

# Who, What, is God?

Of all the theological questions that evoked controversy in the ancient “universal church,” none was more hotly debated than the question “Who, and What, is God?” Today, the debate continues. Some claim that Jesus Christ is “very God of very God,” while others claim that He was an archangel in His preincarnate state, or that He didn’t preexist at all. Just what does the Bible say about this? Did Jesus preexist? Does He have a right to the names and titles of divinity? And what about the Holy Spirit? Does the Bible present the Spirit as the Third Person of a Trinity?

## Chapter 1

### A Subject of Much Controversy

From the beginning of human history to the present, men have believed in the existence of a supreme, eternal, Spirit Being known as “God,” “Theos,” “Elohim,” “Allah,” and countless other names and titles. God has been described as everything from the supreme Personage who dwells “out there” someplace to the omnipresent, impersonal “Force” that binds all things together; from the supernatural Creator whose existence transcends the space-time universe to the divine Presence who *is* the universe.

Pantheists believe God and the universe are identical, while Panentheists believe that the universe is part, but not all, of God. Polytheists believe there are many gods, while Monotheists believe in only one God.

Of the three great Monotheistic religions—Christianity, Islam and Judaism—Christianity is unique in that it teaches that the one God exists as more than one Person. Mainstream Christians have for centuries believed that the one God is three Persons—the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit. However, Christians have not been unified in their beliefs about how the three Persons of the Godhead relate to each other; nor has belief in the trine nature of God gone unchallenged.

In fact, of all the doctrinal issues that threatened the unity of the pre-Reformation church, none was more divisive or more threatening than the debate over the nature of God. From the fourth century, A.D., through several succeeding centuries, bishops of the historic, visible church convened in “ecumenical councils” to resolve such issues as whether Christ was a creature or Creator; whether the Father, Son, Holy Spirit were co-equal and co-eternal; whether Christ had one or two natures; and whether Christ had one or two wills.

On the fringes of the historic church were the sectarians who denied the co-equality and the co-eternity of the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. Some accepted the miraculous conception of Christ, but denied His deity. Others rejected the Virgin birth, claiming that Jesus was a natural son of Joseph and Mary. And still others accepted the deity of the Son but believed the Holy Spirit to be an angel, or created entity.

While the doctrine of the Trinity as we know it today did not emerge in its fully developed form until the latter part of the fourth century, belief in the Trinity (or a form of it) pre-dated the fully developed Trinitarian creeds by at least two centuries. The Ante-

Nicene “Church Fathers”—the theologians of the pre-Nicean Council (A.D. 325) period whose works (in whole or in part) have been preserved—spoke of the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit as three distinct Persons, while maintaining that there exists only one God. They generally described Father, Son, and Holy Spirit in vertical order, with the Father at the top, the Son second, and the Holy Spirit third, therefore differing from later Trinitarianism, which presents Father, Son, Holy Spirit on a horizontal plane—each said to be “co-equal” and “co-eternal.”

Obviously, as the availability of the New Testament increased, the difficulty of reconciling the biblical assertion that “God is one” with scriptural passages attributing Godhood to both the Father and the Son would produce differing interpretations. It was this difficulty that led to so much controversy in the fourth century over the nature of God. However, Christological controversies developed much earlier in the history of Christianity.

### **Early Controversies**

First, there were the various Gnostics sects, which taught that the Christ had not come in the flesh. They believed in the existence of only two realities, good and evil. God and His spiritual realm were equated with “good,” and all the material things, including the physical universe, were equated with “evil,” and were attributed to the activity of an evil god. Therefore, they concluded that the Christ could not have come as a flesh-and-blood (physical) human being, for then He would have been evil. While some Gnostics, or Docetists, believed that Christ was a “phantasm” who had only the *appearance* of flesh, others apparently believed that the material Jesus was distinct from the spiritual Christ. They held that Jesus was an ordinary human being born to human parents, but “the Christ” was the spiritual entity that descended upon Jesus at His baptism and departed from Him during the crucifixion.

The term “Gnosticism” is used of a fairly large number of sects holding a mixture of Christian and pagan philosophical views. (The terms *Gnosticism* and *Docetism* are often used interchangeably, though beliefs among sects described with these terms varied.) Perhaps some could be described as “Unitarian.” (Unitarians deny the deity of Jesus Christ and the Holy Spirit, believing the Father to be the sole Personage of the Godhead.) However, all early Unitarians probably did not owe their Christological concepts to Gnostic influence.

The first Unitarian sects appeared early, perhaps before the end of the first century. At least one Jewish sect believed in the miraculous conception and virginal birth of Jesus, but denied His preexistence and deity. At least one other Jewish sect denied the virgin birth, believing Jesus to have been the righteous son of human parents. However, all Jewish Christians of that period did not share these views. Evidence indicates that the Nazarenes, whose history can be traced to the original church at Jerusalem, believed in the deity of Jesus Christ and in the Virgin Birth.

Monarchianism, similar to Unitarianism in some respects, arose in the second century. Two forms of Monarchianism emerged. One asserted that Jesus was a created being whom God had adopted as His Son. The other, called Modalism, held that “Father, Son, and Holy Spirit” are three forms through which God operates, but not three Persons.

Some of the early Unitarians sects seems to have posed little threat to Christianity in general, and were always regarded as “outsiders.” The Gnostics were far more influential,

but their influence was overshadowed by the influence of the developing “universal church.” Gnosticism was vigorously and successfully opposed by the early church “Fathers,” particularly Irenaeus (A.D. 130–200) and Tertullian (A.D. 160–220).

Tertullian, the famous “Father of Latin Theology,” accused the Monarchians of having “crucified the Father” by claiming that the Father and Son are the same Person. He used the word “Trinity” (Latin: *Trinitas*) in his description of God as one God existing in three Persons. His works were an important contribution toward the later development of Trinitarian dogma.

While Christological heresies appeared early, the most threatening controversy over the nature of Christ and His relationship with the Father did not come about until the fourth century.

### **Arianism**

In 319, Arius, an Alexandrian theologian, began teaching that Jesus Christ is a spiritual being who does not share the essential nature of the Father, but was made before the foundation of the world. To Arius and his followers, Jesus Christ and the Holy Spirit were second and third, respectively, in the spiritual hierarchy headed by the Father. Both the Son and the Spirit were regarded as personal beings, but neither were considered “God” in the absolute sense.

“Arianism” and other controversial issues resulted in the first “ecumenical council,” known in history as the Council of Nicea. The council was summoned in 325 by the Roman Emperor Constantine, who had granted full toleration to the formerly persecuted Christian church in 313, and had become emperor of the East as well as the West in 324. The Nicene Council, consisting of about 220 bishops, formulated a creed condemning Arianism and affirming that Jesus Christ “is God from God, light from light, true God from true God, begotten, not made, of one substance with the Father.” The creed contained the single statement, “And in the Holy Spirit,” but made no statements regarding the Spirit’s personality or relationship to the Father and the Son.

Thus, the foundation for later Trinitarian creeds was laid at the Council of Nicea. While the “holy catholic apostolic church” officially stated its position in the form of a creed, the teachings of Arius continued to be widely held until the latter part of the fourth century.

During the church’s struggle with this issue, Arianism took several forms. The “Semi-Arians” held that Christ was similar in substance (“essence,” “being,” or “nature”) with the Father, but was not of the same substance. The “Anomoeans” held that the nature of the Son was completely dissimilar to that of the Father. The “Homoeans” held that Christ was like the Father, though different in substance.

At first, the controversy centered on the nature of Christ, but by 359, Athanasius, who had fought so vigorously against the Arian heresy, was faced with the challenge of defending the doctrine of the Holy Spirit as the Third Person of the Godhead who is co-equal and co-eternal with the Father and the Son. Athanasius’ writings on the Holy Spirit was in response to the views of the Tropicis, an Egyptian group who held that the Father and the Son are co-equal and co-eternal but the Holy Spirit is a created being inferior to the Father and Son. Athanasius was the first to present Trinitarian dogma in its fully developed form.

## Trinitarianism

The Trinitarian dogma that developed in those early centuries has remained the official teaching of the “holy apostolic and universal church” to this day. Trinitarians believe that there is one God, and that the one God exists eternally in three Persons—the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit. The three Persons of the Godhead are not three Gods (Tritheism), but one God; neither are they three “parts” of God, for God cannot be divided into parts. To Trinitarians, “Persons” does not mean “Beings,” but “personal distinctions.” In fact, some Trinitarians point out that God can be described as *a* Person or as *three* Persons, depending upon the definition of “person.” Thus God is “one God in three Persons,” or “a Person with three personal distinctions.”

While agreement on the true nature of God developed early and has been maintained among “orthodox” churches to this day, Christological disputes continued for some time to send ripples of controversy across the sea of Christendom.

In the fifth century, “Monophysitism” made its debut. The word comes from the Greek *monos* (“single”) and *physis* (“nature”). The Monophysites believed that Christ has only one nature—the divine nature. They held that Christ’s human nature either never existed or was absorbed by His divine nature. The Council of Chalcedon (451) declared that Christ has two natures, human and divine, and that the two natures co-exist in perfect unity. Monophysitism was finally condemned at the Third Council of Constantinople (680–681), but is to this day the official teaching of the Armenian, Coptic, Jacobite, and Syrian churches of the East.

The controversy over whether Christ has one or two natures was not the only dispute that divided Trinitarians. The “Monothelites” held that Christ has only one will. The Third Council of Constantinople asserted that Christ has two natures as well as two wills, and that the human will is in subordination to the divine.

While Monophysitism and Monothelitism threatened the unity of the “universal church” during the fifth century, the most devastating controversy came much later when the Western church added the Latin phrase *filioque* (“and the Son”) to the creed. The original creed, sanctioned by the church councils, stated that the Holy Spirit proceeds from the Father. With the inclusion of the *filioque* clause, the creed states that the Holy Spirit proceeds from the Father “and the Son.” The Byzantines objected to the West’s adding the clause without consulting them, and claimed that “and the Son” suggests that the Holy Spirit has two sources of procession rather than one. To them, such a suggestion was heretical.

The dispute over the inclusion of “and the Son” in the creed, along with other controversies between the East and the West, resulted in the “Great Schism” of 1054. No longer was the “universal church” a united body, and to this day the Eastern and Western divisions—the Roman Catholic and Eastern Orthodox churches—have yet to resolve their differences.

The Protestant Reformation, beginning in the sixteenth century, brought no changes to Trinitarian dogma as defined by the West, and the Reformers proved themselves no more tolerant than their Romish opponents in dealing with those who held contrary views.

## The Protestant Reformation

While the Reformers challenged the Roman Catholic Church on many points of doctrine, the doctrine of the Trinity retained its place of prominence among the proponents of the new “orthodoxy.” However, as in the Christendom of earlier centuries, Trinitarian dogma did not go unchallenged. And like earlier times, those who challenged the dogma found themselves relegated to the ranks of the apostates. In fact, some of the Reformers resorted to methods of purging the church of heretics that the theologians of the fourth century never dreamed of.

John Calvin, the famous Swiss Reformer who established a theocracy in Geneva in the sixteenth century, is highly esteemed by modern leaders of the Reformed church, but his brand of “righteousness” left no room for those he and his followers regarded as heretics, idolaters, blasphemers, and infidels. While Calvin denounced the Roman Catholic hierarchy, his methods of dealing with apostasy were no less chilling than the methods employed by the Catholic Inquisitors.

One unfortunate victim of Calvin’s “justice” was Michael Servetus, who had escaped the cruel hands of the Catholic Inquisitors in Lyons, but met his fate in Calvin’s Protestant Geneva. Servetus was strapped to a stake and burned, an act Calvin attempted to justify in his tract, *The Defense of the Orthodox Faith in the Sacred Trinity*. Servetus’ crime? He denied the doctrine of the Trinity.

Throughout the Reformation period, various individuals and groups challenged Trinitarian dogma. Among them were the “radical Reformers” such as the “Anabaptists,” or “re-baptizers.” Not all Anabaptists, however, rejected Trinitarianism. Of all the individual theologians who denied the Trinity, perhaps the most influential was F. P. Sozzini (1539–1604), better known as Faustus Socinus.

### **Socinianism**

Like his modern Unitarian counterparts, Faustus Socinus held that human reason is foundational to Christianity. Socinus, an Italian theologian, wrote several books challenging the main tenets of the Protestant mainstream. He denied the Trinity, claiming that Christ did not preexist His human birth, and rejected the traditional views of Redemption and the Atonement, among other things.

Socinus’ teachings were adopted by the Minor Reformed Church of Poland, and were expressed in the Racovian Catechism, composed in 1605. His teachings, though opposed by the Reformers, have survived the centuries, and form a part of today’s Unitarianism.

In fact, virtually all of the non-Trinitarian views of the past are expressed in one form or another in the various sects of our time.

### **Modern Beliefs—Nothing New**

The present-day counterparts of Arius, Socinus, and Athanasius are found within churches and sects throughout the professing Christian world.

Jehovah’s Witnesses hold a form of Arianism, believing that Christ was created at some point in time. The Witnesses believe that Christ is “a god” (note the lower-case *g*), but is not God in the absolute sense. They teach that Christ, in His preexistent state, was Michael the Archangel. Many of the “Sacred Names” sects hold the same teaching.

The Unitarian Universalist Church rejects the belief in the preexistence and deity of Christ, as do several smaller sects, such as the Megiddo Church of Rochester, N.Y., the

Christadelphian Church, and a few of the Sacred Names sects. These groups hold teachings similar to those of Faustus Socinus.

Christian Scientists and various spiritualistic sects hold concepts similar to those of the Gnostic groups of the early centuries of Christian history.

Several “Jesus only” groups, such as the United Pentecostal Church, teach a form of Modalism, also known as Sabellianism, Monarchianism, and modalistic Monarchianism. They claim that God is a single Personage, and that the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit are three “modes” or “titles” God has used in revealing Himself to man.

Most non-Trinitarian groups believe that the Holy Spirit is the power of God at work in the natural world, but is not a person distinct from the Father and the Son. These groups, though generally described as “Arian” in belief, differ with Arius on this point.

Of course, Trinitarianism is the prevailing view. It is the official teaching of the Roman Catholic, Eastern Orthodox, and Protestant churches throughout the world, and is usually considered essential to true Christianity. However, even these churches are not in full agreement on every point relative to the relationships within the Godhead. For instance, to this day Eastern Orthodox theologians continue to express their disapproval of the addition of the *filioque* clause (“and the Son”) to the Trinitarian creed. Unlike their Western counterparts, they insist that the Holy Spirit proceeds from the Father, or from the Father *through* the Son, but not from the Father *and* the Son.

Moreover, many modern theologians, even within the clergy of Catholic and Protestant churches, have publicly declared their rejection of Trinitarian dogma. While the rightly point out that the scriptural writers never thought of God as a Trinity, they deny the inspiration and inerrancy of the Bible. Their arguments are largely founded upon the “scholarly” assumption that the Bible is a compilation of myths reflecting the world view of the ancients, and that the ancient theologians who formulated the creeds interpreted the Scriptures without the benefit of the interpretational skills of today’s “higher critics.” Thus, such “mythical” ideas as the Virgin Birth, Vicarious Atonement, the bodily Resurrection and Ascension of Christ, miracles, healings, and so forth, reflect an inferior world view, and therefore are rejected by today’s “enlightened” theologians.

Modern theologians are not alone in calling for revision in their church’s long-held beliefs. Clergymen within smaller groups have also revised their opinions in recent years.

Historically, the Church of God (Seventh Day) has been regarded an “Arian” sect for its teaching that Christ was created at some point prior to the foundation of the world. However, in more recent years, many of that church’s leaders have adopted a more or less “Binitarian” view. They now believe that God exists as two Persons, the Father and the Son, while affirming their belief that the Holy Spirit is the spiritual power, activity, and influence of God, but is not the Third Person of the Trinity.

The Worldwide Church of God has also altered its view of the nature of God. Mr. Herbert W. Armstrong, founder of that organization, taught that God is a Family presently composed of the Father and the Son, and that the Holy Spirit is not the Third Person of the Godhead, but is the power, influence, and the spiritual extension of God. In recent times, however, the WCG has adopted a concept that resembles Trinitarianism. The leaders of that organization now speak of the Father and the Son as “consciousnesses” within God, but are unclear as to whether they believe the Holy Spirit is a distinct “consciousness.” They claim that the word “person,” when used of one of the

“consciousnesses” within God, is a weak metaphor, and have renounced their long-held belief that God is a Family.

Several ex-WCG affiliates have altered their views on the nature of God and Christ since departing the organization. Some now believe in a form of Arianism, while others have embraced something similar to Socinianism, and still others have returned to the mainstream and accepted Trinitarianism.

We of the Church of God International affirm our long-held belief that God is a Family presently composed of the Father and the Son, and that the Holy Spirit is the spiritual presence, activity, and extension of God in the natural world. We do not believe that the Father and the Son are “consciousnesses” within the one Being known as God; rather, we believe the Father and the Son are distinct Persons, and that Scripture describes each with all the attributes of Being. We believe that the Father is the Supreme Sovereign, and that most references to “God” in the New Testament are references to Him. We also believe that the Son is of the same Kind, or Family, as God the Father, and is therefore God. Our belief regarding the Godhead differs from the modern forms of Arianism in that we find no scriptural support for the belief that the divine *Logos* (Christ, the Son) was a *created* being.

We firmly believe that this was the understanding of the apostles and of the church Christ founded through them. In the pages that follow, you will see proof positive that this is indeed the teaching of the Holy Scriptures, and was the understanding of the apostolic church.

## Chapter 2

### Who is Jesus?

Did Jesus Christ preexist His human existence? If so, was He a created being, perhaps an archangel, as many claim? Or was he *truly God*?

As we have seen, from the early centuries of Christian history to the present, the question of who is Jesus has produced many differing views as to the Person and nature of the Son of God. Some claim that He was, in His preexistent state, an archangel, a created being, while others claim that He “preexisted” only as a thought in the mind of God. Others accept His divinity, but claim that His human existence was not truly human—that He had the *appearance* of a man, but was not truly man. And still others claim that the Father and the Son are two manifestations, modes, or roles of the one Person known as God.

Obviously, if Jesus Christ preexisted His human conception, if He was indeed God, though distinct from the Father, and if He came to this earth as a truly flesh-and-blood human being, then all the Christological concepts that deny His divinity and prehuman existence are heretical and must be declared as such! Clearly, then, we should approach this subject prayerfully and with a spirit of deep respect for the revealed Word of God.

Before we examine the question of Christ’s preexistence, it is necessary that we first determine whether scriptural descriptions of God allow more than one Person in the Godhead. Scripture clearly teaches that “The LORD our God is *one* LORD” (Deuteronomy 6:4; *cf.* Mark 12:29). But does this mean that the one God is only one *Person*?

Let's begin with the Hebrew word translated "God" in the Old Testament.

### Elohim

"In the beginning God created the heaven and the earth" (Genesis 1:1). The word translated "God" in this verse is the Hebrew *Elohim*. It is a *plural* noun, and is used both of the true God and of false "gods." In Exodus 20, the word is used in both senses: "And God [*Elohim*] spake all these words, saying, I am the LORD the God [*Elohim*]...Thou shalt have no other gods [*elohim*] before me" (verse 1–3).

While the word is often used of multiple "gods," it is sometimes used in reference to a single "god." For instances, "Chemosh" was the "god" [*elohim*] of the Moabites," and "Milcom" was the "god" [*elohim*] of the children of Ammon" (1 Kings 11:33). Thus, the word, though plural, does not necessary denote a plurality of persons.

According to Smith, "The fanciful idea that it [the word *Elohim*] referred to the *trinity* [or *plurality*] of persons in the Godhead hardly finds now a supporter among scholars. It is either what grammarians call the *plurality of majesty*, or it denotes the *fullness* of divine strength, the *sum of the powers* displayed by God" (William Smith, L.L.D., *A Dictionary of the Bible*, p.220).

It is true that the word itself does not prove a plurality of Persons in the Godhead, but the fact that the word is plural at least allows for the *possibility* that the one God is more than one Person. Therefore, to find evidence for a plurality of Persons in the Godhead, we must look for other clues.

One such clue is found in the use of plural verbs. Unitarians argue that since *Elohim* (when used in reference to the one true God) is followed by a singular verb, the word cannot refer to a plurality of Persons. However, this argument overlooks the fact that *Elohim* is sometimes followed by a plural verb, thus indicating that the noun (*Elohim*) is to be understood in the plural sense. While such cases do not necessarily demand that "God" be understood as a plurality of Persons, the Hebrew construction does allow for the possibility.

Another, more powerful, clue is found in the use of plural pronouns. In Genesis 1:26, God (*Elohim*) says, "Let *us* make man in *our* image, after *our* likeness..." In Genesis 3:22, God (*Elohim*) says, "Behold, the man is become as one of *us*..." And in Genesis 11:7, God (*Elohim*) says, "Go to, let *us* go down..."

The fact that both singular and plural verbs and pronouns are used with the plural *Elohim* is not a contradiction, as some suppose; rather, it suggests (or allows for) *plurality in unity*—that is, one God but more than one Person. This "plurality in unity" is suggested in Isaiah 6:8, where God says, "Whom shall *I* [note the singular pronoun] send, and who will go for *us* [plural]?" This verse allows for the possibility that one Person is speaking for Himself and on behalf of at least one other Person.

While Unitarians attempt to "explain" their way around the above verses, anyone should be able to see that the use of plurals certainly presents a strong case for the plurality of Persons in the Godhead.

Another clue lies in understanding the meaning of the word translated "one" in Deuteronomy 6:4. Interestingly, this verse (known as the *Shema*) is used more than any other verse to "prove" that God is one Person. The verse states, "Hear O Israel: The LORD our God is one LORD." In Hebrew, the word for "one" is *echad*, which is often used as a *compound* "one" rather than an absolute "one." The two persons, Adam and Eve, were to

come together as “one [*echad*] flesh” (Genesis 2:24). In this case, one plus one equals one. The *Shema*, then, does not prove that God is one Person. The Hebrew terms (*Elohim* and *echad*) allow for more than one Person while confirming that God is one—just Adam and Eve, though distinct, were “one flesh.”

Apparently, those who reject the belief that God is more than one Person do so because, to them, the concept smacks of Polytheism, or belief in many “gods.” But if we understand “one” in the sense of *composite unity*, then we can easily see how the one God can be more than one Person.

With that understanding that the Hebrew term “God” is plural, that the term is sometimes used with plural verbs and plural pronouns, and that the word for “one” in the *Shema* is often used as a compound “one,” we should have no difficulty in understanding that God is more than one Person—just as we have no difficulty in understanding that *Adam* (translated “man” in Genesis 1:26,27) is more than one person.

Notice again the first part of Genesis 1:26: “And God said, Let us make man in our image, after our likeness...” In view of all that we have seen, the most logical explanation of this verse is that one divine Person was speaking to at least one other Person of like nature.

With this foundation, let’s now go to the New Testament for further revelation.

### The Logos

The apostle John wrote: “In the beginning was the Word [Greek: *Logos*], 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; and without Him was not any thing that was made... And the Word was *made flesh*, and dwelt among us (and we beheld His glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father,) full of grace and truth” (John 1:1–3,14).

Notice, the *Logos*, or “Word,” was made flesh. Clearly, the *Logos* is Jesus Christ. Note also that in the beginning the *Logos* was *with* God and *was* God—that is, Jesus Christ was not only with God the Father in the beginning, *He was God!* Further, all things were made by (or through) Him, meaning that both the Father and the Son were involved in creation. This agrees perfectly with Genesis 1:26: “And God [*Elohim*, plural] said, Let us make man in *our* image, after *our* likeness...”

Here we see “plurality in unity” in very simple, easy to understand language. However, the modern counterparts of Arius and Socinus have found ways to strip this simple passage of its obvious meaning. Some, for instance, claim that John 1:1 should read this way: “In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was *a god*.” Thus, the Word was not God in the absolute sense, but was “a god,” or “mighty one,” just as an angel is a “mighty one.”

Others claim the second “God” should be rendered “divine,” thus taking away any suggestion of Personhood. They read the latter part of John 1:1 this way: “...and the Word was with God, and the Word was *divine*.” The “Word,” they claim, refers to the expression of God’s divine will. It is the *spoken* Word, not the *speaking* Word.

However, these interpretations are an unfortunate attempt to make John 1:1 say something other than what it clearly says.

First, the Greek Term for the second “God” is *Theos*. This word means “God,” not “divine.” Had John intended to say that “the Word was divine,” he would have used a Greek term that means “divine”—and there is such a term.

Second, verse 3 clearly identifies the Word as the One through whom all things are made. This verse makes no sense if the Word is viewed as an impersonal “divine principle,” or as the “divine will of God” expressed through His creative acts.

Those who hold the “a god” theory agree that the Word is a Person, but claim that since the definite article (in the Greek) appears before the first “God” but not before the second “God,” the latter should be understood not as *the* God, but as *a* “god” (the lower-case *g* suggests an inferior god). Unfortunately, those who hold this view disregard the best of Greek scholarship, which insists that such a translation is a linguistic atrocity.

In the latter clause of John 1:1, the subject is “the Word,” the verb is “was,” and the definite predicate nominative is “God.” Had John inserted the definite article before “God,” he would have created a confusing and grammatically incorrect construction. No Greek scholar worth his salt accepts the “a god” theory.

The “a god” proponents also disregard the fact that the word “God” (Greek: *Theos*) appears without the definite article throughout the New Testament. One example of this appears within a few verses of John 1:1. Verse 6 reads: “There was a man sent from God [*Theos*, without the definite article], whose name was John.” Here, the word “God” refers to *the* God, though the definite article does not appear. It makes no sense to say that John was “a man sent from *a* god.” And neither does it make sense to say that the Word was anything less than *God!* “The Word was with God, and the Word was God”—*truly God!*—though clearly distinct from the One He was with in the beginning.

Moreover, the idea that Jesus Christ was an archangel (a modern form of Arianism) in His preexistent state clearly contradicts the teaching of the New Testament. The writer of the book of Hebrews asks: “For unto which angels said He [God the Father] at any time, Thou art my son, this day have I begotten thee? And again, I will be to him a Father, and he shall be to me a Son?” (Hebrews 1:5). The point is that God never said these things to *any* of the angels, including archangels. Therefore, Christ is not, and never was, an angel.

The word *angel* means “messenger.” In the sense that Christ was sent as the Father’s Messenger, He was an Angel. But the writer of Hebrews, when distinguishing Christ from the angels, is clearly speaking of *created* angels.

The writer of Hebrews further states: “But to which of the angels said He at any time, Sit on my right hand, until I make thine enemies thy footstool? Are they [the angels, including archangels] not *all* ministering spirits, sent forth to minister for them who shall be heirs of salvation?” (Hebrews 1:13,14). Again, had Christ been an angel—archangel or otherwise—in His preexistent state, the writer of Hebrews could have never made these statements.

In spite of clear evidence to the contrary, Unitarians claim that the Greek word *logos* suggest “divine principle,” and should not be understood as “spokesman.” They point out that in various ancient Greek writings this word is used in reference to “wisdom” or “logic,” and claim that John’s use of *Logos* should be understood similarly. When John spoke of the *Logos* being “made flesh,” then, he was merely speaking of the manifestation of the wisdom of God. In other words, until His birth, Christ was nothing more than a “divine thought” in the mind of God.

No doubt, John fully intended to convey to his Greek readers the thought of divine wisdom, but Unitarians tend to overlook John’s *Jewish* background and the fact that many of his readers were Jewish. Are we to conclude that his use of the word *Logos* had little meaning for his Jewish readers?

The truth is, any Jew of John's time would have immediately understood the *Logos* of God to be the "Spokesman" of God. According to the *Encyclopedia Judaica*, certain rabbinic writings that date later than John's Gospel "understand logos as a second god... Among the rabbis a belief in a 'second God,' or divine intermediary, is represented in the heretical views of Elisha B. Avuyah... His views seems related to speculations about the Creation, in which the voice, or Word, of the Lord on the waters (Ps. 29:3 and Gen. 1) and at the revelation of Sinai (Ex. 20) are hypostatized" (Volume 11, p. 462).

Though the rabbinic concept of "logos" as "a second god," or "divine intermediary [Spokesman]" post-date John's Gospel, its appearance in rabbinic writings, without Christian influence, suggests that the concept originated much earlier. At least, it shows that, in Jewish thought, the term *Logos* can and *does* connote "Spokesman."

Further, John was familiar with the ancient custom of a king's use of a spokesman (an "interpreter," or *logos*) who exercised the judicial authority of the king when petitioners sought audience with the monarch. The king's throne was inaccessible to the public, so the spokesman served as the king's visible representative. In the same way, when the *Logos* "was made flesh," He served as the Father's visible representative. "He that hath seen me," Jesus said, "hath seen the Father" (John 14:9).

In addition, had John written in Aramaic, a language commonly used by the Jews of his time, he would have used the word *Memra*, the Aramaic equivalent of *Logos*, which was often viewed as a messenger, or spokesman, sent from God. Those who claim that *Logos* cannot mean "Spokesman" are wrong! It can, and does. Thus, in the beginning the Spokesman was with God, and the Spokesman was *God*, not an angelic intermediary or "divine principle."

The Synoptic Gospels (Matthew, Mark and Luke) emphasize the humanity of Christ and provide important clues as to His preexistent state, but John's Gospel goes beyond the Synoptics in emphasizing both the divinity and preexistence of Christ, as well as His humanity.

Let's see what John said about the preexistence and deity of Jesus Christ.

### **The Preexistence and Deity of Christ in John's Gospel**

John's purpose for writing his Gospel is found in John 20:31: "But these were written, that ye might believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God; and that believing ye might have life through His name."

Notice that John wanted his readers to know that Jesus Christ is the Son of God. Just as "son of man" refers to a human being, or one whose essential nature is like that of his father, "Son of God" (when used of Christ) refers to the One whose essential nature is like that of His Father. The son of a human being is human, and the Son of God is God. That is what John meant when he spoke of the Son of God, and that is precisely what he wanted his readers to understand.

It should be pointed out, however, that to the first-century Jew, the phrase "son of God" did not denote divinity. It was generally used of an angel or of a righteous man. It was used of the Messiah, whose appearance the Jews of that period expected. However, John's concept of "Messiah" was not identical to the traditional Jewish concept. He had been taught by the Messiah Himself, and understood that "Son of God" means more than "angelic messenger" or "righteous man."

Since much of the New Testament was written in response to heresies or problems within the church, it is probable that John wrote in order to combat certain heresies that were gaining a foothold within Christianity. Scholars generally agree that John wrote toward the end of the first century, A.D., about the time, or shortly before, “Christian Gnosticism” and related heresies first appeared as a force to be reckoned with (though there is evidence that certain docetic views appeared much earlier).

Some scholars believe that John’s primary purpose was to combat Gnosticism, while others believe his Gospel was a response to other heretical teachings. His assertion that the preexistent *Logos* was “made flesh” seems to suggest that John was opposing Gnosticism, or some form of Docetism, while his emphasis on the Jew’s rejection of Jesus (1:11), their unbelief, and their lack of understanding regarding the nature of the Messiah and His Kingdom (John 3) leaves open the possibility that he was combating the teachings of some branch of Jewish “Christianity” which, like the Ebionites, rejected belief in the preexistence and deity of Christ as well as the Virgin Birth.

“Gnosticism” is very complex. The term has been used to identify a large number of sects that flourished in the second and third centuries. Some scholars believe that John’s Gospel was written too early to have been polemic against Gnosticism. However, the existence of “Christian Gnosticism” in the second century suggests that Gnostic ideas had begun circulating among Christians much earlier.

The Gnostics were not uniform in their theology, but all held erroneous beliefs about the nature of Christ. Generally, they held the ancient philosophy of cosmic “duality”—the belief that there are two fundamental realities, good and evil, and that these two realities oppose each other. To the Gnostics, only God and His spiritual hierarchy are good; everything else, including the physical universe, is evil. This philosophy disallowed the belief that the Savior of the world could exist as a physical human being—for physical things are evil. Further, Christ’s advent was for revelatory rather than redemptive purposes, for Gnostics held that salvation comes through enlightenment and special knowledge (the Greek *gnosis*, from which “Gnosticism” is derived, means “knowledge”).

At least two concepts about the nature of Christ emerged from this philosophy. One (Docetism) held that Jesus, the divine *Logos*, had the *appearance* of flesh, but was not truly a flesh-and-blood human being. The other differentiated between “Jesus” and “the Christ,” claiming that Jesus was an ordinary man born to ordinary parents, while the Christ was the “divine essence” that descended upon Jesus at His baptism and departed from Him during the Crucifixion.

To what extent John was dealing with Gnosticism is uncertain, but one thing is sure: John’s teaching disallowed any form of Gnosticism (or Docetism). The apostle insisted that Jesus *is* the Christ, the Son of God, and that the *Logos*, who was with God and was God, was *made* flesh. John allowed no room for the argument that Jesus was other than the Christ or that His human existence was not truly human.

John further condemned Gnosticism (and/or similar heresies) in his first and second epistles. He wrote: “Who is a liar but he that denieth that Jesus us the Christ? He is antichrist, that denieth the Father and the Son” (1 John 2:22). In his second epistle, he stated: “For many deceivers are entered into world, who confess not that Jesus Christ is come in the flesh. This is a deceiver and an antichrist” (2 John 7). In dealing with this heresy, he confirmed the deity of Christ. He wrote: “...we are in Him that is true, even in His Son Jesus Christ. *This is the true God*, and eternal life” (1 John 5:20).

With an understanding of the types of heresies John was dealing with, we can easily see why he repeatedly referred to Jesus' preexistence and divinity. John insisted that Jesus Christ the *Person*, not some "divine essence," descended from heaven and became a flesh-and-blood human being. Any other interpretation does violence to John's Gospel and his epistles.

Notice how John emphasized the preexistence and divinity of Jesus Christ:

John 3:13: "And no man hath ascended up to heaven, but He that came down from heaven, even the Son of man which is in heaven."

John 3:31: "He that cometh from above is above all: he that is of the earth is earthly, and speaketh of the earth: He that cometh from heaven is above all."

John 6:38: "[Jesus said] For I came down heaven, not to do mine own will, but the will of Him who sent me."

John 6:51: "[Jesus said] I am the living bread which came down from heaven: if any man eat of this bread, he shall live for ever: and the bread that I will give is my flesh, which I will give for the life of the world."

John 6:62: "[Jesus asked] What and if ye shall see the Son of man ascend up where he was before?"

John 8:58: "Jesus said unto them, Verily, verily I say unto you, Before Abraham was, I am."

John 17:5: "[Jesus prayed] And now, O Father, glorify thou me with the thine own self with the glory which I had with thee before the world was."

In order to conclude that Jesus Christ preexisted only as a thought in the mind of God, or that the Christ was somehow separated from Jesus, or that He was not God, one must construct an elaborate, logic-defying system of theological interpretation whereby the above easy-to-understand scriptures can be "spiritualized" away and emptied of their clear meaning. Or one must simply reject John's Gospel all together.

The heretics may have understood that "the Christ" had come down from heaven and was divine. But John wanted his readers to understand what the heretics didn't: that the Person known as Jesus *was* the divine Christ—the *Logos*—who had come down from heaven.

In addition to the above verses, John recorded several events to underscore the truth of Jesus Christ's divinity.

On one occasion, when Jesus spoke of God as His Father, the unbelieving Jews who heard Him accused Him of "making Himself equal with God" (John 5:18). The Jews understood that Jesus' claim of being the Son of the Father was a claim of divinity.

When "doubting Thomas" felt the wounds of the risen Christ, his doubts were replaced with conviction. "And Thomas answered and said unto Him, My Lord and my God" (John 20:28). Jesus didn't respond with rebuke, but said, "Thomas, because thou hast seen me, thou hast believed: blessed are they that have not seen, and yet have believed" (verse 29).

Earlier, when Jesus said, "Abraham rejoiced to see my day: and he saw it, and was glad," the unbelieving Jews chided, "Thou art not fifty years old, and hast thou seen Abraham?" Jesus' reply drew an angry response. He stated, "Verily, verily, I say unto you, Before Abraham was, *I am*" (John 8:56–58). Upon hearing this startling statement, the Jews gathered stones to cast at Jesus, for they clearly understood that not only had He

claimed preexistence; He had applied to Himself the name of God (“I AM”—see Exodus 3:14).

Interestingly, Jesus did not say, “Before Abraham was, I *was*.” He said, “I AM!” This curious construction makes no sense had Jesus been speaking only of His preexistence. But it makes perfect sense if we understand that He was speaking of His preexistence *and* His identity. He was applying to Himself the name of Deity, and His opponents knew this was what He meant. (Note: While Yahweh—the Hebrew name for Jehovah, translated “the LORD” in most English versions—is the name of the Father, or “Prime Mover” of the Godhead, the name may also be applied to the Son, for the Son is of the same nature as the Father and is the Father’s representative.)

Students of the Bible are well aware of the numerous “I AM” verses in John’s Gospel. No doubt, John included these to emphasize the identity of Jesus. One of the most outstanding of the “I AM” passages is found in John’s account of the betrayal and arrest of Jesus.

When the mob came for Him and announced that they sought Jesus of Nazareth, “Jesus saith unto them, *I am*... As soon as He had said unto them, *I am*, they went backward, and fell to the ground” (John 18:5,6; note: the “he” following “I am” in the KJV was added by the translators). Obviously, “I AM” meant much more than “I’m the one you seek.” Jesus was affirming His divinity.

Some argue that the “I AM” sayings of Jesus could not be linked with the “I AM” of Exodus 3:14 because the Hebrew for “I AM” means “I shall be.” However, they overlook the fact that in the Septuagint (the Greek translation of the Old Testament, well known to New Testament writers) the words for “I AM” are *ego emi*, which are the same words translated “I am” in John’s Gospel. Further, it is true that the Hebrew expression means “I shall be,” but this expression also carries the meaning of “I am.”

With all this evidence, can any honest truth-seeker deny that John’s Gospel clearly teaches both the preexistence and the deity of Jesus Christ?

But John’s Gospel is not alone in affirming the divinity and prehuman existence of Jesus. Upon close examination, we find this same truth revealed in the Synoptic Gospels.

### **Evidence From the Synoptic Gospels**

Some believe that of the first four books of the New Testament, only John’s Gospel presents Jesus as the Second Person of the Godhead. But, as we shall see, this is not true. A careful survey of several passages leads to the indisputable conclusion that the deity of Christ was not a foreign concept to the Synoptic writers.

Consider the following facts from the Synoptic Gospels:

1. Jesus is the Savior of His people. “And she [Mary] shall bring forth a son, and thou shalt call His name JESUS [*Savior*, or *Yahweh Saves*]: for He shall save His people from their sins” (Matthew 1:21).

2. The Savior’s name “shall be called Emmanuel, which being interpreted is, God with us” (verse 23).

3. He is greater than the Temple (Matthew 12:6).

4. He is Lord of the Sabbath day (verse 8).

5. He has power to forgive sins (Mark 2:5,10).

6. He has power to baptize with the Holy Spirit (Mark 1:8).

7. He is the ultimate Judge of the wicked (Matthew 7:21–23; Luke 3:17).

8. He accepts worship (Matthew 8:2; 9:18; 14:33; 28:9,17).

Can the Savior and Judge who is Lord of the Sabbath day; who is greater than the Temple; who has power to forgive sins, baptize with the Holy Spirit, and judge the ungodly; who receives worship; and whose name means “God with us” be any other than *God*? Can these descriptions be used of a person who “preexisted” only as a thought in the mind of God, or of a created angelic being?

Through the prophet Isaiah, God says, “For I am the LORD thy God, the Holy One of Israel, thy *Saviour*... I, even I, am the LORD; and beside me there is no *saviour*” (Isaiah 43:3,11). In the day of her salvation, Israel will say, “Verily thou art a God that hidest thyself, O God of Israel, the *Saviour* (45:15). In that day, “all flesh shall know that I the LORD am thy *Saviour* and thy *Redeemer*” (49:26; 60:16; cf. 63:8). He reveals Himself as “a just God and a *Saviour*” (Isaiah 45:21).

True, an ordinary human messenger can be described as a “savior,” but when we compare the above descriptions of God as Savior with the preceding descriptions of Jesus, we can only conclude that Jesus Christ is more than an ordinary man. As the Second Member of the Godhead, and as His Father’s representative, He has a right to the titles of divinity.

His divine identity was demonstrated in the healings He performed. On one occasion, He said to a man “sick of the palsy,” “Son, thy sins be forgiven thee.” Certain scribes who were present accused Him of blasphemy and asked, “Who can forgive sins but God only?” Jesus replied, “Whether is it easier to say to the sick of the palsy, Thy sins be forgiven thee; or to say, Arise, and take up thy bed, and walk? But that ye may know that the Son of man hath power on earth to forgive sins, (He saith to the sick of the palsy,) I say unto thee, Arise, and take up thy bed, and go thy way into thine house” (Mark 2:5–11). The man was healed immediately.

The message to the scribes was clear: Since only God can forgive sins, and since Jesus proved His own power to forgive sins by healing the sick man, then Jesus is “God with us” (Immanuel). Surely these scribes were familiar with such scriptures as Psalm 103:3, which says that God “forgiveth all thine iniquities” and “healeth all thy diseases”; and Daniel 9:9, which states, “To the Lord our God belong mercies and forgiveness...” Thus, when Jesus healed the sick man, He declared His divine identity.

It was God, not Moses, who sanctified the Sabbath day and commanded His people to observe it. “Remember the Sabbath day,” He said, “to keep it holy. Six days shalt thou labour, and do all thy works: But the seventh day is the Sabbath of the LORD thy God...” (Exodus 20:8–10). How could Jesus be “Lord of the Sabbath day” if He were only an ordinary man who had no preexistence? Though He was prophesied to be a Son of David and prophet like Moses (Deuteronomy 18:15), neither Moses nor David could claim to be “Lord of the Sabbath day.”

Jesus’ preexistence is also seen in His lamenting of Jerusalem’s sins. When He prophesied the desolation of Jerusalem, He reflected upon His involvement with the city’s stiff-necked forebears: “O Jerusalem, Jerusalem,” He lamented, “thou that killest the prophets, and stonest them which are sent unto thee, *how often would I have gathered thy children together*, even as a hen gathereth her chickens under her wings, and ye would not!” (Matthew 23:37).

How could Jesus have said this had He not been there to witness the hard-headedness of His people? Obviously, He had witness Israel’s disobedience in the wilderness, had

seen the slaying of the prophets, and had seen Jerusalem's stubborn refusal to allow her children to be gathered under His divine care.

He confirmed His preexistence and divinity when He asked the Pharisees, "What think ye of Christ? whose son is He?" The Pharisees answered, "The son of David." They were correct; Christ was the descendant of David. But Jesus' reply to the Pharisees shows that He was much more than the son of David. He asked: "How then doth David in spirit call Him Lord, saying, The Lord said unto my Lord, Sit thou on my right hand, till I make thine enemies thy footstool? If David then call Him Lord, how is He his son?" (Matthew 22:42–45; cf. Mark 12:35–37; Luke 20:41–44).

Christ's message is clear: The Messiah is not only a descendant of David; He is the Son of God, the One David called "Lord." And since David lived centuries before the New Testament period, the One David called "Lord" must have preexisted His human birth.

We see, then, that John was not alone in declaring the divinity and preexistence of Jesus Christ. When all four Gospel accounts are considered, the evidence overwhelmingly draws us to one indisputable conclusion: *Jesus Christ is God!*

But there's more, much more, clear scriptural proof of Christ's divinity and preexistence. Let's now turn our attention to Paul's epistles.

### **Evidence From Paul's Epistles**

Some claim that the apostle Paul's strict monotheistic background—he described himself as a "Hebrews of the Hebrews" (Philippians 3:5)—would not have allowed him to believe in the deity of Jesus Christ. This argument, however, assumes that Paul's encounter with Jesus on the road to Damascus (Acts 9) was either fictitious or had little influence upon Paul's theology. It assumes that Paul was incapable of recognizing plurality in the Godhead from Old Testament terms and descriptions.

The truth is, Paul clearly recognized the divine identity of Christ, and did not hesitate to identify Him with the God of his Hebrew forebears.

Speaking of Jesus Christ, Paul wrote, "For whosoever shall call upon the name of the Lord shall be saved" (Romans 10:13). The casual reader may not notice that Paul, in speaking of Christ, was actually quoting from Joel 2:32: "And it shall come to pass, that whosoever shall call on the name of the LORD [Hebrew: *Yahweh*] shall be delivered..." Surely Paul would have never applied this verse to Jesus Christ had he not believed on the divinity of Christ.

Paul said that a Christian's attitude should be like that of Christ, "Who, being in the form of God, though it not robbery to be equal with God: But made Himself of no reputation, and took upon Him the form of a servant, and was made in the likeness of man" (Philippians 2:6,7). This verse does not mean that Christ was in the "form of God" in the same way man was made in the "image of God," as some claim. This is seen by comparing "form of God" with "form of a servant." Christ took on the "form of a servant" by being made "in likeness of man." The phrase "thought it not robbery to be equal with God" is best rendered "did not regard equality with God a thing to be grasped" (NASB), which shows that He had "equality with God" (*i.e.*, He and the Father were of the same nature) before willingly taking on "the form of a servant." He "made Himself of no reputation," or "emptied Himself" (NASB), which means that, in being "made in the likeness of a man," He laid aside the privileges He had in His preexistent state.

Those who empty this passage of its obvious meaning by reading their own beliefs into it should pay closer attention to what Paul himself believed. In verse 10, Paul leaves no doubt as to what he believed. He wrote: “That at the name of Jesus, very knee should bow, of things in heaven, and things in earth, and things under the earth.” Standing alone, this verse strongly suggests that Jesus could be no less than fully divine. But once we consider the fact that Paul was quoting from Isaiah 45:23, the verse becomes much more than a mere “suggestion” of Christ’s divinity. In Isaiah, 45:23, God Himself says, “That unto *me* every knee shall bow...” Paul’s use of this passage in reference to Jesus confirms his belief in the deity of Christ.

To the Ephesians, Paul declared that God “created all things by Jesus Christ” (Ephesians 3:9), thus affirming what John’s Gospel states: that the preexistent Christ acted as God’s divine agent in the creation of the universe.

If doubts persist, then consider what Paul wrote to the Christians at Colosse. Speaking of Christ, he wrote: “Who is the image of the invisible God, the firstborn of every creature [or “all creation”—NASB]: For by Him were all things created, that are in heaven, and that are in earth, visible and invisible, whether they be thrones, or dominions, or principalities, or powers: all things were created by Him, and for Him. And He is before all things, and by Him, all things consist” (Colossians 1:15–17).

Could anything any be clearer? When this passage is considered alongside everything else Paul said about the deity of Christ, we can only conclude that any attempt to strip Christ of His divinity requires that the Scriptures be twisted beyond recognition—or rejected outright!

But in spite of the evidence, some claim the above passage provides no proof that Jesus Christ is God. They say that the phrase “firstborn of all creation” shows that Christ was the first of all things (both heavenly and earthly) to be created. Not so! The title “firstborn” denotes *preeminence*, not “first to be created.” He has preeminence over all creation *because He is Creator!* That’s what Paul clearly said.

Paul further stated, “For in Him [Christ] dwelleth all the fulness of the Godhead bodily” (Colossians 2:9). The Greek word for “Godhead” is *Theotes*, rendered “the Deity” in the NASB, and refers to the divine *nature*, not “divine attributes.” Christ could not embody the fullness of the divine nature if His nature were different from His Father’s nature. Yet, some try to strip Him of His deity by stripping *theotes* of its full meaning. *The New World Translation of the Holy Scriptures*, for example, erroneously translates this word “divine quality.” (This is not surprising, for the same “translation” substitutes “a god” for *Theos* in John 1:1.)

Further proof that Jesus Christ is God is found in Titus 2:13. The NASB is correct in its translation of this verse: “looking for the blessed hope and the appearing of the glory of our great God and Savior, Christ Jesus.” Not only is Christ identified as “our great God and Savior” by the literal translation of the Greek; He is identified as both God and Savior by the assertion that He is the One whose “appearing” (that is, the Second Coming!) is expected. Paul never encouraged anyone to look for the “appearing” of God the Father.

Moreover, Paul said that the proclamation of God’s Word was committed to him “according to the commandment of God our Savior” (Titus 1:3). We read of Paul’s commission, and of the One who commissioned him, in Acts 9:15: “But the Lord [Jesus Christ] said unto him [Ananias], Go thy way: for he [Paul] is a chosen vessel unto me, to

bear my name before the Gentiles, and kings, and the children of Israel.” To Paul, “God our Savior” and Jesus Christ were one and the same.

In his first epistle to the Corinthians, Paul said that the ancient Israelites “drank of that spiritual Rock that followed them: and that Rock was Christ” (1 Corinthians 10:4). Paul was referring metaphorically to two occasions when water for the children of Israel miraculously came forth from a rock (Exodus 17:6; Numbers 20:11). According to rabbinic legend, both occasions involved the same rock, which (according to the legend) miraculously “followed” the Israelites in their wilderness wanderings. Paul said that the true supernatural Rock that went with Israel was Christ.

Doubtless, Paul’s description of Christ as the “Rock” that went with Israel was linked with his awareness of the many Old Testament passages that describe God as a “Rock” (Deuteronomy 32:4,15,18,30,31; Psalm 18:2,31,46; 28:1; 31:3; etc.)

Clearly, if Paul were here today he would fervently and without hesitation condemn all teachings that deny the preexistence and divinity of Jesus Christ, and would boldly proclaim that Christ is both God and Savior, in whom dwells all the fullness of the Godhead, and by whom all things were created.

We find this same truth throughout the New Testament. Let’s now turn our attention to the book of Hebrews.

### **Evidence From the Book of Hebrews**

The first chapter of the book of Hebrews proclaims the deity of Christ in no uncertain terms. We are told right away that Christ has been “appointed heir of all things, by whom also He [God the Father] made the worlds” (Hebrews 1:2). Here Christ is presented as Creator (or “Co-creator”). This agrees perfectly with John’s description of Christ as the *Logos* through whom all things were made.

Verse 3 declares: “[Christ is] the brightness [or “reflection”] of His [the Father’s] glory, and the express image of His Person [or “exact imprint of God’s very being”—NRSV], and upholding all things by the word of His power, when He had by Himself purged our sins, sat down on the right hand of the Majesty on high” (verse 3). In the preceding verse, Christ is presented as Creator. Here, He is Sustainer. It is hardly believable that the Creator and Sustainer who reflects the Father’s glory and shares His nature (as the “exact imprint”) could be other than God.

Further, if He were anything less than God, He would not be worthy of worship. He must be God, then, for verse 6 tells us He *is* worthy of worship: “And let all the angels of God worship Him.” This is a paraphrased quotation taken either from the end of Psalm 97:7 or from the end of Deuteronomy 32:43, which is missing from the Massoretic text (from which the KJV Old Testament was translated) but present in other ancient manuscripts, including the Septuagint. In either case, the “Him” the angels of God are to worship is God.

In verses 8 through 10, Jesus is identified as both God and Messiah: “But unto the Son He saith, Thy throne, *O God*, is for ever and ever: a sceptre of righteousness is the sceptre of thy kingdom. Thou has loved righteousness, and hated iniquity; therefore God, even thy God, hath anointed thee with oil of gladness above thy fellows. And, Thou, Lord, in the beginning hast laid the foundation of the earth; and the heavens are the works of thine hands.” In this passage, the writer quoted from Psalm 45:6,7 and Psalm 102:25.

The “Lord” who “laid the foundation of the earth” (Psalm 102:25) is the Messiah figure (Psalm 45) whom God “hath anointed...with the oil of gladness.”

Here we see the Messiah presented as both God and the “righteous servant” of God (Isaiah 53:11). Many stumble on this point, wondering how the Messiah can be God if He is the servant of God. The seeming contradiction is resolved once we understand that the Second Person of the Godhead took upon Himself the form of a servant.

This great truth is echoed throughout the Bible, right to the closing chapters. Let’s now examine several important passages from the final pages of God’s Word.

### **Evidence From the Book of Revelation**

In the book of Revelation, the Person, nature, and redemptive work of Jesus Christ are beautifully portrayed in descriptive language and through a kaleidoscope of marvelous imagery. He is both the fierce “Lion of the tribe of Judah” and lowly “Lamb” whose body bears the wound of a sacrificial offering. He is the royal “Root and Offspring of David,” the brightly glowing “Morning Star”, the magnificent “King of kings and Lord of lords.” He is the “Faithful Martyr,” the “Firstborn of the dead,” the “Ruler of the kings of the earth.”

And He is *God!* This truth is seen in Christ’s own use of the titles of divinity.

John, through a visionary experience, was glimpsing the climactic Day of the Lord when he heard “a great voice as of a trumpet, Saying, I am Alpha and Omega, the first and the last...” (Revelation 1:10,11). When he turned to see the source of the voice, he beheld “one like unto the Son of man...His head and His hairs were white as wool, as white as snow; and His eyes were as a flame of fire; And His feet like unto fine brass, as if they burned in a furnace; and His voice as the sound of many waters” (verses 13–15).

When John “fell at His feet as dead,” the supernatural Being laid His right hand on John and said, “I am the first and the last: I am He that liveth, *and was dead*; and, behold, I am alive for evermore...” (verses 17,18).

Clearly, the One who identified Himself as “Alpha and Omega, the first and the last” was none other than Jesus Christ! The “alpha” is the first letter of the Greek alphabet, the “omega” the last. Jesus Christ is the “Alpha and Omega,” which suggests that in Him is the beginning and the end of God’s revelation to man. This alone suggests preexistence and divinity, but when we realize that Yahweh identified Himself as the “first and the last,” the truth of Christ divinity is inescapable.

In Isaiah 41:4, God says, “I am the LORD [*Yahweh*], the *first, and with the last*; I am He.” In Isaiah 48:12, Yahweh says, “I am *the first, I also am the last*.” In the book of Revelation, “Alpha and Omega” is a title belonging to “the Almighty.” Notice: “I am Alpha and Omega, the beginning and the ending, saith the Lord, which is, and which was, and which is to come, the Almighty” (Revelation 1:8; *cf.* 21:6,7).

In Revelation 22, Jesus identified Himself as both “Alpha and Omega” and “the Root and Offspring of David” (verses 13,16), thus confirming His identity as both God and Messiah, the servant of God. This is in perfect harmony with the Gospels accounts, Paul’s epistles, and the book of Hebrews. With so much evidence, who can deny that Jesus Christ is both God and Messiah?

An honest study of the New Testament leads to the indisputable conclusion that the early disciples believed in the deity of Christ. But what about the Old Testament? Is there any evidence of Christ’s deity in the inspired prophecies of the Hebrew Scriptures?

## Evidence From the Old Testament

In Isaiah 53, the Messiah is described as the “righteous *servant*” of God (verse 11). If He is the servant of God, many have asked, how can He be God? As we have seen, the Hebrew *Elohim* and the plural verbs and pronouns sometimes associated with it allow for the possibility of a plurality of Persons in the Godhead. But is there anything in Isaiah’s prophecies that identifies the Messiah as a divine Personage?

Indeed, there is. Concerning the future Messiah, Isaiah wrote: “For unto us a child is born, unto as a child 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).

Some Jewish commentators insert the word “is” between “Counselor” and “The mighty God,” causing the verse to suggest that the Messiah’s name will be called “Wonderful Counsellor *is* the mighty God.” However, nothing in the Hebrew suggests that “is” should be inserted. Therefore, as in the New Testament, the book of Isaiah indicates that the Messiah is both God and the servant of God.

Psalms 45 is another prophecy about the Messiah, and was so recognized by the Jewish rabbis of the time of Jesus. Speaking of the Messiah’s victory in establishing His Kingdom, the Psalmist wrote: “Thine arrows are sharp in the heart of the king’s enemies; whereby the people fall under thee. Thy throne, *O God*, is for ever and ever: the sceptre of thy Kingdom is a right sceptre” (verses 5,6). Again, the Messiah is called “God” (*cf.* Hebrews 1:8).

In Psalm 110:1, the Messiah is called “Lord” (*Adonai*): The LORD said unto *my Lord*, Sit thou at my right hand, until I make thine enemies thy footstool.” The One who would later reveal Himself as the Messiah was David’s “Lord,” showing that He was much more than a “son of David,” and suggesting that He existed long before His human birth (*cf.* Matthew 22:41–46).

But was He a created being who came into existence at some point in time, as some claim? Through the prophet Micah, God answers: “But thou, Bethlehem Ephrathah, though thou be little among the thousands of Judah, yet out of thee shall He come forth unto me that is to be ruler of Israel [clearly a prophecy concerning the Messiah]: whose goings forth have been from old, *from everlasting*” (Micah 5:2). The “ruler of Israel” who came forth from “Bethlehem Ephrathah” existed before the foundations of that small town were laid—in fact, before the foundations of the world were laid! He is Creator, not creature.

Apparently it was Christ who appeared to Moses and the ancient Israelites as “the Angel of Yahweh.” As we have seen, He was not one of the created spirits known as angels (Hebrews 1), but He was an “angel” in that He was the Personage of the Godhead who served as the Spokesman, or Messenger, and who went with Israel to lead them to the place God had prepared for them. The word “angel” means “messenger,” and can refer to spirit beings as well as human beings. Jacob equated “the God who fed me all my life” with “the Angel which redeemed me from all evil” (Genesis 48:15,16). The fact that the Spokesman of the Godhead, who Himself is God, is called an “Angel” does not in any way suggest that He was one of the created “ministering spirits, sent forth to minister for them who shall be heirs of salvation” (Hebrews 1:14).

In Exodus 3, the “angel of the LORD” who appeared to Moses in the burning bush (verse 2) identified Himself as “the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob” (verse 6) whose name is “I AM” (verse 14). He is presented as both God and the Messenger (“Angel”) of God. When we compare this with the prophecies describing the Messiah as “God,” “the Mighty God,” “Lord,” and the “Ruler of Israel, whose goings forth have been...from everlasting,” it seems most likely that the Angel of Yahweh was the One who would later declare, “Before Abraham was, I AM!”

Evidently, the Angel sent to lead Israel was the same Personage. God said: “Beware of him, and obey his voice, provoke him not; for he will not pardon your transgressions: for my name is in him” (Exodus 23:21). The terms used here indicate that the Angel, as God’s Spokesman (“my name is in him”), had power to judge the people (“he will not pardon”), and was to be feared and obeyed (“Beware of him, and obey his voice”). Could this be any other than the *Logos* who “was with God, and was God,” or the “spiritual Rock” who “was Christ,” and who was with Israel in the wilderness?

There is also indication in the Old Testament that the Messiah is worthy of our worship. Speaking of the Son of God, Psalm 2:12 states: “Kiss [or *Do homage to*] the Son, lest He be angry, and ye perish from the way, when His wrath is kindled but a little. Blessed are all they that put their trust in Him.” While this verse alone is not conclusive proof of the deity of the Son, the fact that His subjects are called upon to *do homage* and to put their trust in Him leaves the impression that He is much more than a “son of David.”

Zechariah’s prophecy leaves us with no doubt that the Messiah is much more than a son of David. God said: “And *I* will pour upon the house of David, and upon the inhabitants of Jerusalem, the spirit of grace and of supplications: and they shall look upon *me* whom they have pierced, and they shall mourn for Him, as one mourneth for his only son, and shall be in bitterness for Him, as one that is in bitterness for his firstborn.” Notice that it was *Yahweh* who said “they shall look upon *me* whom they have pierced.” The One who was actually “pierced” was Jesus Christ, the “suffering servant” of Isaiah 53. Again, the Messiah is presented as both *Yahweh* and the servant of *Yahweh*.

Just as Jesus Christ was the Person who was pierced, He is also the Person who will come to establish His Kingdom on this earth. Yet, Zechariah’s prophecy tells us that the King who will come to this earth and gather His saints is none other than *Yahweh*. God declares: “Then shall the LORD [*Yahweh*] go forth, and fight against those nations, as when He fought in the day of battle. And His feet shall stand in that day upon the mount of Olives...and the LORD my God shall come, and all the saints with thee... And the LORD shall be King over all the earth...” (Zechariah 14:3–9). This could be none other than that Personage who promised: “And, behold, I come quickly; and my reward is with me, to give every man according as his work shall be” (Revelation 22:12).

In summary, the Messiah is called “God,” “Lord,” “the Mighty God,” and “the Ruler of Israel” who existed “from everlasting.” At the same time, He is presented as a human being capable of suffering and subject to death (Isaiah 53). Thus, the Old and New Testaments are in perfect harmony in proclaiming both the deity and the humanity of Jesus Christ.

Some have asked, “But how could so many Jews who were strict Monotheists have accepted the deity of Christ?” The answer is simple: The prophets declared it, Christ Himself taught it, and His resurrection confirmed it. No wonder “doubting Thomas,” upon touching the risen Messiah, said, “My Lord and my God!”

The deity of Christ is central to true Christianity. Those who teach that Jesus is not God have perverted the Gospel and corrupted the one true Faith, “the Faith which was once delivered unto the saints” (Jude 3). As the Son of God Himself said, “if ye believe not that I AM, ye shall die in your sins” (John 8:24).

## Chapter 3

# What is the Holy Spirit?

For centuries, mainstream Christianity has placed the doctrine of the Trinity at the top of its list of fundamental beliefs. To many, “Trinitarian” is virtually synonymous with “Christian.” If a person doesn’t believe in the Trinity, they claim, he is not a true Christian!

Trinitarians assert that the one God exists eternally as three Persons—the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit. As we have seen, God indeed exists as a plurality of Persons. No one doubts that the Father is God, and Scripture clearly teaches that the Son of God. But what about the Holy Spirit? Does God’s Word present the Spirit as the “Third Person” of the Godhead, as Trinitarians insist?

Let’s begin our investigation with the text most often cited as support for the doctrine of the Trinity.

### The Comforter

In the night of His betrayal, Jesus Christ promised that after His departure He would send “the Comforter” to His disciples. “And I will pray the Father, and He shall give you another Comforter, that He may abide with you for ever; Even the Spirit of truth; whom the world cannot receive, because it seeth Him not, neither knoweth Him: but ye know Him; for He dwelleth with you, and shall be in you” (John 14:16,17).

Jesus said the Comforter is the “Spirit of truth,” which is the Holy Spirit. “But the Comforter is the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in my name, He shall teach you all things, and bring all things to your remembrance, whatsoever I have said unto you” (verse 26).

The word “Comforter” is translated from the Greek *Parakletos*, which means “called to one’s side, i.e., to one’s aid...” The word “suggests the capability or adaptability for giving aid. It was used in a court of justice to denote a legal assistant, counsel for the defense, an advocate; then, generally, one who pleads another’s case, an intercessor, advocate...” (W. E. Vine, *An Expository Dictionary of New Testament Words*, p. 200).

The definition of the word, the use of the personal pronouns “He” and “Him,” and the *teaching* role of the Comforter certainly seem to connote personality. The Comforter’s ability to “testify” (John 15:26), “reprove” [convict]” (16:8), “speak” (16:13), and “shew you things to come” (16:13) seems to further strengthen the belief that the Holy Spirit is the Third Person of the Godhead.

In addition to John’s record of Jesus’ teaching, other scriptures present the Holy Spirit with attributes of personality. In Acts 13:2, the Holy Spirit speaks and commands: “As they ministered to the Lord, and fasted, the Holy Spirit *said*, Separate me Barnabas and Saul...” In Romans 8:26, the Spirit intercedes for the saints: “Likewise the Spirit also

helpeth our infirmities: for we know not what we should pray for as we ought: but the Spirit itself *maketh intercession* for us with groanings which cannot be uttered.” In Acts 21:11, the Spirit prophesies: “And when he [Agabus the prophet] was come unto us, he took Paul’s girdle, and bound his own hands and feet, and said, *Thus saith the Holy Spirit*, So shall the Jews at Jerusalem bind the man that owneth this girdle...” And in Acts 5:3, we find that one can lie to the Holy Spirit: “But Peter said, Ananias, why hath Satan filled thine heart to *lie to* the Holy Spirit, and keep back part of the price of the land?” In verse 4, Peter said, “thou has not lied unto men, but unto *God*.”

All the above passages *do* give personal attributes to the Holy Spirit, and leave us with the impression that the Spirit is not an impersonal “it.” An impersonal “it” doesn’t speak, prophesy, intercede, or command. Nor can an impersonal “it” that is equated with “God” be lied to. All these descriptions leave us with three possible ways of understanding what the Scriptures mean by “Holy Spirit.”

First is the traditional understanding: Since God the Father and Jesus Christ are the First and Second Persons of the Godhead, the Holy Spirit is the Third Person. In view of the above passages, this seems to be a logical conclusion.

The second way of understanding the Holy Spirit is through understanding the use of *personification* in the Scriptures. In Proverbs 8, for example, “wisdom” is given the attributes of a person, though wisdom is not a person. “*She* [Wisdom] *standeth* in the top of high places...” *She crieth* at the gates...” *She* says, Unto you, O men, *I call*; and *my voice* is to the sons of men... *I lead* [walk] in the way of righteousness, in the midst of the paths of judgment... *I was set up* from everlasting, from the beginning, or ever the earth was... When He prepared the heavens, *I was there*... Blessed is the man that heareth *me*...” (verses 2–4, 23, 27, 34).

Of course, the “Wisdom” spoken of here is God’s own wisdom, though it is presented as a personage who is distinct from the One who “prepared the heavens.” Thus, through an understanding of the use of personification in the Bible, we might conclude that “the Comforter” is the personification of God’s power, wisdom, love, and so forth.

Both of the above views seem logical, at least on the surface. But there is another, and more consistent, explanation for the Holy Spirit’s personal attributes. Let’s now consider the third way of understanding why the Scriptures present the Spirit with the characteristics of personality.

### **The Spiritual Presence of God**

Unlike Pantheism, which states that God is everything (or everything is God— that is, the universe and God are identical), Scripture presents God as “the high and lofty One that inhabiteth eternity” (Isaiah 57:15). In other words, He is transcendent—we might say, “extra-dimensional.” He created the laws that govern the universe, but His existence is above and beyond the universe and in no way depends on it.

God is bound by neither time nor space. Solomon said, “But will God indeed dwell on the earth? behold, the heaven and heaven of heavens cannot contain thee; how much less this house [i.e., the Temple] that I have builded” (1 Kings 8:27). God dwells above and beyond the space-time universe; therefore, He is not omnipresent, or “everywhere present,” in the sense that He dwells *within* the universe—under every rock, in every heart, on every street corner, and so forth—as if He were some sort of “Energy” akin to

the “Force” of *Star Wars* fame. Rather, He is omnipresent in that there is no place inaccessible to Him, no place unknown to Him, and no place beyond His reach.

Though God is transcendent, He has on many occasions “invaded” the time-space universe. That is, He has reached from eternity into the world of man, as it were, and altered the course of history, changed lives, and interrupted the natural order of things. The scriptural writers described these supernatural phenomena in many ways. One such way is through use of words “Holy Spirit,” or “Spirit of God.”

David said, “Whither shall I go from thy Spirit? or whither shall I flee from thy presence” (Psalm 139:7). Notice that “thy Spirit” is synonymous with “thy *presence*.” God’s Spirit, then, may be defined as God’s *spiritual presence*. David knew that no matter where he went, God would always be there in Spirit. He also knew that God was fully capable of intervening into the time-space universe (the natural world) and making His presence known.

David went on to say: “If I ascend up to heaven, thou art there: if I make my bed in hell [Hebrew: *sheol*, referring here to the deepest pit], behold, thou art there. If I take the wings of the morning, and dwell in the uttermost parts of the sea; Even there shall thy hand lead me [notice, David is speaking of God’s intervention, His activity within the physical world], and thy right hand shall hold me” (verses 8,9).

When we understand the Holy Spirit as God’s invisible presence and activity within the natural world, we can easily understand why the scriptural writers so often gave personal attributes to the Spirit. Since “Holy Spirit,” or “Spirit of God,” refers to God’s spiritual presence (through intervention) within the natural world, it is incorrect to say that the Holy Spirit is nothing more than an impersonal force, or that the personal pronouns “He” and “Him” cannot be appropriately used when speaking of the Spirit. This, however, does *not* mean that the Holy Spirit is the “Third Person” of the Godhead.

In Psalm 51, David again associates the Holy Spirit with God’s presence. He said, “Cast me not away from *thy presence*, and take not *thy Holy Spirit* from me” (verse 11). Throughout the Old Testament, we read of God placing His Spirit within His messengers. Such statements as “And the Spirit of the Lord came upon him” are common, and always describe the presence and activity of the invisible God in the lives of human beings living in the natural world. Obviously, the concept of the Spirit of God as a personage distinct from the One who gives the Spirit was unknown to the scriptural writers.

With this understanding, let’s now examine several New Testament descriptions of the Holy Spirit.

### **Power of the Highest**

In Luke the first chapter, we find important information about the Holy Spirit. The angel Gabriel, foretelling the birth of Jesus, said to the virgin Mary: “The Holy Spirit shall come upon thee, and the power of the Highest shall overshadow thee: therefore also that holy thing which shall be born of thee shall be called the Son of God” (verse 35).

Notice that the angel first said, “The Holy Spirit shall come upon thee...” He then said, “the power of the Highest shall overshadow thee...” Obviously, *these two statements are two ways of saying the same thing*. The Holy Spirit that “shall come upon thee” is the power of the Highest that “shall overshadow thee”! The Holy Spirit, then, may be defined as *the power of God*.

Of course, the phrase “power of God” by itself does not capture the full meaning of “Holy Spirit,” but it is an appropriate description because it is another way of speaking of the spiritual presence and activity of the invisible God.

Further, if the Holy Spirit is a Personage distinct from yet equal to the Father of Jesus, as Trinitarians claim, one cannot help but wonder why Matthew’s account tells us that Mary “was found with child *of the Holy Spirit*” (1:18), and “that which is conceived in her is *of the Holy Spirit*” (1:20). Of course, Trinitarians explain that since the one God exists as three Persons, when one acts, the other two act—thus, all three Persons of the Trinity were involved in the Incarnation. This argument may seem plausible; nevertheless, the fact that the Holy Spirit is singled out as the source of the conception is curious, if not confusing. However, by simply understanding the Holy Spirit as the power of God—the presence and activity of the invisible God in the natural world—any confusion instantly clears up.

The expression “power of God” is but one way of describing the Holy Spirit. Let’s see how many other ways the Bible describes the Spirit.

### **The Finger of God**

When Jesus was accused of casting out demons “through Beelzebub, the chief of the devils” (Luke 11:15), Jesus answered, “And if I by Beelzebub cast out devils, by whom do your sons cast them out? therefore shall they be judges. But if I with the *finger of God* cast out devils, no doubt the Kingdom of God is come upon you” (verses 19,20).

In Matthew’s parallel account, Jesus quoted as saying, “But if I cast out devils by the *Spirit of God*, then the Kingdom of God is come unto you” (Matthew 12:28). The Spirit of God, then, is the “finger of God”; it is the *spiritual extension* of God. This is yet another way of describing the presence and activity of the invisible God in the natural world. It is a way of describing God’s “reaching down” and “touching” the lives of human beings.

The Ten Commandments were “written with the *finger of God*” (Exodus 31:18; Deuteronomy 9:10), meaning that the law was miraculously engraven in stone by the Spirit of God. In other words, “the high and lofty one that inhabiteth eternity” reached into the natural world and produced the Ten Commandments on tables of stone.

The “finger of God” is another way of describing the “power of God.” The Spirit by which Jesus cast out demons is the same Spirit by which He healed the sick. Luke wrote, “...and the power of the Lord was present [with Jesus] to heal them” (Luke 5:17).

In addition to “finger of God,” other similar descriptions of God’s activity are recorded in Scripture. Recall that David spoke of God’s “right hand” leading and holding him (Psalm 139:10). God promised to redeem Israel “with a stretched out arm” (Exodus 6:6). With “the blast of [His] nostrils,” God parted the Red Sea (Exodus 15:8). These and similar expressions are found throughout the Old Testament, and are synonymous with “the power of God,” “the Spirit of God,” or simply, the miraculous presence and activity of the invisible God in the natural world. In fact, the Hebrew expression for “Spirit of God” can be translated literally “*breath* of God.” Obviously, God’s “stretched out arm,” “right hand,” and “breath” (or “Spirit”) all refer to His supernatural intervention.

The *New Catholic Encyclopedia* is correct in stating that the Old Testament “clearly does not envisage God’s spirit as a person,” and that “If it [the Spirit of God] is sometimes represented as being distinct from God, it is because the breath [*i.e.* “Spirit”]

of Yahweh acts exteriorly” (Vol. XIII, p. 574)—that is, the Spirit of Yahweh is the spiritual presence, activity, and influence of the invisible God in the natural world.

The Christians of the first century experienced God’s spiritual presence and activity in a most profound way. Let’s notice what the phrase “Spirit of God” meant to them.

### **Spiritual Indwelling of God**

The apostle Paul wrote, “And if Christ be *in you*, the body is dead because of sin; but the Spirit [that is, “Christ in you”] is life because of righteousness” (Roman 8:10). And, of course, if Christ dwells in you, then so does the Father (1 John 1:3; 2:23; 2 John 1:9). John wrote: “No man hath seen God [the Father] at any time. If we love one another, *God dwelleth in us*, and His love is perfected in us. Hereby know we that we dwell in Him, and He in us, because He hath given us His *Spirit*” (1 John 4:12,13). The Holy Spirit, then, may be defined as *the spiritual indwelling of God, both the Father and the Son*.

Paul wrote: “But ye are not in the flesh, but in the Spirit, if so be that the *Spirit of God* dwell in you. Now if any man have no the *Spirit of Christ*, he is none of His” (Romans 8:9). He added, “But if the *Spirit of Him that raised Jesus from the dead* dwell in you, he that raised up Christ from the dead shall also quicken your mortal bodies by His Spirit that dwelleth in you” (verse 11).

Notice that Paul spoke of the Spirit of the Father and the Spirit of Christ. Are these *two* different Spirits? No! Paul wrote, “There is one body, and *one* Spirit, even as ye are called in one hope of your calling” (Ephesians 4:4). Clearly, the Spirit of the Father is no different from the Spirit of the Son. Both expressions refer to the spiritual indwelling of God—another way of describing the invisible presence, activity, and influence of God (both Father and Son) in the lives of human beings living in the natural world.

To the Corinthians, Paul wrote: “Know ye not that ye are the temple of God, and that the Spirit of God dwelleth in you? If any man defile the temple of God, him shall God destroy; for the temple of God is holy, which temple ye are” (1 Corinthians 3:16, 17; *cf.* 2 Corinthians 6:16). Anciently, the Temple of God was God’s “house,” or God’s “dwelling place.” In the same way—or a more profound way—the church is the Temple, or “dwelling place,” of God. When Paul said “the Spirit of God dwelleth in you,” he was speaking of the spiritual indwelling of God, both the Father and the Son. He gave no reason to think that a “Third Person” is involved.

The Bible tells us that God the Father dwells in heaven, and that Jesus Christ is at His right hand. How can the Father and Son dwell in heaven, and, at the same time, dwell “in” us? Answer: By *spiritual extension*—by reaching into the natural world—both the Father and the Son dwell in the spiritual Temple, the church.

This view of the Holy Spirit helps us to better understand why Jesus mentions the Father, the Son, *and* the Holy Spirit in the baptismal formula. “Go ye therefore, and teach [make disciples of] all nations, baptizing them in [or *into*] the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit” (Matthew 28:19). God promises the Holy Spirit to the repentant believer upon baptism (Acts 2:38). By understanding that the Holy Spirit is the spiritual indwelling of the Father and the Son, we can understand why Jesus mentioned all three in the baptismal formula.

While the Holy Spirit is not the Third Person of the Godhead, it is a mistake to say that the Spirit “is not personal and is not God.” The Spirit of God is inseparable from God. As the apostle Paul said, “Now the Lord *is* that Spirit: and where the Spirit of the

Lord is, there is liberty” (2 Corinthians 3:17). This supports our primary definition of the Holy Spirit as the spiritual presence, activity, and influence of God in the natural world.

Paul’s first epistle to the Corinthians further clarifies what he meant when he spoke of the Holy Spirit.

### **The Mind of God**

Paul wrote: “But as it is written, Eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, neither have entered into the heart of man, the things which God hath prepared for them that love Him. But God hath revealed them unto us by His Spirit: for the Spirit searcheth all things, yea, the deep things of God” (1 Corinthians 2:9,10). Notice that the Spirit is the means whereby God reveals His truth to His people.

In the next verse, Paul tells us what he means by “His Spirit”: “For what man knoweth the things of man, save the *spirit of man* which is in him? even so the things of God knoweth no man, but by the *Spirit of God*” (verse 11). In this case the “spirit of man” is the *mind* of man—that part of man that thinks, reasons, stores knowledge. It follows, then, that since the “spirit of man” is the mind of man, the “Spirit of God” is the *mind of God*—His thoughts, His way of viewing things. Further, since the “spirit [mind] of man” is not a personal entity that is separate from the man himself, the Spirit of God (or “mind of God”) is not the Third Person of a Trinity.

Paul went to say: “Now we have received, not the spirit of the world, but the Spirit which is of God; that we might know the things that are freely given to us of God. Which things also we speak, not in the words which man’s wisdom [which comes from the mind of man] teacheth, but which the Holy Spirit [the mind of God] teacheth; comparing spiritual things spiritual” (verses 12,13). Here, “the spirit of the world” is contrasted with “the Spirit which is of God.” Since “the spirit of the world” refers to the *influence* of the world, “the Spirit which is of God” must carry the meaning of “divine influence.”

Paul further clarified what he meant by “Holy Spirit” in verse 16: “For who hath known the *mind of the Lord*, that he should instruct Him? But we have the *mind of Christ*.” Paul’s statement, “For who hath known the mind of the Lord, that he should instruct Him?” is a quotation from the Septuagint version of Isaiah 40:13. The King James Old Testament, translated the Hebrew manuscripts, reads: “Who hath directed [or “searched out”] the Spirit of the LORD, or being His counsellor hath taught Him.” The Hebrew word for “Spirit” is *Ruwach*, which is elsewhere translated “Spirit,” as in “Spirit of God.” To Paul, then, the Spirit of God was the mind of God, or God’s influence upon His people in their view of the world, in the values they hold, and in their concepts of ethics and morality.

The definition “mind of God” agrees perfectly with “spiritual presence and activity of God,” and denotes God’s *influence* in the life of the Christian. Here again we see no evidence of the involvement of a “Third Person.” On the contrary, we see clear evidence that Paul never thought of the Holy Spirit as the Third Person of the Godhead.

Paul’s salutations provide further evidence that he was not Trinitarian.

### **Holy Spirit Not Included in Paul’s Salutations**

Trinitarians point to 2 Corinthians 13:14 as proof that Paul believed in the triune nature of God. Paul did mention the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit in this passage, but his use of these terms hardly proves that he believed that God is a Trinity.

Interestingly, Trinitarians ignore the fact that Paul, in the introductory comments in each of his epistles, refers to the Father and the Son together, but does not mention the Holy Spirit. If Paul was Trinitarian, why did he fail to at least acknowledge the role of the “Third Person” in the believers’ Christian experience?

For example, in his first epistle to the Corinthians, Paul said, “Grace be unto you, and peace, from God our Father, and from the Lord Jesus Christ” (Verse 3). Why didn’t Paul mention the Holy Spirit? Does grace and peace come from the First and Second Persons of the Godhead, but not from the Third Person? This is especially curious in view of the fact that the “fruit of the Spirit” includes “love, joy, *peace*, longsuffering, gentleness, goodness, faith, meekness, temperance” (Galatians 5:22,23).

Perhaps Trinitarians can forgive Paul for failing to mention the Holy Spirit just this once. But, if they would read *all* of Paul’s salutations, they would see that he *consistently* left out the Holy Spirit. Surely Paul did not believe the Holy Spirit was the Third Person of a Trinity.

However, Paul did speak of the Holy Spirit as having personal attributes. In Acts 28, Paul, quoting the prophet Isaiah, said, “Well *spake* the Holy Spirit by Isaiah the prophet unto our fathers, Saying, Go unto this people, and say, Hearing ye shall hear, and shall not understand; and seeing ye shall see, and not perceive” (verses 25,26). Paul was quoting from Isaiah 6:9,10. Let’s examine this passage and see what the prophet said about the manner in which the prophecy was given to him.

Isaiah wrote: “Also I heard the *voice of the Lord*, saying...” And then follows the section of Scripture Paul quoted.

Notice that Paul said, “Well *spake* the Holy Spirit by Isaiah...; and Isaiah said, I heard the *voice of the Lord*...” Paul knew that Isaiah had heard God’s voice during a visionary experience, which God had produced by His Spirit. Isaiah had seen God in vision, but not in actuality, and had received revelation from Him while in vision. Therefore, when Paul said that the Holy Spirit spoke to Isaiah, he was not trying to point out which member of the Godhead spoke; he was simply indicating that Isaiah’s prophecy came through inspiration of the Holy Spirit.

When the Bible says that “the Holy Spirit said...” it is merely telling us *how* God spoke. If Jesus Christ appeared (not in vision, but literally) to the disciples and spoke, then the disciples, when later quoting what Christ had said, would simply say, “The Lord said...” But when the Lord spoke to them in a “still, quiet voice,” or when they heard His voice without seeing His form, then the disciples, when quoting Him, would say, “The Holy Spirit said...”

To Christ and His disciples, the Holy Spirit was the spiritual presence, activity, and influence of the invisible God in the natural world. No doubt, it was this understanding that led them to compare the Holy Spirit with the natural elements.

### **Spirit Compared to the Elements**

The book of Acts reveals that the Holy Spirit came on the Day of Pentecost with the sound of “a rushing mighty *wind*,” and manifested itself in “cloven tongues like as of *fire*” (Acts 2:1–3). Jesus likened the Spirit to *living water* (John 4:10–15). “He that believeth on me,” Jesus said, “as the Scripture hath said, out of His belly shall flow *rivers of living water*. (But this *spake* He of the Spirit, which they believed on Him should

receive: for the Holy Spirit was not yet given; because that Jesus was not yet glorified.)” (John 7:38,39).

All these descriptions—fire, wind, and water—denote *power*. Think of the sheer *energy* produced by a raging fire, a mighty river, or a rushing wind. The Holy Spirit was the *power*—the presence and activity of the Eternal God—that brought this vast universe with its billions of star-sprinkled galaxies into existence.

The word translated “Spirit”—*Pneuma*, in the New Testament—suggests *force*, or *power*. Vine says the word “primarily denotes the wind (akin to *pneo*, to breathe, blow); also breath; then, especially the spirit, which, like the wind, is invisible, immaterial and powerful” (W. E. Vine, *An Expository Dictionary of New Testament Words*, p. 1075).

The word “spirit” is used of the motivational forces of the mind (attitudes, motives, emotional drives)—that invisible part of us that causes us to behave the way we do. Therefore, the Holy Spirit, as the *mind* of God, is given to us to *convert* us, to help us to *change*, by enabling us to redirect our thoughts and adopt new attitudes and motives.

In the Bible, God is described in terms of a *family* relationship—a Father and a Son. The Holy Spirit is never presented as a third family member; never portrayed as a “Mother,” or as a “Daughter.” Thus, the Holy Spirit is best understood as the power, mind, and spiritual extension of God—the spiritual presence and activity of the invisible God in the natural world—not as a Person distinct from the Father and the Son.

This brings us to several important scriptures that show us how the New Testament writers thought of the Holy Spirit.

### **Trinitarian Dogma Foreign to New Testament Writers**

Trinitarians commonly use such expressions as “God the Holy Spirit” and “Third Person of the Trinity,” believing the Spirit to be “God the Sanctifier,” who is co-equal and co-eternal with “God the Father” and “God the Redeemer.” The New Testament writers, however, spoke of the Holy Spirit in entirely different terms.

For example, in the Gospels, the Holy Spirit is described as a “dove.” “And Jesus, when He was baptized, went up straightway out of the water: and, lo, the heavens were opened unto Him, and He saw the Spirit of God descending like a dove, and lighting upon Him” (Matthew 3:16; *cf.* Mark 1:10; Luke 3:22; John 1:32). God is described as a Father and a Son—a *Family* of divine Persons. A “dove” hardly fits within the description of a family relationship.

Further, God says, “I *pour out* of my Spirit upon all flesh...” (Acts 2:17); Jesus was “*full of the Holy Spirit...*” (Luke 4:1); and on the Day of Pentecost, the disciples were “*filled with the Holy Spirit...*” (Acts 2:4). Notice the expressions “pour out,” “full of,” and “filled with.” These expressions show that the New Testament writers thought of the Holy Spirit, not as a “Third Person” of the Godhead, but as *spiritual power* flowing from God.

The apostle Paul spoke of the “supply of the Spirit” (Philippians 1:19), contrasted being “filled with the Spirit” with being “drunk with wine” (Ephesians 5:18), and contrasted “spirit of bondage” with “Spirit of adoption,” which is the “Spirit of God” (Romans 8:14,15). It is not likely that Paul would have used these descriptions had he thought of the Holy Spirit as the Third Person of a Trinity.

Of course, Trinitarians object by pointing out that Scripture also speaks of being “filled” with God. For instance, in Ephesians 3:19, Paul said that Christians can “be filled

with all the fulness of God.” This, however, is quite different from the expressions “pour out,” “full of,” and “filled with,” as used in reference to the Holy Spirit. Being “filled with the fulness of God” simply means being filled with the qualities God is filled with—love, mercy, wisdom, and so forth. A person is filled with these qualities by being filled with the Holy Spirit, which Paul described as “the power that worketh in us” (verse 20). Both the Greek construction and the context (see verses 16–20) support this conclusion.

Seeing, then, that the Holy Spirit is presented in Scripture, not as the Third Person of a Trinity, but as the spiritual presence and activity of the invisible God in the natural world, let’s return to Christ’s comments on the Comforter, and see if we can come to a clearer understanding of what He said.

### **Figurative Language**

In John 14–16, Jesus spoke of His “going away” and of His “coming again” unto His disciples. He said, “A little while, and ye shall not see me: and again, a little while, and ye shall see me, because I go to the Father” (John 16:16). He was obviously speaking of His death, resurrection, ascension, and post-resurrection appearances, but the disciples did not understand what He meant. Jesus explained with an illustration:

“A woman when she is in travail hath sorrow, because her hour is come: but as soon as she is delivered of the child, she remembereth no more the anguish, for joy that a man is born into the world. And ye now therefore have sorrow: but I will see you again, and your heart shall rejoice, and your joy no man taketh from you” (16:21,22).

Jesus went on to say: “These things have I spoken unto you in proverbs [“figurative language”—NASB]: but the time cometh, when I shall no more speak unto you in proverbs, but I shall shew you plainly of the Father” (verse 25).

Notice that Jesus said that He had spoken to His disciples in “figurative language.” Commentators point out that the “figurative language” included the illustration of the “woman in travail” and, perhaps, the “husbandman-vine-branches-fruit” analogy of John 15:1–16. But with our understanding of the Holy Spirit as the spiritual presence and activity of God, it is likely that Jesus’ description of “the Comforter” was also “figurative language.”

In fact, throughout John 14–16 Jesus incorporated figurative language in His teaching, as some commentators point out. He said He would go to His “Father’s house” and “prepare a place” for His disciples, after which He would “come again” and receive them unto Himself (John 14:2,3). “Father’s house” is figurative language, for the Father doesn’t dwell in a “house.” The disciples must have thought He meant that He was going to some particular place on this earth, for they clearly said they didn’t know where He was going (verse 5). In chapter 15 and 16 Jesus uses more figurative language in His analogy of the vine-husbandman-branches-fruit (15:1–8) and in His illustration of the “woman in travail” (16:21,22). His description of the Holy Spirit as the “Comforter” (or “Helper”) He will send from the Father is also best understood as figurative language, especially in view of the fact that toward the end of His discourse He said, “These things have I spoken unto you in proverbs [or *figurative language*]...”

Jesus said, “And I will pray the Father, and He shall give you another Comforter, that he may abide with you for ever” (John 14:16). He then clarified His figurative language by explaining that the Comforter is “the Spirit of truth” (verse 17). Interestingly, within this context Jesus said, “I will not leave you comfortless [“as orphans”—NASB]: I will

come to you” (verse 18). This seems to suggest that His description of “the Comforter” is figurative language for Jesus’ own spiritual presence, activity, and influence in the lives of the disciples.

When He said that in a little while the world would see Him no more, but the disciples would see Him, Judas asked, “Lord, how is it that thou wilt manifest thyself unto us, and not unto the world?” (verse 22). Notice Jesus’ answer: “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*” (verse 23). Does this mean that the spiritual presence of the Father and the Son would be *in addition to* the presence of the Comforter? More likely, it means that the spiritual presence (or indwelling) of the Father and the Son *is* “the Comforter.” This agrees perfectly with our understanding of the Holy Spirit as the spiritual presence and activity of God (both Father and Son) in the natural world. It seems obvious that Jesus’ description of “the Comforter” was part of His “figurative language.”

Through use of figurative language, then, Christ was telling His disciples that they should not be alarmed by His *bodily* absence, for He would be *spiritually present* with them, and that His (and the Father’s) spiritual presence would in fact be more beneficial to them than His bodily presence. Later, after His resurrection, He said to His disciples: “All power is given unto me in heaven and in earth...and, lo, I am with you always, even unto the end of the world [age]” (Matthew 28:18,20).

The rabbinic writers never believed that the *Ru’ah ha-Kodesh* (the “Holy Spirit”) was a distinct personage within the Godhead, as in Trinitarianism. Yet, it was not uncommon for rabbis to describe the *Ru’ah ha-Kodesh* with personal attributes. The *Encyclopedia Judaica* states: “This tendency towards hypostatization is already apparent in such expression as ‘*Ru’ah ha-Kodesh* resting’ on a person or a place, or someone ‘receiving *Ru’ah ha-Kodesh*.’ But it is pronounced in descriptions of the *Ru’ah ha-Kodesh* speaking (Pes. 117a), or acting as defense counsel on Israel’s behalf (Lev. R. 6:1), or leaving Israel and returning to God (Eccles. R. 12:7)” (Volume 14, p.366).

The terms *Ru’ah ha-Kodesh* and *Shekhinah* (“dwelling,” or “resting”—used of God’s presence) were interchanged in some rabbinic texts. Like the *Ru’ah ha-Kodesh*, the *Shekhinah* was hypostatized. For instance, “the *Shekhinah* is pictured as talking to God (Mid. Prov. to 22:28)...” However, the rabbis knew that such descriptions could easily be misinterpreted, so they “occasionally preface their remarks with *kivyakhol*, ‘as if it were possible’ ...” (*Encyclopedia Judaica*, Vol. 14, p. 1350).

If the rabbis described the *Ru’ah ha-Kodesh* (Holy Spirit) as having personal attributes and as Israel’s defense counsel, yet did not believe the Spirit to be a distinct Person among other Persons in the Godhead, why should anyone have difficulty believing that Jesus’ description of the Comforter (the disciples’ “defense counsel”) was figurative language.

The strongest case Trinitarians have for their belief in the Holy Spirit as the Third Person of the Godhead is Jesus’ description of the Comforter. But once we consider all that the Bible says about the Holy Spirit, and once we understand that Jesus used figurative language, the doctrine of the Trinity is left without any real scriptural foundation.

Now, let’s consider some objections often presented by Trinitarians.

## Answers to Objections

The following objections are representative of arguments that have been presented in various publications, in public forums, and in letters sent to our office.

**Objection #1:** “Jesus said that the only sin that would not be forgiven is ‘blasphemy against the Holy Spirit.’ He said: ‘And whosoever speaketh a word against the Son of man, it shall be forgiven him: but whosoever speaketh against the Holy Spirit, it shall not be forgiven him, neither in this world, neither in the world to come’ (Matthew 12:31,32). Since the Son of man is a Person, the Holy Spirit must be a Person as well. Further, the fact that the Holy Spirit can be blasphemed is evidence that He is a Person.”

**Answer:** First, the Word of God (God’s revealed truth) can be blasphemed (Titus 2:5), so the object of blasphemy need not to be a person. Second, why is blasphemy against the Second Person of the Godhead forgivable, while blasphemy against the Third Person is not? As noted previously, by comparing this account with Luke’s parallel account, we see that “the Spirit of God” is “the finger of God” (compare Matthew 12:28 with Luke 11:20), which shows that the Holy Spirit is the spiritual extension of God. In context, Jesus was reproofing the Pharisees for attributing the power of God (*i.e.*, His spiritual presence and activity) to the devil. Matthew 12:31,32 hardly supports Trinitarianism.

**Objection #2:** “In Mark 3:29,30, the Holy Spirit is contrasted with an ‘unclean spirit.’ Since an ‘unclean spirit’ is a personal entity, the Holy Spirit must be a Person.”

**Answer:** Again, in Luke’s parallel account, the Holy Spirit is described as “the finger of God.” Thus, Mark’s account, as Matthew’s and Luke’s, speaks of the *source* of Jesus’ power. The Pharisees said the source of Jesus’ power was an unclean spirit. Jesus said the source of His power was God. Whether that source was personal is not in question.

**Objection #3:** “The Holy Spirit cannot be defined as ‘the power of God,’ for then the expression ‘power of the Holy Spirit’ (as in Romans 15:13) would mean ‘power of Power,’ which makes no sense. Thus, the Holy Spirit must be a Person who *has* power.

**Answer:** Scripture speaks of the “power of God” (Luke 9:43); yet, Jesus called God “Power” (Matthew 26:64). Does this mean that “power of God” means “power of Power”? This is nothing more than a play on words. Electricity is power; yet we speak of the “power of electricity.” Therefore, we may define the Holy Spirit as the “power of God,” and, without contradiction, speak of the power of the Holy Spirit. As previously noted, the Holy Spirit is equated with “the power of the Highest” in Luke 1:35. Jesus was speaking of the Holy Spirit when He said that His disciples would be “endued with power from on high” (Luke 24:49). Paul equated “the gift of God, which is in thee” (*i.e.*, the Holy Spirit) with “the spirit of...power, and of love, and of a sound mind” (2 Timothy 1:6,7). Remember, however, that “power of God” is but one way of describing the Holy Spirit.

**Objection #4:** “The God of the Bible doesn’t need a power, or force, to do His work for Him. He is omnipresent, which means He is everywhere present, and doesn’t have to

‘send’ a force or power in order to create, perform miracles, or change the lives of human beings.”

**Answer:** As we have seen, God’s “Spirit” is synonymous with God’s “presence” (Psalm 139:7). When the Bible speaks of God “sending” or “pouring out” His Spirit (as in Acts 2:17 and Galatians 4:6), it is speaking of the spiritual presence and activity of the invisible God in the natural world. Since the Bible speaks of God “sending” and “pouring out” His Spirit, it is appropriate that we do so as well. Further, the Holy Spirit enables us to understand *how* God is omnipresent. Since He is transcendent, He does not dwell within the natural world, but above it. He is omnipresent in that there is nothing hidden from Him and no place beyond His influence. He does not dwell on every street corner, in every home, and under every rock. But all of these places are subject to his influence. He can at any moment reach out into the natural world and bring about change. This is what the scriptural writers had in mind when they spoke of God sending His Spirit, or of the Holy Spirit being poured out.

**Objection #5:** “First John 5:7 states: ‘For there are three that bear record in heaven, the Father, the Word, and the Holy Ghost: and these three are one.’ Doesn’t this verse say that the one God exists in three persons?”

**Answer:** It is a well known fact among theologians that 1 John 5:7 is spurious. Harrison explains: “The third edition [of Erasmus’ Greek translation] (1522) became famous because of its inclusion of I John 5:7. Erasmus had promised to put it in if it could be found in any Greek MS. When it was found in a single MS 61 (16<sup>th</sup> century), he had to abide by his promise, even though, as he suspected, this was translated back into Greek from the Latin. It got into the Latin by mistaking one of Cyprian’s comments as part of the text of Scripture. It continues to stand in the King James Version as a reminder that diligence is needed in order to free the text from additions to the original” (Everett F. Harrison, *Introduction to the New Testament*, p. 71).

**Objection #6:** “Since believers are to be baptized ‘in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit’ (Matthew 28:19), doesn’t this suggest that the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit are three distinct Persons?”

**Answer:** The expression “in [*eis*, “into”] the name of,” as in Matthew 28:19, denotes “in recognition of the authority of (sometimes combined with the thought of relying or resting on)” (W. E. Vine, *An Expository Dictionary of New Testament Words*, p. 722). Baptism is performed in recognition of the Father’s authority, which is administered through the mediatorship of the Son and confirmed by the reception of the Holy Spirit. As we have seen, the Holy Spirit is the power, spiritual presence, influence, and activity of God (both Father and Son) in the lives of repentant believers. The Father’s act of giving the Holy Spirit, the Son’s act of mediating, and the Spirit’s life-changing activity are authoritative actions—thus, baptism is performed in recognition of the authority of the gift-giving Father, the mediating Son, and the life-changing Holy Spirit.

**Objection #7:** “Paul wrote, ‘The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, and the love of God, and the communion of the Holy Spirit, be with you all’ (2 Corinthians 13:14). Paul could have hardly named all three in such a way unless he believed them to be three co-equal, co-eternal Persons.”

**Answer:** The Greek word translated “communion” is *koinonia*, which means “fellowship,” or “to share in.” The verse could be rendered, “The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, the love of God, and the *sharing in* of the Holy Spirit be with all of you.” (See marginal note in the NRSV.) God shares His Spirit with His people, and His people are united with God (both Father and Son) and with each other through the Spirit. Though Paul concluded 2 Corinthians with mention of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit, he began the epistle with his usual: “Grace be to you and peace from God our Father, and from the Lord Jesus Christ” (1:2). As we have noted, Paul’s repeated “failure” to include the Holy Spirit in his salutations casts great doubt upon the assumption that the apostle was Trinitarian.

More often than not, New Testament passages that speak of the Father and the Son do not mention the Holy Spirit, and for obvious reason: The writers of the New Testament did not think of the Holy Spirit as the Third Person of a Trinity. The earliest Christians, including all the apostles, were Jewish. As Jewish Christians, their concept of the Holy Spirit was founded upon the Old Testament’s presentation of the Spirit as the power of God, or spiritual presence and activity of the invisible God in the natural world, and upon Jesus’ teaching on the Holy Spirit and His example of Spirit-filled living. They knew that the Father is God, and that Jesus’ claim of deity was confirmed by His resurrection. Thus, God is presented in Scripture as two divine Persons, not three.

Let’s now consider one final witness that attests to the dual nature of the Godhead.

### **The Witness of Nature**

Paul wrote, “For the invisible things of Him [God] from the creation of the world are clearly seen, *being understood by the things that are made*, even His eternal power and *Godhead...*” (Romans 1:20). Some Trinitarians argue that the “triune” nature of God is revealed in nature. For example, they point to triplets at the molecular level, and speak of “the triple point of water,” showing how water, under certain conditions, can simultaneously exist in three forms—solid, liquid, and gas. However, it is doubtful that the ancients to whom Paul spoke were particularly keen in their awareness of molecular structures and the laws of thermodynamics.

But they *were* aware of their natural surroundings. They knew that there are two sexes; were aware of the day and night; knew of the “greater light” that rules the day, and the “lesser light” that rules the night; knew that each human beings has two identical sides—a right side and left side. They were aware of *duality* throughout nature.

Surely the creation that is observable to everyone reflects the nature of the Creator. And since we see so much duality in creation, is it not likely that the Creator is dual in nature? With the witness of creation alongside the revelation of God’s Word, it is not only likely, it is *certain* that God exists as two Persons—the Father and the Son.

And you can come to know both the Father and the Son in a far greater way than you have known them in the past. You can receive a small measure of God’s power—power

that will enable you to conquer the obstacles along the way as you follow in the footsteps of Jesus Christ. You can have the mind of Christ, and experience the spiritual indwelling of the Father and the Son. You can receive the Holy Spirit as the “earnest,” or “downpayment,” on eternal life—thus assuring your future inheritance, an *eternal* inheritance!

How can you receive this wonderful gift? The answer is in Acts 2:38, a statement made by the apostle Peter over 1,900 years ago: “Repent, and be baptized...in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins, and *ye shall* receive the gift of the Holy Spirit.” ◻

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