cannot be ignored or denied, but we tend to do one of the either, or both. The solution to understanding these types of Scriptures will not be found in denying Jesus' deity, nor will they be solved by positing a Godhead which consists of three distinct beings who share equality of deity. The solution lies in the acknowledgment of Jesus' complete, authentic, and genuine humanity;³² a humanity which imposed limitations (accepted willingly and intentionally) upon His deity so that He could live on the same plane as any other human, sharing in all of their experiences, so that He could relate to man and be a sufficient high priest (Hebrews 2:14-18; Hebrews 4:14-16; Hebrews 5:1-9; Hebrews 7:13-28). When God assumed humanity, He acquired a consciousness and identity which He never possessed before the incarnation. He had a human psyche not overwhelmed or consumed by His deity. The exercise of Jesus' human nature (such as His consciousness, spirit, will, mind, emotions, and flesh) in such a way requires that in the incarnation, Jesus be spoken of as possessing an identity distinct from, but not separate from the Father.³³ Just as we find a distinction, but not a separation of Christ's two natures, we also find a distinction, but not a separation between God and Jesus; the Father and the Son. This view does not "compromise the deity of Christ or the radical monotheism of biblical theology. But it does give credit to the completeness and genuineness of His [Jesus'] human nature. Any other explanation compromises the completeness of His deity or His humanity."³⁴

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

Building on the above, we might ask why it is that usually only the Father and Jesus are mentioned in Paul's benedictions? It seems that Paul only mentioned the Father and Jesus because we now know God in two major manifestations: God transcendent as the all existing Spirit, and God immanent as He came in flesh to redeem our souls. Paul and others did not write

in this manner to show a separation in the Godhead, but to show the distinction between the existence of Father and the Son because of the addendum of humanity, and yet at the same time the unity of the Godhead. The fundamental difference between the Oneness concept of God, and the Trinitarian concept is where the Biblical distinctions are placed. Trinitarians place an eternal distinction in personhood between the Father, Son, and Holy Ghost. Oneness theology maintains that there is no distinction of personality in the Godhead. Rather, the Holy Spirit has always been YHWH the Father of all creation. Since the Son of God did not come into being until the incarnation when YHWH became a man, there is no eternal distinction between the Father and the Son. The Scripture never distinguishes between the deity of the Son and the deity of the Father, but all distinctions are between God as He exists omnipresent and transcendent, and God as He exists as a genuine human being. The distinction is not in the Godhead, but in the humanity of Jesus Christ. There is a three-fold revelation of God to man, but not a tripersonality in the Godhead.³⁵ In conclusion, we can affirm the divinity of the Father, Son, and Holy Ghost without referring to them as three persons, or composing monotheism. By no means would such an affirmation imply three gods, but would simply state that the one God of the Bible is experienced in three different ways, all of which are valid.³⁶ It could not be said much better than that expressed by McGrath: A helpful way of looking at this is to say that three essential models must be used if the full depth of the Christian experience and understanding of God is to be expressed adequately. No one picture, image or model of God is good enough-and these three models [Father, Son, and Holy Ghost] are essential if the basic outlines of the Christian understanding of God is to be preserved. The first model is that of the transcendent God who lies beyond the world as its source and creator; the second is the human face of God, revealed in the person of Jesus Christ; the third is that of the immanent God who is present and active throughout his creation.³⁷

Apologetic Interaction

Arianism Critique

Arius was right in saying that there was a time when the Son was not, but what he meant by it is wrong nonetheless. Since the Son is not eternal, but is God manifest in flesh, the Son "was not" until the incarnation. Arius attributed the beginning of the Son to be before the creation, maintaining that the Son was the first creation of God. This teaching is gathered from Colossians 1:15-16, where Jesus is called the "firstborn of every creature." The passage goes on to say that Jesus created everything. Arius took this to mean that Jesus was created by the Father, and then Jesus in turn created everything else. The term firstborn is from the Greek *prototokos* (from *protos*, first, and *titko*, to beget). It can refer to first in order of origins, or first in the sense of preeminence or priority. The context of Colossians chapter one is emphasizing Christ's preeminence in His image (Colossians 1:15 a), over every thing created (Colossians 1:15-16), in His power to sustain the universe (Colossians 1:17), and his preeminence over the church (Colossians 1:18). In fact, verse eighteen says, "[Christ] who is the beginning, the firstborn from the dead; that in all things he might have the preeminence."

Dynamic Monarchianism Critiqued That Jesus was not born an average man is evidenced by many Scriptures. The prophet Micah said that the ruler of Israel (the Messiah) would come out of Bethlehem. This ruler's origins were from old, from everlasting (Micah 5:2). Also, the Son brought forth from Mary's womb was to be called Immanuel, being interpreted "God with us" (Matthew

1:23). These two verses demonstrate that Jesus was God before the incarnation, and that He was God even as a babe.

Tritheism Critiqued The belief in three separate Gods is shown to be faulty by doing a comparative study of different Scriptures where the Father is said to have done something in one place, the Son the same in another, and the Holy Spirit in another. One such example, given previously is comparing the accounts of Who indwells believers. Romans 8:9-11 speaks of the Spirit of God, the Spirit of Christ, and the Holy Spirit as filling the believers, yet there is only one Spirit (Ephesians 4:4). Another example involving only the Father and the Spirit is the conception of Christ. The Holy Ghost is said to have caused the conception (Matthew 1:20), but the Father is consistently identified

Trinitarianism Critiqued

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

What is the significance of terminology? How important is it? Calvin was insightful when he was rebutting those who argued against the Trinity based on the terms used to explain it. He said, "If they call it [the word "person"] a foreign term, because it cannot be pointed out in Scripture in so many syllables, they certainly impose an unjust law—a law which would condemn every interpretation of Scripture that is not composed of other words of Scripture."³⁸ Calvin realized the fact that the vocabulary of the Bible is not adequate to express the meaning and interpretation of the Bible's teaching. If all we used was the Bible's terminology to explain the Bible, ultimately we would not explain the meaning of the Bible, but would merely quote its pages. To understand the Bible, other words must be employed, whether they be in spoken-form, or in thought-form. To this B.B. Warfield had a truthful insight when he said, "...the definition of a Biblical doctrine in such un-Biblical language can be justified only on the principle that it is better to preserve the truth of Scripture than the words of Scripture."³⁹ Most evangelicals use words such as "rapture" and "innerancy" and think nothing of it because the terms express a Biblical teaching. Though they are not found on the pages of the Bible, the Bible does teach the concepts that these unbiblical words represent. The question ultimately boils down to what Warfield was speaking about—do the words used to explain the doctrine of the Trinity preserve the truth of the Biblical teaching on God? Certain words which have either been coined, or altered from their Biblical meaning include these: essence, three persons, God the Son, God the Holy Ghost, and eternally begotten. I maintain that the Son is God, and that He is the Son of God, but these words are Biblical, and they can convey a different concept of God than is presented in the NT. God the Son and God the Holy Ghost present the idea that they are separate Gods, although this is by no means what orthodox Trinitarianism is trying to convey; nevertheless, the terminology employed tends to make many people fall into some form of tritheism. The danger of such terminology as employed in the creeds is not only that of possibly misunderstanding the concept of God as presented in the Bible without those words, but it is as Daniel Segraves said so succinctly: "Any time non-biblical words become benchmarks of orthodoxy, it is at least dangerously close to affirming extra-biblical revelation. If Christians cannot be saved by making their confession of faith using only biblical language, it is

hard to escape the conclusion that the language that is required (e.g., "three persons") is equally authoritative with Scripture."⁴⁰ Oneness Theology Defended

Patripassianism

One of the charges that has always been brought against a Oneness view of God is that it holds to the idea that the Father suffered and died on the cross. This conclusion has been arrived at because Oneness believers insist that Jesus is the Father incarnate. This view is known as Patripassianism (Latin meaning "the Father suffers"). In fact, it was this concept which was one of the main reasons that Modalistic Monarchianism was declared to be heretical. As Millard Erickson notes, however, "It may well be that the chief reason for the repudiation of patripassianism was not its conflict with the biblical revelation, but with the Greek philosophical conception of impassibility."⁴¹

Oneness theology does not teach that the Father suffered in His essence, but that the Father suffered in the man Christ Jesus, the Son of God. The Father did not die, nor was He crucified.

Acts 20:28 says: "Take heed therefore unto yourselves, and to all the flock...to feed the church of God, which he has purchased with his own blood." (italics mine) The antecedent of "his" is "God." Paul declared that God shed His blood for the church. Three questions arise from this Scripture: 1. How can it be said that God has blood? 2. Jesus shed His blood by dying on the cross. If this blood is actually the blood of God, did God die? 3. If the blood of Jesus is identified as God's blood, then Jesus' physical humanity was God's. This being true, was Jesus' body still God when in the grave?

We know that it was actually Jesus who shed His blood on the cross, so calling Jesus' blood the blood of God demonstrates the deity of Jesus Christ; however, the implications of this verse do not stop here. If the human blood shed at Calvary can be said to be God's, this indicates that even the humanity of Christ can be said to be divine.

⁴² When we understand the true nature of the hypostatic union we must confess that the humanity God assumed in the incarnation has now been permanently incorporated into His eternal existence as Spirit. The Scripture declares this when it says "the Word [God] was made flesh." The humanity of Jesus was not the essence of God's being, but because of the hypostatic union the deity was miraculously manifest in every aspect of Jesus' humanity. It is in this manner that the body of Jesus can be said to be the body of God. As a result it might be said that God was born of a virgin, suffered, died, and rose again. This is not to say that Jesus' death was any different than any other man's death. When Jesus died on the cross, He died like any other human being would die. His spirit separated from His body (Matthew 27:50; James 2:26).

If Jesus' humanity was permanently incorporated into the Godhead, becoming a part of God's existence, then was Jesus' deceased body the body of God? Daniel Segraves answered this question saying, "The fulness [sic] of deity continued to be expressed in His immaterial being even during the time of His death, and at His resurrection His immaterial and material parts were reunited permanently."⁴³ The body of Jesus was even God's body while in the grave. When it is implied that God died, it must be understood that it is not being alleged that the Spirit of God died. A spirit cannot die. What is being referenced is God's existence as a human being. As a man God could, and did die. The way to lessen the impact of this hard-to-swallow truth might lie in the usage

of terminology. The term "Son of God" is used in reference to God's existence as a human being throughout the New Testament. This term specifically refers to God's assumption of, and existence as humanity. It was in this state that God died. It seems better, then, to say that the Son of God died. This is consistent with the terminology of the New Testament, and in no way takes away from the truth of Acts 20:28.

Sabellianism

Another charge brought against Oneness believers is that they believe God exists in successive modes of existence. When we say that Jesus did not exist until Bethlehem, or that the Holy Spirit was given after Pentecost, we are not saying that God exists only in successive modes as Sabellius claimed, nor are we saying that Christ was a created deity as in Arianism, but we are saying that God's eternal ousia became flesh in 5/6 B.C., and that the unique experience of the Holy Ghost prophesied about in the OT (Joel 2:28; Ezekiel 36:24-28) did not occur until after Jesus' ascension (Luke 24:49; John 7:37-39; John 14:16-18, John 14:26; John 15:26; Acts 2:4). This does not mean that the Father ceased being the Father while in Jesus on the earth. It also does not mean that the Holy Spirit was first introduced on the day of Pentecost. Throughout the gospels we see references to the Father, Son, and Holy Ghost simultaneously. When such terms as "manifestation," "mode", or "role" are attributed to God by Oneness believers, it is perceived that our conception is that Jesus is only a role that God is existing in at this time, but He could cease existing in that role at some point in the future. What is meant by "role" is the way in which God reveals Himself to mankind. What we mean when we speak of "modes" or "roles" is the way in which God reveals Himself to mankind. Oneness believers maintain that God reveals Himself to humanity in three primary ways (I prefer this way of saying this over "roles" or "modes"): Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. These ways in which God reveals Himself, however, are not distinct persons or personalities within God. As a human being, God reveals Himself to man in redemption. The purpose of the Son was to accomplish our redemption, and subsequently stand in the place of a mediator between us and the Father (1 Timothy 2:5; Hebrews 4:14-16; Hebrews 6:20; Hebrews 7:24-28, Hebrews 8:1-2). Presently, one of the major revelations of the Spirit is sanctification. As it pertains to Jesus, God will never discard His humanity. The humanity of Christ has been forever incorporated into the Godhead. The place of the Son as the mediator between God and man will cease (1 Corinthians 14:24-28), but the Son of God will never cease to be. The Son had a beginning in the incarnation, but He will have no end, just as we will also live eternally. The Preexistence of Jesus

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

There is not enough space to deal with each of these passages individually, but some general observations will be given to help shed some light on this topic. It is obvious that Jesus was not referring to His humanity previously having glory, or being in heaven, since His humanity did not

exist until the incarnation. In John 17:5, Jesus' reference to "me" includes His humanity. That this must be so is due to the nature of the incarnation. Jesus' deity was not speaking here, but the God-man was speaking. Since Jesus' humanity did not preexist, He must be referring to His deity. The question is, in what way did Jesus' deity preexist the incarnation? Did He preexist as a distinct person from the Father and Spirit? As has already been demonstrated, as it pertains to the deity of the Son, He was YHWH. The Bible never says that the Son of God preexisted the incarnation, but Jesus as the Spirit did preexist as the logos, both in the morphe of God (Php 2:6), and as the expression of God. Just as Jesus can be said to be the Lamb slain from the foundation of the world (Revelation 13:8), without having a physical body until the incarnation and having been slain in time, God can give glory to His logos before the logos is ever made flesh to actuate the plan. God does call those things which are not as though they were (Romans 4:17). Jesus could rightly say that He came forth from the Father. The logos was with God, and then was made flesh, coming to the earth (John 1:1, John 1:14). Jesus did return to heaven. He ascended to the Father, from whence He came some thirty-seven years or so before. Since the logos was God, He did not come as one of the three personalities in the Godhead, but it was the deity of the Father Himself who came. Who Jesus Prayed To A common question asked to a Oneness believer is "Who was Jesus praying to?". Some Oneness believers have explained the phenomenon of Jesus' prayers to be that Jesus' human nature was praying to His divine nature. The result is that Jesus is divided up into two parts, one divine and one human (Nestorianism), and Jesus ends up praying to Himself. Another response is that Jesus did not need to pray; His prayers were only for our example. Neither of these responses are orthodox Oneness explanations. The author of Hebrews attested to the genuineness of Jesus' prayers when He said, "Who in the days of His flesh, when He had offered up prayers and supplications with strong crying and tears unto him that was able to save him from death, and was heard in that he feared" (Hebrews 5:7 italics mine). The author validated that Jesus did indeed pray, and those prayers were prayed to the One Who was able to save Him from death (God). Jesus did not pray to Himself, but He prayed to the Father. These prayers were with strong crying and tears. Clearly these adjectives and verbs demonstrate true action on the part of Jesus, and intense action at that. There would be no reason for such expressive language if Jesus' prayers were not real. To explain the prayers of Jesus as the human nature of Jesus praying to the divine nature of Jesus poses problems. For one, natures do not pray, people do. Secondly, the Scripture declares that He prayed to God, not Himself. It would make no sense for Jesus to pray to Himself. Surely if this was the case, there would have been no need for verbal expressions of prayer because Jesus could have communicated to the deity within Him in some transferable, telepathic manner. This is not the view of Scripture. To explain the prayers of Jesus as one divine person praying to another poses even greater problems. If this were the case, then there is a subordination of one divine person to another. Prayer is addressed to one who is superior in power and ability, or else there would be no need for prayer. If this is a case of deity praying to deity, then there is a hierarchy in the Godhead, and a ditheistic Godhead at best.

It seems best to understand the prayers of Jesus in light of His humanity. Jesus possessed a complete human psyche through which He communicated with man and with God as all other human beings do.⁴⁴ The verse quoted above demonstrates this well when it explains Jesus' prayers as being prayed "in the days of his flesh." This doesn't mean that the body Jesus possessed during His earthly ministry was dissolved somehow upon His glorification and

ascension, but was speaking of the days in which Jesus walked in this earth before His ascension into heaven. It was during that time that Jesus prayed in the manner the author described. That Jesus' prayers were genuine is witnessed by the fact that Jesus prayed in solitary places and at night (Mark 1:35; Luke 5:16). Not only did Jesus pray alone, but He prayed all night long at times (Luke 6:12). For Peter, He prayed that his faith would not fail (Luke 22:31-32).

There is probably no greater example of the genuineness of Jesus' prayers than those recorded of in the Garden of Gethsemane before His betrayal and crucifixion. It was here that Jesus prayed so earnestly that it is said "his sweat was as it were great drops of blood falling down to the ground" (Luke 22:44).⁴⁵

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

Oneness Theology Defended Against Claims of Heresy As far as the orthodoxy of Oneness theology, most Trinitarians will admit that the differences between Oneness believers and Trinitarians is rather minute and not always so apparent.. Cal Beisner had this to say concerning the differences: "As the differences between modalism and pure trinitarianism are rather minute, it is not surprising that a great number of Christians in mainline denominations...hold a modalistic conception of the Trinity, at least unconsciously."⁴⁶

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

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

Jesus Christ is God uniquely present in a truly human life, but he is not a second god nor only one third of God. Jesus Christ is the Word made flesh (John 1:1). The Word which became flesh was God, not the second person of the trinity. John does not say, "In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was the Second Person of the Trinity" (John 1:1). He says that "the Word was God." Jesus Christ is more than "the Second person of the trinity"; He is Immanuel, God with us.⁴⁷ Likewise, concerning the Holy Spirit Stagg said: The Holy Spirit is the Spirit of God, not the Spirit of the third person of the trinity. The Holy Spirit is God in his nearness and power, anywhere and anytime, the very divine presence incarnated in Jesus Christ now present in His people. He is not a third God or one-third of God. He is God himself relating to us in judgment, guidance, strength, redemption, or otherwise.⁴⁸

Alister McGrath offered some insight pertaining to the word persons in reference to the Trinity that modern Oneness believers completely agree with: The word "person" has changed its meaning since the third century when it began to be used in connection with the "threefoldness of God." When we talk about God as a person, we naturally think of God as being one person. But theologians such as Tertullian, writing in the third century, used the word "person" with a different meaning. The word "person" originally derives from the Latin word persona, meaning an actor's face mask-and, by extension, the role which he takes in a play.

By stating that there were three persons but only one God, Tertullian was asserting that all three major roles in the great drama of human redemption are played by the one and the same God. The three great roles in this drama are all played by the same actor: God. Each of these roles may reveal God in a somewhat different way, but it is the same God in every case. So when we talk about God as one person, we mean one person in the modern sense of the word, and when we talk about God as three persons, we mean three persons in the ancient sense of the word. ... Confusing the word "person" inevitably leads to the idea that God is actually a committee....⁴⁹ By no means do the above quotes demonstrate that these men are unorthodox Trinitarians, nor do they demonstrate that they are orthodox Oneness believers. For other terminologies employed, and other explanations given by them are not plausible to Oneness believers. What these quotes do demonstrate is that Oneness believers and Trinitarians have more in common than what may have been previously realized.

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

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

Relevance to Life and Ministry As was mentioned in the beginning of this paper, one's view of God is central to most religions of the world. To the Christian, God is the source of all reality. The way we understand the ontological nature of God will affect the way we interpret the way we are to relate to Him. Having a Oneness view of the Godhead will affect the way we pray. A Trinitarian commonly struggles with the dilemma of who to pray to. Some only addresses one member of the Godhead at a time, or only pray to one. Some Trinitarians have confessed to me that they get confused as to who they should pray to for what, so they end up praying the same prayer three times, addressing it to each member of the Trinity. Oneness believers do not have this confusion. They know that when they pray, it does not matter whether the Father, Jesus, or the Holy Spirit is addressed. Because God is one, and Father, Son, and Spirit are all manifestations of the same Person, we are assured that our prayers are heard. This means that we can encounter God first-hand. We do not go to some Arian demigod, or to a man who is only adopted as deity by the God, nor do we encounter one part of God, but we encounter God Himself. When ministering to this world, and they desire to see an example of love, we can show them that YHWH Himself became flesh, so that He could die on a cross to atone for our sins. He did not send somebody else. He did not send a second-person, but He came Himself. What a glorious and great God we serve.

Concluding Thoughts

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

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

We must always remember that God's revelation, the Bible, is a reduction of reality. God has attempted to express particular things about Himself using human language and material concepts. But God is beyond words, and is spiritual, not material. Let's be honest, how can we put God's infiniteness into words? How can we grasp the concept of an eternal God who has no beginning or ending? How can we understand how God could become a man? How can the infinite become finite, and yet still be infinite. There is so much of God that we do not know and cannot explain, but can only experience glimpses of. Such concepts are very difficult to grapple with. The answers which we come up with should always be held in a tentative manner, realizing that our understanding of God will progress in time. We attempt to fill in the gaps between the Biblical statements to make sense out of them, and unify them into one working theology, but the ways in which we fill in the gaps of the Scriptural facts should be held on a provisional status while we await more understanding. As Michael Bauman has said, "Sometimes our theological reach exceeds our grasp. We simply do not know much of what we think we know."⁵⁰ Who God is, and the relationship of the Father, Son, and Holy Ghost is not beyond some level of understanding, but truly, being able to put our finger on God and define His eternal majesty in any theology book is beyond our grasp. I choose rather to admit that I know what little I know, and to confess that I do not know that which I do not know, for this is the beginning of knowledge. I pray you will do the same.

Footnotes

1. Louis Berkhof, *History of Christian Doctrines* (Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1937), 78, quoted in David Bernard, *Oneness and Trinity: A.D. 100-300* (St. Louis, MO: Word Aflame Press, 1991), 137.
2. Gordon L. Lewis and Bruce A. Demarest, *Integrative Theology* (Grand Rapid: Zondervan Publishing House, 1996), 252.
3. David Bernard, *Oneness and Trinity: A.D. 100-300* (Hazelwood, MO: Word Aflame Press, 1991), 136.
4. Walter A. Elwell, ed., *Evangelical Dictionary of Theology* (Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1984), 727.

5. Lewis and Demarest, 252.
 6. J.N.D. Kelly, *Early Christian Doctrine* (New York: Harper & Row, 1960), 259, quoting Basil of Ancyra, found in Alan F. Johnson and Robert E. Weber, *What Christians Believe: A Biblical & Historical Summary* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1993), 169.
 7. J. Hampton Keathley III, "The Trinity (Triunity) of God." <http://www.bible.org/docs/theology/proper/trinity.htm>
 8. E. Calvin Beisner, *God in Three Persons* (Wheaton, IL: Tyndale House Publishers, Inc., 1978), 24.
 9. All references to God's hands (Isaiah 48:13), nostrils (Exodus 15:8), or eyes (Proverbs 15:3) must be understood as anthropomorphic expressions trying to relate God to us in human terms. God is not one big body up in heaven. To have a body would indicate limitation in space, but God is omnipresent and is not limited by any form or body (1 Kings 8:27; Psalms 139:7-13). If we are to understand these Scriptures to be physical descriptions of God, we would also be forced to believe that God is part bird because the Scriptures speak of God as having wings (Psalms 91:4). The Scripture declares that God is Spirit (John 4:24), and spirits by definition do not have physical bodies (Luke 24:36-39).
 10. Vine's Expository Dictionary of Biblical Words. Thomas Nelson Publishers, 1985, on PC Study Bible. Computer Software. Version 2.1. Biblsoft. Seattle, WA. 1993-1996.
 11. Ibid.
 12. The Bible. New International Version.
 13. Paul penned the epistle to the Colossians around A.D. 64, about 34 years after Jesus' death and resurrection, yet at that time he said the fullness of the Godhead "dwells" in Jesus bodily. "Dwells" is in the present tense form in the Greek and English. This indicates that in A.D. 64, the fullness of the Godhead was still dwelling in Jesus Christ's physical body.
 14. Daniel L. Segraves, *Systematic Theology I* (Stockton, CA: n.p., 1997), 31.
- Beisner, 14.
15. A.T. Robertson, *Word Pictures in the New Testament*. (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Book House, 1932), 5:336.
 16. A.T. Robertson, *Word Pictures in the New Testament*. (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Book House, 1932), 5:336.
 17. Liddon, as found in Vine's Expository Dictionary of Biblical Words on PC Study Bible.
 18. John Calvin, *Institutes of the Christian Religion*, Book I, ch. xiii, sec. xviii.
<http://www.bible.org/docs/history/calvin/institut/c200014.htm>
 19. Alister E. McGrath, *Studies in Doctrine* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1987), 208.
 20. Keathley.
 21. McGrath, 202.

22. Ibid., 202-3.
23. Ibid., 204.
24. Charles Ryrie, *Basic Theology* (Wheaton, IL: Victor Books, 1987), electronic media as found in <http://www.bible.org/docs/q&a/q&a-169.htm>
25. Ibid.
26. David K. Bernard, *Essentials of Oneness Theology* (Hazelwood, MO: Word Aflame Press, 1985), 22.
27. Homer A. Kent Jr., *The Expositor's Bible Commentary*. ed. Frank E. Gaebelin. Vol. 11. (Grand Rapids: Zondervan Publishing House, 1978), 126, as found in Segraves, 11.
28. John Paterson, *God in Christ Jesus* (Hazelwood, MO: Word Aflame Press, 1966), 29.
29. David K. Bernard, *The Oneness of God* (St. Louis, MO: Word Aflame Press, 1983), 197.
30. The name Jesus is never used of God before the incarnation, so I do not mean here that the man Jesus Christ of Nazareth created the universe. Rather, the person we now know as Jesus Christ, as it pertains to His deity, is the Creator, seeing that He was YHWH before the incarnation.
31. Even Jesus confessed that the Father was not on earth, but in heaven when He said to pray, "Our Father who is in heaven...(Matthew 6:9). For the Son to be sent, He had to be sent from somewhere. Wherever He was sent from, that is where it is said that the Father dwells. There can be no doubt that Jesus believed the Father to be someone outside of Himself, who was in heaven, and that He Himself was distinct from the Father, on earth. Jesus said, "Yet a little while am I with you, and then I go unto him that sent me" (John 7:33 b). Jesus ascended back into heaven (Acts 1:9-10). This is where the Father was, and this is where the Son dwells now too. This does not mean, of course, that the Father was not also on earth seeing that the Father is a Spirit who is omnipresent. What it shows us is that the Father was not thought to be centralized within the person of Jesus Christ, but was thought to be the transcendent Spirit of God that fills the heavens.
32. Segraves, 37.
33. Ibid., 38.
34. Ibid.
35. Philip Schaff, *History of the Christian Church* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1910), 2:572-73, quoted in Bernard, *Oneness and Trinity*, 136.
36. McGrath, 208.
37. Ibid., 213.
38. John Calvin, *Institutes of the Christian Religion*, Book I, ch. xiii, sec. iii.
<http://www.bible.org/docs/history/calvin/institut/ci100014.htm>
39. B.B. Warfield, *The Works of B.B. Warfield*, 10 vols. (Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1929), 2:133.
40. Daniel Segraves, *Theology of the Church II* (Stockton: n.p., 1995), 37-8.

41. Millard J. Erickson, *Systematic Theology* (Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1985), 335.

42. This doesn't mean that Jesus' humanity was different than ours in any way. The only way in which His humanity could be said to be different from ours is that His humanity only exists by its union with the Spirit of God, whereas our humanity exists by the union of two human parents. The difference between our flesh and His flesh is a matter of origin and subsistence. The origin and subsistence of His flesh is from the conception brought about by the miraculous conception of the Holy Ghost in Mary's womb, while ours is from the genetical influence of two natural parents brought about by a natural conception.

43. Segraves, *Systematic Theology I*, 7.

44. Segraves, 52.

45. It is not said that Jesus actually sweat blood. Luke said His sweat "was as it were great drops of blood falling down to the ground." The Greek *hosei* means "nearly or similar to." Jesus' perspiration was so abundant that its drops fell to the ground as do drops of blood. Although it is medically possible to be in such agony as to burst the capillaries in the upper layers of skin, thereby "sweating blood," this doesn't seem to be what Luke intended to say Jesus experienced.

46. Beisner, 18.

47. Frank Stagg, *The Holy Spirit Today* (Nashville: Broadman Press, n.d.), 17-18, quoted in Segraves, *Theology of the Church II*, 14.

48. Stagg, 18, quoted in Segraves, *Theology of the Church II*, 15.

49. McGrath, 209.

50. Michael Bauman, *Pilgrim Theology* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1992), 96.

S. What Is The Meaning of Christ's Death?

What Is The Meaning of Christ's Death? by

Jason Dulle

The Problem The death of Christ has held a place of prominence in Christian theology since the days of the apostles. Their stress on this aspect of Christ's life is evident by their many references to His blood. That the divine stage of Christ's crucifixion played a central role in Paul's theology is evident from his words to the Corinthian church: "For I decided to know nothing among you except Jesus Christ and him crucified" (1 Corinthians 2:2).

There is no doubt that Christ's death occurred in history, but why was it emphasized as much as it was in the NT? What was the significance of Christ's sacrifice? Why was it important? All historical event needing interpreting. Doctrine is the attempt to interpret the Biblical-historical story. It is not enough to say that Christ died. There is no good news in this message. The death of Christ on the cross is only good news if it is interpreted in a certain way. The question we concern ourselves with is how to interpret the cross. The Biblical authors did not give us a full, or systematic explanation of the meaning of Christ's death. Trying to piece their sporadic sayings together into one meaningful understanding is like trying to assemble a puzzle without the picture of the puzzle on the cover of the box to guide you—it can be done, but with much greater difficulty and caution. This paper attempts to make sense out of the Biblical data, constructing as accurate of a picture as possible, concerning the meaning of Christ's death.

Alternative Interpretations in the Church

There have been several varied interpretations of the meaning of Christ's death and several explanations as to who was effected by the giving of His life. There are also differences pertaining to the way in which man is affected by the atonement. We now turn our attention to these various theories.

Ransom Theory—Victory Over the Forces of Evil This was the earliest theory to gain predominance in the church. It remained in this elevated status until the late Middle Ages with the advent of Anselm of Canterbury's (1033-1109) Satisfaction Theory. The Ransom Theory varied in its explication over the centuries, but the most common explanation of Christ's atonement was that it was a ransom paid to the Devil. There is a cosmic battle between God and the Devil, good and evil. Satan was able to establish control over mankind and is now the governing power over the world. His rights as the leader and authority over man were not set aside by God by taking man back to Himself, because God would not stoop to the methods of Satan. As a result all of mankind remained enslaved to an unfit ruler.

God made a bargain with Satan which entailed a transfer of the sinless soul of Jesus Christ for all other souls of men. Jesus' soul became a ransom to be paid to the Devil. The Devil, who did not realize that Jesus was God manifest in flesh, agreed to this. After releasing all the souls of men

back to God, the Devil realized that Jesus was God, and that His deity had been concealed from him. Because Jesus was the Son of God, He rose from the dead. In the end, God gained all the souls of men back to Himself including Jesus' soul, and Satan was left with nothing. Christ was the victor over Satan, triumphing over evil.

It was the Devil, not God, who demanded the blood of Jesus. The atonement was primarily for Satan, not God or man. Man was affected by the atonement, but it was not done to change man toward God, or God toward man. The Scriptural support for this theory comes from 1 Corinthians 6:20 where Paul said, "For you were bought with a price, therefore glorify God in your body." Origen relied heavily on this verse. Mark 10:45 was also used as support: "For even the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give his life as a ransom for many."

Origen and Gregory of Nyssa were the early developers of this view. Most of the church Fathers subscribed to this theory. The major exceptions are Athanasius and Gregory of Nazianzus.

Satisfaction Theory—Atonement as Compensation to the Father

Anselm of Canterbury developed this view in medieval Europe under the feudal system of his day. Having a high view of God's holiness and law, Anselm pictured God as a feudal lord who, to maintain His honor, insists on adequate satisfaction for any encroachment on that honor by His "surfs." Great attention is focused on God's injured honor, to the neglect of the idea of a penal substitutionary death of Christ.¹ Sin is seen as a failure to render to God due honor, which injures God's person. This violated honor can be rectified either by the punishment of those who violated it, or by accepting satisfaction for the violation. God chose the latter method because a certain amount of men needed to be saved to replace the number of angels who fell from heaven.²

Man not only needs to restore God's honor, but needs to make satisfaction (reparation) to God for dishonoring Him. The idea is similar to the modern idea of punitive damages. It is a price that needs to be paid above and beyond that which was accrued in debt. Unfortunately man could not provide his own satisfaction. To the medieval mind, "the recompense must be proportional to the dignity of the offended party, in this case God. Consequently, finite persons cannot make an infinite satisfaction for the offense committed against the Lord of the universe."³ Even if man gave his best he could only give back to God what was due Him, nothing more. Man needed someone qualified who could make an infinite satisfaction to God. Since God alone is infinite, only He could make such satisfaction. But if satisfaction was to be of any avail to man, man would have to be involved also. This necessitated the incarnation of God. As the God-man, Jesus Christ, in offering His life to God on behalf of man, went beyond that which was required of Him because He was sinless and had no need of death. Christ's death brought satisfaction to God's wounded honor for all of mankind. In Anselm's theory of the atonement, God is the one primarily affected by Christ's death. The atonement was not directed toward man. Man did not need to be restored to God per se, for it was God who could not commune with man because of His wounded honor. Man desired fellowship with God, but God had to rectify His honor first. Christ died to satisfy something within God's very nature, and thus restore fellowship between He and His creation.

Moral-Influence Theory—Atonement as the Demonstration of God's Love This view was first developed by Peter Abelard (1079-1142) in reaction to Anselm's Satisfaction Theory. He did not agree that Jesus' death served to satisfy God's wounded honor, but saw the atonement as the

perfect example of God's love for man. He emphasized the divinity of Christ. Abelard contended that God has never needed to be reconciled to man, but that man, because of their sin and ignorance, has alienated themselves from God through fear. The natural response of sin is that of Adam and Eve in the Garden of Eden—hiding from the presence of God. What needed to be rectified, then, was our fear of God and ignorance of His love. Man need not fear God's judgment because God's love is so abundant toward us.

Christ showed us that God is not against us. He demonstrated through His suffering and death God's great desire to relate to us in our pain and suffering. When sinners view God's love for us through Christ, they will be compelled to cast off their fear of God, and fellowship with Him as was originally intended.

Abelard contended that Jesus' death was not the purpose of His coming, but was a consequence of it. All of Jesus' life demonstrated God's love for us. His death was just the ultimate expression of that love.

Scriptural support for this theory comes from Luke 19:10 where Jesus said that He came to seek and save that which was lost. The idea here is that man cannot find their way to God because of the barrier of fear, but Jesus came to seek these souls out and demonstrate that they have no reason to fear God. Paul's statement that "God was in Christ reconciling the world to Himself" was also used (2 Corinthians 5:19).

Socinian Theory—Atonement as Example This view of the atonement was developed in the sixteenth century by Faustus and Laelius Socinus. They did not accept any idea of Christ's death being a vicarious satisfaction to God. Their view of Jesus was that of a purely human being. Their understanding of man was Pelagian, denying that man is inherently sinful and estranged from God. Man is inherently good, and can keep the law of God with the right motivation to do so. God is not a God of retributive justice so He does not demand satisfaction from, or in behalf of those who sinned against Him. In contradistinction to the Moral-Influence Theory which said Jesus' death was the demonstration of God's love for us, Socinus and Faustus said Jesus' death was the most beautiful example to man on how we should love God and be humble. The death of Jesus shows us the love for God we need in order to be saved, and inspires us to believe that we can love God completely.

Scriptural support for this view is found in Peter's statement to the scattered churches: "To this you were called, because Christ suffered for you, leaving you an example, that you should follow in his steps" (1 Peter 2:21). John's injunction to believers to walk as Jesus walked also demonstrates the fact that Jesus' life is a pattern to follow (1 John 2:6).

Governmental Theory—Demonstration of Divine Justice

Hugo Grotius (1583-1645) was the major champion of this view. Being a lawyer and not a theologian, he stressed the law of God and the seriousness of the violations against this law. While the Moral-Influence and Socinian Theories paint a picture of God as being sympathetic to sin, the Governmental Theory elaborated on God's holiness, law, and the seriousness of sin. It was not enough to simply do one's best or respond to God's love.

God is very holy and He gave man certain laws. Violations of those laws are not necessarily attacks on God's person as Anselm had claimed, but they are an attack on God as Ruler over man. God is not like a creditor or a master who can forgive debt or sin. Because He governs man He must always act in the best interest of those under His authority. As a result, His justice must be demonstrated against sin. He could not just freely forgive sin, thus bypassing justice. God thought it to be in the best interests of man to send Christ to die.

Christ's death was not just an example, but it objectively satisfied God's justice. It was not a substitutionary death for us so that we could escape the penalty due us, but was a substitution for a penalty. It made punishment unnecessary. Grotius did not believe it even possible for one person to pay the penalty for another individual's transgression of the law. Punishment, it is argued, cannot be transferred. Christ could not have borne our penalty.

Because of the atonement God was made able to deal with us mercifully. The atonement impacted God, but it primarily affected man. Millard Erickson explained that in the Governmental view "the purpose of Christ's death was not to satisfy the demands of God's nature so that he might be enabled to do what he otherwise could not have done, namely, forgive sins. Rather, Christ's death enabled God to forgive sins or remit punishment in a new way which would not have unfavorable consequences or adverse effects upon humans."⁴ The atonement also demonstrated what would happen to us if we continue in sin. On the subjective level it also was a deterrent to sin by demonstrating the vile consequences that sin brings. Thus salvation was not for retribution, but for deterrence from sin.

Penal-Substitution This view of the atonement was primarily popularized by the Reformers. They agreed with Anselm that sin was very serious, but they saw sin as breaking the law of God, rather than merely wounding His honor.⁵ God's law is holy. The infringement of God's law brings God's wrath and curse on the evildoers. To avert the wrath of God, Christ took the sinner's place, making an atonement for their sins. Instead of us receiving death for our sins, Christ tasted death for everyone, that they might experience life.

Neoorthodox

Karl Barth maintained that Jesus' death reconciled the world to God. He did not believe that Christ appeased the wrath of God against sinners, however. Because of the incarnation Jesus took humanity with Him to the cross, representing all men with Him. Jesus did not bear our sin in our place, but we were with Him in His humanity on the cross.

Jesus' death achieved a cosmic victory. Ontologically (pertaining to the nature and essential properties of existence)ly all men have been won back to God, but not all men have come to realize their redeemed status (epistemological). Once the Spirit brings the realization of redemption to a man's mind, he will be saved.

Biblical Teaching

Pentateuch The Levitical sacrificial system was based on the sacrificing of innocent blood for the sin of the worshipper offering the sacrifice. The worshipper would put his hand on the head of the animal to be sacrificed, and then slay it to YHWH. This was to make an atonement for worshipper (Leviticus 1:4; See also Leviticus 4:20; Leviticus 5:10, Leviticus 5:13; Numbers 5:8). The Day of

Atonement was an annual festival in ancient Israel. On this day, known today as Yom Kippur, the high priest would sacrifice animals to atone for his own sins and those of the priesthood (Leviticus 16:11-14). Then he would sacrifice one of two male goats and sprinkle its blood on the mercy-seat in the Holy of Holies as an atonement for the sins of the people (Leviticus 16:15-19). Following this he would lay his hand on the other goat, and after confessing the sins of the people, would send the goat into the wilderness (Leviticus 16:8-10). That which atoned for the sins of Israel was the blood. YHWH said, "For the life of the flesh is in the blood: and I have given it to you upon the altar to make an atonement for your souls: for it is the blood that makes an atonement for the soul" (Leviticus 17:11). Without the shedding of blood there could be no atonement for sin.

Atonement was also made for the Israelite males of twenty years old and upwards by paying a ransom price (koper) of a half-shekel. This was not for sin, but for YHWH, which was then given to the service of the tabernacle. In other cases, as explained above, the ransom was the life of an animal or even the life of a human (2 Samuel 21:2-7). In such cases we understand atonement to mean " 'to avert punishment, especially the divine anger, by the payment of a koper, a ransom,' which may be of money or which may be of life."⁶ Poetry and Wisdom

David believed that the Lord had atoned for the sins of the faithful (Psalms 65:3). Another psalmist believed that in the Lord was full redemption, and that this redemption would be received by Israel (Psalms 130:7-8). In Psalms 40:6-8, David speaking prophetically of the Messiah, said that God did not desire sacrifices and offerings, nor did He require burnt offerings and sin offerings. What God did require was that His law be in the heart of believers, and that they do His will. Mercy could be gained apart from sacrifices for sin (Psalms 40:11).

Another psalm declares that the Lord "will redeem Israel from all their sins" (Psalms 130:8). The Hebrew word here is *padah*, meaning the transference from one owner to another through payment of a certain price or suitable substitute.⁷ This is the only time, of the sixty times this word is used, that this word is used in the sense of redemption from sin. It draws its significance and parallel from its secular references, and the references in the Law to redeeming property and individuals with a certain price. The Prophets

Isaiah prophesied of the coming suffering servant. It was said of him that "he took up our weaknesses and carried our sorrows" (Isaiah 53:4 a). He was smitten of God, stricken, and afflicted (Isaiah 53:4 b). He was also fatally wounded for our transgressions, the punishment bringing us peace was on him, and by His wounds we are healed (Isaiah 53:5). The Lord has laid on him the iniquity of all (Isaiah 53:6, c.f. Isaiah 53:8), which will lead to others' justification. Language such as "carried" and "laid on," in connection with "for us" is clearly substitutionary. The fact that this suffering was penal is indicated by the fact that the punishment was for iniquity. The suffering servant was to suffer on behalf of others' iniquities, bearing their punishment.

Daniel prophesied that a period of seventy weeks were appointed for Israel in order to "finish transgression, to put an end to sin, to atone for wickedness, to bring in everlasting righteousness" (Daniel 9:24). Immediately after this the Messiah is mentioned (Daniel 9:26). It seems that Daniel was connecting the coming of the Messiah with this activity.

Synoptic Gospels

Matthew begins his gospel with the angelic announcement to Mary to name the baby conceived in her womb, Jesus. He was to be named such because He "would save his people from their sins (Matthew 1:21 b). Matthew also quoted Jesus' words saying that "the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give his life as a ransom [lytron] for many [anti pollon]" (Matthew 20:28; cf. Mark 10:45). Lytron (used only in these two references in this form) indicates the means by which release from something is made possible.⁸ This word usually carries with it the idea of a payment for release, and was commonly used in classical Greek and the LXX to denote a payment to release a slave from his bondage. The significance of anti is that it is used in the genitive to mean "instead of." Jesus gave his life for a ransom in our stead.

All three of the synoptic authors mention Jesus' statement at the Last Supper when He said, "This cup is the new covenant in my blood, which is poured out for you" (Luke 22:21; Mark 14:24; Matthew 26:28). Luke and Mark specifically use the preposition hyper, translated "for." This word means "in behalf of." Matthew uses peri, which is used in similar meaning. Here again we see the idea of substitution. Jesus was dying on behalf of others.

Pauline Corpus The Apostle Paul has the most to say concerning the meaning of Christ's death. He declared Christ's death to be a redemption, and a propitiation for us through His blood (Romans 3:24-25). Jesus was delivered over to death due to our wrongdoing, and was raised again for the sake of our justification (Romans 4:25). This statement echoes the suffering servant of Isaiah 53:1-12. Jesus' death was for us.

Christ's death was wrought for us while we were sinners so that we might be reconciled to God once again (Romans 5:8, Romans 5:10). It is through Christ that we receive the reconciliation (Romans 5:11). It was we who needed to be reconciled to God. We had wronged Him, causing the rift in relationship, but God came in Christ to reconcile us back to Himself (2 Corinthians 5:19-20). God made Jesus to be sin for us (hyper), so that we might be made the righteousness of God in Him (2 Corinthians 5:21). Jesus was made to be sin on our behalf. His death was substitutionary. Jesus receives our sin while we receive His righteousness. To the Ephesian church Paul noted that we have redemption by means of Christ's blood, even the forgiveness of our sins (Ephesians 1:7; c.f. Colossians 1:14). Christ's death also brought the Gentiles near to God, who were once alienated from Him (Ephesians 2:12-13). "Though we were once enemies of God, being alienated from him, God reconciled us to Him, having made peace through the blood of His cross (Colossians 1:20-21). Christ's death even took the barrier of the Law of Moses out of the way of the Gentiles by nailing it to the cross (Colossians 2:14). Now we are no longer subject to ordinances that are opposed to us. In Paul's pastoral letter to Timothy he noted that "Christ gave himself a ransom for all" (1 Timothy 2:6). To Titus he also added that Christ gave Himself for (hyper) us, to redeem us from sin, and purify a people eager for good works (Titus 2:14).

Johanine Corpus In John's gospel he recorded John the Baptist's assessment of Jesus, "Behold the Lamb of God who takes away the sins of the world" (John 1:29). John saw Christ as the Servant of Isaiah 53:10-11 who would bear the sins of others. The mention of "lamb" brings to mind the sacrificial system in the OT, specifically the Paschal lamb for the Passover feast. John uses this same imagery in Revelation where the lamb is seen to be slain (Revelation 5:6, Revelation 5:9, Revelation 5:12; Revelation 13:8).

Jesus is the propitiation (hilasmos) for our sins. This Greek word has to do with expiation, the means by which sins are forgiven. It carries with it the idea of the removal of wrath.⁹ John used this word again in 1 John 4:10 when he said that it was not our love for God, but God's love for us that He sent Jesus Christ as an expiation for our sins.

John believed that Jesus' blood had the power to cleanse us from all sin (1 John 1:7). It was for this purpose that Jesus was manifested (1 John 3:5).

Other New Testament Writings

Peter reminded his readers that they were redeemed (set free, liberated) with the precious blood of Christ, as of a lamb without spot or blemish (1 Peter 1:18-19). The Greek word for "redeemed," *lutroo*, was used for the freeing of slaves. The imagery here is that Jesus Christ has freed us from the bondage of sin so that we might live holy (1 Peter 1:14-17).

Probably the most significant contribution Peter makes to our understanding of the atonement is found in 1 Peter 3:18 where he said, "For Christ also has suffered once for sins, the righteous for (hyper) the unrighteous, so that he might bring you to God..." (1 Peter 3:18). The purpose of the righteous Christ's suffering was on behalf of (hyper) the unrighteous so that they could be brought to God. This clearly demonstrates the substitutionary death of Christ, and the fact that His death was for the purpose of reconciling man to God. According to Peter the death of Christ primarily affects man. The author of Hebrews said that Jesus suffered and died so that "he could taste death for every man" (Hebrews 2:9). Again we see the substitutionary aspect of Christ's death. Instead of man having to suffer death for our own sins, Jesus tasted that death for us so that we might escape it ourselves. Christ's death also accomplished a spiritual defeat of the one who has the power over death, i.e. the Devil, and to deliver from bondage those who fear death (Hebrews 2:14-15). This passage would lend credence to the Ransom Theory of the atonement. The author continues to say that remission can only come through the shedding of blood (Hebrews 9:22). For this reason Jesus shed His blood once, and thus "put away sin by the sacrifice of himself" (Hebrews 9:26). This offering was "to bear the sins of many" (Hebrews 9:28; c.f. Hebrews 10:12). This seems to be another reference to the suffering servant of Isaiah.

Systematic Formulation Our understanding of the atonement is highly dependent on our understanding of God and the nature of sin. So before we can examine a systematic understanding regarding the atonement, we must first examine these two key concepts.

God is a holy and just God, who cannot tolerate sin (Leviticus 11:45; Deuteronomy 32:4; 2 Kings 23:26; Isaiah 30:27-31; Lamentations 3:42). His holiness sets the standard of the law, while his justness demands that His law be obeyed. If His law is not obeyed, punishment must be inflicted on the trespasser.

It might be wondered why God is so strict concerning His Law, and why He needs to punish those who transgress it. God's zeal for His law is due to the nature of the Lawgiver. The law of God is not some external code that God keeps or has made up specifically for mankind. Neither is God's law arbitrary. He does not simply decide to approve this and condemn that. Rather God's law flows from His nature. It is a portrait of His person. When we obey God's law, we are not merely keeping a code of conduct, but relating to God Himself.¹⁰ The law has no inherent value or dignity apart from God. When we keep or break God's law we are relating to God Himself. Sin is not merely the

breaking of a law, but transgressing against the very nature of God, thus creating a personal attack on God Himself.¹¹ Breaking God's law, then, hinders the relationship between us and Him.

We must not think of God, however, as merely being a God of wrath. God's mercy is seen all throughout the OT (Psalms 85:2; Isaiah 55:7; Micah 7:18). He is not a God who is looking to punish everybody who sins, every time they sin. Instead, God is slow to anger and eager to forgive (Jeremiah 26:12-13; Joel 2:13-14).

Because of Adam's sin in the Garden of Eden, mankind is in a place of spiritual separation from God. As a result of Adam, all of mankind is in a state of spiritual death, condemnation, and judgment (Romans 5:12-21). Isaiah testified that our iniquities have separated us from God, and our sins cause Him to hide His face from us (Isaiah 59:2). Paul demonstrated the utter sinfulness of all men, declaring that there are none who are righteous who will seek after God, but all men have turned aside from Him (Romans 3:1-12). The natural result of our spiritual state is death (Romans 6:23; Ephesians 2:1-3). The only deliverance from this condition is the grace of God (Ephesians 2:8-10).

Having examined the nature of God and man, we now turn our attention to the nature of the atonement. We look first at the OT. The Aaronic sacrificial system did prefigure Christ's ultimate sacrifice. It demonstrated that there was the necessity of reconciliation to God by blood; however, it did not reveal the nature of the reconciliation.¹² This is important because we must find the deeper meaning of the atonement from the anti-type, not the type. The OT sacrifices were a precursor to Christ's ultimate sacrifice, and thus give us some knowledge of the nature of the atonement, but it is the NT that gives us the broader meaning of its nature. For this reason the NT data carries greater weight for our understanding of the atonement. This is not to say, however, that the OT never painted us a good picture of the nature of atonement. Surely Isaiah 53 was a tremendous prophetic utterance concerning the nature of God's atoning plan for the world.

Looking at the OT briefly, however, we will examine the central idea of atonement. The Hebrew word most commonly used for this concept is kaphar. It is used approximately 150 times. It is commonly believed that the basic meaning is "to cover." The authors of Theological Wordbook of the Old Testament have this to say concerning this idea:

There is an equivalent Arabic root meaning "cover," or "conceal." On the strength of this connection it has been supposed that the Hebrew word means "to cover over sin" and thus pacify the deity, making an atonement (so BDB). It has been suggested that the OT ritual symbolized a covering over of sin until it was dealt with in fact by the atonement of Christ. There is, however, very little evidence for this view. The connection of the Arabic word is weak and the Hebrew root is not used to mean "cover." The Hebrew verb is never used in the simple or Qal stem, but only in the derived intensive stems. These intensive stems often indicate not emphasis, but merely that the verb is derived from a noun whose meaning is more basic to the root idea.¹³ The meaning of kaphar is "to atone by offering a substitute."¹⁴ It is most always used in contexts speaking of the removal of sin or defilement. It was a symbolic expression on the part of the worshipper, giving an innocent life in the place of a guilty life.

Coming to the NT, we find that Jesus' sacrifice of atonement was both representative and substitutionary. He was our representative in that he acted on our behalf in such a way as to

involve us in his action. He was our substitution inasmuch as He acted in our place, causing our action in the event to be unnecessary.¹⁵ That Christ acted on our behalf is evident from the use of hyper in Romans 5:8; Romans 8:32; Galatians 2:20; and Hebrews 2:9. These verses clearly demonstrate that Christ stood in for us. Christ did not merely represent us, however. He also became our substitute. By submitting to, and receiving the divine wrath for sin that we should have received, Jesus redeemed us from that wrath. He took the punishment for us so that we would not have to. The reason Christ could be a suitable sacrifice for us is because He was sinless (2 Corinthians 5:21; Hebrews 4:15). Being sinless, He did not have to pay any penalty for sin. Jesus did not have to die for sin as we do, but he willingly submitted Himself to death (Php 2:8) so that He could taste death for everyone (Hebrews 2:9), and thus destroy the power of death (1 Corinthians 15:26, 1 Corinthians 15:54-55; 2 Timothy 1:10; Hebrews 2:14). The idea of Christ's sacrificial death as a substitution for us is very clear in the Scripture. It is said that because Christ died for all, "therefore all have died" (2 Corinthians 5:14). If by one person dying, all can be said to have died, clearly the one individual stood in their place so that their death is no longer necessary. Paul said Christ redeemed us from the curse of the law "having become a curse for (hyper) us" (Galatians 3:13). The author of Hebrews said that Christ was "offered once to bear the sins of many" (Hebrews 9:28). Peter declared that Jesus "bore our sins in his body on the tree" (1 Peter 2:24). God made Jesus "to be sin for us" (2 Corinthians 5:21). Our sins have been transferred from our account to Christ's.

Jesus' substitutionary sacrifice completed the work of atonement. It was not necessary to perform many sacrifices as they did in the OT. Christ's one sacrifice for sin, that of Himself, secured salvation for us (Hebrews 7:27; Hebrews 9:12, Hebrews 9:26, Hebrews 9:28; Hebrews 10:10). There is no more sacrifice for sin. The blood of bulls and goats are no longer necessary. Christ's one sacrifice has forever perfected those who are being sanctified by Jesus Christ (Hebrews 9:12, Hebrews 9:25-28; Hebrews 10:10-14). The atonement is finished. All that is necessary for men is to receive the effects of the atonement by faith (2 Corinthians 5:20).

How exactly did Jesus' sacrifice affect the relationship between God and man? The effects of the atonement are seen in many areas, but the primary effects are propitiation and reconciliation/justification.

Propitiation has to do with appeasing someone's wrath. That God possesses wrath against sin has already been established previously. If people die in their sins, without settling the matter with God first, they can only expect to face divine displeasure. This is none other than God's abiding wrath against sin. That God's wrath against man because of his sin, needed to be appeased, is evident from a few explicit passages. Leviticus 4:35 says, "And he [the priest] shall take away all the fat thereof, as the fat of the lamb is taken away from the sacrifice of the peace offerings; and the priest shall burn them upon the altar, according to the offerings made by fire unto the LORD: and the priest shall make an atonement for his sin that he has committed, and it shall be forgiven him." The fact that forgiveness would only come after an offering to YHWH for atonement indicates that it was God who needed to be appeased for the sin committed.

Wrath is the divine reaction to those who sin (Romans 1:18; Romans 2:5, Romans 2:8; Romans 4:15; Romans 5:9; Romans 9:22; Romans 12:19; Romans 13:4-5; Ephesians 2:3; Colossians 3:6; 1 Thessalonians 1:10; 1 Thessalonians 2:16). God's wrath is his "settled opposition of his holiness

to evil," not to the evildoer per se.¹⁶ In fact, if we do not give full credence to the wrath of God, and man's deserving of such wrath, we make the forgiveness of God empty and meaningless.¹⁷ The clearest example of this is found in Romans where Paul said God presented Christ as a propitiation (hilasterion) to demonstrate His justice. The reason for this was because God, in His forbearance, did not visit His wrath in its fullness on the sins committed prior to Calvary. This left God open to be charged with being unjust. His righteousness and justice could be called into question. The death of Christ removed this attack by visiting on sin the judgment it deserved, thus showing God to be just, and the justifier of those who will believe in Him (Romans 3:24-26).

God's wrath against sin is not contrary to His love for the sinner. Robert Culpepper made the case that "God's wrath is an integral constituent of his love. The wrath of God is the active manifestation of God's essential incapacity to be morally indifferent and let sin alone. It denotes the attitude of God in his holy love toward willful sin. God's wrath is God's grace. It is his grace smitten with dreadful sorrow. It is his love in agony."¹⁸ While God may will to redeem man because of His love for them, He must fulfill this desire according to the nature of His holiness, without denying His righteousness. This is why Paul said that "God put [Jesus] forward as an expiation by his blood, to be received by faith. This was to show God's righteousness, because in his divine forbearance he had passed over former sins" (Romans 3:25, RSV). God could not let sin go unpunished, or it would make God unjust. In order to fulfill the divine desire to forgive man of their sins, and yet remain just, God presented Christ as a propitiation for our redemption (Romans 3:24-25). This conception of the Father should not give us the idea that the Father is the angry God in heaven, and that the Son is the meek and lowly God-man on earth who averts God the Father's anger from humanity. The Scriptures do not portray the love of the Father for humanity to be the effect of the atonement, but rather the cause of the atonement.¹⁹ God desired to redeem man all along. God does not love us because Christ died for us, but it was the Father's love for which caused Christ to die for us (Romans 5:6-8; 1 John 4:9-10). Even after saying that God demonstrated His love for us by having Christ die for us, Paul still maintained that we were enemies of God before we were reconciled (Romans 5:8, Romans 5:10-11). Even while we were enemies of God because of our sinful state, God, in Christ, still died for our sins to reconcile us to Himself (2 Corinthians 5:19).

Apart from God's manifestation of love in Christ's death, the only manifestation of God we would expect from God is the manifestation of His wrath. In Christ's death God's mercy and justice could both be met, thus allowing the Father to deal with the sin problem, and acquit the believer from all guilt. Jesus' death assumed our legal guilt and made our forgiveness possible. Just as Adam's sin brought condemnation to all men, Christ's righteousness brought justification (Romans 5:16, Romans 5:18). He assumed our sin so that we could assume His righteousness (2 Corinthians 5:14, 2 Corinthians 5:21). Our guilt was transferred to Him as our vicarious sacrifice (endured or done by one person substituting for another) so that we would no longer experience God's condemnation of our sin. In a very real sense Christ experienced the wrath of God against sin in our stead, so that we might experience life in Him.

Whereas propitiation appeases God's wrath against sin, and hence the sinner, reconciliation primarily affects man. Reconciliation is necessary between individuals who have had a harmonious and peaceful relationship hindered by some offense so that there is a breach of relationship. Reconciliation, then, is a restoration of relationship with God. In our sin, we are estranged from God, separated from His face (Isaiah 59:2). We are hostile towards God in our

carnal minds (Romans 8:7; Colossians 1:21), thus making us God's enemies (Romans 5:8). It was in this state of being enemies of God that God reconciled us to Himself (Romans 5:8, Romans 5:10). God is the one who initiated and objectively finished the process of reconciliation. He is the subject, and humanity or the world is always the object. It is not God who is being reconciled to man, but man to God. Paul said that "God was in Christ reconciling the world to himself" (2 Corinthians 5:19), and again, "And you who were once estranged...has he now reconciled in the body of flesh by his death" (Colossians 1:21-22; c.f. Romans 5:10). The reconciliation of man is pictured as a finished work. It is not a work which is being done, but a work that is done.²⁰ After noting that God was reconciling the world to Himself through Christ, Paul pleaded with the Corinthians, "Be reconciled to God" (2 Corinthians 5:19-20). It has already been accomplished on our behalf at Calvary, but it is not realized subjectively in the life of an individual until He receives it by faith. The character of reconciliation is found in Paul's statement that God "was not counting their sins against them" (2 Corinthians 5:19). Reconciliation affects God's attitude toward us. Because man is inherently sinful, which is in opposition to God's holy nature, we are by nature the children of wrath (Ephesians 2:3). God must count our sins against us. In the atonement, however, God, through Christ's vicarious substitutionary death, was able to judge sin once for all, and thus no longer be hindered in His desire to show mercy and forgiveness to those who were unjust (Romans 6:10; Romans 8:3; Hebrews 9:26, Hebrews 9:28). As Peter said, "For Christ has also suffered once for sins, the just for the unjust, that he might bring us to God, being put to death in the flesh, but made alive by the Spirit" (1 Peter 3:18). Jesus' death brought us (those who were unjust) to God. Through the atonement, God took care of the sin problem so that He could deal mercifully and graciously with man instead of pouring out His holy wrath. George Ladd said it this way: For it is an ethical and religious necessity that the holiness of God manifest itself in wrath against sin. Reconciliation is an act of God, initiated by his love, by virtue of which God no longer counts people's trespasses against them; it has to do with the divine attitude toward human beings as the result of which God no longer looks upon them as enemies, as occupying a hostile status. ... Thus reconciliation makes a difference to God as well as to humanity.²¹

Apologetic Interaction

The Ransom Theory The Ransom Theory has little to commend for it. It's major weakness is that Christ's death was a ransom paid to the Devil. There is simply no Scriptural support for such a teaching. The closest Biblical backing is found in Hebrews 2:14 where it is said that through death Christ destroyed the one who had the power of death, the Devil. All this verse demonstrates is that Christ's death defeated Satan. It does not postulate the notion that Christ was a ransom paid to the Devil.

It is true that the Devil is the prince of the power of the air (Ephesians 2:2), and that He is ruling over the kingdoms of this world (Luke 4:5; Ephesians 6:12), but there is no evidence that all the souls of men are in possession of Satan. Satan is not the ruler over hell. He is only one individual who will be cast there by God. God is the ruler over hell (Revelation 19:20; 20:20). Although man is fallen, and willingly subjects himself to the devices of Satan, he does not belong to Satan. God said that all souls were His (Ezekiel 18:4). The fact that man is fallen does not mean that man belongs to Satan. Every human belongs to God. This is why God can do with us what He pleases. He can bring us to Him in heaven, or send us away from Him to hell. The idea that God made a bargain with Satan, exchanging the sinless soul of Jesus for the sinful souls of mankind, is lacking for Biblical support. Of the many Scriptural references giving the purpose for Christ's death, nowhere is this stated as one of them, yet alone the primary reason. It must be asked why the

Devil would even be willing to make the trade? What made a sinless soul better than the billions of other souls that the Devil possessed? Maybe it was the fact that God was giving Satan something that did not belong to Him, and this stroked Satan's pride. Again, however, the Bible is silent. The theory also states that the Devil did not know who Jesus really was (God Himself), and this is why he agreed to the exchange. However, the Bible indicates that the Satanic kingdom was very aware of who Christ was (Luke 4:41). The Devil was aware of Christ's identity when he tempted Jesus (Matthew 4:3-11). If he was not aware of His identity, there would have been no need to be tempted in the ways that the Devil tempted Him.

Paul's statement that if the "princes of this world" had known of God's hidden wisdom, "they would not have crucified the Lord of glory" (1 Corinthians 2:8) is often used to support the idea that the Satanic kingdom was not aware of who Jesus really was. Although the phrase, "the prince of this world" is used of Satanic forces elsewhere (John 12:31; John 14:30; John 16:11; Ephesians 2:2), it is used in the singular, not the plural, presumably referring to Satan Himself. The Corinthian passage uses this phrase in the plural. Although it could be taken to mean that there is more than one demonic being in view here, the context demands otherwise. Paul declared that he worked miracles so that the Corinthians' belief would not stand in the wisdom of men, and that the wisdom he spoke of was not the same as the wisdom of the world (1 Corinthians 2:5-6 a). He goes on to say that the wisdom he spoke was not understood by the princes of this world, "who are passing away" (1 Corinthians 2:6 b). This cannot be referring to demonic forces who are immortal, but to earthly rulers whose rule is always passing away with the changing of offices and passing of time. Grammar and context both point to the fact that it was earthly rulers who were not aware of who Christ was, not demonic rulers. This view of the atonement also makes the Devil, not God, the originator of the atonement. God did not initiate the redemption of mankind, but the Devil, although unknowingly. It was he who demanded the blood of Christ. The Biblical portrait is that Jesus was the "Lamb slain from the foundation of the world" (1 Peter 1:20; Revelation 13:8). The atonement was not a plan in response to Satan, but was planned for man's redemption before there was ever a Satan to demand Jesus' sinless blood from God. The Ransom Theory also states that the atonement did not change man toward God, or vice versa. Again, this smacks in the face of many Biblical passages. Paul said, "And you, that were sometime alienated and enemies in your mind by wicked works, yet now has he reconciled in the body of his flesh through death, to present you holy and unblameable and unproveable in his sight" (Colossians 1:21-22). The atonement did affect our relationship with God. It brought about our reconciliation. This truth of this theory is found in its assertion that there is a cosmic battle going on over men's souls—Satan trying to subvert them from God, and God trying to lead them to Himself. This is about as much truth that can be found in this historically popular, yet unbiblical view.

Satisfaction Theory

Anselm's main thesis was that sin is the wounding of God's honor. Jesus needed to offer satisfaction to repair this wounded honor so that God could offer mercy to man. This view is commended for its high view of God's holiness and the seriousness of breaking God's law. It is also seems to be correct in claiming that Jesus had to be both God and man to make an atonement for us that would be efficacious. However, the idea that the only thing barring man from fellowship with God was God's wounded honor is Scripturally lacking. Man was separated from God because by breaking God's law, men are at enmity against God Himself. It is not merely

God's honor that is offended, but His person (Romans 8:7).

Socinian Theory This theory states that Christ's death was an example for us of the kind of love we should have toward God and the kind of life we should live. The problems with this theory are numerous. First of all, the main tenants that Jesus was only a man, God does not require vicarious suffering for sin, and that man is not inherently sinful have already been proven to be Scripturally false. God does require a sacrifice for inherently sinful man. Since the basic premises of this view are in dire contradiction to the abundant teaching of Scripture, there is not much else to commend this view. This is not to say that there is not an element of truth in this theory. The truth lies in the fact that Christ's death is an example for us to follow, as 1 Peter 2:21 and 1 John 2:6 attest to. We will suffer in the flesh as did Christ Himself. He is our example. The problem with the Socinian theory is that it takes this one aspect of the atonement, which is not given much attention Biblically, and makes it the thrust of the atonement. If Socinus would have read just a little farther in 1 Peter, he would have noticed that Peter taught that Jesus' death was a vicarious sacrifice for our sins (1 Peter 2:24).

Most importantly, if Christ's death did nothing for us, it would not be much of an example. It would be a meaningless act. Jesus would have given His life for no purpose. Does God approve of men giving up the life that He gave to them, for no particular reason? There is honor in giving up one's life for a purpose, but not simply to show how dedicated one is to God. God desires us to praise Him in our lives.

It could be likened to a man who set off a grenade and then jumped on it to show the rest of his platoon the dedication it takes to be in the Army. There would be no honor in such an act. It would not be viewed as an example for others to follow, but sheer stupidity. If however, the man jumped on a grenade thrown into the bunker of his platoon by the enemy, his act would be an example of dedication and would be honored. The Socinian theory of the atonement is both Biblically lacking for evidence, and is logically absurd. **The Moral-Influence Theory**

Abelard's main tenant was that Christ's death was only an example of God's love for us. It did not do anything for us spiritually, except to provide an example for us so that we could understand God's love for us, cast off our sinful ways and our fears which kept us from fellowship with Him, and return to God.

Abelard's view has much to commend it. He was correct in seeing that man was alienated from God because of sin and fear, and that man needed to be reconciled to God as a result. He was also correct in demonstrating that God is not against us, but desires for us to return to Him. Surely God's sacrifice of His only begotten Son for us is a great example demonstrating God's great love for us that can provoke us to return to Him without fear. Where the Moral-Influence Theory falls short is not in what it affirms, but in what it does not affirm. Although Christ's death is a great example of God's love for us (John 3:16), this is not the totality of the teaching of Scripture. As in most false doctrines, there is a strong element of truth presented, but the element is only one aspect of the totality of truth. Abelard made this one aspect of the atonement the entire purpose of the atonement. This theory denies any objective element to the atonement. Nothing was truly accomplished on our behalf at Calvary. There was no true atonement for sins. God could have forgiven us apart from Christ's innocent death. There was no true obstacle in the way for God to forgive us our sins.²² His death is only subjective, giving us an example of God's love to

overcome our fear of Him. The wealth of Biblical statements cited previously demonstrate that God did need a penalty paid for sins. He needed to take care of the sin problem before He could justify man and restore him to a right relationship with Himself. The Governmental Theory The Governmental Theory's main proposition is that Christ's death was a demonstration to the world of the seriousness of sin, and the Ruler's responsibility to judge that sin. This theory is correct in its assessment of God's holiness and the seriousness of sin. Grotius was incorrect, however, in His view of sin. Sin is not just an attack on God as a Ruler, but is an attack against God Himself. God's law flows from God's nature. It is not external to Him, as has been previously demonstrated. An infringement on God's law is a personal attack on God. God Himself testified that sin was against Him personally (Exodus 32:33; Jeremiah 33:8). David proclaimed that his sin was against the Lord (Psalms 51:4).

Grotius was also correct in claiming that Christ's death accomplished an objective basis for the forgiveness of our sins. He was wrong, however, in denying that this death was a substitution for the penalty of our sins, but rather a substitution for a penalty. He claimed that sin and punishment cannot be transferred from one person to another, but Paul made it clear that Christ was "made a curse for us," and God "made him to be sin for us" (2 Corinthians 5:21; Galatians 3:13). His error is due to a misunderstanding of the nature of sin. It is not a physical substance that can be transferred from one person to another. Sin is falling short of God's holy nature by transgressing His law. To transfer the guilt and responsibility from one to another is not impossible, nor is it unjust. Justice is not violated if someone else willingly takes the punishment for someone else's crime so that the guilty individual may be justified.²³

Neoorthodox

Barth was correct in asserting that Jesus' death reconciles the world to God, but he took this idea too far, to the point that he bordered on Universalism (all men will be saved). He was also mistaken in His view that Christ's death did not appease the wrath of God. This has been belabored previously, so nothing more will be said here. His view as it pertains to how Christ's death could be effective for all other men is basically federalistic (Jesus is appointed as the representative for all others). The Scripture does seem to teach this by calling Jesus the "last Adam" who was sent to reverse the effects of the first Adam's sin (Romans 5:12-21; 1 Corinthians 15:21-22, 1 Corinthians 15:45). Barth is wrong, however, in his rejection of a substitutionary sacrifice of Christ for all others. Jesus may have represented all men at the cross, but this does not make all men physically present with Him. The Scripture affirms that He bore our sins by Himself on our behalf, so that we would not have to pay the penalty for our sins (Isaiah 53:6; Galatians 3:13; 1 Peter 2:24).

Objections to the Penal-Substitution Theory Mercy and Justice are Incompatible

Some have seen God's mercy and God's justice to be at odds with one another. It is argued that God's justice would lead to the punishment of mankind, while His mercy would lead to the forgiveness of mankind without exacting a punishment for their sin. This line of reasoning is a false dichotomy. It is not an either/or decision. God's mercy and His justice both function in redemption. God's mercy is what motivated God to act in history to redeem us, while God's justice demanded the means by which that redemption would take place. God's mercy led to His decision to redeem.²⁴ His justice led to the particular method chosen to accomplish this end. Both God's

justice and His mercy are satisfied in the atonement. The Concept of Substitution is not Just This objection may seem valid at first glance. How could a judge be considered righteous if he knowingly accuses an innocent victim of a crime they did not commit, and knowingly acquits the real criminal of his crimes? Substituting the one for the other does not seem righteous. What must be remembered is that Christ willingly offered Himself as a substitute for us (John 15:13). His sacrifice was voluntary. The judge was not the one sentencing the innocent party against his will, but the innocent party requested to take the place of the guilty party. Jesus willingly laid down His life for us (John 10:17-18). The Greek Preposition Does Not Support the Idea of Substitution

Many have claimed that hyper with the genitive case (in behalf of), which is the preposition usually used in connection with the idea of atonement or reconciliation, does not carry the idea of substitution. It is said that only anti (instead of) carries this idea, which is only used in Matthew 20:28 and Mark 10:45 (excepting the compound uses found elsewhere in connection with redemption). Although at first glance this seems to be a convincing blow to the idea of substitutionary atonement, on second glance this distinction between prepositions does not fit the logical or contextual usage.

If one acts on behalf of another, the one representing the other is acting in a substitutionary role. If I have been given the power of attorney over my spouse's assets, when I act in a legal capacity for her, my presence is a substitute for her presence, rendering her presence needless. This idea of "substitution" is found in several passages which use the preposition hyper. In 1 Timothy 2:6 Christ is pictured as giving Himself as a ransom on our behalf. The reason for this was because we could not have been freed by ourselves. He had to act on our behalf, so that what He did could be considered to have been done by us. The only way this could be accomplished is if Christ was acting in our place. Whereas we could not redeem ourselves, He could, and did so by acting in our stead.

George Ladd has offered some tremendous insight in opposition to the idea that Christ only acted on our behalf, rather than in our stead. He said:

If...Christ voluntarily came under the blight of sin, entered into its deepest gloom, and shared with humanity its awful weight and penalty, it is difficult to resist the conclusion that he not only died for me, but that he died in my stead, since because of his death, I shall not die, but shall live eternally with him. By suffering death, the penalty of sin, he delivers me from that very experience. In submitting to the judgment of God upon sin, he has delivered me from the same judgment. The rationale of this is difficult to understand unless Christ suffered the penalty and judgment of God in the stead of the sinner by virtue of which the sinner will never experience that awful penalty.²⁵ The fact that Paul said that because Christ died, "therefore all have died" points to an objective reality that occurred in Jesus Christ at Calvary, which had effects on everyone who was not present there (2 Corinthians 5:14). This is not a mere identification with Christ at His death, but is an accomplished reality performed by one man, and considered to have taken place in all men. Christ's death accomplished my death. This can only be understood in the context of substitution. What should have happened to me will never have to happen to me, because it happened to Christ; and when it happened to Christ, it happened to me.

Although it was not as common to use hyper to denote substitution in Classical Greek, it was used sometimes (Plato, Republic 590a; Xenophon, Anabasis 7.4.9-10).²⁶ The LXX uses the preposition

for substitution in Deuteronomy 24:16, Isaiah 43:3-4, and in the apocryphal book of Jdt 8:12. The use of hyper in Hellenistic Greek (ostraca and papyri) is often used with the force of anti.²⁷ It is used in the papyri of one who writes a letter in someone else's stead. Although this could be interpreted as "in behalf of," the point is clear that one person is acting in the stead of another, so that the other no longer needs to perform the same action. Instead of Mr. A writing the letter, Mr. B wrote the letter for Mr. A. This is a clear example of substitution.

Daniel Wallace proposes that hyper and anti had little overlap in semantic domain in Attic Greek, but that this changed in the Koine period. Hyper began to be used much more frequently and its semantic domains were broadened to that it began to approach closer to the meaning of anti, although it never phased out the use of anti for the idea of substitution.²⁸

Context dictates the force of any preposition. Words have no inherent meaning. Meaning is derived from usage. The contexts of John 11:50, 2 Corinthians 5:15, and Galatians 3:13 give a clear indication that hyper can carry the force of substitution. A.T. Robertson went so far as to say that in these verses "hyper has the resultant notion of 'instead' and only violence to the context can get rid of it."²⁹ In the first reference, Caiaphas said that it was better that one man should die hyper the people, that the whole nation would not perish. Jesus was to die instead of the whole nation, not on behalf of the nation. This was an exchange of one for the many. The other two references, though not as clear as John, do sustain the same understanding. Other passages also heavily lend themselves to this understanding, but are less conclusive (Romans 5:6-8; Romans 8:32; Galatians 2:20; Hebrews 2:9). The use of hyper for substitution is even found in non-soteriological verses such as Romans 9:3 and Philemon 1:13. To haggle over whether hyper can mean "instead of" is almost meaningless, because the logical necessity of acting on behalf of someone is that the original individual who was supposed to act, no longer needs to do so because of the actions of another. This is the meaning of substitution.

Objections to the Idea of Propitiation

Some find the idea that God's wrath needed to be appeased before He could save man an abhorrent and unbiblical doctrine. They say that this makes God the Father into a wrathful God who desires judgment, and the Son into the one changing God's attitude toward man from wrath to love. As has already been stated previously, the Father is not the angry God in heaven, and the Son the meek and lowly God-man on earth who averts God the Father's anger from humanity. Rather it was the love of God the Father that brought about the reconciliation of mankind to Him through the death of Jesus Christ. God had always desired to be merciful to man and to redeem him, but this merciful side of God could not override His holy wrath against sin. Likewise God's wrath could not override His desire to show mercy. Both needed to be satisfied. God's justice and mercy were satisfied as they met in the person of Christ. Through His death God's mercy and justice could both be met, thus allowing the Father to deal with the sin problem, and acquit the believer from all guilt. The Bible is abundantly clear that God hates sin, and that the sins of men anger God's holiness. Without a removal of the sin problem, God could not deal mercifully with man. God's nature is opposed to sin, and thus God is opposed to those who commit sin. His wrath against sin is only expected. Without something to avert this wrath toward man who committed sin, we could only expect punishment. Truly God's wrath did need to be appeased, and God's attitude toward man and his sin had to be changed for reconciliation to take place. Although the Scripture

nowhere explicitly states this in such terminology, it is nevertheless safe to say from the general tenor of Scripture that Christ experienced the wrath of God in our place,³⁰ thus appeasing God's holy anger against us, allowing Him to deal mercifully with us.

Relevance to Life and Ministry

How exactly does the penal-substitutionary atonement relate to our personal lives and ministries? Is it irrelevant to the modern reader of Scripture? I do not believe so. It is relevant to us in many areas.

First of all this understanding of the atonement allows us to see the multi-facedness of God. He is not one-sided. Many times one's conception of God is limited to one attribute or characteristic. Either God is viewed as the exacting judge in heaven who is just waiting to drop the hammer on anyone who drops the ball, or else God is viewed as a big grandfather in the sky who lets us get away with murder. God is not just a God of justice, and neither is He just a God of mercy. We know that God is both a God of justice and mercy. We need not view Him only as a policeman, or only as a friend. We need to both love God because of His mercy and love, and fear God because of His hatred of sin. This understanding of the atonement also makes it clear to us that we cannot do anything for our salvation. Having been sinners by nature, all of us were destined to hell. There was nothing we could do to avoid this, or change our course of destiny. Our just sentence was death because of our sins. But God, who is rich in mercy, while we were without strength Christ died for us (Romans 5:6). It was God who made the move to save our souls. We did not first love Him, but He first loved us and gave Himself for us (Titus 2:14; 1 John 4:10, 1 John 4:19). Salvation began with, and will be finished by Christ. He accomplished our reconciliation to God. All we are left to do is receive the reconciliation by faith (2 Corinthians 5:20).

If Christ did all that is necessary for our salvation, making an atonement for our sins in our stead, we can be assured that we will be saved when we continue to place our faith in Christ's work on our behalf. We can know that we have security in our relationship with Christ. It is not based on our own merits, but on His merits. Jesus is both the author and finisher of our faith (Hebrews 12:2). He can act in this capacity because He did all that was necessary to secure salvation for all those who will believe. What we must do is trust in what He has done for us, and await the redemption of our bodies. On a more subjective level, the atonement should lead us to a greater hatred of sin. The Scripture declares that the beginning of wisdom is to hate evil (Proverbs 8:13). God's hatred of evil and sin led him to make a tremendous sacrifice, i.e. the death of His Son, Jesus Christ. Sin is serious. God does not excuse sin. When we sin we sin against God Himself. It is God that we are hurting, and not just ourselves. God's love for us in spite of our sin may be beyond our areas of knowledge (Ephesians 3:19), but this love was costly. It cost Jesus His life. The fact that God needed to come to earth as a human being, and suffer and die for us, so that we could be saved, should wake us up to the seriousness of sin. The next time we are tempted to sin we should look to Calvary and see the price with which we were redeemed, and in seeing both God's hatred for sin and love for us, turn away from sin to righteousness. For ministry, understanding the nature of the atonement is extremely important. Paul said that God "has reconciled us to Himself by Jesus Christ, and has given us the ministry of reconciliation" (2 Corinthians 5:18). As ministers, our specific ministry is that of reconciling man to God. If we do not understand the nature of the atonement/reconciliation, we cannot effectively preach the message of reconciliation to an

estranged world. A lack of understanding of the atonement will result in a ministry which is out of focus. The atonement defines for us our mission, i.e. the reconciling of lost souls to their heavenly Father.

Finally, the atonement is a motivation for us to live for God, as the Socinian Theory states. Paul said that the love of Christ compels us to no longer live for ourselves, but to live for Jesus Christ, the one who died for us and rose again (2 Corinthians 5:14-15). When we look at Christ's death, it compels us to live our lives in total obedience to God as did Jesus. Just as Jesus was so committed to the fulfilling the will of God, and pleasing God, that He went so far as to willingly give His life as a ransom for many, we also will experience this same passion when we look to Christ.

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Footnotes 1. Gordon L. Lewis and Bruce A. Demarest, *Integrative Theology* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan Publishing House, 1996), 375.

2. Anselm borrowed this idea from Augustine of Hippo.

3. Lewis and Demarest, 375.

4. Millard J. Erickson, *Systematic Theology* (Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1985), 791.
5. Walter A. Elwell, ed., *Evangelical Dictionary of Theology* (Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1984), 102.
6. Leon Morris, *The Apostolic Preaching of the Cross* (William B. Eerdmans Publishing: Grand Rapids, reprinted 1988), 166.
7. R. Laird Harris, Gleason L. Archer Jr., Bruce K. Waltke, *Theological Wordbook of the Old Testament*, as found on BibleWorks, electronic media, 1998.
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9. Morris, 174.
10. Erickson, 803.
11. Ibid.
12. J. McLeod Campbell, *The Nature of the Atonement* (Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co.: Grand Rapids, 1996), 109.
13. TWOT.
14. Ibid.
15. Lewis and Demarest, 401.
16. W.C. Robinson, "Wrath," found in *Evangelical Dictionary of Theology*, 1196.
17. Morris, 185.
18. Robert H. Culpepper, *Interpreting the Atonement* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1996), 406.
19. Dr. Campbell, quoted in F.W. Farrar, "The Atonement in Modern Religious Thought," no other information available.
20. J. Denney, *The Death of Christ* (n.p.: n.p., 1950), 85-86 as found in George Eldon Ladd, *A Theology of the New Testament* (Eerdmans: Grand Rapids, 1993), 494.
21. Ladd, 495.
22. Erickson, 820.
23. Lewis and Demarest, 413.
24. Alister E. McGrath, *Studies in Doctrine* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1987), 284.
25. Ladd, 468.
26. Daniel B. Wallace, *Greek Grammar Beyond the Basics* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan Publishing, 1996), 383.

27. A.T. Robertson, *A Grammar of the Greek New Testament in the Light of Historical Research*, 2nd ed. (New York: George H. Doran, 1915), 631 referenced in Erickson, 814.

28. Wallace, 387.

29. Robertson, 631, in Erickson, 814.

30. Ladd, 473.

S. Where is God?: Exploring the Nature of Omnipresence

Where is God?: Exploring the Nature of Omnipresence by

Jason Dulle

"Prior" to the creation of the material universe ex nihilo there was no space or time. Because there was no time we conclude that God existed atemporally (timelessly). What about the absence of space? Would this not mean God existed non-spatially without creation? Yes it would. How does that conclusion square with the Biblical teaching that God is omnipresent? How can a being that is spaceless in nature be omnipresent? Is the Bible contradicting itself in its description of God's nature? What exactly is the nature of God's omnipresence? Has He always been omnipresent? These questions ought to cause us to think more clearly about what it means to say God is "omnipresent." To be all-present requires that there be a "here" and a "there" to be present at. Without the existence of spatial location the notion of omnipresence is meaningless. Seeing that there was no space "prior" to creation it follows that God was not omnipresent prior to creation.¹ Omnipresence, then, is not an essential attribute of God's nature; spacelessness is essential to God's nature. "God existing alone without creation is spaceless."² God became omnipresent concurrent with creation in virtue of the creation of space.³ Omnipresence emerged as a contingent relation between God and the spatial universe He created.

What is the Nature of God's Omnipresence?

While we have determined that God is spaceless without creation and omnipresent subsequent to creation, this does not tell us anything about the nature of His omnipresence. What does it mean to say God is omnipresent? Does it mean He is spatially located within and extended throughout the universe such that He is present at every point, or does it mean He is cognizant of and causally active at every point in the universe though He is neither spatially located in, nor spatially extended throughout it?⁴ While we have typically conceived of omnipresence in the first sense I would argue that God's omnipresence is more aptly described by the second. At a minimum God's omnipresence means He is not localized anywhere within space, and that He lacks both shape and size. But if omnipresence refers to God's extension through space He would have both shape and size because the universe has both shape and size. God is not extended through space so that He fills it like air fills a container. God is not a physical substance that can fill anything. God's omnipresence in the universe is more comparable to the way in which our minds are "filled" with thoughts. Our thoughts are not spatially extended throughout our minds, and neither is God spatially extended throughout the universe.

If God were spatially present at every point in the universe He could not distinguish "here" from "there." For a being that is spatially present at every point in the universe everywhere is here; everything is ever-present before Him. There is no "there" for such a being. If God were spatially extended through space He must believe that two points, separated by millions of light years, are both "here."⁵ That would mean God could not know the Statue of Liberty is separated from the

Eiffel Tower by thousands of miles. That is patently absurd, and impugns God's omniscience! There must be a better way of understanding God's omnipresence. Has God Changed?

Earlier I argued that spacelessness, rather than omnipresence, is essential to God's nature. Those properties that are essential to a substance cannot be changed without causing the substance to cease to exist. Only accidental properties can be changed if the substance is to retain its essence. If spacelessness is essential to God's nature, then how could God become omnipresent at creation without giving up the property of spacelessness and ceasing to be who He was? If God's omnipresence is understood as a spatial location extended through space this is unavoidable, for He would be required to relinquish the property of spacelessness in order to assume the property of spatiality, and thus He would cease to exist as the divine essence He once was to take on a new essence. If, however, God's omnipresence is understood as God's immediate mental cognizance of, and causal activity at every point in the universe then God's omnipresence would not encroach on His essential spaceless nature. Mental cognizance and causal activity do not require spatial presence.

Additionally, there is nothing intrinsic to the act of creation that would require God to be drawn into space (spatialized). Creation was not a spatial act, therefore, we have no compelling reason to believe God surrendered His divine spacelessness and began to exist spatially subsequent to the act of creation. It stands to reason that God remained spaceless even subsequent to creation. If God remained spaceless His omnipresence must mean He is simply "cognizant of and causally active at every point of space".⁶

Conclusion

God's omnipresence is an example of analogous language in which those incomprehensible aspects of God's nature are described in terms finite humans can comprehend. We run into problems, however, when we take this use of language and apply it to God in literal terms. God is not spatially extended throughout the finite universe, but is cognizant of and causally active in each and every part of it as a non-spatial being. Because God is mentally cognizant of, rather than personally located at every point in the universe He can be both here and there, and know the difference between the two.

Footnotes

1. To speak of that which was prior to creation is a figure of speech, similar to the way scientists speak of temperatures "lower than" absolute zero. It is a mental construct only, having no ontological basis in reality. The beginning of time is a boundary beyond which only our imagination can travel. Trying to find time before the beginning is like trying to cross the boundary of space into spacelessness. There is no space on the other side of space in which to cross over into, and likewise there is no time on the other side of the beginning to go back to.

2. William Lane Craig and J.P. Moreland, *Philosophical Foundations for a Christian Worldview* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2003), 510.

3. Space was created by God, but that does not mean it was manufactured as if it were some physical substance. To say God "created" space merely expresses the fact that (1) space had a temporal beginning, and that (2) God is its causal agent. Space is not a physical substance, but a

relation that obtains in virtue of the presence of finite and material objects. Just as time keeps every event from happening at once, space keeps everything from being located at the same point. In the utter absence of finite and material objects space would not obtain. God no more created something called space than we create the relation "next to" when we place two books side-by-side. Apart from the creation of matter there would be no space (or time for that matter), for it is only the creation of material substance that necessitates there be space in which the matter can exist, and time in which the matter can move. Space and time "came along for the ride" in virtue of the creation of matter, but they were not the objects of creation itself. The relations of space and time emerged with the existence of matter. Space is a contingent relation emerging concomitantly with the presence of material substance.

4. William Lane Craig and J.P. Moreland, *Philosophical Foundations for a Christian Worldview* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2003), 510.

5. Ibid.

6. Ibid.

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