



THE TRINITY AND THE NATURE OF GOD

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Foreword

One cannot understand the "Trinity problem" without a knowledge of the historical events surrounding the formulation of the doctrine. The doctrine of the Trinity is up to this day enmeshed in confusion, controversy, argumentation, and ill will. How could such a situation prevail over Christendom for nearly fifteen hundred years? Perhaps it is because no one really understands the nature of God. Perhaps it is due to the fact that God has not made known any more concerning Himself than what needs to be understood for salvation. This work will make plain that there are aspects about God which cannot be known and that human reasoning, philosophical speculation, and argumentation are useless devices in the attempt to penetrate this barrier. Theologians, largely, not willing to admit they could not define the nature of God because they would not accept the Old Testament descriptions of God, resorted to an orientation based on Greek philosophy and speculation until the entire quest became bogged down in intricate sophistry so complicated that the entire subject became incomprehensible. Even to this day the inability to comprehend the nature of the Godhead prevails. The truth is there is no hope for understanding the nature of God without accepting the revelation given in the Old Testament as well as the gospels and the book of Acts. A philosophical orientation buoyed up by human reasoning will never get at the truth regarding the nature of God, or any other Bible truth for that matter. Unless one accepts what has been revealed in the Bible regarding the nature of God and the limitations imposed on this knowledge, one is destined to continue in the morass of confusion, uncertainty, and controversy that occurred for nearly three hundred years beginning in the third century AD and which continues to this day. In order to stress the importance of various facts in the historical and Scriptural record emphasis is generally ours throughout. The reader is advised to examine the many Bible texts cited in order to obtain a complete analysis of this important subject.

The Trinity— And the Nature of God

It is no exaggeration to say that more has been written about the Trinity, and by inference the nature of God, than any other Bible subject. It has been stated that one is in danger of losing his soul by denying the Trinity and of losing his wits by trying to understand it. Those who deny the Trinity do so on the grounds that it is an embarrassment to reason, a burden to Biblical criticism, a matter of mere antiquarian interest, and of no practical value. Opponents of the Trinity insist reason should have boundaries and the doctrine of the Trinity requires going beyond them. The doctrine has failed the test of practicality and there is no connection between it and the life of faith. It serves only to distract the believer (Stephens, 75-76).

Yet trinitarians reason that neither the gospel can be truly stated nor the Word of God proclaimed without affirming what is explicit in the doctrine of the Trinity (Welch, 290). John McClintock and James Strong in their *Cyclopedia of Biblical, Theological, and Ecclesiastical Literature*, article "Christology," state that the doctrine of the person of Christ is the central doctrine of Christianity; and the ancient church in sanctified and gigantic speculation laid down the Christological foundation. The doctrine of the person and work of Christ formed the main topic of theological speculation and controversy in the early church and yet remains the most prominent religious problem of our day. The person and work of Christ was the main problem of theological speculation from the third to the middle of the fifth century which was settled by four great ecumenical councils—Nicea in 325, Constantinople in 381, Ephesus in 431, and Chalcedon in 451. The Protestant churches of the Reformation adopted the three ecumenical creeds that were a result of the Councils—the Apostles, the Nicene, and the Athanasian.

The doctrine of the Trinity is not specifically found in the New Testament; it is a *creation of the fourth century*. Some elements in the New Testament seem to point to it, while others point away from it (Richardson, 17). Dean Inge, of St. Paul's Cathedral wrote: "We cannot penetrate the mind of the Absolute." He went on to state there are philosophical problems we cannot solve and realities "which we have to accept, not to account for" (Bowie, 113).

In the New Testament there is no mystery about the oneness of God and no attempt to depict that three are one in any kind of statement. The word "Trinity" is never used and there is no indication that the idea of a Trinity had taken form. The common practice has been to read the New Testament as though ideas of a later age are in it, but this is not the case. *In the days of the apostles the doctrine of the Trinity was yet to be created*. It was believed the substance for it was already there and the occasion for the development of the doctrine was sure to arise. It took three or four centuries before the doctrine of the Trinity

became the accepted belief; and it became a metaphysical doctrine concerning the interior nature and life of God (Clarke, 230–231). In the theological writings, with their fluent rendering of terms that separated men of good will for decades, the disputes became all but incomprehensible (Sloyan, 65). From the very beginning, the formula of "one being, three persons" was open to several interpretations so that even today it veils more problems than it solves (Berkhof, 110).

The Holy Spirit, the third form of the Godhead, was a natural consequence of formulating the doctrine. What was eventually adopted in the fifth century was not the doctrine of the Trinity (which means three, implying a plurality of gods) but of Triunity (God is one while at the same time consisting of three persons). The unity was regarded as made up of the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. Trinity required unity and without it the outcome would have been tritheism (the worship of three distinct gods). This, in turn, would be polytheism. There is difficulty defining and defending the doctrine of Triunity, not so much in the threeness once it has been admitted into thought, but in preserving the unity along with it. At all stages of its development belief has been closer to Triunity than to a Trinity. For example, difficulty lies in keeping a clear and vital sense of unity in the Godhead when one of them exerts influence upon another with regard to the salvation of men. The doctrine of the Trinity is the most abstract of doctrines, viewed as vital even when perplexing. But it has been absent from large areas of Christian thought (Clarke, 332–336). To attempt to define the relations between the Father and the Son or to try to produce exact analyses of the place and function of the Holy Spirit in the Triunity is to set ourselves up as judges of God and to forget that His ways are not our ways (Grant 1966, 101).

Today there is no uniform position on the nature of God. Modern theologians have modified and remodified various concepts concerning the Trinity. What must be realized is that the word "Trinity" does not appear in Christian literature until the beginning of the third century and was not believed for a few more centuries. It was forged during the fourth century. The only real "Scriptural" support for the doctrine is I John 5:7, yet all authorities agree this text is an added interpolation, not found in the original. What the Bible clearly reveals is that there are two in the Godhead as seen in John 1:1 where both the Father and the Son are called God. Fourth century theologians defined the nature of God in broad and sweeping terms only, and as a result the debate has remained unresolved for nearly two thousand years. Acceptance of the doctrine of the Trinity is not regarded as essential for salvation and many view it as a matter of historical importance only. Many churches view God as one but do not specifically define how. People tend to rely on Bible "experts" whose task it is to define, dissect, and analyze to give them the answers.

Eusebius, bishop of Caesarea in Palestine, who was held in great repute as a learned and accomplished theologian, dreaded the intrusion into such matters under discussion regarding the nature of God. He asked who knows how the soul becomes united with the body and how it leaves. What is the essence of angels and the essence of our own souls?

Why, then, do we presume to see ourselves or to search out the perfect knowledge of the essence of the eternal Godhead? Why inquire after the incomprehensible? Eusebius said we must believe on Him in order to be partakers of eternal life. For whosoever believes on Him hath eternal life, not whosoever knows how He was begotten of the Father (Neander, II, 412). Another bishop, Meletius of Armenia, rebuked the speculative pride which motivated the quest to know and determine incomprehensible things. He reminded others of the apostle's word that human knowledge was in part and that perfect knowledge was to be expected only in the life to come (ibid, 458).

Many of the theologians of the second and third centuries thought of the Father and Son in terms of subordination (the Son subordinate to the Father) following the triadic and emanatistic Hellenic philosophy of their day. The consequence was that "being" and "person" are left open to more than one interpretation (Berkhof, 110, 112). The pervading tendency of the nineteenth century to view the concept of God as of secondary importance continues to this day. Some view the doctrine as wholly irrelevant and superfluous while others consider it important for certain limited theological purposes only (Welch, 48).

The Historical Contention

Following the deaths of the original apostles, the Apostolic Fathers came on the scene about the middle of the second century. Their writings show no metaphysical explanations for the new conceptions of God. What caused these new conceptions was the changing environment of the church which contributed heavily to the shaping of faith and theology. The change from the heavenly Father in the Sermon on the Mount to the dogma of the Trinity represents, according to Hatch and Harnack, a degeneration rather than a development, a corruption of the truth from its earliest simplicity (*Encyclopedia of Religion and Ethics*, edited by James Hastings, s.v. "God"). Apologists such as Ignatius of Antioch saw no relevancy in applying the Holy Spirit to the same level as the Father and Son. Justin Martyr did not have any dogmatic view regarding the Spirit and the relations of the three persons are not worked out. Athenagoras mentions a triad early in his writings but Justin's disciple Tatian had no doctrine regarding the Trinity and made only a vague reference to a triad. For many Christians of the time having no knowledge of a triad (Father, Son, and Holy Spirit) was sufficient, and they certainly were not concerned with interrelations (Grant 1966, 69-85).

Defining the Godhead came about from the need to differentiate the humiliated and resurrected Jesus from the God of Jewish tradition, so the fundamental problem of the trinitarian question was the difference between the Father and the Son (Richardson, 18-19). In the early centuries the doctrine concerning God was very flexible and emphases changed from one generation to another (ibid, 135). The symbolism in the New Testament regarding

the Holy Spirit was still in a state of flux and no well-defined doctrine had emerged (ibid, 52).

Around AD 320 a series of doctrinal disputes opened with the Arian controversy, first with the nature and being of the Logos becoming man in Christ and then the relation of this Logos to the Father. The question of the position of the Holy Spirit was of necessity dragged into the discussion. Arius had described the Holy Spirit as the first creature produced by the Son (Kurtz, I, 316–318, 323). Arius, a presbyter of Alexandria, disputed the doctrine taught by his superior, Alexander. Arius held that there were not only three persons in God but they were unequal in glory. The Father alone was supreme and the Son derived His divinity from the Father before the Creation of the world. The Holy Spirit was also divine but inferior to the Father. The end result of this controversy was the Nicene Council held in AD 325 which adopted what was to be considered the standard of orthodoxy. Those who opposed the decision felt that tritheism (three gods) would be the inevitable consequence, but it took three more centuries to decide anything regarding the Holy Spirit. Many modern theologians have explained the Trinity in such a manner that the three Persons have been substituted as three divine powers or attributes. Even today we can conclude that we are still unable to determine in what manner or in what sense the three have the divine nature in common so that there is only one God (McClintock and Strong, s.v. "Trinity").

Arianism was a new Christian doctrine; it was Hellenism tempered with the use of Scripture. Had it gained supremacy in the Greek-speaking world, it would have overthrown Christianity. It was a doctrine that fostered monotheism (belief in only one God) in opposition to polytheism, that there was one supreme God with whom nothing could be compared. It rooted out the worship of many gods. It constructed a descending divine triad by which the cultured were able to recognize the highest wisdom of the philosophers. Its result was that it made the transition from heathenism to Christianity easier for the large numbers of cultured and half-cultured Constantine had brought into the church (Harnack, IV, 41, 43–44).

Arius ignited the fire by teaching that before the Son was begotten, or created, or defined, or founded, He was not. The Arian slogan was: "There was when he was not." The Nicene Council, which soundly defeated Arianism stated: "We anathematize those who say or think or preach that the Son of God is a creature or has come into being or has been made and is not truly begotten, or that there was when he was not" (Grant 1986, 160–161). Arianism taught a Trinity consisting of one "uncreated" and two created beings; and, if creatures are to be worshipped the doctrine was completely illogical and irreligious. It was a popular belief because the masses were not yet "Christianized" and did not understand the implications of their beliefs (*Ency. of Religion and Ethics*, s.v. "God"). The main doctrine was that Christ was a middle being between God and man, a demi-god who preexisted, who created the world, yet was himself created out of nothing. He was the first creature of God and consequently of a different essence and not eternal. There were later variations of this

theme, more recent Socinianism, which taught that Christ, though supernaturally conceived, was a mere man but favored by God with extraordinary revelations, elevated to heaven, deified as a result of His holy life, and intrusted with the government of His church which He founded. It substituted for an incarnate divinity a created and delegated divinity. The Nicene Council declared that Christ is God of God, Light of Light, very God of very God, begotten, not made, being of one substance with His Father (McClintock and Strong, s.v. "Christology").

What the New Testament makes plain is that Jesus revealed the Father, but various distortions of thought during the first three centuries tended to lead men away from this truth. Platonic thought considered God to dwell in the realm of pure idea, a purity which could neither be expressed or involved in the material world. Arius and his followers had entered the struggle at Nicea with a prior conception of what must be the nature of the absolute God (Bowie, 89–99). Paul of Samosata, bishop of Antioch, a sort of Arian forerunner, taught that Christ was deemed worthy of being exalted due to a peculiar union with God by means of illumination from the divine reason (Logos). Though Christ was regarded as a mere man, He was not God by His nature but became so by progressive development. Christ, as such, did not exist before His birth and if He was to be regarded as existing with God before all time, it should be understood as ideal existence in the divine reason (Neander, I, 602–603). According to Arius, Christ was not God but rather the Logos, the first and highest of all created beings, created out of nothing and therefore not co-eternal with the Father. Arius also taught that Christ possessed a will subject to change, but since He had constantly directed it to that which was good He became morally unchangeable. So, God the Father bestowed on Him glory seeing He would deserve it as the reward of His virtue. Arius reasoned that either Christ was a divine, original essence like the Father, in which case there were two Gods, or else He was like all other creatures of God, created, formed, or begotten. Alexander held that the Son was produced out of nothing, thereby excluding the idea of preexisting matter. The Son was produced by the will of the Father before all time as perfect God only-begotten, unchangeable. Arianism was rejected by the church fathers who held that the Son was of the same substance with the Father and all thoughts of His being created or even subordinate to the Father were discarded (Neander, II, 405, 407, 410).

Arius, applying some of the teachings of Origen, said that Christ as "eternally generated" meant the Son was so subordinate to the Father that He could not be regarded as divine in the fullest sense of the word; rather He was a creature as was the Holy Spirit which was even less than the Son. The subordination to the Father denied the full reality of God incarnate in Jesus Christ (Pittenger, 39–40). Arius thought that by making the Son co-eternal with the Father would make two self-existent principles, thereby bringing an end to monotheism (Sloyan, 59).

An examination of many of the writings of this period attempt to systematize earlier triadic doctrines, both on the part of pagans and Christians. These early authors were not

depicting a Trinity but three persons (Grant 1986, 156). By holding to the strict subordination of the Son to the Father, orthodoxy was able to repel the charge that there were two Gods and monotheism was guarded by the Father remaining the First Cause (Harnack, III, 70). The statement "true God from true God" was an affirmation that the old philosophical distinction between the perfect God and the subordinate Demiurge had been rejected (Grant 1986, 162). It would not be completely wrong to suggest that the Christian triad developed from three categories of being; that is, the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, essentially a spiritual experience, came to be personified (ibid, 156).

The orthodox champion Athanasius protested against being compelled to define relations within the Deity which are beyond human comprehension (*Ency. of Religion and Ethics*, s.v. "God"). Athanasius upheld the word *homoousios* which defined the Son as one substance with the Father, thus able to save to the uttermost as God (Pittenger, 41). The Son was held to be eternal (before all ages) and *homoousios* with the Father, having the same substance or essence (Grant 1986, 169). In Greek "substance" is denoted by the word *ousis*, which means that which truly is. Substance was the word used in technical divinity to define the idea of essence or nature. When the Son was said to be of the same substance with the Father, it meant that He was truly and essentially God as the Father is (McClintock and Strong, s.v. "Substance"). Earlier the Western churchman Hosius had already defined the distinction between *ousia* and hypostasis (substance and person) (Harnack, III, 78). The term *homoousios*, while not Scriptural, defined the full and absolute deity of the Son, implying "substantial identity of the Father and Son as the solution to the problem of divine unity" (Grant 1986, 162).

Tertullian, the Latin priest and ecclesiastical writer, had defined the Godhead which almost anticipated the Nicene results a century later. He described the distinctions of the Godhead as persons, which is not our present meaning of the word in the sense of personalities, but rather of forms or manifestations (Walker, 69). He created the formula that later orthodoxy adopted by introducing the ideas of "substance" and "person." He held that the administration of the divine sovereignty of emanated persons cannot endanger the unity of God. The arrangement of the unity when the unity evolves the Trinity from itself does not abolish the unity. As Harnack points out, this is simply the Gnostic doctrine of aeons adopted in its full form. The difference is that Tertullian and Hippolytus limited the usage to the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, while the Gnostics exceeded this number (Harnack, II, 257-258). Tertullian viewed God as alone at the beginning, one person. At the moment He chose to reveal Himself He sent forth from Himself the *word* of creation—the Logos—who came into existence as a real being. Thus, the Father is one person, the Son another. "I and the Father are one" refers to unity of substance, not to singleness of number. For that reason the word "Son" is the most suitable expression for the Logos who emanated (radiated from the Godhead) in this way. Tertullian's entire exposition does not differ essentially from the teaching of contemporaneous and subsequent Greek philosophers (ibid, II, 259). We will see this same idea has not been lost in our day either.

As stated in the previous paragraph, Tertullian reasoned that in the beginning God was alone, though in a certain sense He was never alone for He thought and spoke inwardly. As yet He was the only person. But the moment He chose to reveal Himself and send forth Himself, the Logos came into existence as a real being. He is, therefore, conceived as permanently separate from God but as unity of substance. The Son is an offshoot and subordinate to the Father, a derived existence, the hypostatized (to construe a concept into an existent being) Word of creation (Harnack, II, 258–260). The teaching that there was only one Person who manifested Himself as Father, Son, and Holy Spirit by a single hypostasis is called Monarchianism. By contrast Tritheism is the belief that the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit make up three essences as well as three persons. Trinitarianism, on the other hand holds that there are three persons but one essence. Hypostasis is taken to mean substance, hence person. Thus, the orthodox position holds there is but one nature or essence in God but three hypostases or persons. The term hypostasis led to great dissensions among both Greek and Latin theologians. In the Council of Nicea, hypostasis was defined as essence or substance and it was regarded as heresy to say that Christ was a different hypostasis from His Father. The attempt to define the two natures (divine and human) in one person—Christ—was called hypostatical union. Many fruitless as well as metaphysical questions have been debated among different sects of Christians in order to clarify the divine nature of the Lord, all the result of failing to realize that the union of soul and body of anyone can neither be explained nor comprehended and the more it is reflected upon the more mysterious it becomes (McClintock and Strong, s.v. "Hypostasis"). There have been heated debates between the Greek and Latin churches over the words hypostasis and *persona*. The Latin church concluded that the word hypostasis signified substance or essence and to assert there were three divine hypostases was to say there were three Gods. The Greek church, on the other hand, thought that the word person did not sufficiently guard against the Sabellian notion (that there was only one Divinity and that the Son and Holy Spirit were powers or offices of that one God) of the same individual Being sustaining three relations (ibid, s.v. "Personality").

Monarchians refused to acknowledge any divine being besides one God, the Father; they viewed the Logos as divine energy, wisdom, or reason which illuminates the soul of the righteous. They denied that Christ was divine in every sense, but only in a *certain* sense. To some Monarchians the idea that the Logos could become man distinguished and subordinate to the Father, even though intimately related, was too inadequate a representation of Christ. They held that the names of the Father and Son were two different modes of designating the one God. In His relations to the world He was known as the Father but in His appearance in humanity He was called the Son (Neander, I, 577). Another aspect of Monarchianism was that the Father was the one manifested in the flesh (ibid, 592). Hippolytus said the Monarchians taught that Christ is the Father himself, and it was the Father who was born, suffered, and died. If Christ is God, then He is certainly the Father or He would not be God. If Christ truly suffered then God who is God alone suffered. Monarchians took John's gospel regarding the Logos to be an allegory and that He who was

called Father and Son was one and the same, not one proceeding from the other, but He himself from himself. The one God by being born man, appeared as Son. Needless to say Monarchians accused Hippolytus of believing in two Gods (Harnack, III, 62–64, 68).

Another Monarchian, Sabellius of Ptolemais in Pentapolis, Africa, held that the Father, Logos, and Holy Spirit were designations of three different phases under which the divine essence reveals itself. The Father remains the same but evolves Himself in the Son and the Spirit. The personality of Christ was no more than a transitory appearance who returned to His original being into oneness with the Father and as such the personal existence was annihilated (Neander, I, 595, 598). In the dispute with the Monarchians, the doctrine concerning the Holy Spirit was not considered. Sabellius was the first to incorporate the notion of the Holy Spirit into his system. Previous to his time (c. AD 215) the Holy Spirit was conceived as simply the agency and influence of God (ibid, 610). But Sabellius held that the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit are all one and the same, each a character or form of manifestation of the one God who revealed Himself in the character of creator as Father, the redeemer as the Son, and now as the Holy Spirit (Walker, 74). Even Alexander of Alexandria was influenced by this line of reasoning. In his argument with Arius, he advanced the idea that the Son is the inner reasoning and power of the Father himself, thereby approaching Sabellianism (Harnack, IV, 23). Epiphanius remarked that the Sabellians derived their entire heresy from certain Apocrypha, especially the so-called Gospel of the Egyptians (ibid, III, 86).

Another form of Monarchianism was Modalism. It was the concept that the Father, Son, and later the Spirit, were modes in which God manifested Himself. Thus, when the Father allows Himself to be born and suffer, He is the Son. Other forms of Modalism thought in terms of "economies" or "dispensations"; that is, creation, redemption, and inspiration were applied to the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit respectively. In this case Modalism manifested itself in differing modes of revelation (Pittenger, 38–39).

Anyone who is familiar with the doctrine of the Trinity is aware of Cappadocian Theology. Cappadocian Theology refers to the contributions made to theology by the three church fathers—Basil of Caesarea, Gregory of Nazianzus, and his brother Gregory of Nyssa. They were the successors of Athanasius and were responsible for finalizing the victory over Arianism in the East. As students of Origen, and following the pattern of the best philosophical thought of the time for use in Christian theology, they created a league between Faith and Science in the doctrine of the Trinity. They used the concepts derived from Plato and Aristotle. Their theology reflected the best of non-Christian (pagan) thought which had been profoundly influenced by Neo-Platonism. The end result was that the doctrine of the Trinity was a compromise between Judaism and Hellenism. Gregory of Nyssa adamantly held to the unity of the Godhead by speculation and the influence of Origen. Ambrose transported Cappadocian Theology to the West which was a strong influence later on Augustine (*Ency. of Religion and Ethics*, s.v. "Cappadocian Theology"). The Cappadocian

theologians taught that the Christian idea of God was the true average between Greek and Jewish thought. They boldly emphasized the plurality of hypostases as a phase of truth preserved in Greek polytheism, but the worship of many Gods was dispelled by the doctrine of divine unity which set aside the opinion of divine plurality (Harnack, III, 142–143, fn).

The Cappadocian Fathers taught that the Son was one substance with the Father as was also the Holy Spirit. And they insisted that the Holy Spirit was fully divine. Thus, within the unity of the Godhead there were three particulars or differentiations, each fully divine and mutually indwelling. They applied *ousia* (substance or essence) to the unity of the Godhead. They took hypostasis to apply to the person, but how we understand person today is not what was meant in that day. Hypostasis was viewed as an objective, concrete, enduring reality, the result being: The Father, Son, and Holy Spirit meant hypostasis. Hypostasis has been limited to the differentiations of the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit while *ousia* has been applied only to the God-ness of deity (Pittenger, 42).

At the Council of Nicea the question to be resolved was how to conceive the relationship between God and Christ, who had been man. The two major problems were those of God's inner nature and the incarnation. Theodotus of Byzantium insisted Christ was only a man on whom the Holy Spirit had descended at His baptism. Arius, who held a similar view, fortified his argument by fear lest the glory of God should seem to be diminished if it were affirmed that the Word made flesh was equal to the Father. The argument came down to two words—*homoousia* and *homoiousios*, that is, "like substance" or "equality of attributes." Athanasius rejected *homoiousios* because it meant that there would be aspects in which Christ would not be like the Father. Athanasius insisted on *homoousia* because it meant Christ was one substance with the Father. His viewpoint prevailed, but divisions have remained in the church for centuries (Bowie, 81–84). The Arian controversy led to the affirmation that while in the Godhead there is but one essence or substance, in that unity there are three eternal modes of existence, now called hypostases (*Ency. of Religion and Ethics*, s.v. "God").

What the Nicene Council did was to maintain that the concept of trinitarian theology was nonrational, that is, not irrational but beyond reason. The term Logos was abandoned because metaphors of personal relationships (i.e., Father and Son) were preferred over linguistic analysis (i.e., Word and Reason, Thought). Selected complexities of both Scripture and Tradition prevailed (Grant 1986, 163). In reality the theological distinction between terms was purely arbitrary and the Emperor sided with the orthodox position. For the most part society which was still essentially heathen sided with the anti-Nicenes. The catchwords of the doctrinal formula were unintelligible to the laity and even to most of the bishops. That the majority of the bishops at the Council of Nicea were uneducated goes without question. The general acceptance of the formula by the bishops is understood only if one presupposes that the dispute was above the heads of the majority. The contention itself was so sharp that even the common people began to take sides and the dispute was carried on in such a base

manner that even the Jews scoffed at it in the theaters and turned the most sacred part of the doctrine into ridicule (Harnack, IV, 56 fn, 59–61, 51, 10–11).

Did the Council of Nicea face the vital religious issues or were they dealing with philosophical abstractions? Did metaphysics triumph over ethics or scholastic terms over moral realities? The issue at stake was the attempt to separate Christ from God and relegate Him to the status of a mediator and a partial revelation of what God is only. According to Bowie, the living conviction of the Council was stronger than its philosophical complexities (Bowie, 85). The Nicene Creed and the various creeds that followed it were intended to test the orthodoxy of the bishops, not the simpler faith of those being baptized (Grant 1986, 169). One of the major results of the Nicene Creed was from that time on Dogmatics (the authoritarian assertion of principles) was divorced from clear thinking and from concepts that were defensible. Dogmatics became anti-rational. The penchant for mysteries gave a doctrine that seemed to be a true mystery which was the opposite of that which was clear in profane circles. The educated laity in the East viewed the orthodox formula as an unexplainable mystery rather than an expression of their faith. The Nicene Creed was a victory of the priest over the faith of the Christian people. The Logos doctrine itself had become unintelligible to those who were not theologians. The thought that Christianity is the revelation of something incomprehensible became the accepted notion. It was the duty of the Christian people merely to believe. The worship of Christ became meaningless and in His place the bones of martyrs became living saints and veneration became image worship, the adulation of angels and martyrs, crosses and amulets, and the magical worship of the Mass (Harnack, IV, 49 fn, 106–107).

The doctrine of the Trinity is not a product of the earliest Christian period; it was not expressed until the end of the second century. In its development Christians made use of the methods already worked out by Platonists and Pythagoreans for explaining their own philosophical theology. Novatian of Rome wrote one of the early treatises dealing specifically with the Trinity and at that time affirmed the existence of two Gods (Grant 1986, 158, 160).

Following the Council of Nicea, it was clear that the personality of the Holy Spirit, as well as its relationship to the Father and the Son, had not yet been determined. The definition given the Holy Spirit at the Council was so incomplete that five hundred years later the schism that rent the Eastern and Western churches is found in this doctrinal basis (Kurtz, 325). It can be seen that around AD 170–180 theological ideas about the Spirit had not been carefully worked out and by the end of the fourth century theological debates included the Spirit as well as the Son. This theological development was the attempt to rationalize spiritual phenomena (Grant 1986, 145, 149).

Augustine represents the last stage in the formulation of the doctrine of the Trinity. He taught that the Spirit proceeds from both the Father and the Son, co-equally, thereby

completely destroying what remained of subordination. He preserved theoretically the tradition of three Persons in one substance but never overcame the contradictions which were implied in his attempt to combine philosophic and religious viewpoints. He developed the doctrine of God as triune for the Western church by teaching that the differentiations are relations between Father, Son, and Holy Spirit so that the whole Godhead is involved and active in all that God does (Pittenger, 41-42). The earlier doctrine was that the Spirit was subordinate to the Son as the Son was to the Father. The later position was that both the Son and the Spirit were dependent upon the Father, one generated, the other proceeding. Later, the Western church held to the equality of the three Persons, insisting that the Spirit proceeded from the Son as well as the Father. The Protestant Reformers accepted the doctrine of the Trinity as it was formulated in the Creeds (Garvie, 368). Harnack said that Augustine's speculations attempted to construe the most immanent (existing in the consciousness or mind and not in the extra-mental world) Trinities and to sublimate the Trinity into a unity, thus losing itself in paradoxical distinctions and speculations which are not able to give a clear expression to its new and valuable thought. Harnack said that the doctrine of the Trinity can scarcely be said to promote piety anywhere or anytime; rather speculations have drawn men's minds off from the living realities of the historical Jesus. The doctrine of the Trinity has never been interwoven with religious thought and experience in the actual life of Christendom. In addition, no ecumenical formulation of the Christian conception of God was ever made (*Ency. of Religion and Ethics*, s.v. "God").

Development of Trinitarianism

The most decisive factor in bringing about the revolution of religious and moral convictions, as well as moods, was *philosophy*. Several elements of Neoplatonic philosophy, foreshadowed by Philo, are clearly seen in the second century. Religious fancy was legitimized in the province of philosophy. Myth was not only tolerated but its most precious element was the meaning introduced into it. In Philo's philosophy a place was provided for a mythology which was regarded as revelation. The intellectualism of Greek ethics was surmounted—a union between the thoughts of reason on the one hand and the belief of revelation and mysticism on the other. The allegorical method of interpreting myths, a Stoic practice, entered into Neoplatonism. To Neoplatonists the proper material and sure foundation of philosophy was *allegory*. Philo's religion was a mixture of Stoic, Platonic, Neopythagorean, and Old Testament aphorisms (terse statements of a principle), all seen in Neoplatonism (Harnack, I, 123, 111-112, 341, 346). The cradle of Neoplatonism was the great manufacturing city of Alexandria (*Ency. of Religion and Ethics*, s.v. "Neo-Platonism").

The doctrine of the Logos has had a decisive and far-reaching influence upon speculative and Christian thought. The Greek word Logos has been used to express the nature and mode of God's revelation. In classical Greek Logos meant "reason" and "word." Bible usage restricts its meaning to "word." In pre-Christian times its speculation is

associated with Heraclitus, Plato, and the Stoics. The Stoics conceived Logos to mean the primitive power, the never-resting, all pervading fire, the eternal activity of divine world-power which contained within itself the conditions and processes of all things—the Logos or God, if you will (*International Standard Bible Encyclopedia*, s.v. "Logos"). The word Logos permitted varying kinds of explanations. When the Stoics applied it to "reason" they meant that one knew God by this means. The Epicureans took the word to mean "report" or "hearsay" (Grant 1986, 77). There was a parallel movement in Hebrew thought. In Greek thought the doctrine was substantially a doctrine of Reason, but in Jewish thought it was conceived as the outward expression or word. God made His will known by spoken utterances. Revelation was, therefore, called the Word of the Lord. The Logos was the mediating agent or personal organ of the Divine Being. In Greek thought the Logos was viewed as a rational principle or impersonal energy by means of which the world was fashioned and ordered. These two conceptions—Greek and Hebrew thought—were combined in Philo's thought. The result was an entirely new idea of God. Philo separated divine energy from its worldly manifestation and introduced subordinate powers. The Word, according to Philo, was the rational order manifested in the visible world. To him, the Logos was the instrument intermediate between God and man, while God was the Cause. The Logos was the eldest or firstborn Son of God (the second God), the intermediary between God and man. His Jewish background made him view the Logos as personal while his Greek culture tended to cause him to view the Logos as impersonal. What Philo did was set the stage for the acceptance of the Logos doctrine by the Alexandrian theologians. The Logos of the Apostle John is a deliberate protest against the misleading philosophy of Greece (*International Standard Bible Ency.*, s.v. "Logos").

Logos was a common term in ancient philosophy. It represented immanent reason (existing in consciousness or mind but not in an extra-mental world). It was natural for the Greeks to view the world as a product of reason; therefore, reason was the ruling principle in the world. Heraclitus taught that the Logos is not above this world or prior to it, but in the world and inseparable from it. Man's soul was a part of it. In Judaism God was placed at a remote distance and Philo was able to bridge the gap between Judaism and Greek philosophy (*Encyclopedia Britannica*, 11th edition, s.v. "Logos"). According to Marcellus of Ancyra, the Logos is the indwelling power in God which manifested itself in the creation of the world for the first time to become *personal* with the view of saving and perfecting the human race. Thus, the Logos is the *unbegotten* reason of God indwelling in God from all eternity and inseparable from Him. It first becomes a personal manifestation distinct from God in the incarnation through which the Logos as the image of the invisible God becomes visible. In Christ the Logos has become a person. After His work was completed the Son subordinated Himself to God in such a way that God is again all in all and the hypostatic form of the Logos ceased (Harnack, IV, 65–66). The Logos doctrine came into Christianity from a philosophical background. By it, it was possible to link the Christian message with the whole religious movement of the time, thereby appealing to the Greek mind (Garvie, 364–365). Another idea was proposed by Zephyrine. He thought that God is in Himself an

indivisible spirit which fills all things and as the Logos He is both the Father and the Son. He who was manifest in the man was the Son, but the Spirit that entered Him was the Father. In the crucifixion the Father suffered in sympathy with the Son, but the Father himself did not suffer (Harnack, III, 68).

The Logos doctrine legitimized speculation, that is, Neoplatonic philosophy within the creed of the church. It was a system entwined with the metaphysics of Plato and the Stoics. The Logos Christology within the rule of faith set up a mystery which remained unintelligible to the great mass of Christians who now became dependent upon the theologians to understand, interpret, and apply the creed. It fell under the authority of the church and the clergy alone appeared to be the possessors of an independent faith and knowledge, particularly from the third and fourth centuries on. In the East especially, it became a theology of "revealed faith" capable of being represented and expounded by "teachers." The reason Christianity now began to prevail was because it concluded an alliance with the intellectual potentate which had already swayed the hearts and minds of the best men—the philosophic-religious ethics of the age. This philosophic Christology arose around the outside edge of the church and gradually moved to the center (Harnack, III, 2–5).

The Alexandrian school of catechists was of inestimable importance in transforming heathenism into Christianity and in transforming Greek philosophy into ecclesiastical philosophy. In the third century the catechists overthrew polytheism while at the same time preserving everything of value in Greek science and culture. The whole of Greek science was taught in the Alexandrian school and was made to serve the purpose of the Christian apologists. Under Clement of Alexandria the whole of Hellenic civilization was placed under the protection of the church and legitimized. Origen, who was probably the greatest teacher of the Alexandrian school, was steeped in Neoplatonism and Gnosticism. In his view the speculative conception of ecclesiastical Christianity was the only true and right one. He employed Stoic and Platonic systems of ethics as an instrument for the gradual realization of this ideal. Also Greek cosmological speculation formed the complicated substructure of his religious system of morals (Harnack, II, 319, 323, 328, 334–335, 339–340). Neoplatonic philosophy fostered the abstract conception of God. It exercised great influence on the Christian mode of thought and by that means upon the institutions of the church. The history of Christian dogma involves the absorption of Greek philosophy as well as the whole of Greek culture, including the Grammar, Rhetoric, the learned Profession, the Schools, the Exegesis, and the Homilies which passed over into the church. The church thus exhibited the Philosophy, the Ethic, the speculative Theology, and the Mysteries of the Greeks (*ibid*, I, 123, 127–128).

Ammonius Saccas, who had been born a Christian but lapsed into heathenism, founded the Neoplatonic school in Alexandria. One of his most important disciples was Origen. Proclus was another great scholastic of Neoplatonism (AD 411–484). His teaching gave the legacy of Hellenism to the church which extended into the Middle Ages and was

important for one thousand years. In the beginning of the sixth century Augustine borrowed the best from Platonism and introduced it into the dogmatics of the church. Neoplatonism had a very great influence upon the church in the East from the fourth century on. The views between Christian writers and Neoplatonists were so similar that if in any writing various documents were referred to, it was often doubtful whether it was composed by a Christian or a Neoplatonist. Today the mystical and pietistic devotion, even of the Protestant church, goes back to Neoplatonic sources (Harnack, I, 348, 357, 359, 361).

Albinus, who taught Platonism around the middle of the second century, believed that the mind was better than the soul and that the transcendent cause of Mind is the First God. This First God to him was eternal, ineffable, self-sufficient, and always perfect. He fills everything with himself, raising up the soul of the universe and turning it toward himself as being the cause of its Mind. The Mind, arranged by the Father, in turn, arranges the whole of nature in this world (Grant 1986, 79–80). Albinus wrote that the *Nous* (Mind) is not cut off from the substantiality of God but is deployed from this source like the light from the sun. Christian apologists used this kind of imagery when speaking of the generation of the Son from the Father, or the Logos from God. Clement of Alexandria identified the supreme God as Mind. According to him, the Mind God thinks the ideas. So we see that at every turn Christian Alexandria was closely related to pagan thought (ibid, 80, 91).

Another imminent teacher was Porphyry. There was very little difference between him and his Christian contemporaries in their general view of life and duty. Porphyry taught that God is Spirit; his idea of timelessness and incorporeal existence was accepted by the church, but not immediately. Even Augustine believed before his conversion that the church taught God has a body. It was through Augustine that Neoplatonism came into Christian theology (*Ency. of Religion and Ethics*, s.v. "Neo-Platonism"). Plotinus, another teacher of renown, taught that the living forces of the deity permeate all nature. The same spirit which slumbers in the stone and dreams in the flower awakes in the human soul. Plotinus also taught that the names of gods should serve as an allegorical presentment of this system. So influential was the school of Plotinus that it absorbed all the other systems (ibid, 309, 316, 311, 317). Pythagoreans taught that God is both immanent and transcendent. Numenius of Apamea taught that the Demiurge had created the world but there was a god above the Demiurge. He regarded the world as the third god, so, in effect he taught a trinity of three unequal persons (ibid, 309).

Greek philosophy more than anything else contributed to the doctrine of the Trinity. The influence of the Greek schools was what brought the several parts of trinitarianism forward by degrees in Christian writings against the heretics. The main points of Greek philosophy which assisted in the formation of trinitarianism were: 1) The doctrine of pre-existence of souls in its application to Jesus Christ; 2) the doctrine of the Second Divine Principle called Mind or Reason as different from the Supreme Deity; and 3) the Third Divine Principle or the doctrine of the World Soul. The first principle needs no explanation.

The second one satisfied the philosophers by John's reference to the "Word" described in John 1. The third principle (the World Soul) was applied because of the belief there was a mundane soul inhabiting the world and in addition there was a super-mundane soul which was entirely of spiritual origin. Thus, the Holy Spirit was accorded the idea of the Third Principle. The similarity between this Christian view and the heathen schools is striking. These three principles were sometimes called three Divine Hypostases in the Greek schools and taken together were regarded as one divinity. In effect, the church fathers became supporters of a Trinity of divine substances, causes, or principles in the Godhead, interpreting their admired Plato. They gave trinitarianism a very high heathen origin which was part of an ancient tradition (Forrest, 74–80). Paganism and Christianity alike were based on foundations of religious faith and experience, as well as logical or illogical speculations of the learned minority (Grant 1986, 111).

In the second century the leading advocates of triadic doctrine were the Neopythagoreans and the Middle Platonists. Plato regarded the soul of the universe like a cross in the universe. Plato, and Justin later, said the world soul was the Logos and Plato placed it right behind the first God. Also, Plato ascribed the third place to the Spirit. Numenius, the most prominent Platonist and Pythagorean in the second century, influenced both Neoplatonism and Christianity (Grant 1986, 152–153). Philosophical theology was no Christian invention and the doctrine of the Trinity was to some extent anticipated in Platonic circles. The rise of Christian theology took place under strong pressure from the leading philosophies of the time. *The reality of the pagan environment cannot be neglected* (ibid, 169–170). By the fourth century Christian doctrine was heavily influenced by the culture of the time. The doctrine of the Trinity was the result of the religious imagery of the time; *triune deities were a part of that imagery*.

Even though the influence has been neglected or even denied, Christian debates were deeply influenced by those who had been schooled in rhetoric and philosophy. Even Origen does not quote the philosophers who so greatly influenced him. Logical implications of faith were developed on the basis of the leading philosophies of the time, often in ways similar to other religions. The doctrine of the Trinity was not foreign to philosophical or rhetorical statements made by pagans about their pagan gods (Grant 1986, 175). Neither Philo's philosophy of religion nor his mode of thought or the thought from which it originated had any appreciable effect on first generation Christians. Philo's philosophy did not become influential among Christian teachers until after the beginning of the second century and only later did it obtain significance as a standard of Christian theology. Haggadic rules of exposition used by the Jews and hermeneutic principles of the Stoics were united in Alexandria. The literal sense of the Scriptures was excluded and the allegorical sense was elevated above the literal. Ascertaining the "spiritual meaning" beside the literal, partly by excluding the literal sense, became the watchword for "scientific theology." Philo was the master of this method (Harnack, I, 113–114, 116). Origen believed the Scriptures should be understood in three ways: 1) the historical or fleshly sense, 2) the psychic or moral sense, and

3) the pneumatic or spiritual sense which is understood by allegory (ibid, II, 347-348). As the church passed from Jewish influence to Greek, its theology was more and more affected by the intellectual influences of that environment. The theology of the church attached itself increasingly to foreign concepts (Garvie, 363).

Plato held to three principles. One was the Supreme God called *Pater*; the second was divine understanding which he called *Nous*, *Soter*, or *Sophia*; and the third was the world soul (McClintock and Strong, s.v. "Trinity, Heathen Notions of"). Triads of divinities occur in nearly all polytheistic religions. It should be no more than anticipated that one or another of these triads should now and again be pointed to as the replica or original of the Christian doctrine of the Trinity. The *International Standard Bible Encyclopedia* goes on to justify the Trinity, and says the Trinity embodies much more than the notion of "threeness" and beyond that there is nothing else in common with the triads (s.v. "Trinity"). The ancient Babylonians, just as modern people, recognized in words the unity of the Godhead, and while they worshipped countless minor deities they distinctly acknowledged the One infinite and Almighty Creator, supreme over all. In the Babylonian unity of that One God there were three persons and the Babylonians employed the equilateral triangle. As modern Christendom occasionally depicts an image of the Triune God with three heads on one body, the Babylonians did something of the same (Hislop, 14, 16-17). Other examples of a triune God are found in India where the supreme divinity is represented with three heads in one body, with a name meaning "One God, three forms." In Japan, Buddhists worship their great Buddha with three heads in the very same form. The recognition of a Trinity was universal in all ancient nations of the world (ibid, 17-18).

The Holy Spirit as a third person could originate only on Gentile soil. It was only after this form (originally depicted as a feminine being) that in Judaeo-Christian circles the Greek *pneuma* came to be regarded as a person, although it became masculine rather than feminine. A Jewish reply to a Catholic priest who said that the Trinity was an exceeding deep mystery which even the angels and the princes of heaven could not comprehend, was that it was evident that a person does not believe what he does not know; therefore, the angels do not believe in the Trinity. Cabalistic Jews speculated that the Father, Son, and Spirit evolved into a new Trinity and this became dangerous to Judaism. Christians found in the Zohar, a Cabbalistic book, a confirmation of Christianity especially of the dogma of the Trinity (*The Jewish Encyclopedia*, s.v. "Trinity").

The stages of the ecclesiastical history of dogma, from the middle of the first century to the middle of the fifth century, duplicate the stages of history of ancient religion during the same period (Harnack, I, 126-127). In the New Testament there is no reflective consciousness of the metaphysical nature of God and the New Testament does not contain the technical language of later doctrine. Some theologians have concluded that all post-Biblical trinitarian doctrine is therefore arbitrary. Dogmatic development took place gradually against the background of Stoic and Neoplatonic philosophy. Following the

immediate period of the New Testament apostles, the Apostolic Fathers made no attempt to work out the God-Christ relationship with respect to His being. Technical terms, theological theories, and official statements now function as a "set of controls" over the correct way to conceive of God's relatedness as Father, Son, and Spirit as well as God's relatedness to creation as Father, Son, and Spirit. Doctrinal statements are inherently limited and while they address specific points of controversy, they leave other questions unsettled while at the same time creating new problems. Trinitarian doctrine falls short of expressing the full "breadth and length and height and depth" of God's glory, wisdom, and love. It is a partial and fragmentary exegesis of what has been revealed. To speak of God as three persons has always been problematic and remains so today (*Encyclopedia of Religion*, s.v. "Trinity").

A look at any *Catholic Encyclopedia* will tell you that the Trinity is a term employed to signify the central doctrine of the Christian religion—the truth that there is a unity of the Godhead in three persons, the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. These three are truly distinct from one another. According to the Athanasian Creed, "The Father is God, the Son is God, and the Holy Spirit is God, and yet there are not three Gods, but one God." So, according to the doctrine of the Trinity, there is only one true God, but in the unity of the Godhead there are three co-eternal and co-equal Persons, the same in substance but distinct in subsistence. The term "Trinity" is not a Biblical term and Bible language is not being used when it is defined. It is not found in any formulated definition in the Scripture, only in fragmentary illusions. It is regarded as a purely revealed doctrine embodying a truth that is indiscoverable by natural reason. Since it is indiscoverable by reason, it is incapable of proof by reason, so there is nothing that can help us comprehend God (*International Standard Bible Ency.*, s.v. "Trinity").

Trinitarians are quick to point out that the absence of explicit statements regarding the Trinity is not a prohibition for using what has been revealed as grounds for further insight. Since it is a doctrine of revelation alone and arrived at by induction of the totality of Scriptural evidence, it is not stated in the Bible in so many words. Yet it is clearly witnessed to. No finite mind can ever comprehend fully the mystery of the Godhead (*Heresies Exposed*, 203). The doctrine of the Trinity appeared to be the solution of accepting Christ as divine without embracing polytheism, yet it is readily admitted that the doctrine is above reason; it is an object of faith.

Various texts tell us that God's nature is incomprehensible. One example is Job 11:7–8, "Canst thou by searching find out God? canst thou find out the Almighty unto perfection? It is as high as heaven; what canst thou do? deeper than hell; what canst thou know?" In spite of this text, and others, some trinitarians are not deterred from attempting to describe God's nature, relying upon second, third, and fourth century pagan philosophers and Christian theologians who had been highly tainted by Greek thought. What is clear from the Old Testament is that there is a duality of Gods. As for the doctrine of the Trinity, it is built upon assumptions and allusions based on pagan thought. Explanations for the unity of

the Trinity include the notion that each inter-personality is absolutely inseparable from the other two and has inter-consciousness or other-consciousness rather than self-consciousness. The problem is and always has been, how three persons can exist in one Being? The doctrine of the Trinity has been defined as dogma and must be believed whether one understands it or not, a truth regarded as revealed—that which God has imparted to man. What the Cappadocians really meant was that the three hypostases shared an identity of essence; they were not three Gods with a common divinity but one shared with three modes of being (Richardson, 65). The Athanasian Creed, which advocated the procession of the Holy Spirit from the Father and Son was accepted in the West because it was decidedly anti-Arian. The reason was that if the Spirit proceeded from both the Father and the Son, then the Son was not inferior to the Father as Arianism argued (*Conflicts About the Holy Spirit*, 17). The Athanasian Creed marked the full development of the doctrine in the West, and it became a mystery of faith which had to be accepted on the authority of the church as a condition for salvation (Garvie, 367).

Trinitarian Arguments

Many trinitarians today regard the word "Trinity" as an unfortunate choice for a word since it is incorrect, leading to much confusion. They tell us that when Christians use the word Trinity they unconsciously communicate the concept of polytheism. The term triunity should be used because it conveys the idea that God is one, while at the same time denoting three persons. Acceptance of the word triunity does not imply a belief in a God who occupies three distinct bodies. "Person" is defined as one who has intellect, emotions, and will. Therefore, a person may or may not inhabit a body. Humans are persons and vacating a body of flesh does not make them less so, trinitarians say. Angels are spirit beings, unembodied but possessing attributes of personality. According to them, the Bible emphatically teaches that God in triunity consists of three persons existing in one substance. While it is beyond our ability to comprehend this phenomenon fully, it is nevertheless the Bible position (Rosenthal, Intro.). Trinitarians insist that the word "person" has been a fundamental factor in the widespread suspicion of the doctrine, that it must be questioned whether there is even a need for maintaining continuity with the tradition in order to justify the use of this term. A most useful term would be "modes of being" or "modes of existence." "Mode of being" would be God's way or manner of existing as God. When we affirm the personality of God, trinitarians say, we are not affirming that His personality is threefold in a way in which the human personality is not (Welch, 274, 279–280).

Where the Holy Spirit fits into the picture has long been regarded as one of the most difficult aspects of the doctrine. Not until the time of Augustine (AD 354–430) was there a thorough attempt to find a fitting reason for the existence of the Spirit as the third term of the Godhead. Augustine was the first to give classic expression for the distinctive nature of the Spirit and its place in the Trinity. The place of the Spirit in the Godhead was long in

developing and the solution was finally reached by utilizing arbitrary distinctions which were not found in the Bible (Richardson, 44–45). Trinitarians tell us that strictly speaking, all Christians explicitly or implicitly accept a version of the Trinity. They tell us that the denial of the Trinity, after seeing various texts that show a threesome, is the result of misguided emotions, prejudice, or misunderstanding. And that a study of the Hebrew Scriptures opens up a much clearer understanding of God as a Trinity of being.

Deuteronomy 6:4 states: "Hear, O Israel: the Lord our God is one Lord." For unitarians (those who believe in one God and deny the divinity of Christ) this text appears to have silenced the argument that Christ is God. Trinitarians correctly state that the Hebrew word for "one" in this text is *echad*, a compound-unity word denoting one but at the same time made up of several entities. Notice for example, Genesis 1:5; 2:24, Numbers 13:23, and Jeremiah 32:38–39. All these texts contain *echad*. In Genesis 1:5 both the evening and morning make up one day, so two parts make up one. Genesis 2:24, both Adam and Eve make up one flesh. Numbers 13:23, one cluster of grapes contained many individual grapes. Jeremiah 32:38–39, all the people have one heart. By contrast, the word *yachid*, used in Genesis 22:2, signifies absolute oneness and is translated "only." Compare Proverbs 4:3, Psalm 22:20, Judges 11:34, Jeremiah 6:26, Amos 8:10, Zechariah 12:10 for the same usage. What Deuteronomy 6:4 demonstrates is that the word *echad* denotes God as plurality. Look at *elohim* (translated God). All authorities agree that the word *elohim* is plural, yet is often accompanied by a singular verb, and trinitarians are quick to point this out. Exodus 20:2 should read, "I am the Lord thy Gods, which have brought thee out of the land of Egypt, out of the house of bondage." Why does God consistently select the plural form in describing His unity, they ask? Genesis 1:26–27 states, "And God said, Let us make man in our image, after our likeness: . . . So God created man in his own image, in the image of God created he him; male and female created he them." Genesis 3:22 and 11:7 in like manner also indicate the plurality of the Godhead.

Trinitarians tell us the Father and the Son are mentioned in Proverbs 30:4, as well as in Psalm 2:2. The Father and the Holy Spirit are mentioned in Isaiah 63:8–16. David alludes to the Holy Spirit in Psalm 51:11 and it is mentioned in Zechariah 7:8–13 and Genesis 1:2. Trinitarians insist these texts all demonstrate the plurality of God and that the Holy Spirit is not merely an emanation from God but rather one that bears the attributes of responsibility. Psalm 45:6–7; 110:1, Genesis 18:1; 19:24 add to this argument by demonstrating plurality. But, trinitarians say, certainly the Bible does not teach polytheism; to accuse Christians of believing in three Gods is a baseless assertion. Without an understanding of triunity, one would be at a loss to explain much of the Old Testament teaching (Rosenthal, 33–36, 56). According to trinitarians, Isaiah 48:12,16 is further proof that there are three persons in the Godhead. This text reads, "Hearken unto me, O Jacob and Israel, my called; I am he; I am the first, I also am the last . . . Come ye near unto me, hear ye this; I have not spoken in secret from the beginning; from the time that it was, there am I: and now the Lord God, and his spirit, hath sent me." In verse twelve God is the speaker. In verse sixteen God is still

speaking. The "me" at the end of verse sixteen refers back to the speaker in verses twelve and sixteen. The "he" is sent by His Lord God and His Spirit. The same thing is seen in Isaiah 61:1 and 11:1-2. Trinitarians say that the Trinity is foreshadowed in certain passages which directly imply a sort of plurality in God, and its essential elements are explicitly taught in the New Testament. What the church councils did, trinitarians say, was to give technical precision to the faith clearly expressed in the Scripture. For the present, however, it may be noted that the Trinity may be referred to as "absolute mystery, wholly indemonstrable, neither discovered nor formulated by reason" (Welch, 103,104).

Trinitarian Cyril Richardson says the New Testament relates the dominant symbols of the Godhead—the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, and it is from this "fact" that trinitarian theology has arisen (Richardson, 28). There are twenty-five places where the Holy Spirit is referred to by a pronoun (Davies, 217). Proof of the personality of the Holy Spirit is supposedly found in the following texts: Genesis 1:2; 6:3, Job 33:4, John 15:26; 16:13, Acts 15:28, Revelation 22:17. An examination of these texts makes it obvious one would have to read them with a pre-fixed notion of personality to make them fit. Please write for our article entitled, *What Is the Holy Spirit?*, for a fuller explanation. Trinitarians also tell us there are nine different actions applied to the Holy Spirit which must relate to personality. These are "abides, dwells, teaches, testifies, guides, speaks, hears, shows, reproves, glorifies." There are also nine distinct gifts of the Holy Spirit. These are: "wisdom, knowledge, faith, gifts of healing, working of miracles, prophecy, discerning of spirits, tongues, interpretations of tongues." In I Corinthians 12:6-7, trinitarians say, the Holy Spirit is distinguished from both Christ and the Father. See also Ephesians 2:18, I Peter 1:2, Acts 5:32. Direct evidence to "support" the deity of the Holy Spirit can be seen in Acts 5:3-4 where the Spirit is called God. Ananias could not have lied to a quality or attribute but to a person. I Corinthians 3:16-17; 6:16,19 all "prove" the Holy Spirit is God. John 3:5-6 equates the sons of God born of the Spirit with John 1:13 which says they are born of God, thus equating the Spirit with God.

Trinitarians add, Hebrews 9:8 "the Holy Spirit thus signifying," shows the Holy Spirit to be the author of the entire Mosaic ritual. He must therefore be a person for none but a person can be the author. Text proofs for three divine persons include Luke 3:21-22; 4:18, John 16:13, Acts 20:27-28, Romans 8:9, I Corinthians 12:3-6, Ephesians 2:18-22; 4:4-6, I Peter 1:2 and further direct evidence includes Numbers 6:23-26, Matthew 28:19, II Corinthians 13:14 (Davies, 195-226, 223-233). Again, one would have to have a pre-fixed notion of personality and threesome to come to the conclusions Davies does. But as he says, "Accept the personality of the Holy Spirit and the text becomes clear" (ibid, 200).

Trinitarians correctly point out a number of texts which show the procession of the Holy Spirit from both the Father and the Son. These texts include: Matthew 10:20, John 14:26; 15:26, Romans 8:9, I Corinthians 2:11-12, Galatians 4:6, Philippians 1:11, I Peter 1:11. But trinitarians do admit that we know no more of the procession of the Holy Spirit

than we do about the generation of the Son. We know nothing of either beyond the affirmation of the facts (Davies, 194–195).

Trinitarians see a threesome in the unity of God in the most unusual places. For example when the Spirit descended upon Jesus in the form of a dove and the voice spoke from heaven, they see a threefold revelation from God in the form of Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. The same conclusion is drawn from the heavenly announcement concerning Immanuel. There is seen the Father in heaven, Jesus in Mary's womb, and the influence of the Holy Spirit. The trinitarian answer to the assertion that the Holy Spirit is said to be "poured out," "shed forth," "shed abroad," "fall," "come down" is that *sometimes* the Spirit is intended to mean gifts and graces from God. Furthermore, they do admit that there are not very many Scriptures which positively do show and unanswerably establish the personality of the Holy Spirit (Davies, 215). The trinitarian answer to the argument that *pneuma* (Spirit) is neuter, which would not be the case of this were a person, is that deity is without sex and does not exist under such limitations (ibid, 215–216). Davies summarizes: The mode of the Spirit's subsistence in the Trinity proves his personality; many passages are wholly unintelligible and even absurd unless the Spirit is a person. Personification of any kind in some passages where the Holy Spirit is spoken of is impossible. Masculine pronouns prove the Holy Spirit is a person as well as the personal acts assigned to "him" (ibid, 218–219).

So convinced are trinitarians of their view that it is inconceivable to them that the Old Testament says nothing about the Trinity. Yet many authorities say it is a fact that those who depend upon the Old Testament for any revelation concerning the Trinity find none. One who already believes in a trinity may see underlying implications of it in the Old Testament, such as the plurality of *elohim*. Passages which contain "His Word" and "His Spirit" are often joined. As far as the New Testament is concerned, the teaching of the Trinity is built upon assumption and its allusions are regarded as frequent, cursory, easy, and confident. The doctrine of the Trinity is not so much heard as overheard in the Scriptural statements. Trinitarians tell us we cannot speak of the doctrine of the Trinity if we study the exactness of speech in the New Testament any more than we can speak of it as revealed in the Old Testament. The doctrine of the Trinity lies in the New Testament in the form of allusion rather than in any express teaching. Many passages of the New Testament while not formulating the doctrine of the Trinity presuppose it. The nearest approach to any formal announcement is Matthew 28:19–20. Another text used to support the doctrine of the Trinity is II Corinthians 13:14, but again it is no formal statement; rather it is an example of "Trinitarian consciousness." When we attempt to understand how writers of the New Testament conceive the three Persons to be related we meet with great difficulties. Even Matthew 28:19 fails to preserve the allusions carefully. Our confidence is further shaken when we observe the implications with respect to the mutual relations of the Persons which while derived from these designations do not so certainly lie in them as is commonly supposed (*International Standard Bible Ency.*, s.v. "Trinity").

The Greek attempt to understand God's activity in terms was derived from the analysis of abstract thought. There is no way by which the absolute transcendence of God and His relatedness can be brought into a coherent unity. All we can say is that God is both and leave it at that (Richardson, 43). The doctrine of the Trinity involved an irreconcilable struggle between Jewish and Christian monotheism. It was believed Jews held there could not be the slightest hint of a multiplicity of Gods; and also the fact that Jesus, who was God, revealed the Father, who was God. How could this dilemma be resolved except by making the three one? By the time the doctrine was formulated the Holy Spirit was viewed as another entity and thus was added to make up a Trinity. Augustine argued that if one in the Trinity is only a relationship rather than a Person, then the representation of three Persons has dissolved into a mist (Bowie, 127–128).

The truth is that the doctrine of the Trinity does not belong to the fundamental articles of Christian faith and is not found in any singular passage in the New Testament. Its development was gradual, assuming opposite forms, until a mode of apprehension finally appeared which satisfied the demand for unity as well as dialectic reasoning (Neander, I, 574). The doctrine of the Trinity was not regarded as fully revealed during the time of Christ. Old Testament texts convey the impression of at least a plurality in the Godhead, but regarding the manner in which the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit make one God, the Scripture teaches nothing. Theologians differ widely in their opinions respecting this. During the early second century theologians had definite ideas about the Logos but their views regarding the Holy Spirit were far less clear although most of them regarded the Holy Spirit to be a substance emanating from the Father and the Son (McClintock and Strong, s.v. "Trinity"). Personality applied to divine substance involves a contradiction that defines the limits of human thought. As humans we are compelled to apply the Absolute in our own insufficient terms of finite relation. The term "person" applied to the Godhead is not used in the ordinary sense as denoting a separate being; rather it is the subject of certain attributes or properties. The Trinity is thus three names but distinct hypostases with characteristic attributes or properties. Hypostasis means to construe a conceptual entity as a real existent. God may be a substance that is All-wise and Absolute and personality may attach to His being limiting the unlimited and defining the indefinite. As far as the plurality of the Godhead is concerned, some maintain the impossibility of expressing the mutual relations of three hypostases in one substance in any adequate term that human language can supply (ibid, s.v. "Personality").

Trinitarian theology is the attempt to express the idea of both unity and diversity. It tries to express how God can be at the same time a monad (a spiritual substance from which material properties are derived) and triad—one in three. It is only a partial understanding of an article of faith hidden in a mystery. Latin theology, as opposed to Greek, was viewed as disturbing the subtle balance between the absolute unity of essence and absolute diversity of the three persons—the divine essence distorted into an abstract idea of divinity, a rational essence binding the three in the same manner in which humanity binds men together (*Conflicts About the Holy Spirit*, 19). As noted previously, the formal statement about the

doctrine of God's triunity took several centuries to develop and was done with the conceptual tools available at the time. Church fathers used these tools in the same manner that philosophically are used in any given time in history. The church fathers used the Scriptures as well as pagan philosophers. The result was that many of the concepts they developed were radically different from the Scriptures. What was attempted was the incorporation of a threefoldness concept of God into a monotheistic faith. They recognized from certain Old Testament texts a kind of plurality in the divine ways of working in the world and a threefoldness was defined in terms of modes (forms or varieties) or in terms of grades. That is, God first, the Word a lesser Deity, and the Spirit a still less complete divine reality (Pittenger, 31–34, 37). Trinitarian doctrine, therefore, can be described as mystical theology.

In effect the doctrine about Christ became the main article of Christianity. The theology of Paul was not made the most prominent factor in the transformation of the gospel to the Catholic doctrine of faith. Between the important parts of the New Testament and the literature of the period immediately following there is a great gulf (Harnack, I, 133–136). The question that should be raised is whether intellectual categories, which are abstractions from man's total being, are a particularly helpful way to think about God. As used they are altogether insufficient to denote the essential paradox of God's beyondness and relatedness (Richardson, 37). Many Christians admit they cannot fully understand how three divine Persons, though distinct from one another, are one and the same God. It is regarded as a supernatural mystery that cannot be learned by reason. The belief in the Trinity is based on the supposition that it is revealed in the Bible, yet many theologians admit that Biblical proof for the doctrine of the Trinity does not exist. Students have been embarrassed by the simple fact that the Scriptures do not explicitly present the doctrine of the Trinity. Better Bible dictionaries admit that no Old Testament passage can be found that justifies the doctrine of the Trinity and that there is a dearth of material even in the New Testament. They admit no Bible text plainly describes or defines the Trinity.

While the notion of a divine triad or Trinity is characteristic of the Christian religion, it is by no means peculiar to it. It is found in many ancient religions. A partial reason for the doctrine was to vindicate Christianity against the error of heathen polytheism of which it was frequently accused. To say there were three separate beings in the Godhead would be polytheism. On the other hand, to say there are three eternal principals of distinction or modes of subsistence in the Godhead is not polytheism, although it has sometimes led to the accusation of theoretical pluralism. In ancient times, as well as modern, analogy has been employed to throw light upon the mysterious notion—the tri-personality of the Godhead. Such analogies fail to satisfy one side or the other in the conception of "three persons in one Nature" (*Ency. of Religion and Ethics*, s.v. "Trinity"). There was the often repeated charge against Christians that they were godless or atheists because they would not worship the gods of the state. The Christian response was to state their own doctrine of God as clearly as possible. Athenagoras asked how anyone could call Christians atheists when they spoke of God the Father, God the Son, and the Holy Spirit. Since there was a long tradition of

philosophical terminology within Christianity it was held that philosophical language could be used to set forth aspects of the gospel. It was thought that the doctrine of the Trinity had always existed in Christian subconsciousness (Grant 1966, 90-91, 94-95, 97). Yet, a college professor who once defined the doctrine of the Trinity as "the rubbish the churches have added" was not too far out of line by the statement, contrary to what trinitarians think.

In referring to the Trinity, Martin Luther wrote, ". . . This must be accepted by faith. No matter how clever, acute, and keen the reason may be, it will never grasp, and comprehend it . . . I believe and confess that there is one eternal God, and, at the same time, three distinct Persons, even though I cannot fathom and comprehend this. For Holy Scripture, which is God's Word, says so; and I abide by what it states" (quoted by Bowie, 121). As far as the Spirit was concerned, its rank and function were quite uncertain. Some thought of it as personal existence misled by the expression "paraclete." Some regarded it as a created divine being, the highest angel. Others, as derived from God, a permanently existing being sharing in the Godhead. Others identified it as the Son himself. What is said in the Scriptures regarding the activity of the Spirit is vague, frequently leading to the expression of perplexity or exegetical learning. Various church fathers had differing ideas regarding the nature and function of the Holy Spirit. For a long period of time defining the Holy Spirit was vague but philosophical theologians became more and more convinced that it was necessary to assume a threesome in the Godhead. In the first thirty years of the Arian controversy the Holy Spirit was scarcely mentioned and uncertainty prevailed until at least AD 380 (Harnack, IV, 108-118). At the Nicene Council the doctrine of the Holy Spirit was expressed in very vague and general terms. As late as AD 380 Gregory Nazianzen said that some of our theologians consider the Holy Spirit to be a certain mode of the divine agency; others a creature of God; others, God himself. Others say they do not know which of the opinions they ought to adopt out of reverence for the Holy Scriptures which have not explained this point. Hilary of Poitiers said the Holy Scriptures have not furnished material for a more exact logical definition. He believed there were no Scriptures giving exact definitions concerning the relation of the Holy Spirit to the Father in the way he found the relation of the Father and the Son. From about this time on the identity of the essence of the Holy Spirit with the Father and the Son was maintained by the most eminent teachers of the Eastern church (Neander, II, 466-468). Because of the Logos doctrine of subordination to the Father, the church fathers were compelled to conceive of the Holy Spirit as subordinate to both the Father and the Son. Not until the fourth century AD was the Holy Spirit brought into a nearer relationship with the Son and included in the triad. Much earlier Justin regarded the Holy Spirit as the substance of all the gracious gifts proceeding from the Father, communicated through Christ (ibid, I, 608-609).

The main point of opposition for a considerable period of time between the trinitarians and their opponents was the deity of Christ; there was no particular reference to the Holy Spirit. There was comparative neglect in the matter of the Holy Spirit until a late period. There seemed to be a greater fear of the introduction of two Gods than for three Gods. The

question of the Holy Spirit in the divinity became controversial, but eventually came to be generally believed (Forrest, 40–41). The opinions of theological writers altered toward the end of the fourth century and afterwards. Where it had been fashionable to call the Father the only true God, it now became fashionable to say the Trinity was the one God. So, after a lapse of several centuries and by a gradual change of opinion the trinitarian doctrine was completed (ibid, 31). The doctrine of the Trinity did not form a part of the early New Testament message and has never been a central article of faith of the Christian church as a whole at any period of time. The apostles would never have thought in terms of three divine Persons whose mutual relations and paradoxical unity was unable to be understood. To the layman, and for that matter to most theologians, the doctrine of the Trinity is a baffling mystery best left to the learned.

What Not Told about Trinitarianism and Monotheism

Philo Judaeus has long been regarded as the example of Hellenic Judaism of the first century. His voluminous writings demonstrate a type of Judaism very much *unlike* the assumed orthodoxy of Palestine. The nature of the supposed Palestinian Judaism is now being questioned as never before since it has been found that many of the rabbinic writings date to a much later period than the first century. Philo's Judaism was contemporary with Christian origins and is remarkable for the fact it had a second God—the Logos. Could Philo, it is asked, have altered the fundamental monotheism of Judaism and yet remained a leader and spokesman within the Jewish community? Or do his writings reflect the view of a substantial Jewish community which was not monotheistic in the accepted sense of the word? (Barker, 114) The first significant extra-rabbinic evidence regarding two Gods or "two powers" is Philo. He actually used the term "two Gods" which meant the same as "two powers" in rabbinic thought. Philo discussed the concept of a second Deity in order to explain the many anthropomorphisms (the attributing of human characteristics to nonhuman beings [God] or things) in the Bible. Philo thought it improper to speak of transcendent beings in manlike terms, yet felt this terminology was a teaching tool for the common people. Philo held that the Logos may be called God since this was the form in which God had chosen to reveal Himself. The fact is that there were real traditions of a "second God" present in Judaism as early as the time of Philo (20 BC–AD 54). Philo attests to a series of traditions involving the divinity of a principle angelic figure who functions as a helper to God, and Philo maintained that the Logos was God's helper in creation. Philo viewed the descriptions of the "angel of YHWH" as references to the Logos, one of the principle powers of God. Philo used the term "second God" to describe the Logos without thinking he had violated the monotheistic basis of his religion. Why? Because by this time the violation of the canons of monotheism was partly a matter of individual opinion (Segal, 159–164, 172–173, 182–183).

Philo described the Logos as God's administrator and chief steward of the world. The variation of the roles of the figures described as God's chief Agent reflect an idea that was interpreted widely across the entire spectrum of ancient Judaism. The dominant role Jesus played as God's chief Agent, while not fully paralleled in the roles assigned to other chief agents, nevertheless shows the idea was not a modification of Jewish monotheism (Hurtado, 20–21). Philo's concept of a second God is a combination of Platonic ideas of divine intermediation and of the Stoic world spirit. Because the Logos could be hypostatized, it could be viewed as a separate agent and called God (Segal, 23). Philo at times represented the Logos as an independent and personal being, a second God. At other times he represented the Logos as an aspect of divine activity (*Ency. Brit.*, 11th ed., s.v. "Logos"). Those who shared Philo's ideas of the nature of divinity could be prime candidates for the charge of believing in "two powers in heaven." It is quite possible that underlying Philo's philosophical language is an exegetical tradition shared by many other Jews (Segal, 23–24). The Logos was generally assumed to be a human figure in Hellenistic Judaism (*ibid*, 185). Philo drew his theology from the most ancient traditions of Judaism and not from a mixture of hellenized Judaism and contemporary Greek philosophy (Barker, 48). Philo was quite clear when he described the Logos—the second God. He wrote: "For nothing mortal can be made in the likeness of the Most High God and Father of the Universe but (only) in that of a second God, who is His Logos"(quoted in Barker, 116).

Philo attests to the pervasiveness and antiquity of the problem of God's appearance and differing aspects. Philo was not alone in interpreting the different names of God in order to signify different figures and attributes. The rabbis did, also. The truth is that many parts of the Jewish community in varying places and at different times in their history used a tradition that the rabbis labeled heretical. It is not possible to decide exactly when rabbinic opposition to the doctrine began. It is nearly impossible to be sure what the rabbinic traditions were before AD 200, much less before AD 70 when the rabbis assumed the leadership of the Jewish community. Rabbinic traditions, as we now have them, were written subsequent to that time period, so we cannot assume the rabbinic reports date from the Second Commonwealth (after 515 BC) in a carefree manner (Segal, 43). Philo's references to the Logos included such terms as King, Shepherd, High Priest, Covenant, Rider on the Divine Chariot, Archangel, and Firstborn Son; they seemed to have been drawn from Jewish ancient beliefs and only adapted to Greek thinking. What was said about the Logos is very similar to what was said about the Name (YHWH). Philo was presenting Judaism and not some vague syncretism. This fact is certain: Philo could not have invented a second Deity and still retained his credibility as a Jewish philosopher. For Philo the divine Logos was the Angel of Yahweh, just as was the case for his native Judaism. Later ideas of orthodoxy generated at the hands of the rabbis went to great lengths to combat any notion of a second Deity. The question is, did Christians copy Philo or did they both share a belief that was normal for the time? Or did the difference that developed between Judaism and later orthodoxy indicate how far Judaism had altered? (Barker, 116–118, 120)

The question of many gods was certainly known to Philo, but he did not clearly answer it. He did refer to Genesis 28:16—Jacob's dream at Bethel—where he felt the reading should be, "I am the God that appeared to thee in the place of God," not "in my place." "The God" refers to the true God and "God" is the term applied to other heavenly beings. Among Jews in the first century, Philo was not the only Jew who believed in a second divine Being. The Targums (paraphrases from Aramaic to Hebrew), which are impossible to date, reflect several ways of referring to the divinity and *Memra* in the Targums was the most common way of referring to the YHWH. Students of rabbinic Judaism were well aware that *Memra* could not be a hypostasis. The assumption that rabbinic Judaism was the unchanged tradition from pre-Christian times and that this fundamental monotheism of the first century AD is expressed in the Targums fails to acknowledge that there is no real evidence for dating the Targums. The earliest evidence for these Targums is between AD 700 and 900, which can hardly be relied upon for determining any first century documents. There is no concrete evidence that the Targums as we now have them existed at an early date. What the Targums do illustrate is that their translators assumed that the ordinary Jews of the synagogues had more or less the same beliefs as Philo and used the same imagery to express them. The mainstream rabbinic Judaism now reflected in the Targums may not have been the people to whom they were originally addressed. The fact that they are impenetrable to us, although originally intended as a translation and interpretation, should serve as a warning (Barker, 135, 139, 145–146, 148).

Following the Exile (595–515 BC), the Jews began to purify their religion from polytheism and idolatry by affirming the unity of God and His spirituality. They did this by completely separating the manifoldness of visible existence. The result was to empty the unity of God of all reality and to replace it with a multiplicity that was in reality not a unity. God's incomprehensibility and remoteness now began to appear, and He became difficult to find. This abstraction of God was especially apparent in Alexandria where Jewish thought had assimilated Platonic philosophy through Philo who conceived of God as a pure Being who could not come into contact with the material and created world. His action and power were mediated by "His Powers, His Logos, His Wisdom" which as personified or hypostatized attributes became viceregents on the earth. Important in this scheme were angels who became intermediaries of revelation. In effect Hebrew monotheism was unstable because the problem of the One and Many could not be solved by merely separating them. Monotheism attempted to maintain its own truth even partially by affirming contradictions (*International Standard Bible Ency.*, s.v. "God"). Philo gave special authority to a second angelic or metaphysical manifestation of God in heaven which he affirmed as a second power. Whenever a second figure, either in the Pentateuch or Daniel could be identified as quasi-divine or an independent angelic figure, the rabbis loudly fought against it. This was the case when Daniel 7 could certainly be seen to allow for a two power interpretation (Segal, 49–52). Philo shows beyond any doubt that Judaism of the first Christian century acknowledged a second God, and the roles and functions of this God were exactly those of the ancient Yahweh (Barker, 131–132).

In an article entitled "Monotheism—a Misused Word in Jewish Studies," by Peter Hayman, we read that *monotheism is indeed a misused word in Jewish studies, and it is inappropriate to use the term monotheism to describe the Jewish idea of God*. While God is the sole object of worship, He is not the only divine Being. There is always a prominent number two in the hierarchy to whom Israel in particular relates and this pattern is inherited from the Bible. Hardly any variety of Judaism seems to have been able to manage with just one divine entity. As a result many Jews have been left confused, especially as to the identity of the number two in the hierarchy. If monotheism appears to be an inappropriate term to describe Jewish beliefs in God before the Middle Ages, what is the proper term? Perhaps the term "cooperative dualism" rather than monotheism would be better. The rabbinic term was "two powers in heaven" which was their belief, as is clearly seen in Daniel 7 by the Ancient of Days and the Son of man. According to Hayman, Jewish belief about God *from the Exile to the Middle Ages* was that most varieties of Judaism are marked by a dualistic pattern in which *two divine entities are presupposed*. One is the supreme Creator God, the other His Vizier or Prime Minister, or some other spiritual agency who really "runs the show" or at least provides the point of contact between God and humanity. And that even when, as in rabbinic literature, there is clearly one dominant divine figure, it is doubtful the picture of God presented is really unitary at all. Jewish angelology reveals a pattern of religion that is anything but monotheistic. *Recent research has cast a dark shadow over the supposed monotheism of Judaism* (Hayman, 2, 10–11, 15).

All recent scholarly studies have shown that God created order out of a pre-existing chaos. He did not create from nothing. Such a doctrine is foreign to Judaism and probably arose in Christianity in the second century AD and entered into Judaism at the beginning of the Middle Ages. Where does this leave Judaism's supposed monotheism? Is monotheism even conceivable with a doctrine of creation out of nothing? If God did not create the world out of nothing, where did the material for it come from? Clearly from the *tohu* and *bohu* of Genesis 1:2. But where did these come from? Either they were co-eternal with God and hence compromised His unique status or they came out from Him and were a part of Him, which also compromised His unique status (Hayman, 2–4). The literature of post-exilic Judaism contains many references to various heavenly figures who are described as participating in some way in God's rule on the earth and His plan of redemption. These figures all demonstrate an interest in what might be called "divine agency." They represent God in a unique capacity and rank second only to God himself. There was a wide spectrum of Jewish groups who were involved in this concept—that there was a chief Agent who stood far above all other Jewish servants of God. The truth is that this concept of divine agency does not reflect a major mutation in ancient Jewish monotheism. But by the second century AD some Jewish "heretics" were accused of going too far in the reverence of God's chief Agent and were accused of holding to the idea of "two powers" in heaven (Hurtado, 17–19).

Extra-biblical writings give examples of two powers in heaven. Rabbi Ishmael describes an angelic prince called Panion. Panion shares God's name and serves at His

throne. A work entitled *Hekhalot Rabbati* describes a journey to the gate of the seventh palace where the chief guard is the great prince Anafiel who is one of the most exalted beings in heaven, comparable to even the Creator. The *Visions of Ezekiel*, another extra-biblical work describes a mysterious prince, a semi-divine being, identified with the deity described in Daniel 7, whose name is like God's. The passage in *Visions* is similar to descriptions in the *Hekhalot* which attribute deity to the "ancient of days," a godlike being who bore some of God's titles, yet who was distinct from the supreme God. Another deity was Metaton, who was regarded as a second God, sometimes referred to as the "Lessor Yahweh." Similarity between Arianism and Jewish extra-biblical writings is in the fact that Christ was a creature of God promoted to divinity, thus, the Arian Christ turns out to resemble the Metaton of the *Hekhalot* (Halperin, 373, 393, 410, 421, 453).

After the time of Nehemiah, the Jews were regarded as uncompromising monotheists (*Ency. of Religion and Ethics*, s.v. "God [Jewish]"). Jewish monotheism is the professed creed and conduct since post-exilic times, and it is possible the *Shema* was introduced during the persecutions of Antiochus Epiphanes (c. 175 BC). But it is possible to show that both within and without the rabbinic community the existence of a principle angelic creature did not seem to be a problem; rather it was the identity, title, or function of this second figure that occupied the imagination of the Jews (Segal, 187). The Dead Sea Scrolls give significant evidence that some apocalyptic and sectarian movements within Judaism developed dualistic tendencies which could be described as "two powers in heaven." What should be assumed is that these ideas were more commonly shared among all sects of Judaism than is evident from orthodox rabbinic literature (ibid, 20, 22). Rabbi Akiba acknowledged that one of the two thrones in Daniel 7 was for David. He identified the "son of man" with the Davidic Messiah. Rabbi Akiba was not the only one in the rabbinic movement who identified the heavenly figure as the Messiah. He supposedly changed his view to that of aspects rather than a personage, but there is reason to believe that additions were made to his writings in order to support the orthodox view. There were other groups, also, who assigned messiahship to the second figure in Daniel (ibid, 49). Extra-biblical writings of Rabbi Ishmael acknowledge that God manifested Himself in two ways in the Bible, but orthodoxy condemned the idea of two different divinities as dangerous. To counter the two thrones mentioned in extra-biblical literature the rabbis quoted Daniel 7:10 by saying that the fiery stream that issued forth came from *Him*. Therefore, there is only one personage, although there may be two manifestations (ibid, 38, 40).

Most of the background studies used by scholars to support their views have now been shown to belong to a period two or three centuries *after* the time of Christ. What the evidence points out is that pre-Christian Judaism was not monotheistic in the sense that we use the word. It was as the manifestation of Yahweh, the Son of God, that Jesus was acknowledged as Son of God—the Messiah. Jesus was not called "son of Yahweh" nor "Son of the Lord," but rather Lord. In the New Testament the Greek *kurios* (Lord) was the translation from the Old Testament *Yahweh* (Barker, 2-5). The truth is: Greco-Roman

Judaism was by no means a monolithic unity (Hurtado, 39). The traditions which the rabbis dismissed as heretical in the second century AD are found in the sectaries of the first century. The vexing question, however, is: Where and when did these traditions become heretical? In some of the extra-biblical writings, such as the *Merkabah*, there is no convincing evidence that the mystics were ever called heretical. The earliest witness to the rabbinic charge is in the second century and we cannot be sure the rabbis were in control of Judaism until the second century. So, we cannot be sure that any of the systems would have been called heretical in the first century, or even if there was a central authority to define it. Reports regarding these heretics in Talmudic and midrashic literature cover roughly the first six centuries of the Christian era (Segal, 201, 3).

The major arguments against the "two powers heresy" were laid down in the tannaitic period. (The tannaim were rabbis who worked up to 300 AD, the time the Mishnah was being compiled.) The amoraim (the successors of the tannaim who worked from the third through fifth centuries AD) accepted these arguments and expanded them, even adding new ones. It was not until after the second Jewish war (AD 135) and the consolidation of rabbinic authority at Yavneh, which led to a new Jewish orthodoxy, that sectarian groups, who from the orthodox viewpoint compromised monotheism, were excluded from Jewish life. What characterized the rabbinic movement and set it off from other sects of its time was the great emphasis of strict monotheism. The rabbis were involved in the development of orthodoxy because various Jewish sects had ceased to view Jerusalem as the theological center of Judaism. Based on the evidence, it must be concluded that the rabbinic polemic against the "two powers," like most of the rabbinic traditions, cannot be dated earlier than the time of Ishmael and Akiba, about the end of the first quarter of the second century. The biggest difficulty of all in defining this "heresy" is dating the rabbinic traditions accurately. The earliest "heretics" believed in two complementary powers while later heretics (Gnostics) believed in two opposing powers. The basic "heresy" was interpreting Scripture to say there was a principle angel or hypostatic manifestation in heaven equivalent to God. Rabbinic writings show a wide divergence of views and some scholars believe there was no concept of orthodoxy in rabbinic Judaism, and there is no scholarly consensus as to when rabbinic thought became orthodox. The rabbis assumed their interpretation of Judaism was always orthodox and never distinguished clearly between "sectaries" and "heretics." Any interpretation that was not part of the accepted community thought was considered "heretical," though there was a time when non-pharisaic interpretation was simply sectarian. Modes of exclusion (disfellowshipment) do not appear to have been formalized in the first and second centuries, but by the time of the codification of the Mishnah (AD 200) the process of exclusion was well underway. By this time a number of Jewish sectaries fell heir to the appellation "heretic." At the time of the destruction of the Temple there were twenty-four kinds of heretics. The truth is that sectarianism among the Jews was more extensive than previously thought (Segal, 121, 264, 59, x., 5-7, 16).

In fact one of the central issues that separated Christianity from Judaism was the "two powers" controversy, which came to be regarded as a very early category of heresy. But there were rabbinic "heretics" who believed in two powers in heaven. Some mysticism, apocalypticism, Christianity, and Gnosticism were all viewed as heretical by the rabbis (Segal, ix). The difference between Christians and Jews was that the Jews did not believe that the Messiah had already appeared. So the concept of two Deities was not unique to Christians; the point of dispute between Christians and Jews was whether or not Jesus was the second God (Barker, 207). The rabbis attempted to defeat a growing number of sectaries who supported a binitarian (the worship of two Gods) Biblical explanation. The rabbis did this by applying the two power concept to attributes such as mercy and justice rather than to separate beings. They insisted that God's justice and mercy could be combined with the name (Segal, 147,150). As Hayman points out, David Halperin, in his work entitled *The Faces of the Chariot*, reveals the rabbinic distress about much of the Hebrew Bible which seemed too close to paganism for comfort, that is, the duality of the Godhead. The rabbis wished to keep this material away from the attention of the people. So, they countered by splitting God up into two aspects—Justice and Mercy. Also, because the two powers concept was associated with two names for God in the Hebrew, the rabbis dabbled with the personality of God. The result was a monotheism in theory but not in function (Hayman, 13–14). The attributes of mercy and justice were applied to the manifestations of God in order to counter the argument there were two Gods (Segal, 46).

Exodus 20:2, Deuteronomy 6:4; 32:39, and Isaiah 44–47 became favorite texts to defeat the "heretical" notions of the Godhead. But all the groups opposed to the rabbis seem to have had a real knowledge of the Scriptures and can be called rabbinic sectaries or Jewish heretics (Segal, 89, 91). Daniel 7 was interpreted in various ways. For example, God could be manifested as an old man or a young man thereby changing aspects, or as two separate divine figures. Daniel 7 was central to the belief in two powers so that an orthodox counter-interpretation was developed and well-known. Orthodox Jews held that the repetition of the divine name did not identify two powers but emphasized God's unity. The rabbis were alarmed to see the divine name YHWH being used to define a second divine creature; therefore, they argued that the YHWH should be understood to mean the merciful aspect of God's providence (ibid, 35, 37, 180–181). During the third century a list of "dangerous" texts were brought up. These included Genesis 1:1, 26; 11:5; 19:24; 35:5, sqq., Deuteronomy 4:7, Joshua 22:22; 24:19, II Samuel 7:23, Daniel 7:9, and Psalm 50:1 (ibid, 128–129). The rabbis interpreted one of the YHWHs in Genesis 19:24 to mean Gabriel, applying the tetragrammaton to a being other than Israel's one God. They took the plural form for God and applied it to the plural of majesty or God's heavenly court. Genesis 35:5, 7 really presented a problem because the plural form is used here. Philo had discussed a second God in reference to the Bethel revelation. Most of the time the rabbis referred to the singular verb following the plural form of God in order to make God one. II Samuel 7:23 was another immense problem for the rabbis because of the plural form and in spite of their reasonings there was room for understanding a divine manifestation other than God as long as that manifestation

was within the scope of their orthodoxy. In the Greek version of the Old Testament (the Septuagint or LXX) both Psalm 50:1 and Joshua 22:22 are translated in such a way as to imply two powers. And the simple expedient of the rabbis pointing out the singular after the plural is insufficient as the Scriptures were more complex than that. The basic distinction in amoraic times as to what constituted heresy was whether one believed in one or two powers; the orthodox view was monotheism. The rabbinic argument that the singular of any verse counteracts the dangerous implications of the divine plural is typical of the amoraic period. Many of the rabbinic traditions are later elaborations and the final editing may have been in the medieval period (ibid, 130–131, 54).

Jewish monotheism forbade thinking of the Messiah as anything more than a human being; the Christian view was that the Messiah was a heavenly Being and a distinction in the Godhead itself (Richardson, 42). The main reason scholars have not been able to comprehend how Christians from a Jewish background could bestow upon Christ the exalted status seen in Paul's epistles is because of the strong notions they have about the nature of Judaism; this bias controlled their investigations (Hurtado, 7). The controversy that arose between the rabbis and who they regarded as heretics points to the precipitated rise of Christianity. The problem today is the perverted refusal on the part of Christian scholars to believe the claims of the first Christians. The monotheism of rabbinic orthodoxy is not a valid basis from which to construct the earliest Christian beliefs (Barker, 158). There is some indication that Jewish monotheism was able to accommodate surprising kinds of reverence for and interest in other heavenly figures such as chief angels, exalted patriarchs, and personified attributes or powers of God. This more complex picture of Jewish monotheism in the first century makes it understandable how Christians could view the risen Christ as exalted while holding belief in one God. The inability to understand this fact is due to an incorrect and rigid view regarding monotheism. The foolish fancy found in New Testament scholarship that the title "son of man" was a widely used title for an apocalyptic figure in ancient Jewish end-of-the-world expectations can now be discarded (Hurtado, 8, 12). The fact that Jews functionally believed in two Gods explains the speed with which Christianity developed so fast in the first century. In the divinization of Jesus He was regarded with the Yahweh/Michael/Gabriel pattern and identified with the number two figure in the divine hierarchy (Hayman, 14).

Recognizing the distinctly binitarian shape of early Christianity as opposed to monotheism, scholars have sought to explain the veneration of Jesus to be the result of Greco-Roman paganism. Considering the information now available, with respect to the stages of early Christianity, this view is untenable (Hurtado, 3). By what date were Christians claiming Jesus was Lord and Son of God, offering Him devotion? If it can be demonstrated this was not done in the first Palestinian community, then, and only then, can an explanation be found in a Greek context. If the titles and worship were a part of the earliest Palestinian tradition then the significance can be sought only in a Jewish setting (Barker, 213). The intense monotheism of those who had been educated as Jews was not

abandoned, but new modes of conceiving God form an essential part of the doctrine of God in the New Testament. In Romans 10:9–13 *kurios*, quoted from Joel 2:32 with the Hebrew *Yahweh*, is used of Christ to show His essential divinity. His preexistence is implied in II Corinthians 8:9, Philippians 2:6, Colossians 1:15, sqq., and Titus 2:13 where He is the great God and Savior (*Ency. of Religion and Ethics*, s.v. "God"). The question is how could monotheistic Jews worship Jesus, and what did they mean by the words "Son of God," "Messiah," and "Lord"? These titles have been explained in ways other than the meaning eventually adopted. Scholars have assumed these titles came from Greek mythology and could not have possibly begun with the first Christians since their monotheistic background would not have permitted it. "Messiah" was viewed as meaning no more than a nationalist leader who wished to rebel against Rome. "Lord" was viewed as a courtesy title which somehow became confused by Greek Christians with the divine name of the Old Testament. Thus, Jesus "became divine" and was worshipped like one of the Greek local gods. These notions became popular with New Testament scholars for most of the twentieth century because they wanted to emphasize the humanity of Jesus and that His "divinity" was a late unfortunate development (Barker, 1).

Early Christian devotion can be accurately described as binitarian in shape with a prominent place being given the risen Christ alongside God. What must be realized is that the Jewish divine agency tradition *was not of itself* sufficient cause for the true binitarian devotion that suddenly and pervasively developed in the early Christian church. Jewish Christians had an altered standpoint from which to interpret many elements of their Jewish tradition, including the limits of monotheism. *Jesus' ministry provoked a crisis that had to do with His validity as one sent from God.* The chief Agent of this sectary became the object of worship reserved for God alone (Hurtado, 114–115, 117). A straightforward reading of the New Testament suggests that from the beginning Jesus was seen as more than a human. The Old Testament must be allowed to speak for itself and not with the assumption that monotheism has one God with several names (Barker, 2, 28). The religious view of the early Christians was undeniably shaped by Jewish tradition and Jesus was given heavenly status by means of the divine agency tradition. Romans 1:3–4 is one of the earliest examples of the Christological conviction that the risen Christ had been God's chief Agent. I Corinthians 15:20–28 is another example. Philippians 2:5–11 should be especially noted because if this text was taken from a well-known hymn, as many scholars believe, the veneration of Jesus was unparalleled in the Jewish treatment of divine agents (Hurtado, 94–97). Ancient Judaism provided the first Christians with the crucial conceptual category for accommodating the risen Jesus to God's right hand. Early Christian religious experience produced a distinctive modification involving the worship of God's chief Agent by applying this distinction to Christ. Titles such as "Christ" and "Messiah" quickly underwent redefinition in early Christian circles, coming to mean a figure holding heavenly and divine status. The worship of Jesus by Christians is the most important context for use of the Christological titles and concepts. "Lord," for example, was used with a variety of connotations in the ancient world,

but in the Christian context it acquired a specific connotation; it implied more than it previously did (ibid, 13).

There is no doubt Jesus was identified with the God of the Jews. "The Son of God" was their name for Yahweh. The question is: How could the Apostle Paul have distinguished between God and Lord if this were not already a part of first century Jewish belief? Paul's statement in I Corinthians 8:6 is a remarkable contradiction to Deuteronomy 6:4 if he understood Deuteronomy 6:4 as it is taken today—a statement of monotheism (Barker, 192–193). There was a wide-spread opinion in the whole ancient church that Melchizedek was a manifestation of the true Son of God (Harnack, III, 27). The use of the name of Christ in the baptismal formula that called upon the name of the Lord was powerful evidence of the enormously prominent place of Jesus in the early Christian devotion of the first decades. The notion that the earliest Christians saw Christ as "Lord" in an eschatological sense, that is, one who would bring them future salvation, must be given a decent burial (Hurtado, 109–110). What did the titles "Son of God," "Lord" and "Messiah" mean to first Christians? Obviously what was already understood by the people. The texts about Yahweh were about Jesus. Rabbinic opposition was so ferocious because the threat to orthodoxy was from within. *This can be understood only in the light that Christians were proclaiming Christ to be a manifestation of Yahweh* (Barker, 231). I Corinthians 8:1–6 appears to mark a profound Christian adaptation or modification of the *Shema* (Deut. 6:4). The earliest Christian devotion was a direct outgrowth from and a variety of the ancient Jewish tradition. This mutation of monotheistic devotion made Jesus the object of devotion and this among a people that considered itself firmly committed to monotheism. This devotion to Christ may be characterized as binitarian at the earliest stages of the Christian movement. There is no indication that the reverence given to Christ in Paul's churches represented any kind of major innovation or that Palestinian Jews objected to it (Hurtado, 97–100, 107). Pliny, the elder, the Roman jurist and historian, wrote that Christians sang hymns to Christ as God (Barker, 216). The Melchizedek text in the Dead Sea Scrolls is early enough in time to justify our belief that the ground for Christology had been well laid in pre-Christian Judaism. Until Christianity tried to fit the Holy Spirit into the picture, it did not deviate as far as one might think from a well-established pattern in Judaism (Hayman, 15). Behind the debates of councils and the framing of creeds was the binitarian devotion practice of generations of Christians who revered Christ along with God in ways that amounted to a mutation of monotheism (Hurtado, 128).

It was later, during the first century, that Jewish sources rejected the worship of Jesus as constituting an example of "two powers in heaven,"—the worship of two Gods (Hurtado, 2). By the time the fourth gospel was written, the Jewish community is described as opposing Christianity on the issue of the divinity of Jesus; this was very apparent toward the end of the first century although the hostility began during the ministry of Christ (Segal, 217). We can be sure Christians were called followers of the "two powers" concept and were thus labeled heretics. Christians, Samaritans, and various sectaries were accused of

compromising monotheism by holding to the belief of more than one authority in heaven. While these "heretics" were excluded from the synagogue the frequent debates between them and the rabbis did not abate. The "heretics" continued to proliferate in close proximity to the rabbinic community (ibid, 152-154). It is in the gospel of John that the heavenly Logos and the earthly Messiah are clearly identified for the first time. Christianity defined the divinity and personality of the "second power" in the clearest and most emphatic way. Many of the traditions found to be heretical by the rabbis in the second century were intimately connected with the apostolic understanding of Jesus (ibid, 190, 220, 205).

Justin Martyr, about AD 140, is one of the earliest post-apostolic writers who indicated Christ was God, but inferior to the Father. Justin believed it was Christ who conversed with Abraham and the others. Justin wrote, "I will endeavor to convince you that there is another who is called God and Lord, besides Him that made all things . . ." (quoted by Forrest, 18-19). In Justin's writings he referred to Genesis 19:24 to show that two divine figures rule the universe; this is remarkable proof that orthodox Christians were seen as "two power" heretics (Segal, 119). Justin disputed the rabbinic interpretation of Isaiah 42:8, which states, ". . . my glory will I not give to another . . ." Justin said the verse was not to be taken out of context as the whole chapter from the beginning showed that the glory was to be given to the servant of Yahweh and no other (Barker, 194). In Justin's *Dialogue with Trypho*, he demonstrates that a second divine figure is responsible for carrying out God's commands on the earth. What is surprising is that in this dialogue a Jew admits there is another divine Being. The only question is the messianic status of this Being (Segal, 221-222). The rabbis were hard pressed to overcome the arguments of Justin Martyr. Justin knew the Jews allowed one name of God to apply to something like the "Logos" while refusing to identify the Logos with Christ, which was what he had done (ibid, 13 fn).

Other orthodox churchmen were involved in the "two powers" belief. Hippolytus was accused by Kallistos, bishop of Rome, of being a worshipper of two Gods. Kallistos held that the Father, Son, and Logos are all names of "one indivisible spirit." The Son is the proper designation of that which is visible; Jesus while the Father, was the Spirit in Him; the presence of the Father in Jesus is the Logos. Kallistos said the Father did not suffer on the cross, but suffered with the sufferings of the Son; yet the Father "after He had taken unto Himself our flesh, raised it to the nature of deity, by bringing it into union with Himself, and made it one, so that Father and Son must be styled one God" (quoted by Walker, 74-75). Irenaeus defended Christianity against the Gnostic heresies by using the "two power" traditions. Both Tertullian and Hippolytus were charged with believing in "two Gods" by factions who held other views (Modalists and Monarchists). Noetus of Smyrna, who admitted he was a binitarian, made use of all the binitarian texts available to support his belief in two Gods and showed that two Gods are presupposed in the Bible. Novatian stated, "If the Father is one and the Son another, and if the Father is God and Christ God, then there is not one God, but two Gods . . ." (quoted by Segal, 230). Even Origen felt that the Son of God, as Logos, could be called a *deuteros theos* (ibid, 228-231). Origen affirmed the

existence of two Gods, insisting on the importance of two and that their unity was comparable to that in marriage (Grant 1986, 111). The next generation of writers continued to interpret the Scriptures as had Justin but as time went along the distinction began to blur. The fact that writers like Clement made use of the ancient belief in a second God for his own purposes was in no way an invention of the Christian community (Barker, 196). Athanasius taught that in the Son we have the Father, and in what the Son has brought, the divine is communicated to us. This fundamental thought corresponds to the very old concept of the gospel which was never wanting in the church before the time of Athanasius. His view was that the Godhead was a numerical unity, but the Father and the Son are to be distinguished within this unity as two (Harnack, IV, 45-46).

The New Testament identifies Jesus with *Yahweh*, the second God, but not with *Elyon*, the Father. What made Christians use *kurios* as a translation for the divine name if it were not used elsewhere at the time? The fact is that *kurios* is sometimes found in Jewish texts. There is no need to examine contemporary cults of divine kingship to suggest that *kurios* is evidence of the hellenization of early Christianity. Many New Testament texts show the roles and titles of the second God. When Paul was struck down on the road to Damascus, he said, "Who are you Lord?" How could Paul say he believed in one God, the Father, and one Lord, Jesus Christ, if the Lord was the name by which he knew the Father? The truth is Paul had received a tradition that the preexistent Son had been sent to the world that He might be the firstborn of many sons of God. Paul's conception of the Son of God was certainly not his own (Barker, 214, 218-223). Paul rejected the pagan plurality of deities while affirming for Christians there could be only one God, yet he linked Jesus with God and granted Him divine honors. Nothing in Paul's letters indicates a belief any different than his Christian predecessors. Paul's letters contain fragments of early church traditions that preceded him in which we see the exalted Jesus as the object of devotion, a tradition that went back to within a very few years of the beginning of the church. This devotion was carried out by Jewish Christians who were a part of the most "primitive" period of Christianity. This exalted status Paul conveyed was reflective of those who "were in Christ before" him (Rom. 16:7). Thus, we see at the decisive beginning veneration for Jesus was very early, easily within the first decade of the Christian movement (Hurtado, 1-5).

So, the historical inquiry into the origin of the veneration of Jesus is found in the pale of Judaism, not in paganism. Ancient Judaism is the relevant religious background for this phenomenon. Pagan accommodation to polytheism does not explain how the uniqueness of God became functionally binitarian in Christianity. Early Jewish Christians felt thoroughly justified in giving reverence to Jesus while at the same time worshipping one God. How could pious Jews who were monotheists accommodate a second figure alongside God as an object of religious devotion? How was this done in the light of Jewish monotheism? The answer lies in the fact that Jewish Christians relied upon ancient Jewish sources and as a result developed a "mutation" or innovation to monotheism. The origin of this "binitarian shape" of early Christianity constitutes a major historical problem (Hurtado, 5, 2, 6) for

trinitarians and unitarians. Later Monarchians and Modalists claimed that orthodoxy had compromised its monotheistic roots and they used the words "two Gods" as a pejorative term against orthodox Christianity, just as the rabbis had done (Segal, 265). In the New Testament many "two power" themes come together. And in the book of Revelation Christ is identified with YHWH (Rev. 22:12-13). The Son is reputed to be *Elohim* enthroned (Psa. 45:7, Heb. 1:8). John identifies Christ as the glory of God which Isaiah saw (John 12:41, Isa. 6:1).

The first Christian writings, apart from the Scriptures, were those of the Apostolic Fathers who appeared on the scene about AD 150. These writings display a marked contrast from those of the original apostles. It should come as no surprise that heresy and doctrinal aberrations were extant within the church before the last quarter of the first century. About AD 180, Hegesippus wrote a defensive treatise against heresy, demonstrating early Christian traditions. Eusebius' conclusion was that Hegesippus was a Jew of Ebionite leanings and that his work, which contained five volumes, was lost. According to Eusebius, Hegesippus wrote that after the death of the apostles false teachers introduced impious error, fraud, and delusions (*Ecclesiastical History*, Eusebius, Chapter XVII). Justin wrote that heresies arose after the ascension of Christ when Simon, Menander, and Marcion came to the fore. Hegesippus wrote that one heterodoxy led to another. The viewpoint of Justin and others was that *there was an original unified Christianity*, later spoiled when diversity came in (Grant 1986, 109). Hegesippus said that the whole of the heretical schools came from Judaism or Jewish sects, and later on Christian writers such as Tertullian, Irenaeus, and Hippolytus said that these heretical schools owed much of their doctrine to Pythagoras, Plato, Aristotle, Zeno, etc. (Harnack, I, 243). As far as the Apologists were concerned, they were essentially subordinist, the Son always subordinate to the Father (Grant 1986, 109).

Jewish philosophers relished telling Old Testament ideas by relating them to the highest levels of Greek theology. Philo said that according to Moses, "the active Cause is the perfectly pure and unsullied Mind of the Universe." Creation, Philo said, was the work of such subordinates as *Logos* and *Sophia* (Grant 1986, 84-85). So, as far as the Jews of the early AD period were concerned, extensive spiritualizing of the Old Testament religion had already taken place, the result of a philosophic view of religion gathered from Greek philosophy and attached to Judaism. All facts and sayings of the Old Testament in which one could not find his way were allegorized. Nothing was what it seemed but only a symbol of something else. Later, Christian writers who made diligent use of the Old Testament did not hesitate to use the allegorical method. What took place was the obliteration of the concrete meaning of the Scriptures by the Jewish philosophic view of the Old Testament. The simple narratives were developed into a theosophy by which abstract ideas had acquired a reality. The view of the Old Testament had been transferred into a world of Hellenic conceptions, a metaphysical view by which concrete things were transformed into things invisible. The next step was to apply this approach to the gospel record using this new material for spiritual interpretations. The church later claimed as her own those first century writers (AD 60-160) who turned to speculation as a means of spiritualizing the Old

Testament. As Harnack says, this Gnostic infusion was the acute secularizing of Christianity. It is no paradox to say that Gnosticism obtained half a victory in the church. The theologians of the first century were Gnostics who attempted to capture Christianity for Hellenic culture and vice versa (Harnack, I, 223–227).

The Babylonian exile had a tremendous influence upon Jewish thinking. The Biblical concept of God was replaced by a "spiritual" idea—a widened concept that conceived of God as transcendental, high above man and farther off. The Hellenistic philosophy viewed God as a pure Being, transcendental, impassive, inactive, and existing out of relation to time and that which is earthly. This influence is seen particularly in extra-canonical literature of the Jews. Greater "reverence" is shown and anthropomorphisms are shunned. The LXX smoothed away the stumbling-blocks from the language used in the Hebrew Scriptures while at the same time robbing it of much of the force and significance. The literature of the period had a decided tendency to hypostatize the Word of God (*Ency. of Religion and Ethics*, s.v. "God"). Centuries later Maimonides gave the most effectual blow to anthropomorphisms by explaining them in figurative terms (*ibid*, s.v. "God [Jewish]"). So, what Maimonides and other Jewish philosophers did with the Jewish tradition is what Greek philosophers did with Homer—they allegorized (Hayman, 2).

The Christian concept of God that is in vogue today has had a long history. The doctrine of God expounded by Jesus in the Sermon on the Mount has been removed by a wide interval to that of the triune deity worshipped and defined by the church councils. If the present Christian view of God is true then revelation is progressive, the apprehension of God gradual, various, and uncertain (*Ency. of Religion and Ethics*, s.v. "God"). Gnostic undertakings were attempts to transform Christianity into a theosophy, that is, a revealed metaphysics and philosophy of history which completely disregarded the Jewish heritage by use of Pauline ideas tainted with the Platonic spirit. The fact is that Gnosticism was in one respect a distorted Paulinism, a factor in the movement of the history of dogma that was ruled by the Greek spirit which had absorbed Eastern religious philosophy from astrology and various Semitic ideas about the creation and origin of the world and universe. Concrete forms in the Bible were converted into speculative ideas, and moral concepts were turned into such things as "Abyss," "Silence," "Logos," "Wisdom," and "Life." The gospels had become a collection of allegoric representations of the history of God and the world. In effect Christ really had no history. Christianity appeared as a speculative philosophy which redeems the spirit by enlightening it (Harnack, 228 fn–231).

What needs to be realized is that the LXX is not a true translation of the original Hebrew but almost a paraphrase. What it did was provide the church with a dogmatic presentation of the faith that is not in accord with the original text. Translators of the LXX approached their task with wrong presuppositions regarding the nature of God, and as a result introduced disastrous and far-reaching results upon the thinking of the Diaspora as well as upon some sections of the Christian church. If we are to seek the truth about the doctrine of

the Trinity we must rely upon the Masoretic Text. We must also set aside Greek abstract thinking concerning the nature of God and instead rely upon the Hebrew text. The early church could have found the concepts of the nature of God in the Hebrew Bible—it *was* there (Knight, 4, 7–9, 23). As we have seen, even the Old Testament does not describe God as one, numerically. In a number of cases God speaks of Himself in the plural. The present concept of the Trinity continues to confuse church members rather than help them (Berkhof, 117, 120). A comparison of the various Creeds demonstrates that Constantinople was more philosophical and theological, farther away from the original Christian doctrines (Grant 1986, 169). The Old Testament has no teaching on the personal distinctions within the Godhead. Old Testament thought did not attempt to explain the problem of transcendence, immanence, and the function of the Spirit of God in the inner life of God himself. According to Alfred Garvie this "fuller revelation" was accomplished in the New Testament. But notice this candid admission by James Forrest. He tells us the ancients were yet imperfect in their theological knowledge—perfection being reserved for a later age (Forrest, 29). Theologians think that the fundamental articles of Christianity were not yet understood by the Fathers of the first three centuries, that the true system began to be modelled into some shape by the Nicene bishops and was afterward immensely improved by the later councils and synods. Almost all Catholic writers before the time of Arius did not appear to know anything about the invisibility and immensity of the Son of God (*ibid*). So, the general consensus among theologians today is that neither the apostles nor the Apostolic Fathers had the conceptual tools to solve, for example, the meaning of the vision of Stephen when he saw Christ at the right hand of God. Later generations "solved" the problem with their explanations of the Trinity.

Modern Trinitarians

Trinitarians admit the word Trinity does not appear in the Bible and it nowhere teaches that there are three Gods. In spite of this, most Christians believe God manifests Himself in three persons. A better word for explaining the nature of God would be Triunity (Hocking, 67). In fact, some trinitarians admit the word "Trinity" is offensive and carries extra baggage. The doctrine is notoriously difficult to expound in any manner that the Christian layman can comprehend. The doctrine of the Trinity is not a Biblical dogma; rather, it is an interpretation of what "we find" in the Bible (Knight, 1). Also, since God is a personal unity as Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, the differences should not be expressed by the word "person," but as yet there is no acceptable term to replace it (Garvie, 476).

The first thing, trinitarians tell us, is that we cannot fully understand God. The best opportunity available for us is to be in a position to learn more and more about God. To know what God is can broaden one's concepts. But the Bible does not teach we cannot know anything about God's nature. In fact, it begins with God's nature and cannot be understood without it. We are supposed to understand God's nature, since God is the One we pray to and

whose name we use. Is it possible to have an understanding of the Bible beyond what it says literally? Yes, indeed, we are told. It is not only possible but necessary. We need to understand what all the symbols stand for. Theology is the special study of how God figures in our daily and practical lives. Trinitarians ask the question, how can one even think he can understand the Bible in English when he has no knowledge of Hebrew and Greek? The answer is that for spiritual knowledge and growth required, we need not know Hebrew and Greek, but for analysis of doctrine we do. Spiritual growth needs nothing more than a Bible and teachable attitude, but for doctrine we need more than a *Strong's Concordance*. For those who believe it is useless to try to study the Bible because it is impossible to understand, even some trinitarians tell us it is impossible to translate Greek into English because one cannot tell what is specifically being said. While God may inspire some to understand the truth, some subjects require preparation, not inspiration. Understanding is one thing but inspiration is another. Understanding has to do with preparation. If one has not done enough preparation in the discussion of the nature of God, he will not understand God. The reason we have different levels of understanding, trinitarians tell us, is because we are at different levels of preparation. It is not a matter of inspiration, attitude, or conversion, but of specialization. When we speak of God's nature we mean God himself. This study requires patience, the ability to focus on detail, and to dissect God's Word so we can come to correct judgments. The reader will recall that second and third century theologians told the people of their day the same thing—that they needed to rely on the theologians for the proper interpretation and understanding of the Scriptures.

Trinitarian teachers assure their church members that they need not feel it is their responsibility to understand doctrines because that is not in their area of expertise. It is the member's duty to do other things, to be present for church services, to do whatever he needs to do but not necessarily to understand. When it comes to the nature of God members need not feel they must be able to explain it. It is not important for all of us to understand the nature of God; it would be nice, but it is a spiritual luxury. So, whether you understand it or not depends on whether you are an expert in the field or a layman. Not everybody can understand everything. Not everybody can explain doctrine correctly. Such an ability requires terminology, ability to respect details, and to organize in a particular order. How long will it take us to understand God fully? Trinitarians tell us we will always be studying God's nature even in the next world; we will be studying God's nature for eternity. So, if someone in the church does not accept the doctrine of the Trinity fully, or he honestly does not see it, he is not a heretic.

Trinitarians have an answer for everything. For example, it is not recorded that Jesus prayed to the Holy Spirit, or to have said that He and the Spirit are one. The reason, trinitarians tell us, is the New Testament is not a book of theology. It addresses such things as circumcision, but does not go into theology (meaning philosophy). Christ would not have enunciated a position on the Holy Spirit; that is the job of the theologian of the church when it establishes doctrine. The reason there is such a paucity of verses that enumerate the three

hypostases is the Bible is not a theology book. It is not a book that methodologically approaches the discipline that examines God. The Bible is not interested in this kind of thing.

Modern trinitarians tell us that at the time the doctrine of the Trinity was formulated such ideas as substance, nature, and person were the best thought of the day but are not appropriate for our time. Even today, we are told, much of the language regarding the Trinity is tritheistic (worship of three gods). The thought during the time when the doctrine of the Trinity was formulated was Greek philosophy and as such was incapable of intelligently defining the Incarnation. As Garvie points out, if God's nature is anything other than personal then the Incarnation is inconceivable. What must be taken into account is that there must be in God the capacity of self-limitation in His infinity and absoluteness in order to make the personal immanence in human personality possible and real (Garvie, 464-470). The doctrine of the Trinity teaches that the Father is God, the Son is God, and the Holy Spirit is God. God is one being only. All Christians, then, follow the Scriptural teaching that God is one in the strict sense of the word. Trinitarians now tell us that all duality in the Godhead can be dismissed. Yet, they admit that the question to this day has not been answered how God is one and three at the same time. The answer cannot be solved by citing the Scriptures alone; it requires the analysis of other concepts in terms that are in harmony with the Bible evidence. The New Testament does not provide an explicit answer from the standpoint of Biblical evidence; the matter is primarily philosophical.

When trinitarians are asked: "If God is one, explain how the Father turned His back on Himself when Christ said, 'Why hast thou forsaken me?'" The answer is that this is a hopelessly misunderstood Scripture. People think that God really turned His face away from Christ. Christ was quoting a Psalm of David, a messianic Psalm. What He was saying was that He was fulfilling a messianic Scripture. Take another example, the analogy of marriage (Matt. 19:6); a union that is called one in the Bible but made up of two people. Trinitarians tell us that Christ was not talking about bodies; He was talking about God's perception. While the Scripture shows oneness, it talks of twoness. In John 17:11 Jesus was talking about the Father and Him being one but speaking of agreement and unity of minds among a plurality of beings. Therefore, the sense is one. How are they one? (John 14:10) One of them must dwell in the other. When Christ did something, the Father did it too. When Christ said something, the Father said it too. We are assured that to understand the unity of God one must understand Hebrew society; they did not think in terms of bodies in the same way we do. Take I Timothy 2:5 as another example of trinitarian reasoning. The text reads, "For there is one God, and one mediator between God and men, the man Christ Jesus." This text does not show us a separation between God and Christ trinitarians say. This Scripture says there is one God; it does not say there is one God and one Mediator and, therefore, there are two Gods. What Christ was while He walked on the earth or what Christ is right now in our minds or what He is in heaven does not determine the nature of God. If we count Mediators,

we count one. If we count Saviors we count one. None of these factors changes the fact that there is one God.

Isaiah 45:5, 21–22 reads, "I am the Lord, and there is none else, there is no God beside me: I girded thee, though thou hast not known me . . . Tell ye, and bring them near; yea, let them take counsel together: who hath declared this from ancient time? who hath told it from that time? have not I the Lord? and there is no God else beside me; a just God and a Savior; there is none beside me. Look unto me, and be ye saved, all the ends of the earth: for I am God, and there is none else." Unitarians love this text, but trinitarians are not impressed. They tell us that to interpret the text to mean God is one and not a Trinity is taking the passage out of context. In the Trinity there are three hypostases but one God. Therefore, once God's oneness is established, all references in the Old and New Testaments refer to the same God, and we are wasting our time to look for another God. The idea of duality in the Godhead contradicts Isaiah 45:5, say trinitarians, in spite of the fact that John 17:11 describes a plurality, that is, two personalities. But, trinitarians say, let us not forget the Holy Spirit; the Holy Spirit is in some way God because the Holy Spirit is one of the ways in which God lives. The Father, Son, and Holy Spirit are ways in which God lives—modes of being of the one God. Scripture does not really explain how this is so. According to trinitarians those who advocate dualism in the Godhead must explain why the Holy Spirit is not divine, yet revealed with the Father and the Son in manifestations (theophanies) in the Scripture. For example Isaiah 6:3, which "proves" a trinity. Also in various passages in the New Testament where the Holy Spirit is called God by implication, for example Acts 5:3–4. (For a clear explanation of this verse write for our article entitled, *What Is the Holy Spirit?*) Trinitarians insist that the Holy Spirit has eternal life (Heb. 9:14) and if the Spirit is holy, this is sufficient to mark divinity. Had the Spirit been less than God, it would not have been holy. The baptismal invocation (Matt. 28:19) serves as a threefold designation of the one God.

Take the word *elohim*. Trinitarians tell us it really means "the powers that be." Therefore, in several places where *elohim* is found it uses a plural verb. How else could one translate "the powers that be"? When translators used *elohim* they were referring either to angels, or to God, or to human beings exclusively. If it refers to God and the angels, then they translated it as God and sacrificed the Hebrew text. The reader will recall the rabbis did similar things in attempting to refute the duality of the Godhead in the Old Testament. Does "Let us make man in our image" in Genesis 1:26 prove there is more than one God? Of course not, trinitarians say. Neither does Genesis 3:22; 11:6–7, or Isaiah 6:8. Take Genesis 1:26 for example. Immediately following "Let us" in verse 26 is verse 27 which says God created man in His own image. The singular here contradicts the plural in verse 26, so the insistence of a plurality of Gods does not match the singular. Also, the idea that *elohim* is plural is contradicted by Deuteronomy 6:4. Trinitarians tell us whether *elohim* is singular or plural depends upon the context. When it is the subject of a sentence in reference to the true God, it is almost always singular. When it is the subject of a plural verb, it usually refers

to false gods. Of itself *elohim* does not have a collective sense as a family of persons. Perhaps it means intensification. But an examination of the *Theological Wordbook of the Old Testament*, by Harris, Archer, Waltke, says "But a better reason can be seen in Scripture itself where, in the very first chapter of Gen, the necessity of a term conveying both the unity of the one God and yet allowing for a plurality of persons is found (Gen 1:2, 26)." Trinitarians insist there is no such thing as a uni-plural word in the Hebrew; a correct term for *elohim* would be "collective." Those who believe God inspired the word *elohim* in the Hebrew Scriptures are wrong because God does not do such things, they say. Human beings are the ones who create words. The Hebrew language inherited the word *elohim* from the Canaanites. *Elohim* is a plural word; a plural form is used when it refers to many, and a singular form is used when it refers to one. In the New Testament *El*, *Eloah*, *Elohim* are translated *Theos*, and the Hebrew has no word that can be translated "two Gods." The above trinitarian view demonstrates the same arguments tossed out by the rabbis in the second and third centuries. Also, that the Bible is the work of men, not inspired by God, and that it is full of contradictions that must be explained away.

Then there is the *Shema* of Deuteronomy 6:4. Does "one" there mean one, as in counting? Yes, trinitarians tell us, there is only one word used for counting the number one in Hebrew. The word "one" in Deuteronomy cannot mean "only" as some say. *Echad*, used there means one; it does not mean first. We will examine *echad* later to see the fallacy of the above argument, but notice the following: Trinitarians tell us that the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit are not separate distinctions but are three hypostases, or ways of being. They tell us a good example would be the president. He is a president, husband, and father. He is three things with three distinctions, three functions. These are distinctions or ways of being, ways in which he necessarily is. That is the meaning of the word hypostasis. With respect to the president, trinitarians say, if you killed one of the three distinctions he would be dead. God is a being which is Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. If you deny the hypostasis of the Holy Spirit you have a problem on your hands. What we are dealing with is three distinctions, not three separations. We must distinguish what is beyond man's comprehension such as the Being we call God, but what we do comprehend is that He is Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, and He is one. The question has been asked, if there are now three hypostases, could God make up more if He wanted to? The trinitarian answer is no. He cannot. Can God make somebody God? No, He cannot. To "make" somebody means that such a one is not God because he is made. Only God is unmade. If there is another hypostasis that we do not know about, then that hypostasis is not involved in creation or in salvation because we do not know anything about it.

What about the preexistence of Christ? How do some trinitarians view this? They say Christ was not an entity before His first coming. When the Scripture says the Word was made flesh, it does not mean there was an interweaving of divinity with humanity. When praying to the Father, Christ said in effect, "I was with you in glory so I am asking you to give me that state again." In John 1:1, trinitarians tell us, "Word" should be more accurately

translated "utterance." So, in the beginning was "utterance." Now if there was an utterance there was an utterer. Logos, according to trinitarians, does not mean a speaker; it means that which is spoken. So, in the beginning was the utterance (what God speaks); the utterance is with God; and, this utterance which speaks is divine. In the beginning was utterance; the utterance was with God; and, the utterance was divine. God is one. He is thinker and He is thought. He is also spirit, not matter. God is both thinker and thought. As thinker He is Father, as thought He is Son. In what sense is God Father? In the sense He is thinker. In what sense is He Son? In the sense that He is thought. God is divine mind. God's mind is present everywhere. God is thinker and God is thought and God is one in the same way each human being is thinker and thought and one. It is impossible for God to be Father and not Son, thinker and not thought. We are not talking about another person, another separate God. In Genesis 1:1-3 we are introduced to God, the Father, the Spirit of God, that is the Mover, and to the Logos (utterance). God is spirit; God is thinker; God is thought. Father and Son do not express separate beings or persons; they are expressing relationships. The Logos has always proceeded from the Father; the Son has always been coming forth from the Father. Then when did Christ become the begotten Son of God? The answer: He was begotten from eternity as well as from the virgin Mary. Since Logos means "utterance" from the Father, the Word was already in existence and, therefore, He was not created and had no beginning. How can Christ proceed from the Father and yet have no beginning? Who is older, God or His thought? God's thought is infinite and eternal. Everything that proceeds from God is God. So, the Son can proceed from the Father and yet have no beginning.

The above explanation is not new; it goes back at least to the time of Tertullian who said essentially the same thing. It is an example of Greek philosophy tailored to suit the question of Christ's preexistence. Unitarians use the same reasoning.

Trinitarians ask: If the Holy Spirit is God why do we not address the Holy Spirit in worship as we do the Father? The answer is that when we pray to God we pray to the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit because there is one God. Then what about Psalm 110:1 where we read, "The Lord said unto my Lord, Sit thou at my right hand, until I make thine enemies thy footstool"? Is this a reference to two separate beings? Let us read it this way, we are told. "The Father said to the Son, sit on my right hand." If "Son" is a reference to a human king, or to a son of David, in either case it does not substantiate two separate God beings. The text is either prophetic of the Messiah or it is not. It is a dangerous thing to say that the Father has preeminence over Jesus Christ. Why? Because there is only one God and one will. So, there is no preeminence in the sense of authority. If preeminence means in the sense of one proceeding from the other, then everything proceeds from the Father. The Bible uses the word Father because He is the source, the word Son because He proceeds from the Father. What was the relationship, then, between Christ, as God on earth, and the Father, as God in heaven? The trinitarian answer is that Christ was limited to a body, shape, time, and place while the Father was in heaven with no shape, no time, no place. How was Christ God, then? The answer is that He was God in origin. Who, then, was God while Christ was on the earth?

God was. He was Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. Speaking of the Holy Spirit, does the Bible show that the Holy Spirit is God? Trinitarians point to Job 33:4 and Psalm 104:29–30. Yet, both texts which "prove" the Holy Spirit is Creator and life-giving do not imply a third person. Furthermore, trinitarians tell us John 3:5 compared with John 1:13 show that to be born of the Spirit is equivalent to being born of God. Yet, informed Bible students know that born and begotten are from the same Greek word and the text could just as well read that one "begotten" of God is one who receives the Holy Spirit.

Trinitarians look for support for the Trinity in various New Testament passages. For example, Acts 5:3–4 supposedly proves the Holy Spirit is God. Other "proof" texts are Matthew 3:16–17, John 10:30, I Corinthians 2:11, Romans 8:9, and John 14:16. Yet, an examination of these texts shows that scholars are correct who say that in order to find the Trinity in any Bible passage, one must read into the text a presupposition. Also, the question comes up, why did Paul fail to acknowledge the Holy Spirit in any of the salutations in his epistles? The trinitarian answer is that there are two types of greetings in the New Testament—one Hebrew and one Greek. In Paul's epistles we find the Hebrew greeting. The letters of Paul do not deal with the nature of God. But Paul did mention the Holy Spirit in II Corinthians 13:14. A look at the text does not mention a Trinity. Paul's main concern in his letters, we are told, was the unity of the church, not the need to have the members understand the nature of God. The concept of the work of the Holy Spirit did not need to undergo any development. Trinitarians tell us that even though ancient thinkers speculated about God, they never came up with Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. This is because, trinitarians say, the Trinity was given by revelation. This flies in the face of the historical facts. There were many examples of a trinity in the ancient world, often a threesome of father, mother, and son. Later, the mother was transferred over to the Holy Spirit. So, the Trinity did not come as a revelation from God. Rather, it came from paganism which was transferred into Christianity. Trinitarians tell us that in the early church there was never a question about the nature of God. It did not cross their minds; it came up centuries later. One must not, we are told, assume that what the early church thought about Christ represents the truth. That is a mistake that is made today. What was thought in the early church settles nothing. Inspiration is important but not in settling matters of doctrine. Today we have defined the doctrine with greater care. Revelation is what we follow to correct doctrine.

In order to make it easy to accept the doctrine of the Trinity many Bible expositors do not take the Scriptures literally. Rather they are to be taken as metaphors, symbols, parables, figures of speech, etc. While it is true, the Bible does contain metaphors, symbols, parables, figures of speech, etc., it is equally clear that not all of the Bible should be taken this way. A church that follows a metaphoric or symbolic approach is bound to spiritualize the Scriptures. Parables can have a literal and non-literal aspect. Symbols can also have a literal aspect. Trinitarians insist that the crude implication of taking the descriptions of God as literal—a means of disclosing His nature—opens up a wide range of nonsensical questions, such as: Would God be incapacitated by the loss of His limbs? The claim that personal

characteristics, as they pertain to God in the Scriptures, suggest a personality is false; it is theologically inaccurate to say that God is a person for that very reason. The Biblical writers, trinitarians say, used metaphors to express the power and will of God in a vivid and meaningful way, not to literally describe His nature. It is impossible to describe God's nature in literal terms. When trinitarians are asked: "If God cannot lie why would He portray Himself in the form of a man when He is supposedly shapeless?" They say God is not lying when He represents Himself by using figures of speech. All bodily references to God are figures of speech. Even God speaking is a figure of speech. No one believes God has a mouth connected with vocal cords that vibrate the air. The expression "God spoke" is a term borrowed from the created order and used to refer to the "uncreated" order. References to the body are not meant to tell us God has a body. The various texts which show motion, body parts, etc., do not prove God has a shape, talks, moves. When asked: If this is the case then how can a person be sure he understands any Scripture? Trinitarians insist God does not say one should read the Scriptures literally. In fact, they say, if one takes the Scriptures literally one would find them full of contradictions. Take, for example, God is a consuming fire. One would have to conclude God is a fire. If you say He has hands or feet, one would conclude He is not a consuming fire. If you say He is a consuming fire, one concludes He does not have hands and feet. To read the Scriptures at such a superficial level leads to many contradictions. The Hebrew language is so full of figures of speech that nine-tenths of it is figurative. The reader will recall that Platonic-tainted theologians of the third and fourth centuries, as well as Jews, went to great lengths to allegorize the Scriptures in order to explain away what they refused to plainly see.

Why do appearances of God in the Bible fail to prove God has a bodily form? Because, some trinitarians tell us, John 1:18 and I John 4:12 say no one has seen God at anytime. Visions, dreams, and other manifestations should not, therefore, be taken literally for how else could one describe the unfathomable and invisible? The Bible depicts the human form because that is what we relate to best. God uses matter to manifest Himself visibly to humans. His omnipresence does not mean He has a finite body with an omnipresent spirit. Some trinitarians say this amounts to saying that God is part omnipresent and part not omnipresent. God is one, therefore He cannot be part unlimited by space and part limited in space. The Bible tells us, they say, that God is omnipresent and that He is spirit, not a body with a spirit. God is in many places at the same time, yet some have explained this by saying God sends a portion of His Holy Spirit to each individual. The problem is that a portion is a piece and spirit is not composed of pieces; only things have pieces. But the question to be asked is: If God is a spirit with no body and is everywhere in the universe at the same time why is there any need for a third person in the Godhead called the Holy Spirit? Psalm 139:7 says, "Whither shall I go from thy spirit? or whither shall I flee from thy presence?" We cannot escape from God's Spirit. So is it not more logical to conclude that His Spirit is an invisible extension of His mind? What Jeremiah 23:23 teaches is that God is omnipresent, not omnibody.

But a text such as Jeremiah 23:23 does not phase trinitarians. They reply that if we say Christ has to leave heaven in order to come to earth, we deny God's omnipresence. If God is everywhere, that is, omnipresent, then He does not have to leave any place in order to be on the earth. God can be in heaven and on the crucifixion cross at the same time. So, God is not finite. He sustains everything. In Him we live and move and have our being. If one were to get up and move to another location in the room, he would be moving in God. Moving a hand is made possible by God's will. We are not separate from God. We are held together and our life is in His hands. If one is in a particular seat is God there? Yes, indeed, some trinitarians say. If He is in every seat in the house then He does not have to move anywhere. When Adam and Eve tried to hide, it reflected distorted thinking. All verbs of motion applied to God have a meaning for us but are not descriptive of God's divine status. Everything is upheld by God. God is here. God is there. God is everywhere. God is in every part between because everything is sustained by Him. He is in and throughout the human body. He is in man's mind and heart. He is able to read our thoughts because He is everywhere, even inside our heads. He is in and throughout animals. He is in rocks and stone and sand. If God did not uphold it, it would not exist. Everything we touch is sustained by God. He is in the Japanese as well as us because He is everywhere. To say God walks, sits, stands, or has a nose, hands, etc., is all for our edification. It is impossible for God to change locations because in order to do this He must be in a place. He must be limited to one place otherwise how can He move to another place? God is here and there so there isn't anyplace He needs to go. To change locations is impossible for God. Changing locations has to do with having a body.

How do we pray to this ethereal being who is everywhere, trinitarians ask? A being that has no form, no shape, no location? The answer is that we need to distinguish between intellect and emotions of a person. The concept of God is not an emotional one. Prayer, on the other hand, is very personal and very emotional. In the Bible God reveals Himself in spacial terms with form, shape, clothes, robes, etc., and none of this is wrong. It is not wrong to think of God in these terms. If we discuss what God is, then we must use intellect. So, there is a difference between an intellectual grasp of God's nature and an emotional one. The difference between intellect and emotion is the word "truth." Is it truth or not? This is an intellectual question. How God reveals Himself in the Bible may not be truly the way you may have thought about Him in your prayer room. Some trinitarians say, then, that when we are discussing the nature of God we are not discussing how God appears in the Bible. In fact, we are told that one cannot picture God or Satan. To do so is a mistake because a picture is either two or three dimensional and limited by space. One cannot picture God because God is not a spacial being. Even Satan is not limited by time or space; he is omnipresent. Romans 1:23 shows that to present God in the shape of a man is a terrible thing to do.

Some trinitarians insist that while God is omnipresent, a body is not. God is everywhere so that He doesn't need eyes. God speaks and whole worlds come into existence, so what would He do with hands and fingers? God does not need a voice box in order to

register sounds. He can impart His thoughts to us directly. The more one examines the idea of a bodily God the more precarious the notion becomes. God designed our anatomy, structure, and form for our kind of existence. But why would God have such a body? He certainly doesn't need one, so is it reasonable to believe He has one? When the Bible says we shall be like Him it means we will fulfill our purpose to be in the image of God in glory. The truth is, trinitarians say, though we are in the image of God, it does not follow that He is in ours.

To the question, how could God create emotions if He doesn't have any, trinitarians answer, how can God create bodies if He doesn't have one? Emotions, thinking, and reason are not physical and have nothing to do with God. Examples of "the arm of the Lord," "the Lord shall rejoice," "His soul was grieved," "thou hatest all workers of iniquity," "I will be comforted," "God remembered Noah," "bow down thine ear to me," "the breath of his nostrils," "they provoked him to jealousy," and "he that sitteth in the heavens shall laugh" are all examples of ascribing to God conditions and emotions that exist for humans, that is, speaking of God in the manner that marks man, how human beings react or think, the kind of passions that afflict man. This is how the Hebrews spoke, how they ascribed human passions to God. God condescends to convey something in terms we would have conveyed. God knows our emotions before we express them. We express them because we are limited; we need to do so for our own sake not for God's sake. God condescends to our low estate for our own edification. With this approach to understanding the Bible, it is not difficult for the reader to see why trinitarians readily accept the concept of a Trinity.

Daniel 7:13-14 as well as I Kings 22:19 are not to be taken literally, trinitarians say. They are examples of dreams and visions. There is a difference, we are assured, between two Beings in heaven and a vision of two Beings in heaven. If God is going to reveal a vision of something in heaven, of a reality of heaven, He has to reveal it in visible terms. The book of Revelation does not show two separate entities interacting. Again it is a vision of what John saw. A vision shows things in space. When you dream you see things in space. The book of Revelation does not show God as separate entities because it is a vision. If God is going to show something He has to show it in space. Time means space. If you have no space you have no time. Revelation 1:12-17 also should not be taken literally; it is a symbol. When we consider God, trinitarians say, we should realize God is not a person because when you use the word "person" a person has a beginning. This could not apply to God. While the dictionary gives the meaning of hypostasis as a person of the Trinity keep in mind dictionaries give usage not definitions. Dictionaries are lists of usage. The dictionary does not give the meaning of hypostasis, only how it is commonly used. If one says God is a person, one is saying God is a three-person person, so you have a fourth person in God. God would be a person, a person, a person, and a three person person. If you take the Bible literally, trinitarians say, you would have to say Christ is a lamb, that He has seven stars in His hand, and a sword in His mouth. All such references are symbolic; they have a spiritual lesson to convey. All verbs of motion are examples God gives for our benefit. As earthly

beings we speak in earthly terms. God reveals His will to us in words we can understand. Genesis 22:12 is another example, trinitarians tell us, that it should not be taken literally; it is to be understood in a figurative sense. It is in the same category as "the trees selecting a king," or "the mountains skipped like lambs." Now take Genesis 1:26. Some Bible expositors explain the word "image" as special attributes such as personality, the ability to reason, create, plan, make moral judgments. Or "image" can be physical combining all of the above. Trinitarians tell us some scholars view the Hebrew concept of God as not advanced beyond the anthropomorphic stage. But by the time of the prophets the nature of God was better understood. Humans cannot as a whole be in God's image. We are only a bodily representation of God's bodilessness. The idea that God made man in His image is not, therefore, to be taken literally. "Image" and "likeness" are best explained by synonymous parallelism. The words "image" and "likeness" are added to convey intensity, not to convey different meanings. Even the pronoun "us" in Genesis 1:26 is an example of a widespread mistake by assessing the literal feature of the text, we are told. Genesis 11:7 does not mean that a plurality of Gods went down. Such an explanation should be dismissed as impossible in the light of Jewish monotheism. The plural "us" does not refer to Yahweh. All interpretations that suggest plurality of Gods are in error. God is really addressing the host of heaven in Genesis 11.

Accusations against trinitarians who attempt to describe the nature of God as blasphemous, altogether liberal, secular, speculative, and indulging in metaphysical academic diatribes are not at all incorrect. We have already seen in this work the approach to Bible understanding taken by third and fourth century theologians who were steeped in Platonic philosophy. It would not be incorrect to conclude that the entire trinitarian scheme to define the nature of God has its origin in paganism and those today who attempt to parrot the ideas extant in the early centuries of the Christian era are simply repeating the same philosophic notions—*notions* that are hostile to what God revealed in His Word. He did not reveal what Greek philosophy assumed regarding the nature of God. The writer who said the truth of God's nature is essentially revealed in the Old Testament is fundamentally correct.

Trinitarians are not the only ones who have adopted the previous mentioned ideas of God's omnipresence. Take the Cabalists (followers of Jewish esoteric or mysterious doctrine), for example. Cabalists believe the world flows from the godhead, of which the world is a manifestation. The godhead fills everything and is everything. God contains and transcends all things and all qualities, good and evil, limitless and limited, infinite and finite, unity and variety, spirit and matter, unknowable and knowable, all of which are reconciled and united in the great Whole which is the godhead. Man who would reach the godhead must similarly reconcile and transcend all factors in himself. The god of the Cabala is more *it* than *he*—the infinite En-Sof, the hidden godhead, unknown and unknowable. It cannot be defined as good or merciful, or just, or even real or living, nor can one say it is not these things. It can be called Nothing because you cannot ascribe any qualities to it, but equally

it is everything. It can be called Infinite Light, a boundless divine radiance (*Encyclopedia of the Unexplained*, edited by Richard Cavendish, s.v. "Cabala").

There is no aspect of what God is that trinitarians are reluctant to define. They refuse to limit themselves to any question regarding the nature of God. Even the definition of "spirit body" must be characterized. They tell us "spirit body" is a contradiction of terms since whatever is spirit has no body. While Paul uses "spiritual body" in I Corinthians 15, it should be understood to mean the counterpart of "natural body." We are told we must not press the word "body" because it is a spiritual existence. One cannot give a spirit form and shape. One cannot use an expression like "made of" and follow it with the word "spirit." "Spirit body" does not appear in the Bible. The reason it does not appear there is because it does not make sense, trinitarians say. Spirit means "without body." The word "body" requires a shape and substance that can be touched. A "spiritual body" is something different. Paul says there is a colossal difference between a natural body and a spiritual body. A natural body is a terrestrial body, a body that comes from nature. A spiritual body is that which comes from spirit, from the realm of God. According to trinitarians, what Paul is discussing in I Corinthians 15 is origin not composition, the question is from where each body comes. We tend to imagine that there must be an "image of the heavenly," meaning a physical image. The change that will take place is to a different order. We should not read this text and misunderstand it to mean a spirit body. Spiritual does not mean "spirit." Spiritual is what comes from spirit. Such a state means man will be glorified, changed, no longer in space, no longer with height and breadth, no longer with a body. Christ does not have a body, otherwise He would be in one location. A spiritual body refers to the state we will have when we are glorified. Angels should not be referred to as "spirit beings." To use this term implies one is thinking of a unit of space, which is not correct. Angels do not require space because they are not in space. They are like thoughts which are also spiritual and not in space. The glorified saints will be omnipresent because they will not be in time and space. This is the meaning of spirit. Christ is now wherever people are gathered in His name. We shall be like Him; in this way we will be God. Scriptures that "show" God has no form are Psalm 139, John 4:24, Colossians 1:15, I Timothy 1:17, and Hebrews 11:27.

When we discuss the nature of God, trinitarians tell us, we are not speaking about Christ when He was a human. One must not think that His body was God. There is a distinction between God as God in heaven and Christ who came from heaven, whose origin was God. There are those who believe Christ was the God of the Old Testament. Trinitarians tell us this is disproven by the expression "the God of our fathers," (Acts 5:30) which is a reference to the Father during the Old Testament period. This is also disproven by Matthew 15:31, "... they glorified the God of Israel." This again is a reference to the Father, not to Christ, so Christ could not have been the God of the Old Testament. This erroneous conclusion is based on the misunderstanding of Jewish monotheism. It has been demonstrated previously in this work that Jewish monotheism involved the worship of two Gods, and that up to the medieval period Yahweh was regarded as the second God.

Trinitarians say Emmanuel means God *in* us, not God *with* us. Yet an examination of the usage of *meta* shows it is translated "with" numerous times and this is its usual meaning. To say *meta* means "in" is simply an interpretation. Furthermore, Christ certainly did not dwell in the people by means of His Holy Spirit until after His resurrection, so during His earthly sojourn He did not dwell in anybody. The New Testament teaches that Christ is the perfect image of the Father. Trinitarians say it is a mistake to conclude that Christ looked exactly like the Father (John 14:9). Such a misunderstanding is Modalistic (the teaching that the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit are not persons but mere manifestations of the divine nature). Trinitarians tell us the Father was not revealed by Christ's personal appearance because we do not know what Christ looked like. Christ revealed the Father in a unique and meaningful way; we need only look at Christ's life. When the Word was God and was with God means that the Word was with "the God," that is, the eternal God—a different state. "Was God" means He was divine. So, "the God" means the eternal state of divinity while "was God" means the eternal state of eternity. "He is God" means He has a particular quality. The "Word was God" is a discussion of His nature, in this case divine nature. To "go to heaven" is another way of saying "to be exalted."

To be at the right hand of God is to be God, to be on the throne is to share God's glory. When Stephen saw the glory of God and Jesus standing on the right hand of God, trinitarians tell us, there is a difference between what he saw and what is in heaven. "At the right hand" is a Hebrewism, and if one took the Bible literally one would be laughing all the time. One must understand the Hebrew way of thinking. What Stephen saw was a vision; it was not a photograph of heaven. It was given to show Jesus is God, which is the issue over which the Jews rejected Christ. What about the assumption that Christ's human will, which had no preexistence, was resurrected and is now present with the Father? The trinitarian answer is that the will cannot be resurrected because a will never dies. Only human beings die, not wills. Thoughts are immortal; they cannot die. We cannot assume that a will is resurrected because a will does not die in order to be resurrected. Wills, thoughts, and spiritual things do not perish. It was Christ who died, not His will. Was God dead for three days? The answer is no because God cannot die. Christ died because He had become man. The difference between the nature of God's Spirit which supports the entire creation and the Holy Spirit we receive upon baptism is in God's will. Trinitarians assure us it is not unusual to say God's Spirit sustains the universe and also guides our will. If God would remove His will everything would disappear. We would die because we would not be around to die. If God's will changes with respect to existence, we would not exist anymore. If God withdraws His will from our existence and from us we will cease to exist. We will not die, we will just cease to exist. Angels cannot die because they cease to exist by the will of God. Can God do away with angels? Yes, indeed. All He has to do is to will them out of existence. Is Satan disconnected from God? Separated is a spacial term which has no meaning when applied to God. Satan does not exist independently from God. One cannot use the word "separate" when speaking about angels.

Does Christ have a body now? Trinitarians tell us to have a body means to be in time and space. It is not possible to have a body and be in space. If Christ has a body then He is in space now. The answer is that Christ does not have a body. He is in glory. He can manifest Himself in a physical body, but He is in a glorified state. That state is described as a spiritual body, which means a different state. The expression "glorious body" means that Christ's natural body was changed into the appropriate mode of existence. We too shall be changed into a higher state but we will never be more than created beings; we will never be God. God is one so we can never be God. God is in all times and knew in advance that mankind would separate from Him and need a Savior. What we need to realize is that knowing what is going to happen and controlling what is going to happen are not the same thing. God knows our future but we decide it. God does not have to work in time when working with human beings. The statement that God was sorry He had made man is a figure of speech, ascribing passions to God, an example of condescension. God condescends to the ignorance and weakness of man.

For those who ask, who did the speaking in Mark 1:11, the trinitarian answer is that the Scripture does not say it was the voice of God. God can make a voice sound from heaven in the same way He can make a cloud or a pillar of fire. If this was the Father speaking then Christ, John, and Paul must be wrong. If what we see and hear is the criterion of what is the true God, then the Father is audible and the Holy Spirit is shaped like a dove or a tongue. I Timothy 6:16 says, "no man hath seen, nor can see" in referring to God. John 5:37 implies God has a shape, but the original Greek says, "nor seen a shape belonging to Him." There is not a voice that came from God Himself, nor a shape that one can see. The Scripture does not prove that God has a voice. We make a mistake when we think God opens His mouth in order to create a voice. Matthew 27:46 does not mean Christ was speaking to a separate being. This passage is the fulfillment of a prophecy given in Psalm 22:1; Christ was fulfilling a messianic Psalm. He was saying prophecy was being fulfilled. Why did Christ, then, pray to "our Father which art in heaven"? Heaven does not mean a location, but a different state. God abides in a different state; that state is called heaven. What is the answer to John 10:34-35 which seems to imply there is more than one God? Trinitarians say verse 34 is referring to Psalm 82:6. The people were unrighteous judges. *Elohim* is used there because they were acting like God. The text does not say human beings will be God. "Ye are gods" was used when applied to the judges of Israel. Did Moses actually see God's back parts? The answer is no, trinitarians say, because the Bible says no man has seen God at any time. What Moses saw were the words and works of God. The expression "face to face" does not mean what it appears to say. When the Scripture says the angels always behold the face of the Father, it means to be in the immediate presence of God. God does not need a face, shape, or form in order to be recognized.

To assert that God created Adam in His own image, trinitarians say, is to imply He did not do so with Eve. Since both were in the image of God, it would follow that Adam did not look like God physically. Even a newborn child is not in the image of God due to its

small size. "In His image" means a range of divine qualities which is more meaningful than bodily parts. What about Genesis 5:3 where Seth was made in the image of Adam. The definition of the word "like" changes meaning according to its context. It could not only refer to shape but also to value, action, origin. If Adam was made in the image of God, and God does not have a shape, one cannot make God into a shape. The chances are that Genesis 5:3 refers to conduct rather than to physical appearance. The word "like" does not automatically refer to shape. Going back to Genesis 1:26, trinitarians tell us the point to keep in mind is that the first chapter of Genesis is highly poetic. It is an impression of creation not a scientific account of what really happened. What we have in Genesis is a broad and general statement followed later by a more specific account. "Let us" is a broad statement. Man is like God insofar as he rules the lower creatures just as God does. We are in the image of God as far as knowledge is concerned, as well as in righteousness and holiness. Image means having knowledge, understanding, and the intellectual capabilities of God.

Next we need to examine unitarianism as it is posited today. But a look at what we have just read concerning trinitarian theology reveals the use of parables, symbols, metaphors, figures of speech, and the decided view not to accept the Bible literally and at face value. The entire approach is inherited from third and fourth century theological thought highly tainted by Greek speculation. Many of the ideas advanced by trinitarians are so far-fetched, and so unknown in reality, that what is said is largely guesswork. We must not be taken in by Greek speculation under the guise that this represents the authoritative inspired Word of God. We shall see later on what the authoritative Word of God says about the nature of God.

Unitarianism Today

Unitarians are the lineal descendants of the Arians. They are sometimes referred to as Socinians (*Heresies Exposed*, compiled by William C. Irvine, s.v. "Unitarianism"). Like trinitarians, they have an answer for everything. There was a precursor to Arianism. In the primitive church Ebionites maintained an Old Testament type of monotheism, esteeming Christ to be a prophet of exceptionally high and pure character whose mission was to preserve and purify the revelation of the Torah. Jesus was regarded as a specially commissioned messenger from God, in kind with Moses and Isaiah but of a higher spiritual degree (*Ency. of Religion and Ethics*, s.v. "God"). There was also the later view called Adoptionism, which held that Jesus was a man of special decree from God, born of a virgin through the operation of the Holy Spirit; He was not a heavenly being who had assumed flesh through the virgin. After the piety of His life had been thoroughly tested, the Holy Spirit descended upon Him in baptism. It was by this means that He became Christ and received the power for His special vocation (Harnack, III, 21). James Forrest tells us that the writers of the age immediately following that of the apostles believed in one God, the Father, and did not regard Jesus Christ to be more than a man. What this demonstrates, of course, is how

rapidly the truth was lost following the deaths of the original apostles. Forrest goes on to say that from about AD 150–400 both Christ and the Holy Spirit were viewed as divine but inferior to the Father. The third period, following AD 400, was when the doctrine of the Trinity became the leading article of theology (Forrest, 12). Hegesippus was quite correct when he wrote that at an early date heresy set in. This is certainly obvious in the matter of the nature of God, as professing Christians became utterly confused. Opposition to what eventually became the doctrine of the Trinity is seen in a number of comments made during the third and fourth centuries, many which indicate an aversion to the divinity of Christ. Origen wrote, "We may by this means [formulating the new doctrine] solve the doubts of many men who profess great piety, and who are afraid of making two Gods Because it is probable that some will be offended with our saying that, though the Father is declared to be the only true God, there are other Gods besides Him partaking of His divinity." Novatian said the unitarians of his day scandalized the doctrine of Christ's deity. Eusebius wrote, "If this makes them apprehensive lest we should seem to introduce two Gods, let them know, that though we do indeed acknowledge the Son to be God, yet there is (absolutely) but one God. Some for fear of introducing a second God, make the Father and the Son the same. Marcellus, for fear of saying that there are two Gods, denies the Son to be a separate person" (quoted in Forrest, 39–40).

In a book entitled *God's Last Metaphor*, by Bruce M. Stephens, we find reference to Andrew Norton, an early 1800's Harvard religious professor and unitarian who wrote that the doctrine of the Trinity is "part of a system which has been substituted for true religion." Norton regarded the doctrine of the Trinity as theological rubbish of the past, a doctrine that is essentially incredible. He distinguished five different forms of the doctrine and concluded that in each case three Gods were advocated. Norton was convinced that the Trinity, as well as the divinity of Christ, were philosophical corruptions of the New Testament, the result of the early Fathers accommodating the pressures of culture and history. Norton was convinced that in no instance could a trinitarian interpretation be attributed to a text without doing violence to the intended meaning and to the fundamental principles of interpretation (Stephens, 54–55). We might add the same can be said about unitarianism. Unitarians today tell us there are 1350 unitarian texts in the New Testament beside thousands in the Old Testament. These supposedly occur every time the Father is called God. Unitarians admit Jesus is called God for certain two times (but in a different sense). Personal pronoun references occur some 11,000 times informing us, they say, that God is a single individual. While Jesus is given the title God two times, He is never called "the God," which to them means the "only God." In fact, they say John does not say that God was one God and the Word was "another God." John says the Word was divine. There is a difference between the claim that the Word was divine and the claim that He was God.

We have seen the recently made statement that the Christ was a physical manifestation of the hypostatized "utterance" of God. This idea is not new. Statements by Origen refer to the Logos as "an utterance" from God. Tertullian referred to the Logos as "speech" saying

the word of *revelation* was with God. So, unitarians tell us it is clear by these statements that the Word was not yet understood as the Son preexisting eternally with the Father, as was believed by later orthodoxy. What this demonstrates is—the departure from truth took place at an early date and later church fathers groped for some concept of God that was at least Biblical. So, naturally unitarians in order to support their arguments accept this same idea of Christ, a physical manifestation of the hypostatized word. Unitarians tell us it was the "impersonal life" which was with the Father before the birth of Jesus, not the Son himself preexisting. John wants us to understand, they say, that when the Word became flesh, the transition was not that of a divine person becoming a human person, but of an impersonal personification becoming embodied as a human being. To John the Logos signifies not a second person in the Godhead but the self-expressive activity of God. Jesus existed in the mind and purpose of God, rather than literally as a timeless being. They say if we translate Logos as "God's utterance" it would become clear that the Logos was not intended to mean a personal divine being. "Coming down from heaven" need not imply a previous existence in the literal sense. It means that God's timeless gift was planned in His eternal councils. John the Baptist's statement that "He was before me" may refer to superiority of rank rather than a priority of time. So, John 1:15, 30 cannot be claimed as proof that Jesus existed before His human birth.

Unitarians also refer to John 6:62; 8:58; 17:5, which allude to the preexistence of Christ. These texts, they tell us, do not involve the claim that this preexistence was personal and real. Rather, they should be classified with "the phenomena of messianic consciousness." The past tense in John 17 indicates not what actually has happened but what is destined to happen because God has already decreed it. Furthermore, Romans 8:3 and Galatians 4:4 are not proofs of the preexistence of Christ. Rather, they probably mean that Jesus was commissioned by God and shared in man's frailty, bondage, and sin. "Sent from God" does not mean Christ enjoyed life in heaven before coming to the earth. When Christianity began to worship Christ—one that was created—it fell into idolatry. Paul linked salvation to a correct understanding of the identity of God and Christ. It is fanciful, unitarians say, to think that trinitarian and binitarian systems can be harmonized with the strict sense of monotheism of Jesus and the Scriptures. The reader is already aware that Jewish monotheism has been grossly misunderstood, and the crux of the entire unitarian error is based on this misunderstanding. Unitarians refer to Psalm 110:1. They ask, does this text prove the preexistence of Jesus? And what does it mean when it calls the Messiah Lord? Their explanation is that the first Lord in the text is Yahweh. And they admit it refers to Jesus when He functions as an agent for Yahweh. But actually the first Yahweh refers to God, the Father, and the second "Lord" is the Hebrew word *Adoni* meaning master, owner, lord, and is a reference to the Messiah. There is a vast difference between *Adoni* (my master) and *Adonai* (the supreme God). So, what this text tells us, according to unitarians, is that the Messiah was not God but a human descendant of David. When the angel told Mary that her son would be called "the Son of God" this was because of the miracle that would be performed on her.

Various Biblical expressions which describe Christ's preexistence do not mean what they imply, unitarians say. In John 8:47, the phrase "from God" means "the man who belongs to God." Jesus claimed to function as God's agent, given the right to forgive sins, judge the world, and raise the dead. Jesus was not Yahweh but God's supremely elevated representative. The equality of function He had with God did not mean that He was God. Unitarians assure us texts cited in John for proof of Christ's divinity have been misunderstood because little attention has been paid to Jewish categories of thought, particularly that past tenses do not always refer to past events. The human "Son of man" had preexisted in the *divine plan*. Occasional "difficult verses," unitarians say, must not override the plain evidence of the Scriptures. They tell us the failure to grasp the creed of Jewish monotheism will lead to disastrous results when it comes to believing Christ. The Father is the only true God, and since Jesus is evidently a different person from the Father, Jesus is not God. While the fullness of the deity dwells in Him, this does not mean that He is himself God. John's vocabulary of the identity of Jesus must be translated back into its Hebrew original. When Jesus explained the foundation of His belief, He repeated the *Shema* (Mark 12:29). The picture of the Messiah the Jews built up from the Old Testament did not include the idea that the Messiah actually existed prior to His birth. As the "Son of man" He possessed the transcendent gifts of wisdom and power. If Jesus is "very God" and only His atonement could be made for man's sins, where is this "very God" mentioned in the Scriptures? Christ was God's unique, chosen Agent, but to say that He is God misrepresents the Christian Scriptures. When Christ said He did not know the time of His return to earth, this is evidence enough that He was not omniscient. The oft repeated notion that unless Jesus is God we have no Savior has no Scriptural backing.

Modern scholars, unitarians say, no longer take Genesis 1:26 as a proof of the plurality in the Godhead. It is *most likely* the plural pronoun "us" contains a reference to one of God's attendant councils of angels. If *elohim* refers to more than one person in this text, how is it that *elohim* refers to Moses? The Messiah himself is referred to as *elohim*. Compare Psalm 45:6 with Hebrews 1:8. *Elohim* is plural in form but singular in meaning. To propose there is more than one in the Godhead requires us to cast aside the rules of language and grammar. In this case unitarians are not hesitant to use trinitarian arguments if it will advance their cause. Both trinitarians and unitarians must explain away the "us" when used with *elohim*. The standard reply from both is that it refers to God's council of angels. What about the *elohim* used as a reference to Christ, as we see in Hebrews 1:8 quoted from Psalm 45:6? The answer is that often *elohim* is accompanied by the personal name of God, Yahweh. See Genesis 2:4-5, Exodus 34:23, Psalm 68:18, for example (*Theological Wordbook of the Old Testament*, s.v. "*elohim*"). As for the *Shema*, unitarians tell us that it is untrue that *echad* (one) refers to a compound unity. *Echad*, the numeral one, describes Abraham as one, they say. Yet, note what the *Theological Wordbook of the Old Testament* tells us. It says that *echad* stresses unity while recognizing diversity within that oneness. Diversity within unity is also seen from the fact that *echad* has a plural form. See *echad* in the reference just listed for a series of texts that demonstrate this diversity of unity.

Hislop points out in *The Two Babylons*, p. 17, fn, that some have said the plural form of the name of God (*elohim*) in the Hebrew of Genesis permits no argument for the doctrine of the plurality of persons in the Godhead because the same word in the plural is applied to heathen divinities. But, if the supreme divinity in almost all heathen nations was triune, the futility of this objection is obvious.

What about the statement that only the Son "has ascended to heaven"? (John 3:13) The unitarian answer is that this had been forecast in advance about Him. God's acts may be said to have happened already once they are fixed in the divine councils. This can be seen when the special reference in Daniel's prophecy (Dan. 7:13) is taken into account. Christ is not seen in heaven because He is actually alive before His birth but because God has granted a vision of His future destiny. The solution to the puzzle of worship offered to Christ is that worship is offered not only to God but to human persons holding dignity. For example, unitarians say, the king of Israel is worshipped in I Chronicles 29:20. But an examination of the Hebrew text does not support this idea. *Green's Interlinear* shows it to read, ". . . And all the congregation blessed Jehovah, the God of their fathers, and worshipped Jehovah, and bowed to the king." Also the unitarian assertion that Daniel was worshipped (Dan. 2:46) is refuted by the *Critical and Experimental Commentary*, by Jamieson, Fausset, and Brown, which says that Daniel rejected the proffered divine honors. The word "answered" in verse 47 implies that Daniel had objected to these honors and in compliance with this objection the king said, "Of a truth . . . your God is a God of gods." Unitarians tell us the Greek word *latreuo* is used for worship and applied exclusively to the Father. Yet in both Acts 7:42 and Romans 1:25 *latreuo* refers to idolatry, in one case the worship of demons, and in the other the worship of earthly creatures. We are told when Jesus accepted the worship of the blind man and the homage from Thomas, it does not follow that the blind man or Thomas regarded Jesus as of the same nature and substance with God. The term used for worship is used for homage which subjects pay their sovereign, meaning the one receiving it is of a dignity superior to the one rendering it. It is fallacious to argue that because Jesus is worshipped He must be God. Jesus can be worshipped as the Messiah. Thomas' words "my Lord and God" in John 20:28 are simply messianic titles in the Old Testament and in medieval sense. Jesus was the Son of God from conception, not from eternity. Son of God has been unconsciously translated "God, the Son" (Mark 1:1). The authority to forgive sins as God's representative did not make Jesus God. He was a functional equality with God, which has nothing to do with a claim to be coequal, co-eternal with the Father. When Thomas referred to Jesus as God, he was using the broader meaning of the day, a title that referred to a range of authorities, including the Roman emperor. When Thomas used the word *theos* (God) it represented a title used for divine human authorities. Jesus finally became Thomas' Lord and God of "the coming age of the kingdom." Jesus became God to Thomas in the same way Moses became god to Pharaoh. In the world of that day "God" did not mean what it means for us today. The New Testament evidence that Jesus is God in the same sense as the Father is scant indeed. The occasional use of "God" for Jesus is a *special* reference. All that raised Him above humanity was His conception by the Holy Spirit. It does not appear that He

assumed or ascribed to Himself a pre-temporal existence. New Testament readers fail to realize that the word "God" can be applied to a representative of God. The objection to this line of reasoning has already been addressed on pages 33–35.

Paul's background made him an uncompromising monotheist, according to unitarians. They say that apparently Paul did not call Jesus God. Only Hebrews 1:8 may be claimed as a text in which some sense Jesus is called God, but it is unclear who wrote the epistle to the Hebrews, they say. In I Corinthians 8:4–6 Paul clearly stated "there is no God but the Father." Paul preached that God is one party or person. In the light of the misunderstanding of Jewish monotheism it is easy to see why unitarians jump to these conclusions. Jewish monotheism, as we have seen, involved the worship of two Gods—the Most High God and His supreme Agent. Take the Greek word *heis* (one) that is used in the instances where God is referred to as one. Unitarians admit *heis* can be used in the sense of collective unity, such as one body composed of many members, but to them this meaning is inappropriate in the case of God, who is "obviously" one Person. Therefore, the "I am" and "I am He" expressions made by Jesus can be explained satisfactorily as a messianic claim. It bears a divine title without being God. Unitarians say that when Christ said, "before Abraham was, I am," it meant He was appointed Savior of the world before the birth of Abraham. In John 8:58 the Jews thought Jesus was claiming to be God, according to the orthodox view, but according to unitarians the claim was in reality that He was the Son of God with the rank of a human being. Also, the Greek in John 8:58 can possibly mean "before Abraham comes to be, [returns to life by the resurrection] I am." The John 6:62 statement about Jesus ascending where He was before appears to be a reference to His future ascension, unitarians say. If we ask where the Son of man was before, the answer is found in Daniel 7:13. The Messiah man was seen in heaven in a vision of the future which became a reality at His ascension. This same "principle" applies to John 6:62. What has been promised for Him may have actually happened in a vision before it happens in reality. The Son of man was seen in a heavenly preview, so to speak, before He actually arrived there. But then, what about the paradoxical contradiction between John 3:13 and 20:17 where Jesus said He had not yet ascended? The unitarian answer is that things may be said to already happen in God's intention while they await the actual fulfillment in history of the future.

John 17:5 is another text that needs an explanation. In the Biblical way of thinking, unitarians inform us, one may "have" something which is promised from God before he actually has it. Just as God said to Abraham, "to your seed I have given this land." The meaning is that the glory He would receive from the Father was "laid up with the Father" as a deposit potentially His in God's plan. Romans 9:5 does not prove that Jesus is "God over all" because there are seven different ways to punctuate this text in which either Christ or the Father can be called "God blessed forever." At most, unitarians tell us, one may claim a certain probability that the passage refers to Jesus as God. And if Jesus is, by exception, called "God" the title may be used in a messianic sense. I Corinthians 10:4, taken by itself, without considering the context or Paul's use of Hebrew ways of thinking, might suggest that

Christ was alive before His birth, unitarians say. For Paul to have said such a thing would be a contradiction of the words of the prophets. We are told we must guard against such an over-literal reading of this text. It is not unusual for Scripture to use the verb "to be" in less than a literal sense. The Israelites were not literally baptized, nor did the Rock literally follow them. In I Corinthians 15 Paul knows only of a Messiah who is a man, the final Adam. The fact that Jesus died for our sins is proof that He was not God, for God cannot die. A biased translation of Micah 5:2 should not mislead us about the everlasting origins of the Messiah. Jesus himself made no claim that He was God.

Philippians 2:5–8 is often quoted to prove that Paul believed in a Messiah who both was preexistent and God. But unitarians warn us that we must not read our twentieth-century interpretations into this text. On the basis of other statements made by Jesus it would be unthinkable to say Paul would have called Jesus God. Philippians 2 says Jesus was in the form of God; it does not say He was God. Jesus did not take advantage of His royal position as God's legal representative by having "equality with God." Rather, He took on the character of a slave. Unitarians insist it is a traditional idea only that the words "in the form of God" are interpreted to mean a preexistent life in heaven instead of a legal identity with God as a human being on the earth. Colossians 1:15–17 is best understood in the light of the culture and cosmological presuppositions of the day. Paul was not arguing for the existence of a preexistent being. The phraseology of Jewish monotheism gives the proper understanding of God as the wisdom and embodiment of God's wisdom more fully than any other manifestation. Also, unitarians say it is not Biblical to say I Timothy 6:15–16 refers to the Father only and not to the God of the Old Testament. The God of the Old Testament is the same as the God of the New Testament. Both Titus 2:13 and II Peter 1:1 cannot be relied upon to prove that Jesus was God. Unitarians tell us this because of the dispute over how the sentences should be constructed when *kai* (and) is used to join two nouns. And even if the title "God and Savior" were used as an exception, it would not establish His position as a coequal or co-eternal with the Father. Unitarians insist there is nothing in Hebrews 1:6 that implies Jesus was the Creator. The text should be accurately translated "through whom also He [God] made the ages." Jesus is the one at the center of God's cosmic purpose. The indication here is that the Son is not eternal but comes into existence as the historical Jesus. Jesus could not have been God; He was a creation of the Father. When Peter said, "You are the Christ, the Son of the living God," he was merely showing the title Messiah referred to a human being and not God. "Son of God" is a synonym for Messiah. Nowhere in the recorded words of the apostles, with the possible exception of Thomas, is there the slightest indication that the apostles thought they were dealing with a God/man. Some believe I John 5:20 says that Jesus is the true God. The proper interpretation, unitarians say, is that the true-God reference is not to Jesus but to the Father.

Putting It in Perspective

Following the first century AD, the rapid retirement of Jewish Christianity occurred for a number of reasons. The severe morality deduced from the teaching of Jesus, the multiplication of beliefs from an increasing tradition, a lack of definite authority, a confederation relationship among the churches, a misunderstanding of apostolic teachings, and the fusing of the gospel with Hellenism all contributed. As Harnack concluded, in the principle elements of Christianity there was no definite doctrine of faith. *The result was rampant imagination, speculation, and spiritual interpretation of the Old Testament* (Harnack, 45). Those who say, regarding the nature of God, that pagan philosophers and Catholic theologians had to be relied upon because the Bible does not say enough are absolutely correct. The answer had to be sought by means of reasoning which was based upon presumed premises approved by the majority. These premises included the belief that God does not have a shape, that there cannot be more than one God, that God exists outside of space and time, and that the nature of God can be ascertained by the reasoning of the human mind. Philosophers like Philo, who did not know the Hebrew Scriptures and who could not even read Hebrew, relied on the LXX and in turn greatly influenced Alexandrian theologians of the early Christian centuries. A modern study of the Hebrew Scriptures has taught us to be aware that the God of the Bible is depicted quite differently from that of the philosophers of ancient Greece (Knight, 78). The critical value of the LXX is unfortunately greatly impaired by the original corrupt state of its own text. The Hebrew text from which the translators of the LXX worked was often divergent from that represented by the Massoretic text and we should not assume that in cases of differences the Greek is to be preferred. The translators of the LXX made some obvious mistakes: Their knowledge of Hebrew was often inadequate, they occasionally interpreted as well as translated, and sometimes introduced local color (*Ency. Brit.*, 1958 ed., s.v. "Septuagint").

Practical and popular Christianity is not interested in relating with the Absolute or wondering how the diverse modes of God's Being can be resolved into an ultimate unity (Richardson, 118). What God has revealed we can know, and He has revealed He *does* have a form and shape. What we find in the New Testament is the same as what we find in the Old Testament. A distinctive feature of God in the Old Testament shows us a living Personality who thought, felt, willed, and possessed all the characteristics of a personal life. Descriptions of Yahweh depict human limbs and organs—face, fingers, arm, heart, and voice. It is remarkable how many aspects of the personality of God in the Old Testament are equivalents of corresponding features of the human personality. The language employed is popular not scholastic. The Hebrews conceived of God in nature in terms of the physical-spiritual nature of man. The statement "God made man in his own image" is as truly a revelation of the manner in which we are to think of the nature of God as of our own humanity. The one is a picture of the other. We must not dismiss the Hebrew analogy of "anthropomorphism." The fact that the human mind can never comprehend the nature of God can take ease in Jesus' statement, "He that hath seen me hath seen the Father," so we can

at least see what God is like. The Old Testament writers themselves picture what they cannot understand (Knight, 36–37). In spite of the many references to God's appearance, some trinitarians continue to insist that God does not have a form, often citing Deuteronomy 4:15. "Take ye therefore good heed unto yourselves; for ye saw no manner of similitude on the day that the Lord spake unto you in Horeb out of the midst of the fire." Notice carefully, the text does not say God does not have a form. It simply states they saw no manner of similitude. In other words, God did not manifest Himself to them. Paul clearly states in the resurrection man will be given a spiritual body, a body composed of spirit. The idea that God is invisible and as a result has no visible form is true but fails to take into consideration that not being visible to human eyes does not prove God has no form or shape, which can become as visible as any other spirit should God so choose to manifest Himself.

The doctrine that God is like man is one of the most ancient of the doctrines of God. The truth that man bears the likeness of God and God the likeness of man lies at the foundation of all forceful religion. All doctrine of an ethical God is doctrine of a personal God. God's personality is taken for granted in the Old Testament and in the New Testament Jesus did not preach about the personality of God. He presupposes it. He always attributed to God those qualities which could not apply to any other Being but a personal one. During the Old Testament period and the early New Testament times the question of divine personality did not arise, as metaphysical notions had not yet appeared on the scene. One fact is certain, it is unsatisfactory to attribute genuine moral qualities to a mindless order (Clarke, 60–61). If we say God is personal we are saying, in effect, that God is like ourselves. The only question is, in what sense is this true? All human life is social and personality has no existence except in relations with others. When we say God is a personal Being we mean God is one, knows Himself, is conscious of Himself and the significance of His Being. He directs His own actions and makes it expressive of the conscious self. He is a conscious, intelligent, active, related Being (ibid, 62, 64).

How is God described in the Bible? The following lists a few of these characteristics.

GOD IS DESCRIBED AS ETERNAL

For I lift up my hand to heaven, and say, I live for ever (Deut. 32:40). For thus saith the high and lofty One that inhabiteth eternity . . . (Isa. 57:15). Which in his times he shall shew, who is the blessed and *only Potentate*, the King of kings, and Lord of Lords (I Tim. 6:15).

THERE ARE MANY ANTHROPOMORPHISMS WHICH DEPICT GOD'S FORM AND SHAPE AS WELL AS EMOTIONS

And it repented the Lord that he had made man on the earth, and it grieved him at his heart (Gen. 6:6). And I will walk among you, and will be your God, and ye shall be my people (Lev. 26:12). He that planted the ear, shall he not hear? he that formed the eye, shall he not see? (Psa. 94:9)

GOD IS DESCRIBED AS INVISIBLE, BUT HAS MANIFESTED HIMSELF ON MANY OCCASIONS

Who is the *image* of the invisible God, the firstborn of every creature (Col. 1:15). Now unto the King eternal, immortal, invisible, the only wise God, be honour and glory for ever and ever. Amen (I Tim. 1:17).

GOD IS INFINITE

Great is our Lord, and of great power: his understanding is infinite (Psa. 147:5). Can any hide himself in secret places that I shall not see him? saith the Lord. Do not I *fill* heaven and earth? saith the Lord (Jer. 23:24).

GOD IS INCOMPREHENSIBLE

Canst thou by searching find out God? canst thou find out the Almighty unto perfection? It is as high as heaven; what canst thou do? deeper than hell; what canst thou know? The measure thereof is longer than the earth, and broader than the sea (Job 11:7-9). Touching the Almighty, we cannot find him out: he is excellent in power, and in judgment, and in plenty of justice: he will not afflict (Job 37:23). He hath made every thing beautiful in his time: also he hath set the world in their heart, so that no man can find out the work that God maketh from the beginning to the end (Eccl. 3:11). Who hath directed the spirit of the Lord, or being his counsellor hath taught him. . . . To whom then will ye liken God? or what likeness will ye compare unto him. . . . To whom then will ye liken me, or shall I be equal? saith the Holy One. . . . Hast thou not known? hast thou not heard, that the everlasting God, the Lord, the Creator of the ends of the earth, fainteth not, neither is weary? there is no searching of his understanding (Isa. 40:13, 18, 25, 28).

GOD IS OMNIPOTENT

I know that thou canst do every thing, and that no thought can be withholden from thee (Job 42:2). For with God nothing shall be impossible (Luke 1:37).

GOD IS OMNIPRESENT—UBIQUITOUS

Whither shall I go from thy spirit? or whither shall I flee from thy presence? If I ascend up into heaven, thou art there: if I make my bed in hell, 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, and thy right hand shall hold me (Psa. 139:7-10).

GOD IS OMNISCIENT

But the Lord said unto Samuel, Look not on his countenance, or on the height of his stature; because I have refused him: for the Lord seeth not as man seeth; for man looketh on the outward appearance, but the Lord looketh on the heart (I Sam. 16:7). Then hear thou in heaven thy dwelling place, and forgive, and

do, and give to every man according to his ways, whose heart thou knowest; (for thou, even thou only, knowest the hearts of all the children of men;) (I Kings 8:39). I know that thou canst do every thing, and that no thought can be withholden from thee (Job 42:2). Shall not God search this out? for he knoweth the secrets of the heart (Psa. 44:21). The Lord knoweth the thoughts of man, that they are vanity (Psa. 94:11). Declaring the end from the beginning, and from ancient times the things that are not yet done, saying, My counsel shall stand, and I will do all my pleasure (Isa. 46:10). Known unto God are all his works from the beginning of the world (Acts 15:18).

These are just a few of the Biblical texts that describe the nature of God. Some of them are absolutely incomprehensible, yet men in their vanity continue an attempt to describe God's nature to the utmost detail, disclosing "facts" they really do not know, nor does anyone else know. We have read many of these examples in this work, particularly in trinitarian arguments. When will men learn they do not have the capacity to describe the nature of God except in the limited way God has revealed in the Bible? God is indeed infinite, but Bible examples show that He limits Himself (Gen. 22:12, Ex. 16:4, Deut. 8:2; 13:1-3, II Chron. 32:21, Psa. 26:2; 139:23-24). So, who is in a position to really understand and expound the nature of God and His works? (see Job 38:2) Romans 1:23 is used by some trinitarians to "prove" God does not have a shape like a man. But what the text really says is that the heathen were guilty of idolatry for worshipping various kinds of beings that were not God, since it is God alone who should be worshipped. Romans 1:23 does not in any way comment on the form and shape of God. This trinitarian example is typical of implicit use of Biblical texts for their own purposes. The church fathers were living and thinking in a climate of opinion whose origin had been Greece and where it was axiomatic to speculate on the nature of God, particularly from the point of view that God is above and beyond space and time, immutable, impassable, unchangeable, and unchanging. Phrases such as "eternal generation of the Son" and "consubstantiality with the Father," are impossible to visualize and are unbiblical. The Hebrews thought of God visually and of personality by contrast to the Greeks who thought of God in terms of pure being and not in Biblical categories. The Greek way of thinking regarded man as two entities—body and soul, but Old Testament writers made it clear that souls do not dwell in bodies (Knight, 9-11).

Those writers who have labeled the Trinity as the distinctively Christian idea of God are seriously misleading. In fact this "distinctively Christian idea of God" began to fit itself into the trinitarian mold after being adopted from Hellenism. The only thing that distinguishes the Christian version from the triads of other religions is its ethical character. The truth is there is no doctrine of the Trinity in the New Testament and furthermore there is no need for such a doctrine. The distinction between the Father and the Son is a philosophical consideration, the "product of metaphysics" without which the religious element of Christian faith can maintain itself very well (Welch, 49-50). It has been pointed out that when trinitarians refer to theology what they really mean is philosophy, and

specifically Greek philosophy. Also that some trinitarians do not regard the Bible of value in "theological matters." By that they mean philosophical matters. Their ideas are built upon "implicit" Biblical evidence rather than "explicit." They use human reasoning based on Biblical statements that are mostly vague in order to come to conclusions. An example is Isaiah 6:3 where the "holy, holy, holy" supposedly proves there is a Trinity. Some writers have pointed out that much of what is presented in trinitarian arguments goes back to various church councils. Trinitarians insist the Bible cannot be taken literally and does not mean what it appears to say. Both Hebrew and Greek words are distorted. The LXX is appealed to for support of their arguments. Greek speculation is employed to explain the nature of God. They tell us the apostles could not understand the nature of God because they were not advanced enough. They had not evolved enough mentally. Both trinitarians and unitarians repudiate the plain meaning of Bible passages, telling us these passages do not mean what they say. We must rely on their "scholars" to make the Bible understandable. God does not have the capacity to call and lead one to the truth. Truth comes by scholarship. We have been told that Hebrew and Greek words cannot be translated accurately into English or that these words have another meaning. We are led to believe God obviously made some terrible mistake in allowing the Bible to be translated into languages other than Hebrew and Greek because in any other language the Bible is incomprehensible. We are told many Bible passages may be a figure of speech, or since it was a vision it does not mean what it is attempting to portray, or it is an analogy, or an anthropomorphic representation, a dream, or a mistranslation, or some language technicality that only scholars can understand. Or that the LXX states the text more clearly, or the Jewish viewpoint regarding the nature of God is the correct one. In fact, trinitarians have repudiated the Jewish viewpoint as anthropomorphic. In brief, one can have no confidence in his or her ability to read the Bible and accept the clear meaning for what it says. The only way the Bible can be understood is by means of scholars. The reader will recall this is what was done in the third and fourth centuries; the people were forced to rely on the scholars of the church for a proper understanding of the Bible.

Trinitarians talk about the doctrine of the Trinity being revealed. But the connotation that *revealed* conveys to most readers does not apply, since the doctrine of the Trinity was not revealed from heaven. To think of it as revealed is to fall into error. The doctrine of the Trinity is *not* a revelation. It is a derivation and no language can presume to define the inner nature of the Infinite (Bowie, 133, 134). The leading doctrines of the Trinity, as they have developed, raise some basic questions about their validity. None of these doctrines is satisfactory and all of them involve either confusion of different issues or arbitrary elements. Both ancient and modern views pose more problems than they solve. The distinctions in the Godhead of a threefold pattern are far from apparent. The traditional distinctions of Father, Son, and Holy Spirit are ambiguous. Trinitarian doctrines often involve contradictions which generally have not been recognized as such (Richardson, 7-8). We can add to this the doctrine of the procession of the Spirit and the filioque (whether the Spirit proceeds *from* or only *through* the Son) which can no longer be regarded as legitimate theological issues.

They rest on an arbitrary distinction which is not real. Take the view, for example, that God is some sort of society. A society does not imply a number of three. This figure is arbitrary. Perhaps a society should posit an infinite number of persons in the Trinity (ibid, 111-112). It is in this threeness that the artificiality lies. How can three be one and one three? The reality is that the doctrine of the Trinity confronts the Christian with bewilderment rather than true faith. Much of the defense that the doctrine of the Trinity was "revealed" is an evasion of the objections that can be brought against it (ibid, 16). It has been argued: Is God a single center of self-consciousness, or is He three such centers? God is regarded as both the One and in some sense thought of as a society. If there are three centers of consciousness in God, then there are three Gods. It is simply impossible to say that God is one in some ultimate sense and yet retain the idea of discreet centers of consciousness. There is no way to overcome the paradox that we must think of God both as one and as a society. The same would apply to the concept that three centers of consciousness have an underlying subconsciousness. There is no way in human thought to actualize this paradox. Every solution, however ingenious, hides the paradox in one form or another (ibid, 91-95).

Some have said to deny the term "Being" as applied to God denies His existence. And to say that God is universal mind or universal soul depersonalizes God and denies the reality of the Son except when the Son is described as a hypostasis. In this theory the incarnation of the Son was the manifestation of a divine hypostasis revealed as a human being. Under this scenario the word "person" applied to God is a philosophical term. To say God is a person is to misuse the term; it is better to say God does not have a self. The philosophical problem how the infinite God could become manifest in Jesus Christ has no theoretical solution. To repeat what Cyril Richardson said, "All we can say is that God is *both* and leave it at that"(Richardson, 43). The problem of expressing in language the fullness of the meaning of Christ has never been solved adequately, even within the limits of human possibilities (Bowie, 92). Some trinitarians claim God fills the entire universe and that He is everywhere, no doubt from interpreting some of the Biblical texts. But this concept is akin to the pagan idea of the world soul and that all that is in the world is divine by virtue of being part of the world soul. Some have commented about the notion that God created space as another example of trinitarian assumption. Some have correctly countered this by pointing out that space is void. What God created was various material objects and placed them *in* space. There is neither scientific nor Biblical proof that space was created. Space is not something that depends on the existence of matter; the presence of matter helps to define space. "Time," like space, is something that has always existed. Time does not have to be created. Creation put time and space in a measurable context from a human perspective. God is not subject to time and space because He controls them.

Hypostasis in Hebrews 1:3 is referred to by trinitarians for belief in the hypostatic emanation of Christ. But at least one writer has called attention to the fact that the word hypostasis means a foundation, a support. The Apostle Paul used it five times and it is translated "confident," "confidence," "substance," "person." In four of these cases it means

"foundation." Today the English word "substance" means "essential nature." Research into the usage and meaning of hypostasis shows that in the papyri it means "title" or "deed." The truth of the matter is, a more accurate translation of Hebrews 1:3 would be that the Son is the express image of "what the Father stands for." "Essential nature" would not be the correct meaning of Hebrews 1:3. There are other Greek words for "substance" found in the New Testament. The word hypostasis has nothing to do with "substance" as we understand it today. Yet, to a large extent the doctrine of a hypostatical emanation of Christ in the Incarnation is based on the interpretation of the word hypostasis.

Much ado has been made by unitarians about the *Shema*—"Hear, O Israel: the Lord our God *is* one Lord" (Deut. 6:4). It has been duly noted by others that the translation of Deuteronomy 6:4 is somewhat misleading. The context is key to understanding here. The subject is the need to obey God's commands. *Shama* (hear) is often translated in the imperative, meaning "listen" or "obey." *Echad* (one) in this verse is often translated "alone." See for example, Joshua 22:20, I Chronicles 29:1, Isaiah 51:2, and Ezekiel 7:5. While *echad* generally means "one" it can have other meanings. The logical way to translate Deuteronomy in context would be: "Hear [obey] O Israel Yahweh *Elohim*, Yahweh Alone." Note the "is" in this verse is in italics. It is not found in the original Hebrew and should not be there because it confuses the meaning of the verse. Also, the uninspired punctuation mark, the colon, should not be there as it also confuses the meaning. Deuteronomy 6:4 is quoted by Christ in Mark 12:29. An examination of the Greek shows the same meaning as the Hebrew above. In the Greek text *Akove* is in the imperative, indicating the command to listen or obey. The *eis* (one) is shown to be translated as "alone" on occasion (*A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament*, trans. and ed. by W.F. Arndt and F.W. Gingrich, p. 230). Mark 12:29 can be translated, ". . . Hear [listen, obey] Israel, the Lord our God Lord alone is." The *Shema* more than likely falls under the censure of Jesus who told the Jewish leaders, "Ye do err, not knowing the scriptures . . ." (Matt. 22:29). Take a look at some New Testament examples of the word "one." In John 10:30 Jesus said that He and His Father were one; John 17:11, 21 Jesus prayed that His disciples would be one; Romans 12:5, there are many members in one body; Romans 15:6, the members should be of one mind ("being one mind"); I Corinthians 3:8, two individuals planted and watered but are one; I Corinthians 6:16, a man joined to a harlot is one; I Corinthians 10:17, many are one body; I Corinthians 12:12, 13, 20, 26, the body—one—is made up of many members; Galatians 3:28, all are one in Christ; Ephesians 2:15, 16, the twain are made one; Ephesians 4:5–6, one Lord and one God, but comprised of two individuals; Philippians 2:2, all members to have one mind; Hebrews 2:11, the one who sanctifies and those sanctified are all one.

The sermons of the apostles were not concerned with the mystery of the Person of God. The apostles all agree in representing the personal, spiritual God, the righteous, loving Yahweh of the Old Testament (*Ency. of Religion and Ethics*, s.v. "God"). The *Encyclopedia of Religion*, by Mircea Eliade, s.v. "Trinity," says that while Genesis 1:26 is proof of a plurality in God, it would certainly go beyond the intention and spirit of the Old Testament

to personify God by the use of Word, Spirit, Wisdom, and Presence. Exegetes and theologians agree that the explicit doctrine of the Trinity is not found in the New Testament. "Father" is not a title for the first person of the Trinity, but rather a synonym for God. There are a number of binitarian texts in the New Testament. These include Romans 4:24; 8:11, II Corinthians 4:14, Colossians 2:12, I Timothy 2:5; 6:13, and II Timothy 4:1. Unitarians would, of course, disagree. Psalm 110:1 is quoted by Christ in Matthew 22:43–44 and Mark 12:36 where the Greek text has "the Lord [*Kurios*] said to my Lord [*Kurios*]" showing clear proof that in David's time there were two divine Beings who qualified for the title Lord. Unitarians would not argue that the first Lord in that text is God, the Father. Since the Greek shows both "Lords" are translated *Kurios*, they cannot deny that a divine title applies to Christ, not to David. Christ clearly implied that one of these titles belonged to Him and that "the *Kurios*" was in higher authority than "my *Kurios*," implying that the Father was in higher authority than He. The term *kurios* (Lord) refers to God numerous times and is frequently used with reference to Jesus (*Dictionary of the Gospels*, edited by Joel Green and Scot McNight, s.v. "God").

Luke 1:32 states that Jesus shall be called the Son of the Highest, that is, the Son of the Most High. Since Jesus is called "the only begotten Son of God" (John 3:18), "the Son of the Father" (II John 3), and "the Son of the Highest" (Luke 1:32), it is clear that "God Most High" must refer to the Father only. John uses *pater* (father) as a title for God numerous times. His point in doing so is particularly clear in John 5:18 where Jesus said God was His Father, one of the reasons the Jews sought to kill Him. The text says "Therefore the Jews sought the more to kill him because . . . he said God was his Father, making himself equal with God." Unitarians are quick to reply that we must not assume what the Jews *thought* was proof that Jesus was God. But John combined a subordinationist view with binitarian theology in which the Son is God just like the Father (*Dictionary of Jesus and the Gospels*, s.v. "God"). And the prologue to Revelation is the earliest detailed recognition of Jesus as the Great Angel. There can be no doubt that for John the heavenly Christ was the ancient Yahweh (Barker, 203). Two passages, Mark 14:64 and Matthew 26:65, are not the only texts which indicate Christ offended Jews. In John the two accusations (John 5:18; 10:33) which amount to ditheism (two Gods) came from the mouths of Jews who failed to understand the truth. The veneration of Jesus as divine can be traced back far earlier than the gospel of John to the earliest levels of Christian tradition in the New Testament (*Dictionary of Jesus and the Gospels*, s.v. "God"). Was Jesus God? Was He worshipped? Notice the following texts: Matthew 2:11; 4:10; 8:2; 9:18; 14:33; 15:25; 28:9, Luke 24:52, John 9:38. In the Bible the Messiah is recognized as God. In Isaiah 9:6–7 this Child and Son is called "The mighty God." See also Jeremiah 23:5–6 which says essentially the same thing. And Micah 5:2 where the text states that the Messiah is from everlasting. The following texts reveal two Gods in the Old Testament. Trinitarians later added a third God and utilized these texts to show a plurality in the Godhead. These are: Genesis 1:26; 3:22–23; 11:7–8; 14:18; 19:24, Exodus 20:2 (the text should read "I am the Lord thy Gods"), Psalm 2:2; 45:6–7; 110:1, Proverbs 30:4, Isaiah 11:1–2; 42:1, 6–7; 44:6; 48:12–16; 61:1,

Daniel 3:25; 7:13. That Yahweh and the Angel of Yahweh are the same can be seen in Genesis 16:7-13; 22:11-12; 48:15-16, Exodus 3:2-7, Numbers 22:22-31, Judges 5:23; 6:11-12, 22; 13:3, 22, II Kings 19:20, 34-35, Isaiah 37:35-36. Genesis 19:24, a text that deeply troubled the rabbis, and later unitarians, shows that both the Father and the Son bore the name Yahweh. If the name *elohim* refers to a single person how do we explain Genesis 1:26; 3:22; 11:6-7, Isaiah 6:8? Trinitarians would be quick to reply that this refers to angels, part of the divine council, but in these texts God's name is applied to more than one Person; angels are not called God in the Scriptures. In John 6:27 the Father is called God and in Hebrews 1:8 Jesus is called God. Even unitarians are hard pressed to deny this latter text. In Romans 9:5 the Messiah is spoken of as "God blessed forever." In Acts 20:28 God is described as the One who purchased the church with His own blood. This is a reference to Christ only. And in I John 5:20 Jesus Christ is called the "true God and eternal life." In Philippians 2:6, Colossians 1:15, II Corinthians 8:9, and John 1:1 we find Christ described as a preexistent Being, and John makes it plain that Jesus is the Logos—God from all eternity.

In Jewish literature of the post-Talmudic period and in later Halakah writings the usual substitute for the tetragrammaton is *Adonai*. The word *Adonai*, which the Massoretes handed down, reveals that in the early Christian centuries the word was conceived as plural. The idea that *elohim* expresses the plural of majesty is reading into the Hebrew a modern way of thinking. *Elohim*, written in plural, may be constructed with a singular verb. Texts such as Genesis 1:26; 11:7, Isaiah 6:8 show the plurality of God. Lord of hosts means God is Lord of the heavenly powers, which represents a family relationship. Thus, we have the term "sons of God" (Knight, 19-22). Several other nouns beside *elohim* refer to God and are in the plural where it cannot be denied that God is to be understood by them. These are: Malachi 1:6 (*adonim*, plural for Master), Isaiah 54:5 (here both Maker and husband are plural), Ecclesiastes 5:8 (higher is higher Ones), Psalm 78:25 (Angels here is Mighty Ones, never used for angels), Daniel 4:26 (verse 13 uses the singular, but this verse uses "they"), Daniel 5:18, 20 (they in verse 20 refers to the most high God in verse 18). Other examples of the use of plurality when referring to God are: Daniel 9:17, Isaiah 10:12; 64:4, Hosea 1:7 (Jones, 83-87).

Trinitarians readily admit the problem of the Holy Spirit has been the point of greatest difficulty in the historic doctrine of the Trinity. The problem has been so difficult that it has been especially important to insist upon the personality of the Holy Spirit so that it should not be lost sight of (Clarke, 246). The layman upon hearing of the first, second, and third person of the Trinity understood it in terms of the common European concept, that is, as a center of self-consciousness and self-determination. So, most Christians accept the doctrine by sacrificing their intellect, unless they are tritheists. In the nineteenth century modernists accepted the concept that the Spirit was the name for the spiritual influence that exercises in the hearts and lives of men, as opposed to a person concept. Orthodoxy countered by introducing the "personality of the Holy Spirit"—a concept that has led to a form of tritheism. According to orthodoxy, the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit are three ways of describing one

saving reality (Berkhof, 114–115, 117). The only possible text that can lend support to the notion that the Holy Spirit is God is Acts 5:3–4. Other texts give no support at all. In the New Testament the Spirit is often the synonym for Christ, so the lie in Acts 5 was told to Christ. It is not the purpose of this work to examine the Biblical texts which supposedly support the personality of the Holy Spirit. Please write for our article entitled, *What Is the Holy Spirit?* In the Old Testament the Spirit was conceived as an energy which gives the workman his skill, and which comes upon the prophets and illuminates their minds and hearts. The primary notion of the Spirit in the Bible is that of God's dynamic activity (Richardson, 45). It is a term of wide meaning covering God's dynamic action and is closely related to and synonymous with many other expressions. In the New Testament, if God was at work in Jesus and if Jesus was the incarnation of God, then there is no distinction between the divine in Jesus and God's Spirit. In Paul the Spirit is seen as the vital, dynamic energy of God, and Paul understands the Lord as the Spirit (II Cor. 3:17). In what way, then, are Christ and the Spirit distinguished? It is difficult to see how Christ could differ from the Spirit—defined as God in action, expressing Himself by His vital energy (ibid, 49).

The early Christian doctrine of God saw there was but one God, the Father, and the Lord Jesus Christ. *Both* were worshipped as God. But, eventually the mention of the Father and the Son came to be regarded as incomplete unless there was an acknowledgement of the Holy Spirit. Paul's epistles show that the function of the "Spirit of God" and the "Spirit of Christ" and the risen Christ are identical. Paul did differentiate God, the Father, both from Christ and the Spirit of God (the resurrected Christ). The Spirit is the agent through which God brought the Christian community into existence and gave it gifts. What is clear from John 7:39; 14:26; 16:7 is that the Comforter is the Spirit of Christ (Grant 1966, 72–74, 77). The New Testament is written in such a way that sometimes Paul does not always distinguish the Spirit from the living Christ. At times the Spirit of God and the Spirit of Christ and Christ himself are used interchangeably. Sometimes it is difficult to identify Christ with the Yahweh of the Old Testament as Paul often uses the term "Lord" for Christ even when quoting the Old Testament. The event on the road to Damascus gave Paul the personal reality of the risen Christ which the Spirit did not give. When Paul spoke of Christ he had a personal Being in mind, the One who had been manifested as Jesus. When he spoke of the Spirit he thought of the divine power which had been bestowed upon men in consequence of the work of Christ. Romans 8:9–11 show that the Spirit of God, the Spirit of Christ, and Christ himself are practically indistinguishable. If one has the Spirit of God, or the Spirit of Christ, Christ dwells in him. There is no justification from Romans 8:9–11 to represent the Spirit as a third person in the same sense as God and Christ. The church burdens itself in vain with a formula of three hypostases which it has inherited from Greek theology (Garvie, 356–362). The Spirit of God is not distinct from God, nor does the term imply a distinction in the Godhead. The Spirit of God is God himself living, acting, and energizing in the world. It can only be regarded as personal because God is personal (*Ency. of Religion and Ethics*, s.v. "God"). The Spirit can be conceived as God's inner being itself, a kind of heavenly power with its own identity. As Richardson points out, the Holy Spirit is God's dynamic

energy expressing itself in a great variety of ways. It is God himself at work in us, witnessing, responding, interceding (Richardson, 53–54, 109). Knight admits that when we look at the activity of the Holy Spirit in the Old and New Testaments there is no neat, cut-and-dried Biblical evidence for a doctrine of the Holy Spirit as a third person of the Trinity (Knight, 47).

Contemporary orthodoxy still views the Western idea that the Spirit proceeds from both the Father and the Son as the major issue that divides the Eastern and Western churches (*Conflicts About the Holy Spirit*, 23). Trinitarians continue to hang onto their viewpoints, insisting that Matthew 28:19 is proof of a Trinity. Yet, most scholars admit it is triadic, that is, it only makes a reference to the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. It is common knowledge that the Greek in Matthew 28:19 for "in" is "into." The text does not instruct believers to be baptized into the *persons* of the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. Examples of the use of "in the name of" indicate "by the authority of." For example, the disciples baptized by the authority of Jesus Christ. Baptism in the name of the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit means the believer is joined to the Father and the Son by means of the Holy Spirit. The truth is there is no sensible reason why God should speak of Himself in the plural unless He consists of more than one. The Bible nowhere states God is three persons or hypostases. The Bible is very definite in describing two Persons in the Godhead, both in the Old and New Testaments. According to Augustine, all members of the Trinity are internal "relations" within the one personal God. But confusion arises over this view by attributing to all three persons of the "Trinity" the capacity to love. Persons may love but not "relations. By personalizing the relations in this symbolism untold confusion arises. God does not love His thought of Himself, nor can His thought of Himself love Him in return (Richardson, 103, 112). Is it possible, Richardson asks, to reconstruct the trinitarian doctrine in the face of all the objections? The answer is no. The symbols of the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit overlap and do not form a precise Trinity. Confusion is the result of continuing to mold these symbols into a neat trinitarian pattern. The Trinity is an artificial construction; it confuses rather than clarifies. It is a doctrine that has been traditionally forced upon the church. There is no necessity for a threesome in the Godhead. From New Testament study it becomes apparent that the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit do not constitute a genuine Trinity. It involves a degree of artificiality which is arbitrary in character and poses insoluble problems (ibid, 142–143, 149, 55).

In the final analysis, both trinitarianism and unitarianism are weighed in the balance and found wanting. An examination of trinitarian doctrine reveals it is not a part of Scripture. It is the product of Greek speculation and a faulty interpretation of various Biblical texts which have had preconceived ideas read into them. It took three hundred years to develop the doctrine which even today generates more problems than it solves. The doctrine of the Trinity commenced with the attempt to define the nature of the Godhead based on Jewish monotheism, gradually evolving into a threefold manifestation of the divinity. Monotheism is the progenitor of unitarianism also. Unitarianism denies the

divinity of Christ and is based on a faulty understanding of how the Jews viewed God. Ample proof has been set forth in this work to demonstrate the Jews upheld two Gods in their concept of monotheism. The Bible demonstrates that neither a threefold nor a unitary God depicts the inspired revelation. Both the Old and New Testaments represent God as a duality—God, the Father, and the Yahweh who became Jesus Christ. To believe anything other than this denies the clear and precise texts which uphold the binitarian doctrine. Informed Bible students are not taken in by the specious arguments of both trinitarians and unitarians who twist and pervert the Scriptures in order to uphold their false doctrines, and who refuse to acknowledge what is clearly revealed in the Scriptures. Informed Bible students do not need to explain away, as both trinitarians and unitarians attempt, the many texts which prove both the Father and Jesus Christ comprise the Godhead.

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