

**A Definitive Look at  
Oneness Theology:**  
*In the Light of Biblical Trinitarianism*

**4<sup>th</sup> Edition, Revised, Updated, and Expanded**

Adapted from Ph.D. Thesis from North-West University  
entitled:

*An Evaluation of “Oneness Theology”  
in the Light of the  
Biblical Emphasis on Trinitarianism*

**Edward L. Dalcour, Ph.D.**

**Copyright © 2016 by North-West University**

Private Bag X6001

Potchefstroom, South Africa

**All rights reserved. *No part of this book* may be used or reproduced by any means, graphic, electronic, or mechanical, including photocopying, recording—without the prior written permission from author or publisher.**

Unless otherwise indicated, all biblical citations are taken from the *New American Standard Bible*, Copyright © 1960, 1963, 1963, 1968, 1971, 1972, 1973, 1975, 1977, 1995 by the Lockman Foundation (Anaheim: Foundation Publications, 1996).

British Library Cataloging in Publication Information Available

*I dedicate this book to my precious wife, Tia,  
“An excellent wife . . . For her worth is far above jewels.”*

## ABSTRACT

This work is an exegetical polemic against “Oneness” unitarian theology and a positive and exegetical affirmation of biblical Trinitarianism. As a refutation, this dissertation addresses and systematically evaluates the Oneness view of God and its unitarian starting point, namely, the assumption that monotheism equals unipersonalism. As a positive affirmation of the Trinity, this work addresses key biblical passages that exegetically substantiate the doctrine of the Trinity. It carefully examines Oneness theology and finds that it is not consistent with biblical theology.

First, since Oneness doctrine asserts a unipersonal God without the distinction of three Persons, it sees Jesus then as the mere “name” of the unipersonal deity, who manifested as the modes or roles of the Father, Son and Holy Spirit, thus denying the unipersonality of Jesus Christ. Second, since it asserts that only the Father is God (i.e., Jesus’ divine nature/mode), the “Son,” then, represents only Jesus’ human nature/mode, thus denying the Son’s deity. Third, since it rejects the idea that the Son is God, Oneness Christology denies (a) the Son’s preexistence, (b) the Son’s active role as the agent of creation (the Creator), and (c) the Son’s eternal and intimate relationship *with* the Father. Pertaining to redemption, Oneness doctrine maintains that Jesus *as the Father* took flesh, hence denying the incarnation of the divine Son.

In contrast, an exegetical analysis of particular biblical passages in both the Old and New Testaments establishes the fundamental data for the doctrine of the Trinity. Hence, Scripture reveals in the clearest way that there are three distinct Persons—the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit—that share the nature of the one God. Thus, the three Persons are coequal, coeternal, coexistent, and codistinct. The full deity, incarnation and preexistence of the Son, as a distinct Person from the Father, are especially expressed in the Apostle John’s writings.

In the Pauline corpus, the deity, unipersonality and distinction of all three Persons are seen frequently either in the same passage or same context. Both John and Paul present the Son as God and Creator of all things. In the prologue of Hebrews, the author asserts clearly and coherently that the Person of the Son is the eternal Creator; this assertion demolishes the Oneness position, which sees the “Son” representing

only the human nature of Jesus whose life started in Bethlehem. This work concludes that the concept of the Trinity is inescapable in the light of biblical exegesis.

Oneness theology cannot stand exegetically. It must circumvent and redefine the plain reading of many passages that state or imply, for example, the grammatical and contextual distinctions of the Persons in the Trinity, the preexistence and deity of the Son, and the deity and unipersonality of the Holy Spirit. This work also concludes that contrary to the historical revisionism frequently employed by Oneness authors and teachers, the early church prior to Nicaea held to the concept of the Trinity and universally rejected both modalistic and dynamic forms of Monarchianism.

# CONTENTS

## PREFACE

<b>1.0</b>	<b>INTRODUCTION</b>	<b>1</b>
<b>2.0</b>	<b>ONENESS UNITARIANISM</b>	<b>5</b>
2.1	Introduction	5
2.2	Monotheism	8
2.3	Rooted in Monarchianism	11
	2.3.1 The Re-emergence of Modalism	14
	2.3.2 Statistics and Figures	15
2.4	Oeness Theology Defined	17
	2.4.1 Oeness Semantics: “ <i>God-Man</i> ” = “ <i>Father-Son</i> ”	18
	2.4.2 Denial of the Incarnation	20
	2.4.3 Denial of the Distinctions within the Godhead	20
	2.4.4 Denial of the Pre-Existence of the Son	23
	2.4.5 Denial of the Perpetuity of the Son	24
2.5	Text Minus Context Equals Pretext	28
2.6	Incongruities among Oeness Teachers	31
2.7	Determining a Oeness Church	32
2.8	Summary	35
<b>3.0</b>	<b>CHRISTOLOGICAL DIVERGENCES</b>	<b>38</b>
3.1	Introduction	38

<b>3.2</b>	<b>Essence and Substance of the Son</b>	39
<b>3.3</b>	<b>Jesus is not the Father</b>	43
	<b>3.3.1 Unitarianism</b>	45
	<b>3.3.1.1 Oneness Standard Unitarian Proof-Texts</b> ( <i>Mal. 2:10; 1 Cor. 8:6</i> )	46
	<b>3.3.2 Oneness Standard Proof-Texts to show that Jesus is the Father</b> ( <i>Isa. 9:6; John 5:43; 10:30; 14:9; Col. 2:9</i> )	48
	<b>3.3.3 Kai and the Salutations of Paul</b>	58
	<b>3.3.4 Additional Considerations</b>	61
	<b>3.3.5 The Final Analysis: Jesus is not the Father</b>	64
<b>3.4</b>	<b>Jesus is not the Holy Spirit</b>	66
	<b>3.4.1 Oneness Standard Proof-Texts to show that Jesus is the Holy Spirit</b> ( <i>John 4:24; Rom. 8:9-11; 2 Cor. 3:17; Eph. 4:4-6</i> )	67
	<b>3.4.1.1 Same Attributes Argument</b>	74
	<b>3.4.2 The Biblical Teaching: Jesus is not the Holy Spirit</b>	76
	<b>3.4.2.1 The Holy Spirit is Distinct</b>	77
	<b>3.4.2.2 The Holy Spirit is a Person</b>	78
	<b>3.4.3 The Final Analysis: Jesus is not the Holy Spirit</b>	82
<b>3.5</b>	<b>Baptismal Formula - A Case Study</b>	83
	<b>3.5.1 Baptism: “In the Name of Jesus” Only</b>	85
	<b>3.5.1.1 Bad Hermeneutics</b>	86

3.5.1.2	<b>The Contextual and Historical Significance of the <i>Onoma</i>, “Name”</b>	88
3.5.1.3	<b>Acts and the “Name of Jesus”</b>	89
3.5.1.4	<b>UPCI Standard Proof-Texts and Arguments (<i>Matt. 28:19; Acts 2:38</i>)</b>	90
3.5.1.5	<b>Baptism: Unification/Identification</b>	96
3.5.1.6	<b>Baptizing in the Trinitarian Formula or “In Jesus’ name” only</b>	99
3.5.1.7	<b>The Trinitarian Formula in the Early Church</b>	100
3.6	<b>Summary</b>	104
<b>4.0</b>	<b>THE PRE-EXISTENCE OF THE SON</b>	<b>107</b>
4.1	<b>Introduction</b>	107
4.2	<b>Person and Being</b>	108
4.3	<b>The “Oneness” Position</b>	108
4.4	<b>An Orthodox Response to the “Oneness” Position</b>	110
4.5	<b>The Pre-Incarnate Son</b>	110
4.6	<b>Jesus Christ the Son as Co-Creator</b>	141
4.7	<b>The Implications of <i>Monogenēs Huios</i></b>	146
4.8	<b>Summary</b>	150
<b>5.0</b>	<b>ORTHODOXY UNITED AGAINST HERESY</b>	<b>152</b>
5.1	<b>Introduction</b>	152
5.2	<b>Docetic Gnosticism</b>	153
5.3	<b>Arianism</b>	155
5.4	<b>Modalism</b>	159

<b>5.4.1</b>	<b>Dynamic Monarchianism</b>	<b>159</b>
<b>5.4.2</b>	<b>Modalistic Monarchianism</b>	<b>160</b>
<b>5.5</b>	<b>Orthodoxy Fights Back</b>	<b>161</b>
<b>5.5.1</b>	<b>Against Sabellius</b>	<b>165</b>
<b>5.6</b>	<b>The Doctrine of the Trinity and the Early Church</b>	<b>170</b>
<b>5.6.1</b>	<b>Ecumenical Councils</b>	<b>173</b>
<b>5.6.2</b>	<b>The Trinity and the Early Church</b>	<b>175</b>
<b>5.6.2.1</b>	<b>Apostolic Fathers</b>	<b>176</b>
<b>5.6.2.2</b>	<b>The Apologists</b>	<b>179</b>
<b>5.6.2.3</b>	<b>Theologians</b>	<b>181</b>
<b>5.7</b>	<b>Summary</b>	<b>185</b>
<b>6.0</b>	<b>CONCLUSION</b>	<b>188</b>
<b>6.1</b>	<b>The Tri-Personal God Revealed in the Old Testament</b>	<b>190</b>
<b>6.1.1</b>	<b>Multi-Personal References</b>	<b>191</b>
<b>6.2</b>	<b>God in Three Persons: A Biblical Conclusion</b>	<b>193</b>
<b>6.2.1</b>	<b>Important Refutations Presented</b>	<b>193</b>
<b>6.2.2</b>	<b>Personal Loving Fellowship between the Persons in the Trinity</b>	<b>198</b>
<b>6.2.3</b>	<b>Personal Loving Fellowship between the Persons of the Trinity and Believers</b>	<b>198</b>
<b>6.2.4</b>	<b>The Soteriological Trinity</b>	<b>199</b>
<b>6.3</b>	<b>Summary</b>	<b>201</b>
	<b>BIBLIOGRAPHY</b>	<b>206</b>

## PREFACE

The work embodied in this thesis is the outgrowth of my passion for the doctrine of the Trinity. As a Christian apologist and president of the Department of Christian Defense (an apologetic organization) dealing largely with the theology of non-Christian cults, much of the research for this dissertation actually begun over a decade ago while writing and preparing lectures on the objections to the Trinity made specifically by the Jehovah's Witnesses. Due to their unipersonal position (viz., that *only the Father* is God) they falsely contend that Christians believe that Jesus is the Father when they assert Jesus is God. In fact, I find that Christians who have not been adequately taught about the Trinity make the same error. Thus, unstudied Christians too often unknowingly affirm Oneness theology in their efforts to explain how Jesus is God.

Therefore, a primary reason for my concentration on Oneness theology in contrast to Trinitarianism is to disambiguate and clarify the doctrine of the Trinity especially for evangelistic purposes. This dissertation is an endeavour to express the salvific importance of the Trinity and to provide some theological awareness of Oneness theology. It is my hope that this work will develop some significant concepts of Trinitarian theology. I have spoken and written much on the subject. A great deal of space has been devoted to the preexistence of the Son, for this doctrine is the theological breaking point of Oneness theology: showing that the Son preexisted as God, as Creator and as distinct from the Father turns Oneness theology upside down.

I am optimistic that the fruit of this research will equip and inspire the body of Christ, both pastors and laity, to stress the importance of the doctrine of the Trinity and provide an accurate presentation of it. It is also my hope that through this research, Christians will fully understand the fundamental differences that exist between Oneness theology and Trinitarianism and thus realize that the Trinity is the very heart of the gospel expressing the nature of the true God—the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit.

# INTRODUCTION

The biblical doctrine of the Trinity is arguably the pinnacle of God's self-disclosure to mankind. From the multi-personal references to God in the Old Testament (e.g., Gen 19:24) to the personal distinctions between Father, Son and Holy Spirit expressed in the New Testament (cf. Matt. 28:19; 2 Cor. 13:14), the triune nature of God has been well established (Gunton, 2003: 12). Despite this evidence, however, it seems that the preaching and teaching of the truth of the Trinity is largely absent from many Christian pulpits. Moreover, although all Reformed Systematic Theology books deal significantly with the Trinity (e.g., Reymond, 1998) and some notable scholars have produced worthy contributions on the subject (see Warfield, 1988; White, 1998), there appears to be a definite lack of ecclesiastical material, apologetic literature and other resources affirming and defending the doctrine of the Trinity. It was in the third century A.D. that a Libyan priest named Sabellius proposed unipersonalism as the equation of monotheism, developing an idea earlier posited by Noetus of Smyrna and Praxeas (cf. Walker *et al* 1997: 76, 81, 85). This was in complete antithesis to the understanding of the early church, for the concept of a plurality of divine Persons was deeply imprinted in the apostolic tradition and the popular faith (Kelly, 1978: 88). In the same way, modern advocates of Oneness theology assert a theologically unitarian (or unipersonal) notion of God.

Thus, the advocates of Oneness theology (e.g., Bernard, 1983, Magee, 1988), in common with other unitarian groups, vehemently identify monotheism with unipersonalism (i.e., that God exists as one Person). This is contrary to the testimony of Scripture, in which God is constantly and consistently presented not as one Person, but rather as one Being. Those who propose otherwise do so largely on the basis of an erroneous assumption that whenever the word "one" is applied to God (e.g., Deut. 6:4), it is in the context of absolute solitariness, which is clearly not the case (see Magee, 1988).

Because of this unitarian/unipersonal *a priori* assumption, adherents of Oneness theology deny that there is one God revealed in three distinct Persons. Rather, they assert that "Jesus" is the name of the unitarian deity and that the terms "Father," "Son" and "Holy Spirit" are merely the different modes or expressions in which this "Jesus" is

manifested (Creator, Redeemer, Sanctifier, etc.; Bernard, 1983: 248). It is essentially for this reason that Oneness devotees are baptised “in the name of Jesus” only (cf. Beisner, 1998: 52-53). Their basic hypothesis is that there is only one God, the Father (cf. Mal. 2:10; 1 Cor. 8:6; cf. Kuschel, 1992: 276); since Jesus is also acknowledged as God (John 8:58; Titus 2:13), he must, therefore, be the Father *and* the Son while the Holy Spirit is seen as merely “another term for the one God” (Bernard, 1983: 128). Hence, Oneness teachers argue that the God Jesus has two natures: divine, as the Father/Holy Spirit; and human, as the Son of God (note, not God the Son). Because the essence of Oneness theology is such that only the Father is God, the Son represents only the humanity of their “Jesus.” Consequently, both the deity and the preexistence of the Son are summarily denied. Such passages that indicate the Son’s preexistence (e.g., John 17:5; Col. 1:16, 17) are “explained” away by anti-Trinitarians on the basis of the Son existing only as an intention *in the mind* of the Father, not as a personal coexistence (Buzzard & Hunting, 1998: 158-161).

The logical development of their arguments is such that it was not the Son but the Father who clothed Himself in flesh and that this “flesh” was thence called “Son” (Bernard, 1983: 104, 299). The implications of such a position are vast, for they extend to subjects of such Christological import as the precise role of the Son as Mediator, Intercessor and Saviour, amongst others. Aside from denying the foundational doctrine of the Trinity, Oneness devotees typically misrepresent the basis of its pivotal argument, purporting that it is tantamount to worshiping three separate Gods (Bernard, 1983: 290). This, however, would be tritheism, not Trinitarianism (see Torrance, 1999: 29, 59, 83). Since it seems that many Christian believers have not received adequate teaching regarding the doctrine of the Trinity (literally, Tri-unity—see Cunningham, 1998: 89-119), when faced with the challenge of affirming and defending the doctrine, they often find themselves ill-equipped to present anything but a defective representation of it. The distinction that must be made between biblical orthodoxy regarding the revelation of the Trinity and the position adopted by those who promote the Oneness view is essentially that of exegesis versus eisegesis. The central research question of this work, therefore, is: How may one evaluate Oneness theology in the light of a biblical exegesis, which reveals God as a Triune Personal Supreme Being?

The questions that naturally emerge from this problem include:

- What are the theological assertions of those who promote Oneness theology, and upon what basis are their conclusions derived?
- What are the fundamental Christological differences between orthodox Trinitarianism and the major tenets of Oneness theology?
- What is the biblical presentation of the role of the second Person of the Trinity in Creation and what are the implications of this?
- Are there any lessons to be learned from how the early Church dealt with some of the major doctrinal controversies it was faced with regarding the Person of Christ in a Trinitarian context?

The aim of this work is to evaluate the premise behind Oneness theology in the light of the biblical evidence regarding its emphasis on a Triune Personal Supreme Being—God. The objectives of this work must be seen in their relationship to the aim. Therefore, the subject will be approached from the following four angles:

- i)** To identify the theological assertions of those who promote Oneness theology, and the hermeneutical and exegetical methods employed by them;
- ii)** To assess the fundamental Christological differences between orthodox Trinitarianism and the major tenets of Oneness theology;
- iii)** To demonstrate the biblical presentation of the second Person of the Trinity as co-Creator with the Father and the implications of this presentation;
- iv)** To determine what lessons may be learned from how the early Church dealt with some of the major doctrinal controversies it was faced with regarding the Person of Christ in a Trinitarian context.

The central argument of this study is that a valid exegesis of Scripture demonstrates clearly that Oneness theology is based on an erroneous view of God, which effectively denies the biblical revelation of the only

true God—who is triune in nature. Since Oneness theology embraces a unitarian (unipersonal) concept of God, it shares the same fundamental concept of God as that of Muslims, Jehovah’s Witnesses, and unbelieving Jews.

# *Chapter Two*

## **ONENESS UNITARIANISM**

### **2.1 INTRODUCTION**

Arguably, in the last hundred years or so, there has been a marked increase in biblical and theological illiteracy among Christians universally (cf. Moreland, 1997: 22-38). Important biblical doctrines such as the Trinity, substitutionary atonement and justification through faith alone, which were so revered by the early Christians, are today abdicated or exchanged for a consumer or seeker friendly message. Far too many leading popular professing Christian TV evangelists, pastors and authors carelessly and consistently present unfounded biblical teachings and concepts (see Fee, 1985; Hanegraaff, 1993; and MacArthur, 1993).

The tragic result of this phenomenon is a distorted and muddled gospel message where biblical faith is reduced to a “positive confession” of faith (viz., teaching to have faith in faith), which leads to health, wealth and prosperity (cf. MacArthur, 1993; Tsoukalas, 1999: 47-48). British sociologist and theologian Os Guinness (see Moreland, 1997: 130) argues, “The Devil will allow short-term success in evangelism and church growth if the means used to achieve it ultimately contribute to the marginalization of the church and her message.” It is largely for that reason that essential Christian doctrine is trivialized, undefined, and distorted within mainstream evangelicalism (see Carson, 2002: 102). Because essential doctrine is far too often not the premier attraction in many Christian churches, revivals, and especially Christian television, many well-meaning Christians simply assume that anyone who declares the words “Jesus is Lord” must be Christian. We are not suggesting here that all of Christian television ignores and/or distorts the gospel. We are only pointing out that many of the most popular evangelists are teaching aberrant and heretical doctrines.

Even so, it must be realized, the mere phrase “Jesus is Lord” is meaningless unless the phrase correlates with the Jesus of biblical revelation, for “professing” Christian groups such as Jehovah’s

Witnesses, who deny the deity of Christ, and Mormons, who deny the nature and eternal existence of the one true God, all claim “Jesus is Lord.” Although Oneness Pentecostals deny the Trinity, they too declare, “Jesus is Lord” (cf. UPCI, 2008b).

However, the heretical teachings of Oneness theology are much more subtle than that of many heresies. Oneness theology is perhaps even more dangerous, in that people are more likely to accept it as Christian. In other words, are the doctrines of Oneness theology consistent with the teachings presented in Holy Scripture? Only by the Scriptures, the sole infallible standard that categorically distinguishes true Christianity from false or professing ones, can one accomplish an accurate evaluation of Oneness theology.

In saying that, it is not the name “Jesus” itself that has any salvific value, for there were many who were named “Jesus” (that is, Joshua) in first-century Palestine. In contradistinction, however, it is only the Jesus of biblical revelation who can truly save those enslaved to sin. It is *this* Jesus who alone can forgive sins and it is this Jesus who “gives life to whom He wishes” (John 5:21).<sup>1</sup> When Jesus said, “He who believes has eternal life” (John 6:47), the meaning of the word “believes” must be considered.

The word translated “believes” (*pisteuōn*, literally, “believing”; *pisteuōn* is the present active indicative participle of *pisteuō*) in soteriological contexts has the denotative and lexical meaning of intellectual assent, knowledge, and trust (cf. Bauer, 2000: 816-18). Note, for example, that in passages such as John 3:16, 36; 5:24; 6:47; 1 John 5:1, where salvation is in view, this present active indicative participle form, *pisteuōn*, is used. This indicates that the “believing” is on-going and active. Thus, truly regenerate Christians will *keep on* believing. Their belief in Christ will not be temporary, but rather active and constant in contrast to an anthropocentric faith, which is not the result of regeneration (cf. John 6:66). In fact, throughout John’s gospel and epistles, in the context of salvation, as with *pisteuōn*, “believing,” present tense participles are used to denote this reality (e.g., *akouōn*, “hearing” [John 5:24], *erchomenon*, “coming” [6:37], *trōgōn*, “eating” [literally, “munching”], and *pinōn*, “drinking” [6:54, 56]).

Simply then, genuine Christianity is biblically defined by having an ultimate trust (faith) in and possessing an *accurate* knowledge of the

---

<sup>1</sup> Unless otherwise indicated, all biblical citations within this thesis are from the *New American Standard Bible*, 1996.

Person, nature and finished work of the Jesus Christ of biblical revelation (cf. John 17:3). Oneness theology has a definite theological position, which differs fundamentally and historically from the biblical presentation. What is key in understanding Oneness theology is to understand its basic theological starting point: God has revealed Himself as a unipersonal, that is, *unitarian* Being. Theological unitarianism asserts God to be unipersonal, existing exclusively as one undivided Person, hence rejecting the doctrine of the Trinity.

A distinction, though, needs to be made between religious groups that are unitarian in their doctrine of God and the official Unitarian religion itself. The former would include such religious systems as Judaism, Islam, the Watchtower Bible and Tract Society (i.e., Jehovah's Witnesses) etc., while the latter is applied exclusively to the Unitarian Church as a religious denomination. Thus, *unitarian* (in lower case) will be used throughout this thesis to refer to the unipersonal theology of the Oneness view of God as well as all other theological unitarian groups, but not necessarily the Unitarian Church. Technically, a unitarian belief of God is synonymous with a unipersonal belief of God—unless one asserts an *impersonal* “single” Deity, as with the Baha'i faith, which excludes unipersonalism while still maintaining unitarianism.

Notwithstanding the fact that many Oneness theologians and official organizations (e.g., Bernard, 1983:57; UPCI, 2008b) see God as unipersonal, some Oneness teachers (cf. Reeves, 1962: 26-28), however, would reject (though very indecisively) that notion. Some would even object to the usage of “unitarian” as a description of Oneness theology, confusing the categories of religious denomination with theology as we have just discussed. Nevertheless, these objections clearly rest on semantic and not exegetical grounds. In his argument against Oneness theology labeled as “unitarian,” recognized United Pentecostal Church International (hereafter UPCI) authority David K. Bernard (1983: 326) explains that “Oneness believers affirm the full deity of Jesus whereas Unitarians do not.” However, his argument here emanates from his failure to make a coherent distinction between the “official” religion of the Unitarian Church and the theological unitarianism that Oneness theology embraces.

Moreover, Bernard (1983: 22) is ambiguous in his dissatisfaction with Oneness theology, holding to the notion that God is unipersonal: “We limit our conception of God if we describe Him as a person. For this reason, this book has never said there is one person in the Godhead

or God is one person. The most we have said is that Jesus Christ is one person, because Jesus was God manifested in flesh as a human person.” This kind of elusiveness only serves to obscure the Oneness position. Bernard makes a category mistake, confusing “person” with “people.” It is personal attributes and personal characteristics, not necessarily flesh, that constitute personhood. For example, angels, including the devil, are certainly “persons” in that they possess personal attributes and personal characteristics, especially in their ability to communicate comprehensibly with others. However, they do not fall under the category of human/people. Bernard here implies that Jesus (as the Father) before *manifesting in the flesh* was not a Person (equating “person” with “human/people”). To deny the personhood of the Father and equivocate on the word “person” is the only tenable way Bernard can stay consistent in his vague denial of God being unipersonal.

However, he is not consistent in promoting such a view, for he uses personal pronouns and applies personal attributes in his descriptions of God *before* manifesting in the flesh (Bernard 1983: 191). Without question, Bernard is the most prolific and most cited Oneness writer who accurately represents and understands Oneness theology (cf. Beisner, 1998: 11). Therefore, throughout the course of this thesis, he will be the primary source of reference as to what Oneness theology teaches.

Regardless of the way Oneness teachers explain the Oneness concept of God, unitarianism/unipersonalism cannot logically be denied. If Jesus is unipersonal, which Oneness doctrine necessarily implies, and if the entire Godhead (Father/Son/Holy Spirit) consists in the “one Person” of Jesus, then it necessarily follows that Oneness theology holds to a unipersonal view of God. That Oneness theology is theologically unitarian is undeniable.

Therefore, examining Oneness theology in light of biblical exegesis, and not the philosophical arguments so often presented by Oneness defenders, will substantiate that Oneness unitarianism severely opposes the biblical position, which is decidedly Trinitarian.

## 2.2 MONOTHEISM

“Hear, O Israel! The LORD is our God, the LORD is one!” (Deut. 6:4). The *Shema* was continuously quoted by every believing Jew to remind him or her that there was only one true God, the Creator of all things,

from whom salvation and ultimate *shalom*, “peace,” was given (cf. vv. 4-9). Originally, the *Shema* (“Hear O Israel”) consisted of one verse (Deut. 6:4; cf. *Talmud Sukkot*, 42a). The reading of the *Shema* in the liturgy, though, consists of three portions: Deuteronomy 6:4-9; 11:13-21; and Numbers 15:37-41. These three portions relate to Jewish core beliefs. In Mark 12:29, Jesus quotes the *Shema* (from the Septuagint, hereafter LXX) as the first and greatest of all the commandments. Interestingly, the verb *akouō* appears here as a second person *imperative* (*akoue*)—that is, a commandment. Thus, Jesus cites Deuteronomy 6:4 to underscore that the foremost commandment is “to hear” (i.e., believe, understand, have knowledge, etc.) that the Lord is one.

To hear that the Lord is *one* was not a polite request, but rather a divine command. Ontological monotheism, the belief in one true God *by nature*, is what set apart the people of God from the crass polytheism, which flourished in the surrounding pagan nations (cf. Deut. 4:35). No one can read, for example, Isaiah chapters 40-48 and not recognize the constant and definitive way the Lord expresses absolute monotheism to His people.

When evaluating any theologically unitarian construct, such as Oneness theology, monotheism must first be defined from a biblical context in order to (a) correctly apprehend the doctrine of the Trinity and (b) fully apprehend why Oneness theology is not consistent with biblical theology. As with theologically unitarian believing groups, Oneness theology views monotheism as unitarianism or more specifically, unipersonalism (i.e., that God exists as one Person; cf. UPCI, 2008b). Although this correlation is constantly maintained, there is no place in Scripture where God is strictly defined as one Person, but rather He is presented as one Being. There is a marked distinction between “being” and “person.” “Being” is *what* something is, “person” is *who* something is. Thus, maintaining a continued awareness of this distinction is greatly efficacious in accurately communicating the doctrine of the Trinity—one Being revealed in three Persons.

While the concept of monotheism does not expressly indicate unitarianism, Oneness teachers (Reeves, 1962; Bernard, 1983; Magee, 1988) read into the places where God is said to be “one,” “alone,” etc. (e.g., Deut. 4:35; 6:4; Isa. 43:10; 44:6, 8; 1 Tim. 2:5) the idea of absolute solitary “one” or the idea of “one Person.” The burden of proof, in this case, would certainly fall on the one claiming that “one God” means “one Person” having the strict denotative meaning of *absolute* solitude.

This task, though, is evidently unachievable when unitarianism, and not the biblical data, is the basis of the semantic assumptions. As previously mentioned, Bernard (1983: 290) equivocates on the idea of a “unipersonal” God, yet he has no problem with the idea that God is absolutely one, hence affirming unitarianism while at the same time prevaricating on unipersonalism. First, it does not follow that because God is personal He must be unipersonal.

Second, though it is true that there are some Hebrew Old Testament terms meaning “one” that can indicate *absolute* solitude or a single one, it is untrue that every term that can mean “one” carries this same meaning or emphasis. Morey (1996: 87) indicates that there are nine words in biblical Hebrew that can mean “one” (*ish, ishah, nephesh, yachiyd, almoni, echad, gam, badad, chad*). This is particularly true regarding the key term for “one” when it is applied to God. The word exclusively applied to God to denote that He is “one” is *echad* (viz., Deut. 6:4). What Oneness Pentecostals should consider is that the Hebrew term *echad* can have the meaning of complex or compound oneness or unity (e.g., Gen 2:24; 11:6; Exod. 26:6, 11; Swanson, 1997: entry 285).

Note the use of the term “compound” or “composite” throughout this dissertation in the sense of *unity oneness*, which is in contrast to absolute solitary oneness. Though the terms “compound” and “composite” can indeed denote “parts of a whole,” this definition is inadequate in describing the multi-personal nature of God. For the Persons of the Trinity are not parts or divisions of the one Being.

One cannot quantify or divide God into parts, for each Person exists as fully God (cf. Col. 2:9; Tsoukalas, 1999: 222-24).

Thus, the Lord is one, that is, one Being. Nevertheless, what is theologically significant is the fact that though *echad* can mean both compound unity and solitary “one” or “alone,” the Hebrew word that *solely* denotes absolute solitary “one” or “alone” is *yachiyd* (Brown *et al*, 1979; cf. Judg. 11:34; Ps. 68:6). Dissimilar to *echad* and other Hebrew terms meaning “one,” *yachiyd* carries the limited meaning of solitary “one” or “alone.” If the biblical authors were unitarian, envisaging Yahweh as one sole Person, as Oneness teachers propose, one would expect to see the term *yachiyd* used of Him. But it is never applied to God in the Old Testament, which uses *echad* exclusively.

Another monotheistic group, the Jehovah’s Witnesses, argue that there is only one true God, the Father (Jehovah) and Jesus (“a god”) being the “first of Jehovah’s works”—a *created* angel (Watchtower,

1989b: 16). Thus, along with Oneness believers, they assume a conclusion: monotheism *equals* unipersonalism. This is a very important point when dealing with Oneness theology. Biblical monotheism must be set forth accurately and according to the biblical presentation laid out by the biblical authors. Historically, in the face of the polytheistic and gnostic ideologies which were being widely promulgated, the Christian church systematically refuted such views and persistently taught that there was only one true God ontologically who *alone* is eternal. What is not well thought-out by unitarian groups is that the very foundation of the doctrine of the Trinity is ontological monotheism: there exist three distinct, coequal, coeternal, and coexistent Persons or Selves that share the nature of the *one* God.

Even so, against such language, Oneness teachers such as Bernard (1983) assert that the doctrine of the Trinity departs from monotheism. This contention, though, is due to their gross misapprehension of the doctrine, namely, that monotheism and unitarianism/ unipersonalism are interchangeable. Various Oneness teachers see the doctrine of the Trinity as teaching or implying three *separate* Gods. Reeves (1962: 51-52), for example, argues that a literal plurality of Persons would in effect “be a belief in a plurality of Gods” (cf. Bernard, 1983: 290). In contrast to this anti-Trinitarian *straw man* argument, absolute ontological monotheism is the doctrinal bedrock of the Trinity.

The triune nature of God consists of the three distinct Persons, not three separate Gods or Beings. A radical and incorrect view of biblical monotheism and a theological misunderstanding of the tri-unity of God was the very basis upon which Modalism first emerged historically.

## 2.3 ROOTED IN MONARCHIANISM

To achieve a correct theological cognition of Oneness theology, an adequate familiarity with some of the more significant technical terms is imperative. Historically, Oneness theology was first known as Monarchianism, which comes from the Greek word *monarchia* meaning *single principle*. In Chapter 5, there will be an expanded treatment of the historical particulars of Modalism, but here a general summary will suffice.

There were two forms of Monarchianism: *modalistic*, and the far less accepted, *dynamic* (or more properly called Adoptionism), both of which emerged at the end of the second century. Dynamic

Monarchianism taught that Jesus *became* “divinely inspired” at His baptism to do miracles, but without actually becoming deified. In this view, God merely “adopted” Jesus as His Son; hence this view was known as Adoptionism. The early Christian church quickly refuted and debunked this Christological heresy, which clearly denied the deity and eternity of Jesus Christ. Because of this fundamental denial of the full deity of Christ, dynamic Monarchianism never really gained widespread status or acceptance and eventually faded out. On the other side of the spectrum was modalistic Monarchianism, known also as Modalism, or Sabellianism. Sabellianism took its name from the Libyan priest Sabellius who came to Rome and promulgated Modalism at the beginning of the third century A.D. (cf. Kelly 1978: 121).

It was also known as Patripassianism, which in Latin means “father to suffer”. Because the basic premise of Modalism held to the idea that Jesus was the Father, some early church fathers, for example Hippolytus, envisaged this doctrine as teaching that the Father suffered on the cross. Speaking of the first known modalist, Noetus of Smyrna (c. A.D. 190), Hippolytus (*Against Noetus 2*, in Roberts and Donaldson, 1994: vol. 5:224) writes: “They [the modalists] answer in this manner: “If therefore I acknowledge Christ to be God, He is the Father Himself, if He is indeed God; and Christ suffered, being Himself God; and consequently the Father suffered, for He was the Father Himself.”

As will be discussed in greater detail in Chapter 5, there were (and still are) two forms of Modalism: *successive* (or *developmental*) and *simultaneous* (or *static*). Successive Modalism teaches that the modes were successive: starting with the mode of the Father in creation; then, the Son for the task of redemption; and after, the Holy Spirit for regeneration. Sabellius held unambiguously to successive Modalism (cf. Schaff, 2006, vol. 2: 11:262), whereas simultaneous Modalism teaches that the modes of the Father, Son and Holy Spirit exist simultaneously (using passages such as Matt. 3:16-17 as a so-called proof text). Most Oneness groups today teach a form of simultaneous Modalism (see UPCI, 2008b). Today, however, “Oneness Pentecostalism” or simply “Oneness theology” describes the modalistic belief.

Modalism earned its name from its distinctive theology. In general, Modalism, that is, Oneness theology, teaches that God exists as a unitarian, that is, a unipersonal, indivisible monad (Reymond, 1998: 597). Thus, the titles “Father,” “Son” and “Holy Spirit” merely represent the different “modes” (or roles or offices) that God temporally

manifested for the sake of redemption (Bernard, 1983: 106). Oneness teachers maintain that “Jesus” is the name of this unitarian/unipersonal deity.

Since Oneness theology sees Jesus as the only real Person in the Godhead, it asserts that Jesus has two natures, divine and human. However, these two natures of Christ do not represent two natures of the one Person, as defined in Scripture (John 1:14; 1 Cor. 2:8; Phil. 2:6-11), but rather the divine nature represents the Father and the Holy Spirit and the human nature represents the Son—namely, the humanity of Jesus. Oneness theology flatly rejects unipersonality of Jesus Christ, since they see Jesus as the Father, Son and Holy Spirit. In addition, Oneness theology does not regard the Holy Spirit as a Person, but rather, as with the Father, a mere manifestation or mode of Jesus’ divine nature (cf. UPCI, 2008b). “The Holy Spirit,” Bernard explains (1983: 128), “is another term for the one God.” There will be a further examination of the Oneness position regarding the Holy Spirit in Chapter 3.

In studying the ancient heresy of Modalism and its relationship to modern Oneness Pentecostalism, knowledge of its doctrinal origins is vital. Precisely, Modalism emerged at the end of the second century. Noetus of Smyrna (c. A.D. 190) was the first known modalist to allege, “Christ was the Father Himself” (Hippolytus, *Against Noetus*, in Roberts and Donaldson, 1994: vol. 5:223-31). Additional leaders of the movement included Praxeas (according to Tertullian), and shortly after, the Libyan priest Sabellius. In spite of many Oneness teachers and advocates throughout the years differing on many tangential doctrines, one theological point is firmly agreed upon by all Oneness believers historically and presently: God is unipersonal and has not revealed Himself in three distinct, coequal, coeternal, coexistent Persons or Selves. One cannot read the writings of church fathers such as Hippolytus, Tertullian, Novatian, Dionysius of Alexandria, Dionysius of Rome, Cyril of Jerusalem and Epiphanius and not see the magnitude of importance they held for the doctrine of the Trinity and their utter disdain for the heretical teachings of Modalism, for Modalism, as the early Christian church universally recognized, denied the Son as eternal God.

The early church fathers valued Scripture and they were passionate and explicit in proclaiming the nature of God. When a false teaching emerged that attacked any portion of essential Christian doctrine, they polemically and vigorously refuted those promulgating such teachings. Holy Scripture was their sole infallible ultimate *rule of faith*. It

instructed them to refute publicly those who opposed sound doctrine (Eph. 5:11; 1 Tim. 5:20; Titus 1:9, 13; 2:1). Accordingly, in loving obedience to God’s infallible Word, they defended indefatigably the biblical presentation of the two-natured Person, God the Son, Jesus Christ. Oneness theology redefines the Person of the “Son,” Jesus Christ. Observably, in order to make Oneness theology appear to be the doctrinal norm of the early church, Oneness writers (Chalfant, 1979; Bernard, 1991) greatly misuse and revise historical information regarding church history. Commonly, Oneness writers quote early church fathers selectively and out of historical context, which we will factually demonstrate in Chapter 5.

### **2.3.1 The Re-emergence of Modalism**

Shortly after the Christian church condemned Sabellius as a heretic (Kelly, 1978: 121), Modalism generally died off, at least until Emanuel Swedenborg (1688-1772) had a “revelation” that Jesus was the one Person behind the masks of the Father, Son and Holy Spirit, whereas early Modalism (Sabellius in particular) taught that the one Person behind the three masks or modes was the Father, not Jesus.

Modern Oneness Pentecostalism, also known as “Jesus Only” churches, with the UPCI being the largest Oneness domination, is a development from early Pentecostalism (early 1900s) emerging out of the Assemblies of God Church in 1914. From 1913 to 1916 several Pentecostal leaders including R. E. McAlister, Frank J. Ewart, Glenn Cook and Garfield T. Haywood (Ankerberg and Weldon, 1999: 367) began teaching that the “correct” baptismal formula must be “in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ” and not “in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit” (Beisner, 1998: 7). McAlister’s baptismal formula message, based on Acts 2:38, greatly influenced a preacher named John Scheppe. One night, in the midst of intense prayer, Scheppe claimed that he had encountered a type of revelation or mystical experience confirming the power of the name of Jesus. Certain passages of Scripture (e.g., Matt. 17:8; John 10:30; Phil. 2:9-11; and Col. 3:17) led Scheppe to adopt a modalistic view of the Godhead that—contrary to Sabellius—made Jesus, not the Father, the one true God (cf. Ankerberg and Weldon, 1999: 367).

### 2.3.2 Statistics and Figures

The UPCI's official website (UPCI, 2016a) provides the following statistics:

The UPCI has been among the fastest-growing church organizations since it was formed in 1945 by the merger of the Pentecostal Church Incorporated and the Pentecostal Assemblies of Jesus Christ. From 521 churches in 1945, the UPCI in the United States and Canada grew to 4,602 churches (including daughter works and preaching points) and 9,746 ministers in 2015. In the same year it reported works in 212 nations and territories outside the U.S. and Canada with 35,739 churches and preaching points, 23,401 licensed ministers, 886 missionaries, and a constituency of 2.7 million. The international fellowship consists of national organizations that are united as the Global Council of the UPCI, which is chaired by the general superintendent of the UPCI. Total constituency is estimated at 3 million.

Notwithstanding the fact that literally hundreds of non-UPCI Oneness churches worldwide have divested themselves of the strict legalism of the UPCI, these non-UPCI Oneness churches still retain the same modalistic definition of God. The UPCI bogs down its members with strict dress codes such as hair style requirements, abnormally stringent behavior requirements, attendance requirements, rules for “correct” worship, and the teaching that speaking in tongues is the only true sign or evidence of being “baptized with the Holy Spirit,” etc (cf. Boyd, 1992).<sup>2</sup>

It is quite difficult, however, to ascertain an accurate count of all Oneness believers worldwide. For non-UPCI Oneness churches have various names and many are not concerned about nor retain membership data. Thus, aside from the more than four million members of the UPCI,

---

<sup>2</sup> Although Gregory Boyd has skillfully provided a pointed refutation against Oneness Pentecostalism and has disarmed the liberal scholarship of the “Jesus Seminar” (e.g., *Jesus Under Siege* [Wheaton: Victor Books, 1995]), this author is in full disagreement with his views on “open theism” (cf. Gregory A. Boyd, *God of the Possible: A Biblical Introduction to the Open View of God* [Grand Rapids: Baker, 2000]). See Bruce A. Ware, *God's Lesser Glory: The Diminished God of Open Theism* (Wheaton: Crossway Books, 2000), wherein Ware provides a blow-by-blow refutation against the hyper-Arminian system of “open theism.”

and taking into account the numerous non-UPCI Oneness churches and organizations internationally, it is reasonable to say that the total number of Oneness believers could exceed 15 million. Some of the main Oneness organizations are as follows: Higher Ground Always Abounding Assemblies; Apostolic Overcoming Holy Church of God (AOHCG); Assemblies of the Lord Jesus, Inc. (ALJI); Bible Way Church of Our Lord Jesus Christ World Wide, Inc. (Bible Way); Church of Our Lord Jesus of the Apostolic Faith (COLJF); Pentecostal Assemblies of the World (PAW); Pentecostal Church of Apostolic Faith (PCAF); United Church of Jesus Christ (Apostolic) (UCJC-A); United Pentecostal Church International (UPCI). Some of the key Oneness publications are *The Pentecostal Herald* (UPCI); *The Global Witness* (UPCI); *The Bible Way News Voice* (Bible Way); *The People's Mouthpiece* (AOHCG); *The Contender for the Faith* (COLJF); *Christian Outlook* (PAW).

Some of the key Oneness educational institutions are: Berean Christian Bible College, Birmingham, AL (AOHCG); Aeon Bible School, Indianapolis, IN (PAW); Institute of Biblical Studies, Baltimore, MD (UCJC); Apostolic Bible Institute, St. Paul, MN (UPCI); Apostolic Missionary Institute, Oshawa, ON (UPCI); Christian Life College, Stockton, CA (UPCI); Indiana Bible College, Seymour, IN (UPCI); Texas Bible College, Houston, TX (UPCI). This would make Oneness believers the largest anti-Trinitarian professing Christian group in the world, exceeding that of the Jehovah's Witnesses and the Mormon Church.

The official website of the Watchtower Bible and Tract Society (Watchtower, 2009) currently reports a membership of close to seven million (6,957,854) "active" Jehovah's Witnesses and a reported attendance of seventeen million at the annual Memorial Attendance. According to the official website, The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints (LDS, 2009; i.e., the Mormon Church) boasts a worldwide membership of more than thirteen million (13,193,999) with a full time missionary force of over fifty-two thousand young Mormon missionaries.

Additionally, there are many popular and prolific preachers on the airwaves that hold to and/or propagate the Oneness view of God. For example, Trinity Broadcasting Network (TBN), which is the largest Christian television network, consistently features one of the most recognized Oneness preachers, T. D. Jakes of the Potters House (located in Dallas, Texas; cf. section 2.7 below). Regrettably, we see the

resurrection of the ancient theological heresy of Sabellianism starting with Swedenborg to the present.

## 2.4 ONENESS THEOLOGY DEFINED

The basic Oneness doctrinal syllogism is as follows:

- **Premise 1:** There is only one God, the Father (e.g., Mal. 2:10; 1 Cor. 8:6; cf. Bernard, 1983: 66, 126).
- **Premise 2:** Jesus is God (e.g., John 8:58; Titus 2:13).
- **Conclusion:** Jesus is the Father (and the Holy Spirit). Jesus has two natures: *divine* as the Father/Holy Spirit and *human* as the Son of God.

While this syllogism is a brief description of the modern Oneness view of God, it serves, nonetheless, as an accurate representation. Bernard (1983: 248, 252) clarifies the Oneness doctrine of God:

The modalistic doctrine is usually explained simply as the belief that the Father, Son and Holy Spirit are only manifestations, modes, of the one God (the monarchia), and not three distinct persons (hypostases) ... In summary, modalistic Monarchianism can be defined as the belief that the Father, Son and Holy Spirit are manifestations of the one God with no distinctions of person [*sic*] being possible. Furthermore, the one God is expressed fully in the person of Jesus Christ.

The Oneness position is made clear: modalistic Monarchianism, that is, Oneness theology, is unitarian in its doctrine of God, thus categorically rejecting the biblical doctrine of the Trinity. Fundamentally, Oneness theology maintains that God has revealed Himself as three roles, modes, manifestations, etc., and that the entire Godhead consists in one Person—Jesus Christ (cf. Bernard, 1983:57).

In an official UPCI doctrinal tract entitled “60 Questions on the Godhead with Bible answers” (UPCI, 2008c), question 11 asks, “Does the Bible say that all the Godhead is *revealed in one person*? Yes, in Jesus Christ. II Corinthians 4:4; Colossians 1:19; 2:9; Hebrews 1:3.”

In the same tract, question 56 asks, “Can Trinitarians show that three divine persons were present when Jesus was baptized by John? Absolutely not. The one, omnipresent God used three simultaneous manifestations. Only one divine person was present—Jesus Christ the Lord.” Oneness teachers thus present a Jesus who while on earth had two natures: divine, as the Father/Holy Spirit, and human, as the Son of God (though not God the Son). Hence, all Oneness teachers and believers unconditionally reject the biblical presentation of God revealing Himself in three distinct Persons: “To say that God is three persons and find substantiation for it in the Scripture is a work of futility. There is literally nothing in the Bible that supports God being in three persons” (Weisser, 1983: 2).

#### **2.4.1 Oneness Semantics: “God-Man” = “Father-Son”**

The definitions of Oneness doctrinal terms must be properly distinguished in order that phrases such as “God,” “Father,” “Jesus is God,” “Jesus is man,” etc. can be understood from a Oneness theological point of view.

Without the apprehension of such distinctions, the task of understanding the Oneness language becomes increasingly difficult. Therefore, in the presentation that follows, by way of Oneness definitions, when the term “Son” is used, it is referring to the human nature of Jesus. Likewise, when the term “God” or “Father” (or “Holy Spirit/Ghost”) is used, it is referring only to the divine nature of Jesus. Notwithstanding the fact that virtually every non-Christian cult denies in some way, shape, or form, the full deity of Jesus Christ, Oneness theology happily affirms it. As a result, many unassuming Christians see Oneness Pentecostalism as merely another “Christian” denomination. However, we must scrutinize the so-called affirmation of the deity of Jesus Christ made by Oneness advocates *in light of Oneness Christology*. To recall, the Oneness theological position maintains a modalistic idea of Jesus being both God the Father and the human Son. It is only in this sense, then, that Oneness believers can affirm that Jesus is God—namely, *as the Father* according to His divine nature.

Only in this sense can they affirm such things as Jesus preexisting, being the Creator, the great “I am,” the Alpha Omega, the Yahweh of the Old Testament, etc. However, none of these features can apply to Jesus as the Son (cf. Bernard, 1983: 104). This point must be clear: in

Oneness theology, the *Father* represents Jesus' divine nature while the *Son* represents Jesus' human *non-divine* nature. Hence, God is defined from a unitarian perspective: only the Father is God (i.e., Jesus' divine nature; Bernard, 1983: 66, 126). So, the Oneness affirmation of the deity of Christ is merely a semantic equivocation. Thus, the meaning of "Son of God" in Oneness theology refers primarily to the humanity (viz., the human nature) of Jesus, not to His deity. Bernard (1983: 99, 103) explains that "the Son of God" may refer to

God manifested in flesh—that is, deity in the human nature ... We can never use the term "Son" correctly apart from the humanity of Jesus Christ ... The Son always refers to the Incarnation and we cannot use it in the absence of the human element ... The Son did not have preexistence before the conception in the womb of Mary. The Son preexisted in thought but not in substance.

That Jesus is God-man in Oneness dogma is the same as saying that Jesus is "Father-Son" since they equate "God" with "Father" and "Son" with Jesus' humanity. Oneness teacher John Paterson (1966: 22) explains: "When we say that Jesus is both God and Man, we mean that He is both Father and Son." Paterson (1966: 22) goes on to say:

As the Father, He is absolutely and PURELY God, as the Son, He is absolutely and PURELY Man. When Jesus claims to be God, it is with respect to His Essence as the Eternal Spirit, the Father; and when He says, "My Father is greater than I" (John 14:28), it is with respect to His created nature as Man, the Son.

Following this line of thought, therefore, when Scripture speaks of Jesus as God (e.g., John 8:24, 58; 20:28 Titus 2:13), it is Jesus merely speaking in the role or mode of the Father—namely, Jesus' divine nature. When Scripture speaks of Jesus as man (e.g., when He stated, "I thirst" or asked, "Who touched Me?"), it is Jesus speaking in the role or mode of the Son—namely, His human nature. Therefore, when reading the New Testament, Oneness believers must determine in which role or mode Jesus is speaking—the "Father," or the human "Son," or the "Holy Spirit."

"Sometimes it is easy to get confused," says Bernard (1983: 88), "when the Bible describes Jesus in these two different roles, especially when it describes Him acting in both roles [divine and human] in the

same story ... He could speak as man [i.e., the Son] one moment and then as God [i.e., the Father] the next moment.” What is clear is that the Oneness position denies the unipersonality of Jesus Christ. Yet, to maintain the unipersonality of God, the Oneness position “implies that Jesus was two persons [Father and Son] enabling each to talk to the other” (Beisner, 1998: 16-17).

#### **2.4.2 Denial of the Incarnation**

The historical doctrine and biblical presentation of the incarnation of the Lord of Glory, Jesus Christ, is the very essence of the gospel. It defines the Savior’s mission: God the Son becoming flesh (cf. John 1:14).

Scripture clearly presents that the Son voluntarily became the very nature (*morphē*) of a human (cf. Phil. 2:6ff.; both John 1:14 and Phil. 2:6ff. will be exegetically treated in Chapter 4). In vivid contrast to the biblical/historical view, Oneness teaching denies the incarnation of the Person of the Son. Biblically, the incarnation of the Lord Jesus Christ is exegetically affirmed in such passages as, for example, John 1:1-14; 3:13; Philippians 2:6-11; and 1 Corinthians 2:8. Historically, the early church fathers clearly spoke of the Son (or, in the *apostolic* fathers, the eternal Word) becoming flesh. In addition, important early ecumenical councils and creeds (e.g., Nicene, Chalcedonian, etc.) clearly affirmed the biblical data regarding the incarnation of God the Son. We will provide a most detailed examination of the early church regarding both the development of the Trinity and Oneness theology in Chapter 5.

Assuming that God is unipersonal (existing solely as the Father), the Oneness position rejects the preexistence of the Son, hence arguing that it was the Father, “for the purpose of redemption” (Bernard, 1983: 106, 122), that came down and *wrapped* Himself in human flesh (though, not actually *becoming* flesh; cf. Bernard, 1991:103). Thus, Oneness theology denies and convolutes the biblical doctrine of the Incarnation, which teaches that God the Son (cf. John 1:1c) “became” flesh (*egeneto* from *ginomai*, thus, not *put on* or *wrapped in*, but actually became).

#### **2.4.3 Denial of the Personal Distinctions within the Godhead**

As many Christian theologians have pointed out (e.g., Morey, 1996; White, 1998, Beisner, 1998), significant Christological doctrines such

as the divine Son's role as Mediator, Intercessor, and Redeemer are reduced to a mere charade in Oneness theology. Insurmountable theological problems become apparent when there is a denial of the personal distinctions within the Trinity. For example, if Jesus is not a distinct Person from the Father, between whom does He mediate? For whom does He intercede? To whom did He propitiate? Even Bernard (1983: 186) admits, "Many verses of Scripture distinguish between the Father and the Son in power, greatness, and knowledge." He then argues:

It is a great mistake to use them to show two persons in the Godhead. If a distinction exists between Father and Son as persons in the Godhead, then the Son is subordinate or inferior to the Father in deity. This would mean the Son is not fully God, because by definition God is subject to no one ... The way to understand these verses is to view them as distinguishing the *divinity* of Jesus (the *Father*) from the *humanity* of Jesus (the *Son*). The humanity or *Sonship* role of Christ is subordinate to his deity (emphasis added).

First, to say, "If a distinction exists ... then the Son is subordinate or inferior to the Father in deity," begs the question. Bernard assumes his conclusion (distinction = ontological inferiority) that he has not yet proven. He also confuses the terms "subordinate" and "inferior", imposing a meaning of ontological inferiority on account of his pre-committed theology. It is consistent with Trinitarian theology that the Son's subordination or subjection to the Father was a functional and not an ontological aspect of His position (cf. Phil. 2:6-11). However, the term "subjection" (or "submission, obedience," etc.) is from the Greek word *hupotassō*, literally, "to be under [the] organization" or "arrangement" (*hupo* + *tassō*; cf. Bauer, 2000: 1042). Hence, it does not necessitate ontological superiority or subjection. While the Son is biblically presented as being ontologically coequal with the Father (cf. John 1:1c; Phil. 2:6-11; Heb. 1:3), He is presented also as being *functionally* (positionally) subordinate or subject to Him. That the Son was "subjected" to the Father (cf. 1 Cor. 15:28) does not indicate that He was *less than* or *not equal* to Him in terms of nature or essence.

In the same way, that wives are called to be *hupotassō* to their husbands (e.g., Eph. 5:21-24; 1 Pet. 3:1) or that the husband is said to be "the head of the wife" (Eph. 5:23) does not indicate that wives are *less than* or *not equal* to their husbands in terms of nature or essence,

but only by way of position. In Luke 2:51, we read that Jesus “continued to be in subjection [*hupotassomenos*] to them” (i.e., His parents). This certainly does not mean that the Son was inferior by nature to Mary and Joseph, only that He continually obeyed them.

Here, the present tense passive participle of *hupotassō* is used (*hupotassomenos*), which indicates that His subjection was voluntary and continuous. In the same doctrinal vein, when Jesus said, “the Father is greater than I” (John 14:28), it must be realized that the term translated “greatest” (*meizōn*, from *meγas*) denotes position or function—not nature (cf. Bauer, 2000: 624; see John 14:12). In fact, no standard lexicon offers a meaning of qualitative or ontological superiority for the term *meγas*. If the Son wished to communicate that the Father was ontologically superior than He, He certainly could have used the term *kreittōn* (“better”/“stronger”) to accomplish this. For this term can indeed denote ontological superiority (e.g., Heb. 1:4: the Son is “much better [*kreittōn*] than the angels”; see also Phil. 1:23; cf. Bauer, 2000: 566).

Further, there is no such passage indicating that the Son was ontologically subordinate or subject to His Father, unless, of course, one reads into those terms that meaning. Quite the opposite, Scripture is replete with lucid examples of the Son’s coequality with the Father (e.g., John 1:1c; 5:18-24; 8:58; 17:5; 1 Cor. 2:8; Rev. 5:13-14).

Second, to say that “the Son was not fully God, because by definition God is subject to no one,” ignores the fact that (a) as indicated, the Son was functionally, not ontologically, subordinate to the Father, (b) Scripture presents that the “Son” was fully God and not a *part* of God (e.g., John 1:1c; Phil. 2:6; Col. 2:9; Titus 2:13; Heb. 1:3, 8), and (c) the Holy Spirit, who in Oneness theology was fully God, was subject to both the Father and the Son in that He glorified the Son and *obeyed* both the Father and the Son (e.g., John 15:26; 16:13-15).

The personal and intimate interaction between the Father and the Son, as with Jesus’ prayers to Him, which obviously denote their distinction, Oneness theology unnaturally explains away as not an exchange between two Persons, but merely as an interaction between the divine and human natures of Jesus (cf. Bernard, 1983: 176-82). In other words, when Jesus prays to the Father, Jesus’ human nature (the “Son”) is actually praying to His own divine nature (the “Father”); that is, Jesus talks and interacts with Himself! This position implies that Jesus spent much of His time on earth giving nothing more than a divine monologue to His hearers. The great weakness of this notion, however,

is that *natures* do not love or interact with each other; only persons, that is, self-aware subjects, do.

#### 2.4.4 Denial of the Preexistence of the Son

Oneness theology has established that God exists strictly as one Person—the Father. Therefore, it necessarily follows that the Son did not exist before Bethlehem as a *distinct* (from His Father) conscious self-aware Subject or Person. Hence, Oneness doctrine flatly denies that the Person of the Son, Jesus Christ, preexisted. It rejects any idea of the Son being the actual Agent of creation. Bernard is so convinced of this premise that he claims (1983: 104-5):

The Sonship—or the role of the Son—began with the child conceived in the womb of Mary ... Hebrews 1:5-6 also reveals that the begetting of the Son occurred at a specific point in time and that the Son had a beginning in time ... It is easy to see that the Son is not eternal, but was begotten by God almost 2000 years ago.

In contrast to Bernard’s observations, the New Testament presents the Son as a distinct Person from the Father and as the Agent of creation (e.g., John 1:1-3; 1 Cor. 8:6; Col. 1:16-17; Heb. 1:2, 10); this will be exegetically demonstrated in Chapter 4. Although the plain exegesis of the passages mentioned above (esp. Col. 1:16-17) clearly present the Son as the Creator, hence preexisting, Oneness theology holds to the position that the Son was merely a “thought” or plan in the mind of the Father (Bernard, 1983: 183).

When faced with passages that specifically speak of the Son preexisting, including the numerous passages that speak of the Son as the Agent of creation (esp. Col. 1:16-17), Oneness teachers claim all these passages are speaking with the Son *in view* and not *in Person*. Bernard (1983: 183) reasons that “The plan of the future Sonship existed with God [the Father] from the beginning—an idea in the mind of God.”

Weisser (1983: 35) goes so far as to say that the Word in John 1:1 was merely a “concept in the Father’s mind.” According to this philosophy, passages such as John 1:3 and Colossians 1:16-17, which plainly teach that the Son was the Creator, are really teaching that the Father created “all things” with the Son merely *in view*—a coming attraction. What militates against such a view, however, is that

historically the book of Colossians was a pointed refutation of the heresy of Gnosticism, which taught that Jesus did not create “all things” or anything for that matter. The term “Gnosticism” (from *gnōsis*, “knowledge”) is used here broadly to describe the various first and second century sects who shared the same basic doctrinal characteristics: spirit *versus* matter. Because formal Gnosticism had not yet developed, some critics attack the Pauline authorship of Colossians (e.g., Brown, 1997). It was not, however, the fully developed system that Paul (and John in 1 and 2 John) addressed, but rather Paul grappled with the main theological predilections of Gnostic philosophy, which was wide-ranging in the first century. Despite the philosophical dissimilarities, all Gnostics at least shared one common thread: spirit was good and matter was inherently evil.

This system was later described as “Docetism” (from *dokein*, “to seem,” which Serapion of Antioch [c. A.D. 200] first expressed; Maier, 1999: 216). Generally, however, both Gnosticism and Docetism held to the spirit *versus* matter dualistic system. So accordingly, they did not believe that Jesus (a good god or “aeon,” cf. Cerinthus; see Maier, 1999: 146) would ever *become* flesh. The mere thought of Jesus becoming and *remaining* in human flesh (cf. 1 John 4:2-3 as discussed below) was utterly repugnant to them.

Asserting a modalistic interpretation into Colossians 1:16-17 (and 2:9) fails to properly understand the historical background of Colossians making Paul’s anti-Gnostic polemic entirely vacuous. The presentation of the Son as the actual Creator of “all things” in verses 16-17 is exegetically undeniable. Conclusively then, the exegetical presentation of the preexistence of the Son and His role as the Agent of creation demolishes Oneness theology. Because of the theological significance of the preexistence of the Son, Chapter 4 is entirely devoted to it.

#### **2.4.5 Denial of the Perpetuity of the Son**

Assuming that Jesus’ role of Sonship had a beginning, Oneness teachers postulate the notion that the Sonship will have an ending. In his most popular Oneness book, under the title “The Ending of the Sonship,” Bernard (1983: 106) explains,

Not only did the Sonship have a beginning, but it will, in at least one sense, have an ending. This is evident from 1

Corinthians 15:23-28 ... This verse of Scripture is impossible to explain if one thinks of a ‘God the Son’ who is co-equal and co-eternal with God the Father. But it is easily explained if we realize that ‘Son of God’ refers to a specific role that God *temporarily assumed* for the purpose of redemption. When the reasons for the Sonship cease to exist, God (Jesus) *will cease acting in His role as Son*, and the Sonship will be submerged back into the greatness of God, who will return to His original role as Father, Creator, and Ruler of all (emphasis added).

The denial of the preexistence of the Son and the assertion that the Sonship will come to an end attacks the very essence of the Person of Jesus Christ and thus, the heart of Christianity. Using nearly identical language to the statement made by the heretic Arius of Alexandria (A.D. 318), Bernard (1983: 105) claims, “There was a time when the Son did not exist; God prophesied about the Son’s future existence.” Denying the full deity of the Son, the heretic Arius assertively proclaimed: *Ēn pote hote ouk ēn* (“There was [a time] when He [the Son] was not.”) Bernard’s concept here is very different from the belief of the early Christians who condemned Arius for his belief.

In point of fact, those denying in any way, shape, or form that Jesus, the Son of God, is eternal are guaranteed by Christ Himself that they will perish in their sins: “Therefore I said to you that you will die in your sins; for unless you believe that I am *He* [*egō eimi*], you will die in your sins” (John 8:24). The full force of Jesus’ assertion here is striking: *Ean gar mē pisteusēte hoti egō eimi apothaneisthe en tais hamartiais humōn*, literally, “For if you should not believe that I am you will perish in your sins”). This passage is an absolute “I am” claim—i.e., there is no supplied predicate (cf. Reymond, 1998: 231-32; White, 1998: 96-100; Tsoukalas, 1999: 21-22). Jesus here clearly asserts that salvation rests on believing that He (as the Person of the Son; cf. vv. 16-18, 27) is the eternal God. In the Gospel of John, Jesus makes seven “absolute” (i.e., no supplied predicate) *egō eimi* (“I am”) declarations: John 8:24; 8:28; 8:58; 13:19; 18:5; 18:6; and 18:8 (also cf. Mark 6:50).

When Jesus claimed to *be* the *egō eimi*, He was essentially claiming to be Yahweh. Hence, the Jews wanted to stone Him for, as they saw it, a most blasphemous claim (cf. John 8:58-59). The Hebrew phrase, *ani hu*, which was translated *egō eimi* in the LXX, was an exclusive and recurring title for Yahweh (cf. Deut. 32:39; Isa. 41:4; 43:10; 46:4; etc.).

Thus, salvation is *conditioned (ean)* on believing that the Person of the Son, Jesus Christ, is the eternal God, Yahweh (cf. Rom. 10:9, 13). The Oneness teaching that the Sonship of Jesus will expire, that is, cease to be, is a theological error that severely challenges the apostles' presentation of the unipersonality, deity, and eternity of the Son. Indeed, the deity and eternity of the Son is plainly and exegetically shown in such passages as John 1:1-3, 18; 8:24, 58; 17:5; Colossians 1:16-17; 2:9; Philippians 2:6-11; Titus 2:13; Hebrews 1:3, 8, 10-12; 2 Peter 1:1; and Revelation 1:8; 5:13-14; 22:13.

Also note, the Oneness idea of the Sonship ceasing indicates that the *humanity* of Christ will cease, since Oneness theology teaches that the Sonship is a specific reference to the humanity and not the deity of Jesus (Paterson, 1966: 22; Bernard, 1983: 99, 103). The Oneness notion seriously conflicts with the very heart of the apostolic teaching. For according to the Apostle John, the key ultimate test for Christian orthodoxy is the acknowledgment of the *perpetual state* of Jesus Christ as God-man—namely, Jesus *remaining* in the flesh.

In 1 and 2 John, John provides a sharp refutation against the flesh-denying Gnostics (viz., Cerinthus, as mentioned above). This is especially seen in 1 John 4:1-3: “By this you know the Spirit of God: every spirit that confesses that Jesus has come in the flesh is from God” (v. 2). The verb *elēluthota* is the perfect active participle of *erchomai* (“to come”).

The import of the perfect tense is a *completed action* in the past with continuous effects; it denotes a “present state resulting from a past action” (Greenly, 1986: 50; cf. Mounce, 1993: 218-19). Therefore, verse 2 is cogently stating, “Every spirit that confesses that Jesus *has come and remains* in the flesh is from God.” Jesus Christ, God the Son, became and now remains in the flesh (see also 2 John 7). John’s first and second epistles, as with Paul’s letter to the Colossians, served as a pointed refutation against the Docetic Gnostics *who denied that Jesus became and remains in the flesh*.

In the same way, Oneness theology denies that the “Son” became flesh and continues to remain in the flesh. Paul was clear: “For in Him all the fullness of Deity continuously dwells in human flesh” (Col. 2:9; trans. mine). As further expounded in Chapter 3, the word *katoikei* (“dwells”) is a present active indicative form of *katoikeō*.” The present tense indicates that the fullness of absolute Deity (*theotētos*) *permanently and continuously* dwells in “bodily form” (*sōmatikōs*)—thus contradicting further any idea of a cessation of the Son.

In support of the idea of a cessation of the Sonship, Oneness teachers (e.g., Bernard, 1983: 106-7) typically appeal to 1 Corinthians 15:23-28 (cf. 2.4.3 above). However, when we carefully analyze this text, it does not teach what Oneness teachers assume. It is a categorical fallacy to argue that 1 Corinthians 15:23-28 teaches that the Sonship of Jesus Christ will be terminated, for such an argument confuses Jesus' earthly position as a humble man with His essential nature as God. The only thing that will end is His earthly Messianic kingdom, not His Sonship or Person (Reymond, 1998: 1011, 1028). The Oneness interpretation of 1 Corinthians 15:23-28 is a typical example of Oneness eisegesis. Nowhere in this text, including the term translated "until" (*achri*; 1 Cor. 15:25), does it specifically state that Jesus' position as Son will end—that is an assumed Oneness conclusion, not an exegetical confirmation. As mentioned, the only thing that will end is His earthly Messianic kingdom.

Thus, Oneness teachers assume their conclusion without first proving it from the text. Scripture positively affirms that the Person of the Son, thus, the Sonship of Jesus Christ, will eternally remain:

- In Daniel 7:9-14, the Son of Man "was given [by the "Ancient of Days," viz., God the Father] dominion, glory, and a kingdom, that all the peoples, nations and *men of every* language might *serve* ["worship"] Him. His [the Son of Man's] *dominion is an everlasting dominion, which will not pass away ...*" (emphasis added).
- It is to the "Son" that the Father can say, "Your throne, O God, [*ho theos*] is forever and ever ... You are the same, and Your years *will not come to an end*" (Heb. 1:8, 12; emphasis added). As noted, here the Father Himself says that the Son's "years will not come to an end."
- Revelation 3:21 presents the "Son" as sitting on His own throne (distinct from the Father's throne).
- Revelation 5:13-14 presents two distinct divine objects of religious worship: "To Him [the Father] who sits on the throne and to the Lamb [the Son], be blessing and honor and glory and dominion forever and ever."

The foundation of the Oneness assertion that the Sonship will end is not on the biblical exegesis of the passages offered, but on the assumed conclusion that God is a modalistic, unipersonal deity that will cast away His so-called “role” as Son. This is asserted in the face of the clear language of the text, which militates against such a concept: “Your [the Son’s] years will not come to an end.”

The biblical data presents the Son as *ho theos* (“the God”), the second Person of the Holy Trinity (e.g., John 20:28; Titus 2:13; 2 Pet. 1:1; Heb. 1:8; etc.). He will continue to be the Son forever, His “years will not come to an end ... He is the same yesterday and today and forever” (Heb. 1:12; 13:8). His “dominion is an everlasting dominion, which will not pass away ...” (Dan. 7:14).

## **2.5 TEXT MINUS CONTEXT EQUALS PRETEXT**

Oneness theology builds its theological framework on the philosophical supposition that monotheism *equals* unipersonalism. For that reason, the modalistic arguments put forward by Oneness advocates lack meaningful and coherent exegetical interaction. For example, the modalistic interpretations of such passages as Matthew 28:19, John 10:30 and Colossians 2:9, which will be exegetically treated in subsequent chapters, clearly show that Oneness teachers are willing to sacrifice the clear exegesis of the text for the sake of their pre-committed theology. Only by ignoring and/or evading the normal rules of biblical hermeneutics and exegesis can Oneness teachers make biblical passages teach Oneness doctrine. Every false doctrine starts with a faulty hermeneutic and/or exegesis. Hermeneutics (from *hermēneia*, “interpretation”; cf. 1 Cor. 12:10), when applied to the area of biblical theology, refers to the means whereby particular, objective principles of interpretation are applied to the text so as to understand the biblical authors’ meaning correctly.

The orthodox hermeneutic is the Grammatico-Historical Method, consisting of 1) grammatico-syntactical considerations (i.e., the *original meaning* of words and the syntactical structure must be studied), 2) historico-cultural considerations, (i.e., the understanding of the historical setting in which particular books were written), 3) contextual considerations, (i.e., recognizing the natural context, thus avoiding a pretext, for context always determines the meaning of the passages) and

4) theological considerations, (i.e., Scripture should always interpret Scripture).

Hence, one should always observe in Scripture what the Reformers called the *analogia fidei* (“analogy of faith”; Sproul, 1977: 46-48). This principle maintains that there exist no contradictions in the Bible. Theology does not determine doctrine, but rather it is the exegesis of the text that establishes the plain intended meaning of the author. Exegesis shows respect for the text and, by extension, for its author; eisegesis, even when based upon ignorance, shows disrespect for the text and its author (White, 2004: 81). Exegesis is the skill of “drawing out” the *intended meaning* of the authors, utilizing the objective principles or rules of hermeneutics.

Thus, exegesis is the application of the rules of hermeneutics. An excellent example denoting the import of the term is in John 1:18, where we read that Jesus “reveals” or explains (*exēgēsato*) the Father. Never are Christians to engage in eisegesis (i.e., to “read into” the text *a priori* assumptions). The rules of exegesis exist to protect the text from misinterpretations (White, 2004: 82). The Christian must come to the Bible with the supposition that the Bible *is* the infallible and inerrant Word of God, hence, the *starting point* of all theological assertions. Additionally, context plays a vital and significant part in correctly interpreting the biblical text. One can wrench any passage of Scripture out of its natural context, inevitably imposing a foreign meaning onto the text, and thus postulate it as “biblical truth” (especially by non-Christian cults).

For example, consider the way Mormons misinterpret passages such as John 10:34 and 1 Corinthians 8:5-6 in order to teach both their distinctive doctrines of exaltation (i.e., men becoming Gods) and polytheism/henotheism (i.e., the existence of many “true Gods”; cf. Smith, 1976: 370). Alternatively, consider the way Jehovah’s Witnesses purposely mistranslate the singular present indicative *eimi*, “am” in John 8:58. This translation (*New World Translation*, 1984) renders the phrase *egō eimi* as a past action, “I have been” (as if Jesus was claiming to be very old), rather than the appropriate rendering of the *present* indicative, “[I] am” (un-predicated; Wallace 1996: 530; cf. Reymond, 1998: 231).

In fact, since the inception of the *New World Translation* in 1950, the Jehovah’s Witnesses have proposed several reasons as to why Jesus’ *egō eimi* affirmation was not a claim to deity. One such reason was to view *eimi* as a *perfect indefinite* tense. In the 1950 edition of the *New World Translation*, there is footnote at John 8:58 explaining the “I have

been,' *egō eimi* ... properly rendered in the perfect indefinite tense ['I have been']. It is not the same as *ho ōn* (meaning 'The Being' or 'The I Am') at Exodus 3:14, LXX" (also cf. Watchtower, 1985: 451). This may sound legitimate to the grammatically unschooled in the area of biblical languages; however, any first year student of biblical Greek knows that there is no such tense in biblical Greek as a "perfect indefinite."

The *egō eimi* affirmations of Christ do not exist in solitude nor are they detached from the context in which they appear. There is a progressive contextual pattern of all absolute *egō eimi* affirmations. This progression is noted by 1) the non-response of the Jews in John 8:24 and 28; 2) the immediate response of the Jews in John 8:58 (understanding now as to what Jesus was actually claiming); 3) Jesus' prophecy in John 13:19 to His disciples in which the fulfillment was well observed in John 18:5, 6, and 8) the full impact of Jesus' affirmation of deity here caused the Roman guards to fall back.

Therefore, the theological import of Jesus' *egō eimi* affirmations and the evolution (progression) in understanding by both friends and enemies as to what Jesus was actually claiming must be evaluated in view of all *egō eimi* affirmations throughout His life and not merely John 8:58.

Thus, an indispensable and foremost component of proper interpretation is context, literary context at the proximate level and at the level of the document as a whole, and also the (historical) context of the author (cf. White, 2004: 86-87). A text without a context is a pretext and a pretext always leads to a flawed interpretation. This is true in establishing the "intended" meaning of any author. The modalistic teachings and interpretations which Oneness teachers impose upon various passages (such as Matthew 28:19; John 1:1, 10:30; 14:9; Hebrews 5:5; etc.) are blatant examples of eisegesis. Rather than allowing the text to speak for itself, thus engaging in right and proper exegesis, Oneness teachers start with a unitarian assumption from which their theological assertions flow.

Aside from a defective hermeneutic applied to the text of Scripture, it will be revealed in Chapter 5 that Oneness writers (especially Chalfant, 1979; Magee, 1988; Bernard, 1991) typically ignore, distort and/or revise the context in which the early church fathers wrote. Chalfant (1979: 116-17) asserts that no apostle of Jesus Christ ever taught the Trinity nor did the immediate disciples of the apostles (e.g., Clement, Ignatius, Hermas, Polycarp) teach it. Likewise, Bernard

(1983: 236) contends that the “early Christian leaders in the days immediately following the apostolic age were Oneness.”

Even more, Bernard (1983: 236) claims that Bishop Irenaeus of Lyons (c. A.D. 180) was Oneness in spite of his unambiguous Trinitarian affirmations. For example, in one of his commentaries on John 1:1, Irenaeus (*Against Heresies* IV:20, in Roberts and Donaldson, 1994: vol. 1:488) states that “the Word, namely the Son, was always with the Father; and that Wisdom also, which is the Spirit, was present with Him.” Later, in Chapter 5, we will show that the early Christians’ understanding of God was poles apart from the Oneness allegation that the early Christians held to a modalistic concept of God. The early church, as Kelly (1978: 88) observes, envisaged a plurality of divine Persons.

## 2.6 INCONGRUITIES AMONG ONENESS TEACHERS

Oneness Pentecostals pride themselves on the notion that they alone unwaveringly follow the “apostolic teachings” (UPCI, 2008b). However, the phrase “apostolic teaching” has become a meaningless slogan. Many non-Christian cults claim to follow the teachings of the biblical apostles (e.g., Mormons, Jehovah’s Witnesses, etc.). Merely claiming to follow the teachings of the apostles, though, does not ensure an accurate representation of those teachings. Following the apostolic example requires following the apostolic meaning. In order to reflect accurately the teachings set forth by the New Testament apostles, one must engage in a careful and proper exegetical interaction with the text.

Interestingly, not all Oneness teachers agree as to what the “apostolic teachings” are on particular passages and significant doctrines. For instance, the Oneness Pentecostal strict baptismal formula (“in the name of Jesus” *only*) is not verbalized in the *exact* same way among Oneness churches and teachers. Because Oneness teachers incorrectly and carelessly handle the book of Acts disregarding the context and grammar of particular passages (esp. Acts 2:38), variations of the so-called baptismal formula have been proposed (this important point is elaborated in the next chapter).

If the Oneness position of a strict baptismal formula is correct, then, which exact formula is the correct one: “*on* [*epi* + dative] the name of Jesus Christ” (2:38); “*into* [*eis* + accusative] the name of the Lord Jesus” (8:16; 19:5); or “*in* [*en* + dative] the name of Jesus Christ” (10:48)? As highlighted in Chapter 3, the main weaknesses of the

Oneness position regarding the so-called baptismal “name of Jesus only” formula as well as baptismal regeneration (both held primarily by the UPCI) are (a) a confusion between narrative and didactic literature and (b) an assumption that the phrase “in the name of Jesus” (or any of its variations) was an actual “verbal” formula.

There is a lack of unanimity between two prolific Oneness writers, Bernard and Sabin, regarding the interpretation of Philippians 2:6-11. Bernard (1983: 220-24) interprets the *Carmen Christi* as referring to the Father who supposedly emptied Himself, whereas popular Oneness writer and speaker Robert Sabin interprets it as speaking of Jesus’ earthly life (cf. Boyd, 1992: 106-7). Furthermore, Oneness theologians disagree on the Apostle John’s identification of the Logos in John 1:1. Paterson (1966: 29) and Graves (1977: 35), for example, identify the Logos as the Father Himself.

In contrast, Bernard (1985: 22) sees the Logos as a non-personal “unexpressed thought or plan in the mind of God” (i.e., the Father). Bernard also states (1983: 103) that the Logos “had pre-existence and the Word was God (the Father), so we can use it without reference to humanity ... The Bible calls this foreordained plan the Word (John 1:1, 14).” Weisser (1983: 35) agrees with Bernard that the Logos was merely a thought or a “concept in the Father’s mind.” The identification of the Logos in the prologue of John is theologically significant. To distort the identification of the Person of the Logos in John 1:1 is a fundamental error. Yet Oneness theologians have different views on this vital “apostolic teaching,” which is an essential aspect of the entire gospel, for God’s covenant of redemption is contingent on the incarnation of the Person of the eternal Logos, God the Son.

## **2.7 DETERMINING A ONENESS CHURCH**

When arguably one of the most popular Christian pastors in America, Joel Osteen, announces to millions worldwide on Larry King Live (2005) that he does not know where the non-believing Jew, Muslim or Atheist goes when he or she dies, something is wrong. Joel Osteen of the Lakewood Church in Houston, Texas who is “the most popular preacher in the country right now—a best-selling author and the ‘most watched minister’ in America” (Heslam, 2006). Note below some excerpts from the Larry King Live (2005) interview, which aired on June 20, 2005:

**KING:** What if you're Jewish or Muslim, you don't accept Christ at all?

**OSTEEN:** You know, I'm very careful about saying who would and wouldn't go to heaven. I don't know ...

**KING:** If you believe you have to believe in Christ? They're wrong, aren't they?

**OSTEEN:** Well, I don't know if I believe they're wrong ...

**KING:** But for someone who doesn't share it is wrong, isn't he?

**OSTEEN:** Well, yes. Well, I don't know if I look at it like that. I would present my way, but I'm just going to let God be the judge of that. I don't know. I don't know.

Too often, Christian leaders and pastors, particularly at large churches, do not regard essential Christian doctrines such as the doctrines of grace and the Trinity relevant to their "seeker friendly" messages. Even worse, the Potter's House, for example, located in Dallas, Texas, is a nondenominational mega-church led by popular TV evangelist and prolific author, T. D. Jakes. The "Belief Statement" provided on the church's website (Jakes, 2008) presents a decidedly "Oneness" concept of God. In a strikingly modalistic tone, the first line of the Statement reads: "There is one God, Creator of all things, infinitely perfect, and eternally existing in three manifestations: Father, Son and Holy Spirit."

Note that Jakes provides a unitarian and distinctly Oneness concept of God. Using the term "manifestations" (thus avoiding the use of "Persons") to describe God is consistent with Oneness doctrine, not Trinitarianism. What is more, his previous doctrinal statement described God as "THREE DIMENSIONS OF ONE GOD ... Triune in His manifestation, being both Father, Son and Holy Ghost ... We believe in the Father who is God Himself, Creator of the universe. (Gen. 1:1; John 1:1)" (caps his). As with the current one, Jakes uses the terms "dimensions" and "manifestation" to describe his modalistic idea of God, thus avoiding the use of "Persons."

Also, note that Jakes uses John 1:1 to show that the Father is God, when both historically and theologically the church has used the passage to show that the Word, the Son, was God. Nonetheless, that the "Word" here was the Father, not the Son, is perfectly consistent with Oneness doctrine (cf. Bernard, 1983: 103). Though John 1:1 does teach that the Father is God (1:1b), it is the eternal "Word" who was with God and was God that is the emphasis of the passage especially in light of the "emphatic use" of the anarthrous *theos* in John 1:1c: *kai theos ēn ho*

*logos*, literally, “and God was the Word”). The result of a diet rich in “seeker friendly” non-definitive messages is biblically obtuse Christians not being equipped with the theological knowledge to distinguish between a Oneness view of God and a Trinitarian view of God. Thus, there is a toleration of both views as truth. Normally, one can discover a church’s doctrinal view simply by examining its doctrinal statement, although many independent churches provide a vague and indistinguishable doctrinal statement in which they can appeal to the majority of church-seekers in spite of their theological predilections. One such church is the Shepherd of the Hills, which is one of the largest churches in Los Angeles, California. In the *What We Believe* section (Shepherd, 2008), a very indistinct description of Jesus Christ is provided: “Jesus Christ was virgin-born, sinless, died on the cross for sins, was raised from the dead on the third day, and is coming again (Matthew 1:18, Hebrews 4:15, 1 Corinthians 15:3-4, Jn. 14:3).” Note that the entire doctrinal statement lacks any mention of the deity of Christ or the Trinity.

Compounding the issue even further, as with many Christian churches, numerous Oneness churches provide unclear doctrinal statements in which unstudied Christians cannot make a theological distinction. For example, note the description of “The Godhead” in the Articles of Faith (Bethel, 2008), which the Oneness organization Bethel Ministerial Association provides: “THE GODHEAD: There is one God in three manifestations: Father, Son and Holy Spirit. God is an invisible Spirit (John 4:24, Colossians 1:15). Jesus Christ is God, the invisible Spirit, manifest in the flesh (1 Timothy 3:16, John 1, 4)” (capitals theirs). As with the doctrinal statement of Jakes and the Potter’s House, Bethel Ministerial Association provides a theologically non-defined equivocal statement regarding God. Jakes even uses the term “Triune.”

The problem is that undiscerning and unstudied Christians may fail to make a correct theological distinction between (a) “manifestations” and “Persons” and (b) the *economic* and *ontological* Trinity (which will be explained shortly). In saying that, how is the common Christian able to distinguish from a Oneness church and a Trinitarian believing church? A general guide (not an infallible rule) as to a potential marker, which may reveal a Oneness view of God is the omission of the word “person” when describing the Godhead within a doctrinal statement.

As observed above, Oneness theology will use the term “Godhead” but not “Trinity” to describe its unitarian/unipersonal view of God, seeing Jesus as the Godhead and, of course, the Trinity as a false

doctrine (cf. Bernard, 1983: 22). This is common, for many Oneness churches omit the term “Trinity” but retain the term “triune” particularly when making Oneness assertions such as that God is “Triune in His manifestation” (e.g., Jakes, 2008). Oneness churches typically describe God as existing in three “manifestations,” “modes,” “offices” or even “dimensions” (e.g., Jakes, 2008; UPCI, 2008b), but never in three “Persons.” Orthodox Christianity has never used the terms exemplified above to describe God.

However, if a church claims to be Trinitarian, yet in their doctrinal statement uses terms such as “manifestations” to describe the three Persons of the Trinity, it reveals a theological ignorance or carelessness on the part of the writer. For the term “manifestations” in describing the Father, the Son and/or the Holy Spirit more frequently indicates Oneness rather than Trinitarian theology.

## 2.8 SUMMARY

Regrettably, because of the strong influence of a postmodern society, objective truth has little value in far too many churches. Hence, it is not uncommon to hear such statements like, “It’s all the same God,” or “As long as they love Jesus,” coming from the mouths of the unstudied and theologically challenged. It is important, then, to realize that the Trinitarian Oneness debate is not mere semantic quibbling or the splitting of theological hairs. Nor is this a matter of simple differences of opinion on peripheral views. The doctrine of the Trinity literally defines the biblical revelation of God. To err on the doctrine of the Trinity is a deadly error, for the consequences are eternal. There is a qualitative difference between a unipersonal deity that temporarily manifests at different times in different modes, roles or offices, and a triune God who has eternally existed in three distinct Persons in a loving unbroken intimate relationship with each other. Scripture presents exegetically that the Son had loving intercourse *with* the Father before time (esp. in Dan. 7:9-14; John 1:1; 3:13; 17:5).

Unity among Christians is a biblical directive, but it must be unity around the essentials of biblical theology, not in spite of them. Who God is, as to His nature, is an essential doctrine that establishes the legitimacy of one’s salvation (cf. John 8:24; 17:3). Scripture opposes the Oneness concept of God. As pointed out, since in Oneness theology the terms Father, Son and Holy Spirit represent merely the modes or

roles that the unitarian/unipersonal deity named “Jesus” projects, there can be no real meaningful personal interaction between them.

The Oneness notion that the interactions between the Father and the Son (and Holy Spirit) were mere interactions among natures or modes severs the biblical teaching of the personal loving interaction between the Persons of the Trinity. However, the Oneness idea that “natures” can actually love, talk, or pray to each other, or exhibit any kind of emotion toward one another is not only irrational, but also unbiblical.

Only self-aware cognizant persons can engage in personal emotive activities such as giving and receiving love or intellectually communicating with each other—abstract natures cannot. Scripture presents that the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit each possess personal attributes and characteristics, which constitute personhood. As shown in subsequent chapters, the three Persons in the Trinity possess personal attributes and personal characteristics such as love, anger, the exercising of the will and mind, etc., which, as stated, constitute personhood.

The Oneness position rejects the biblical teaching that God exists in three distinct Persons (cf. Weisser, 1983: 2) equating three Persons with three Gods and one God (i.e., monotheism) with one Person. Thus, a unitarian solution is posited. This mischaracterization of the Trinity implies that the doctrine of the Trinity is tritheistic, which is an obvious “straw man” argument that redirects the issue. The Mormon Church views the “Godhead” (for this world) as three *separate* Gods. The founder and first so-called prophet of the Church, Joseph Smith Jr., declared to his followers (Smith, 1976: 370):

I will preach on the plurality of Gods ... I have always and in all congregations when I preached on the subject of Deity, it has been the plurality of Gods ...Jesus Christ a separate and distinct personage from God the Father, and that the Holy Ghost was a distinct personage and a Spirit: and these three constitute three distinct personages and three Gods.

In addition, the Quran, in passages such as Sura 4:171 and 5:73, grossly misrepresents the Trinity as three separate Gods: the Father, Jesus and Mary. Unquestionably, the modalistic deity of Oneness theology is not the God of the Bible. Either God exists in absolute solitude as an invisible unitarian monad that comes out in different roles, modes, manifestations, etc. using the mere “language of plurality” to *seem* as

though distinctions exist, or God actually revealed Himself in three coequal, coeternal, *distinct* Persons sharing the nature of one Being existing in an intimate inseparable unquantifiable loving relationship from eternity (cf. John 1:1; 3:35; 17:3; 2 Cor. 13:14). The latter is based on the biblical data; the former is not. The Holy Scriptures reveal that apart from the true God, the Creator of heaven and earth and all that is, there is no Savior and thus, no salvation (cf. Deut. 32:39; 17:3; 1 John 2:22-23).

Believing Christ to be anything or anyone other than what has been biblically presented will result in eternal separation from the true God (cf. Matt. 25:46; John 8:24). Oneness doctrine demotes Jesus Christ by rejecting Him as Creator and hence, rejecting His preexistence. It also denies (among many other essential doctrines) the biblical doctrine of the incarnation. That the Father came to earth and only appeared to become flesh (i.e., becoming the role of the Son) without actually becoming flesh as Oneness Pentecostals believe, utterly contradicts such passages as John 1:14, which clearly teaches that the Word (not the Father) *egeneto*, “became,” not “wrapped” Himself in, *flesh*. It categorically denies the unipersonality and deity of the Son and it denies the personal distinctions between the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit, and therefore denies the biblical revelation of God Himself.

# *Chapter Three*

## **CHRISTOLOGICAL DIVERGENCES**

### **3.1 INTRODUCTION**

The ultimate test that unequivocally decides what is and what is not genuine or orthodox Christianity is simply the biblical doctrine of the Person, nature and finished work of Jesus Christ. Christ makes this clear in a question to His disciple Peter: “What do you think about the Christ?” (Matt. 22:42). Similar to Jesus’ statement in John 8:24 (cf. Chapter 2, 2.4.5) eternal life is absolutely dependent on believing in the Jesus of biblical revelation (cf. John 17:3). As pointed out, virtually all major non-Christian cults assert, “Jesus Christ is Lord” (e.g., Mormons, Jehovah’s Witnesses, etc.). This is, to be sure, a meaningless assertion, for the Jesus of these groups opposes the biblical presentation. Oneness Christology is a clear and major departure from biblical orthodoxy. It removes the personhood and deity from the Son, thus removing the Son from the Trinity. The chief Oneness Christological divergences from that of the biblical teachings are as follows:

- Oneness Christology denies the unipersonality of Jesus Christ.
- Oneness Christology denies that the “Son” is God. To recall, Oneness theology teaches that Jesus’ divine nature represents the Father and Holy Spirit, not the Son—i.e., the “Son” is not God; He is merely the human nature of Jesus (see Bernard, 1983: 99, 103, 252; UPCI, 2008b).
- Oneness Christology denies the preexistence of the Son and His role as the Agent of creation (cf. Bernard, 1983: 103-4; Magee, 1988: 25).

- Oneness Christology claims that Jesus *is* the Father, Son and Holy Spirit (same Person), hence denying the concept of the Trinity (cf. Bernard, 1983: 57; Weisser, 1983: 2; UPCI, 2008b).
- Oneness Christology claims that the cross-work of Jesus Christ was not sufficient for justification/salvation. Specifically, the UPCI (2008b) asserts baptismal regeneration, which teaches that the meritorious work of water baptism utilizing the inflexible verbal formula “in the name of Jesus” achieves regeneration. UPCI teachers also assert that the proof or so-called evidence of the reception of the Holy Spirit (thus, ultimate salvation) is speaking in tongues, which should happen after water baptism (cf. Paterson, 1953: 12, 27; Vouga, 1967: 18; Beisner, 1998: 52-54; UPCI, 2008b).

### 3.2 ESSENCE AND SUBSTANCE OF THE SON

It is clear that the Oneness Christological position radically distorts the very essence of the Son by its main modalistic assertion: the Son was a mere mode or manifestation of the unipersonal deity named Jesus. Mainly, Oneness theology unequivocally rejects the Son’s nature as God. As we have seen, the Oneness position views only the Father as God. Any denial of the deity of the Son, God in the flesh, denies the very essence of the Son’s Person. The Oneness position denies both the Son’s unipersonality and His deity (cf. Paterson, 1966: 22; Bernard, 1983: 99, 103; UPCI, 2008b). The deity of the Person of the Son is exegetically affirmed in the clearest way especially at places such as Daniel 7:9-14; John 1:1, 18; 20:28; Romans 9:5; 10:13; 1 Corinthians 2:8; Philippians 2:6-11; Colossians 2:9; 1 Timothy 3:16; Titus 2:13; 2 Peter 1:1; Hebrews 1:3-10; Revelation 5:13-14; and 22:13. Throughout this thesis, the exegesis of many of these passages will clearly refute the Oneness Christological position.

There are several places in the New Testament where the Son is actually called *ho theos*, “(the) God.” These would be, as included above, John 20:28; Titus 2:13; 2 Peter 1:1; Hebrews 1:8 (which will be fully discussed in Chapter 4); and 1 John 5:20. Regarding 1 John 5:20, see Harris (1992: 239-53) and Reymond (1998: 201, 212), who argue for the grammatical probability that *ho alēthinos theos* refers to Jesus.

Rogers Jr. and Rogers III (1998: 599) insist that “the pronoun *houtos* in 1 John 5:20 clearly refers to Jesus” (cf. also Wallace, 1996: 326-27). What is theologically noteworthy is that Titus 2:13 and 2 Peter 1:1 (and perhaps 2 Thess. 1:12) are both Granville Sharp grammatical constructions—namely, Sharp’s rule #1 (Sharp, 1803: 3-7). This rule is named after its founder (not inventor) Granville Sharp (1735-1813; cf. Sharp, 1803). Sharp was passionate in his unyielding belief in the full deity of Jesus Christ. Sharp’s research of the Greek New Testament led him to discover six grammatical rules by which the Greek article *ho* and the conjunction *kai* were utilized. Remarking on the validity of Sharp’s grammatical rules, Beisner (1998: 46) explains:

Those who know Greek can confirm the accuracy of the conclusions drawn here by consulting C. Kuehne, “The Greek Article and the Doctrine of Christ’s Deity,” *Journal of Theology: Church of the Lutheran Confession* 13, no. 3 (September 1973): 12-28; 13, no. 4 (December 1973): 14-30; 14, no. 1 (March 1974): 8-19; 15, no. 1 (March 1975): 8-22, in which Kuehne brilliantly explains, illustrates, and defends the six parts of Sharp’s rule.

Although there were six grammatical rules that Sharp discovered, rule #1 is most recognized and cited (cf. Greenlee, 1986: 23). Generally (not verbatim), rule #1 states that when the connective *kai* connects two nouns of the same case (singular nouns that are not proper [e.g., personal names]), and the article *ho* precedes the first noun, but not the second, each descriptive noun refers to the *first named person* (cf. Sharp, 1803: 3-7; Greenly, 1986: 23).

Rule #1 is also signified by the abbreviation, TSKS (i.e., The-Substantive-Kai-Substantive). Hence, Titus 2:13 and 2 Peter 1:1 contain TSKS constructions emphasizing the full deity of the Son. Titus 2:13 reads: “Looking for the blessed hope and the appearing of the glory of our great God and Savior, Christ Jesus.” Notice the phrase *tou megalou theou kai sōtēros hēmōn Iēsou Christou*, literally, “the great God and Savior of us Jesus Christ.” Here, the conjunction *kai* connects both singular descriptive nouns, *theou* and *sōtēros* and the article *tou* proceeds the first noun, *theou*, but not the second noun, *sōtēros*. Therefore, according to Sharp’s grammatical rule, Jesus Christ is *tou megalou theou kai sōtēros*—“the great God and Savior.” The same great truth is found in 2 Peter 1:1. Minus the extraneous words preceding the

TSKS construction and the adjective *megas* in Titus 2:13, the reading in 2 Peter 1:1 is virtually identical: *tou theou hēmōn kai sōtēros Iēsou Christou*, literally, “the God of us and Savior, Jesus Christ.”

According to recognized Greek grammarians (e.g., Robertson, 1934: 786; Greenly, 1986: 23; Wallace, 1996: 273), lexicographers, (e.g., Cremer, 1878: 279-81), and commentators (e.g., Hendriksen, 1980: 373-75) this rule is invariably valid, markedly showing the full deity of the Son, Jesus Christ. In contrast, Oneness teachers (cf. Paterson, 1966: 22; Bernard, 1983: 99, 103) insist that the Son denotes only the humanity and not the deity of Jesus, blatantly rejecting the Son’s deity. In sharp opposition, Scripture presents that the Son possesses the very attributes of God:

- He has power to forgive sins (cf. Matt. 9:6)
- He is greater than the Temple (cf. Matt. 12:6)
- He is Lord of the Sabbath (cf. Matt. 12:8)
- He is the King of a kingdom and the angels are His, gathering His elect (cf. Matt. 13:41; Mark 13:27)
- He is the Messiah, the Son of the living God (cf. Matt. 16:13-17)
- He was to be killed and raised from the dead (cf. Matt. 17:9, 22-23; 19:26:2; Mark 8:31; 9:31; Luke 9:22; 18:31-33; John 2:19ff.)
- He is omnipresent (cf. Matt. 28:20; John 14:23)
- He is omniscient (cf. John 2:24-25; 6:64; 16:30; 21:17)
- He is omnipotent (cf. Matt. 8:27; 9:6; 28:18; Heb. 7:25)
- He gave His life as a ransom for many (cf. Mark. 10:45)
- He gives eternal life (cf. Luke 10:21-22; John 5:21; 10:27-28)
- He is the *monogenēs theos*, “unique/one and only God” that came from heaven (cf. John 1:18; 3:13)
- He preexisted *with* and shared glory *with* the Father (cf. Micah 5:2; John 1:1; 17:5; as will be shown in Chapter 4)
- He is immutable (cf. Heb. 13:8)
- He was worshiped (cf. Dan. 7:14; Matt. 14:33; John 9:35-38; Heb. 1:6; Rev. 5:13-14)

Virtually every New Testament book teaches the full deity of the Son explicitly or implicitly. This is seen especially in passages such as Matthew 1:23; Luke 10:21-22; John 1:1, 18; 5:17-23; Jesus’ seven absolute *egō eimi* statements; John 20:28; Romans 9:5; 1 Corinthians

2:8; 16:22; 2 Corinthians 8:9; Philippians 2:6-11; Colossians 2:9; 1 Timothy 3:16; Titus 2:13; Hebrews 1:3, 8-10; 2 Peter 1:1; 1 John 5:20; Jude 1:4-5; Revelation 1:8; and 5:13-14. The biblical evidence is massive. As we have seen, aside from the fact that the New Testament specifically presents the Son as God, even *ho theos* (cf. Harris, 1992), the Son is presented as the Creator of all things, thus preexisting (cf. John 1:3; Col. 1:16-17; Heb. 1:2, 10). This is the strongest point of refutation against Oneness theology. In Chapter 4, there will be an exegetical outline of the biblical evidence for the preexistence of the Son.

There is another important piece of evidence affirming the deity of the Son. Scripture presents the Son as receiving the same kind of religious *worship* (*proskuneō*) as that of God the Father. This important reality can be especially seen, for example, in Daniel 7:9-14, where two distinct divine Persons are being presented (note, v. 9, “thrones,” not a single throne), the Ancient of Days and the Son of Man. In verse 14, the Son of Man is “given dominion, glory and a kingdom,” by God the Father in which “all the peoples, nations and men of every language might *serve* [LXX, *latreuō* (in some LXX eds., *douleuō*), i.e., worship, cf. Exod. 20:5; LXX] Him. His dominion is an everlasting dominion which will not pass away” (emphasis added). In the New Testament, Jesus receives religious worship (*proskuneō*), for example, by the men in the boat (cf. Matt. 14:33) and the blind man (cf. John 9:35-38). In Hebrews 1:6, the Father commands “all the angels of God” to worship (*proskuneō*) the Son. This kind of worship is clearly religious in nature, for the setting is in the heavenlies before God the Father. In Revelation 5:13-14, the Father and the Lamb receive the same kind of “blessing and honor and glory and dominion” and worship: “And the four living creatures kept saying, ‘Amen’ and the elders fell down and worshiped [*proskuneō*].”

Note that these acts of worship to the Son are not merely in the context of honor and/or falling prostrate before another in mere obeisance, but rather the Son is worshiped in a religious context, namely, worship that is reserved for God alone (cf. Exod. 20:5); for worship of creatures is forbidden by the Lord. This revealing truth shows that the Son shares the very essence of God the Father. He is God in the *same sense* as that of the Father (cf. John 1:1b): “Who always being the brightness of His glory, the exact representation [image] of the nature of Him” (*tēs hupostaseōs autou*, i.e., nature of the Father; Heb. 1:3; trans. mine). “He that does not honor the Son,” says Jesus,

“does not honor the Father who sent Him” (John 5:23). By denying both the Son’s unipersonality and His deity, Oneness Christology denies and rejects the very essence of the Person of the Son, Jesus Christ.

### 3.3 JESUS IS NOT THE FATHER

Grace, mercy *and* peace will be with us, from God the Father and from Jesus Christ, *the Son of the Father*, in truth and love (2 John 1:3; emphasis added)

To recall, the Oneness theological position holds to a unitarian idea of God. It sees “one God” as “one Person,” the Father. For that reason, the consequent proposition is that while on earth Jesus had two natures, *divine*, which is the mode or office of the “Father” and *human*, the mode or office of the human (not divine) “Son.” Accordingly, the Oneness position argues that Jesus was both the “Father” and “Son.” Notwithstanding the biblical data, Oneness teachers remove the three distinct Persons of the Trinity and postulate a unipersonal deity:

There is one God with no essential divisions in His nature. He is not a plurality of persons, but He does have a plurality of manifestations, roles, titles, attributes ... Jesus Christ is the Son of God [not God the Son]. He is the incarnation of the fullness of God [the Father] in His deity, Jesus is the Father and the Holy Spirit ... Jesus is the name of the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit (Bernard, 1983: 294-95).

Though there is no biblical passage in the New Testament that explicitly calls Jesus the “Father,” Oneness supporters firmly maintain that Jesus is the Father. While these adherents certainly claim to have a biblical precedent for their views, providing a defense for their position based on sound, biblical exegesis is a different matter. Discursive and philosophical arguments, incorrect proof-texting, the misuse of the key passages, and historical revisionism are common in the Oneness approach. In the final analysis, however, the true test of any position is its ability to withstand the examination of sacred Scripture. The Bible is clear and able to define the issue as to what is and what is not “biblical.” As demonstrated throughout this thesis, Oneness teachers must maneuver the text in such an unnatural way in order to conform to their pre-decided theologies. First, the standard Oneness proof texts used to

teach that only the Father is God include Isaiah 9:6, Malachi 2:10 and 1 Corinthians 8:6. Second, the passages generally employed to support their modalistic assumption that Jesus is His own Father are John 5:43, John 10:30, John 14:9 and Colossians 2:9. There is also a technical argument asserted by Oneness teachers such as Bernard (cf. 1983: 208-9), which has to do with the Greek conjunction *kai* in Pauline salutations.

It is asserted that the conjunction *kai* should be translated not as the connective “and” but rather as the ascensive “even.” Hence, Oneness teachers (e.g., Bernard, 1983: 208-9) render and interpret the standard salutations as “Grace to you and peace from God our Father, *even* [*kai*] the Lord Jesus Christ.” This rendering is divergent from virtually every recognized translation, which translate the conjunction *kai* as the simple connective “and” (“our Father, and [*kai*] the Lord Jesus Christ”). By replacing “and” with “even,” Oneness teachers insist that Paul was teaching that God the Father was “even” the Lord Jesus Christ—namely, the same Person.

There will be a detailed discussion of this false grammatical assertion below in section 3.3.3. There are other arguments postulated by Oneness teachers, however, these above are used most to sustain their position. Regardless of the passion and sincerity that Oneness believers exude, when these passages are strained through an exegetical examination, it is apparent that the Oneness interpretation of select biblical passages greatly opposes the intended “plain reading” of the text. Consider first the maximum redundancy of the way Scripture speaks of the distinct relationship between the Father, Jesus and the Holy Spirit. Former UPCI preacher Gregory A. Boyd<sup>3</sup> (1992: 68-69) observes:

Jesus is explicitly referred to as “the Son” over two hundred times in the New Testament, and never once is he called “Father.” By contrast, over two hundred times “the Father” is referred to by Jesus or someone else as being clearly distinct from Jesus. In fact, over fifty times this juxtapositioning of the Father and Jesus the Son is rendered explicit within the very same verse ... whereas one hundred seventy nine times Jesus is presented as referring to “the Father,” “my Father,” or “your Father” in the Gospels as distinct from himself, at no time

---

<sup>3</sup> Cf. note 1 above.

does he refer to “my Son” or anything of the sort as distinct from himself! Forty times in John’s Gospel, Jesus refers to himself as “sent by the Father,” but never does he refer to himself as the Father who sent the Son.

The biblical evidence expressing the personal distinctions between the Father and Jesus is accumulative: over two hundred times Scripture refers to Jesus as “Son”, and *never once* is Jesus explicitly or implicitly called “Father.” As the Apostle John firmly declares that Jesus Christ is “the Son of the Father” (2 John 1:3; cf. also 1 John 1:3). So instantly recognizable are the biblical references of personal distinctions between the Father and the Son such as these that Oneness theologians sacrifice at the expense of their doctrinal predilections.

### 3.3.1 Unitarianism

In order to provide a logical and biblical refutation of the Oneness Christological position as well as a positive affirmation of the eternal distinctions that exist between the Persons of the Trinity, the fundamental Oneness theological starting point, unitarianism/unipersonalism, must be clearly recognized and thus made the object of consideration. For it is this premise that gives rise to how Oneness believers understand monotheism, as already seen, and the grid by which they define the Person of Jesus Christ. The Oneness presupposition as it relates to the term “Father” is that only the Father is God, the divine nature of Jesus, and the “Son” being the human nature of Jesus (Bernard, 1983: 66, 126; Magee, 1988: 25, 32). Hence, Jesus, as the Son, was not deity. To maintain and defend this premise, they appeal to passages that exclusively speak of the Father as “God” (e.g., Mal. 2:10; 1 Cor. 8:6).

Following then, the Oneness teaching of the incarnation, as previously shown, holds to the erroneous notion that it was *the Father*, not the Son, who came down and *wrapped* Himself in flesh, not actually becoming flesh, and that flesh was the “Son” mode or office (see Bernard, 1983: 106, 122; 1991:103). To argue that because the Bible refers to the Father as God means that only the Father is God is circular reasoning. Passages such as Hebrews 1:8 shut down the Oneness argument. God the Father here actually addresses the Son as *ho theos*: “But of the Son [*pros de ton huion*] He says, ‘YOUR THRONE O GOD [*ho theos*] IS FOREVER AND EVER ...’” That the Father *directly*

*addresses*<sup>4</sup> the Son as “God” is a solid point of refutation to the Oneness non-eternal, non-divine Son view. In verse 10, the Father *directly addresses* the Son as the Elohim/Yahweh (“You Lord”; note the use of the vocative *kurie*) of Psalm 102, who laid the foundation of the earth and created the heavens by the works of His hands.

### 3.3.1.1 Oneness Standard Unitarian Proof-Texts: *Malachi 2:10;* *1 Corinthians 8:6*

**Malachi 2:10:** “Do we not have one father? Has not one God created us?” Oneness teachers (e.g., Bernard, 1983: 126) see this passage as teaching that there is only one (unipersonal) God: the Father. A few initial observations prove otherwise. First, Malachi 2:10 does not support the Oneness assertion; it only asks, “Do we not have one father? Has not one God created us?” The passage does not say that *only* the Father is God. Second, the New Testament revelation concerning the intra-personal relationship between the “Father” and the “Son” was not an entirely realized revelation in the Old Testament. Rather, the New Testament fully reveals this truth particularly in the incarnation of God the Son (cf. Eph. 3:4-5; Col. 1:26-27).

Third, to the Jewish mindset, the plain and normal meaning of “father” in this passage would have meant Creator.<sup>5</sup> That “father” (Heb. *āb*) was a term that signified God as Creator is well exemplified in the Old Testament: “Is not He your Father who has bought you? He has made you and established you (Deut. 32:6); “But now, O LORD, You are our Father, We are the clay, and You our potter; And all of us are the work of Your hand” (Isa. 64:8); “Do we not all have one father? Has not one God created us?” (Mal. 2:10).

The concept of God as “father” in the Old Testament denoted the relationship that Israel had with God. The God of Israel was “like that of a father” in the sense that He redeemed, provided, comforted, protected, created, etc.: “Just as a father has compassion on his children,

---

<sup>4</sup> The nominative *theos* with the vocative force will be explicitly addressed in Chapter 4.

<sup>5</sup> Consequently, the KJV (the UPCI’s standard translation) agrees that the term “father” was not a formal title for Yahweh. In recognition of this fact, the KJV did not capitalize “father” in Malachi 2:10 (as with many standard translations, e.g., KJV, Young’s, ASV, NASB). Hence, the KJV translators rightfully saw “father” as signifying God’s *role* as Creator; thus, not the later New Testament revelation of the capitalized formal title, “Father.”

so the LORD has compassion on those who fear Him” (Ps. 103:13). This thought is also brought out in Isaiah 63:16: “For You are our Father, though Abraham does not know us and Israel does not recognize us. You, O LORD, are our Father, our Redeemer from of old is Your name.” Biblical scholar Dr. Lawrence O. Richards (1991: 266) comments on the use of the term “father” when applied to God in the Old Testament:

God is identified as Father only a few times in the OT. In those instances the relationship is between God and Israel as a people or between God and Christ as the seed of David’s line. In the OT, God is not viewed as being in a father-son relationship with individuals or as the father of mankind in general.

Thus, the Old Testament did not fully conceptualize the New Testament concept of Father and Son. It is anachronistic to put forward such an assertion.

**1 Corinthians 8:6:** “For us there is but one God, the Father, from whom are all things and we exist for Him; and one Lord, Jesus Christ, by whom are all things, and we exist through Him.” From this isolated passage, we again see the assertion of unitarianism: only the Father is God. Along with Oneness Pentecostals, this passage is frequently utilized by unitarian groups such as Jehovah’s Witnesses, who say that *only* Jehovah, the Father, is God Almighty.

The Oneness position cannot stand for many reasons. First, the passage actually distinguishes between “one God, the Father,” and “one Lord, Jesus Christ.” Second, if “one God” means that only the Father (not the Son) is God, then, “one Lord” would mean that only the Son, not the Father, is Lord. There are many passages that specifically call the Father *kurios* (e.g., Luke 10:21) and specifically call the Son *ho theos*, (e.g., John 20:28; Titus 2:13).

In the New Testament, Paul normally refers to the Father as *theos* and the Son as *kurios* particularly when the Father and Jesus appear in the same verse or context. In Paul’s mind, in a religious context, both titles *theos* and *kurios* were two equal descriptions of deity. This is especially seen when one considers that the very term used to translate the Tetragrammaton (i.e., the Divine Name, Yahweh, “LORD”) in LXX was *kurios*. Reformed theologian B. B. Warfield (1888: 220) comments on the way Paul used the two terms:

Paul knows no difference between *theos* and *kurios* in point of rank; they are both to him designations of Deity and the discrimination by which the one is applied to the Father and the other to Christ is (so far) merely a convention by which two that are God are supplied with differentiating appellations by means of which they may be intelligibly spoken of severally.

Along with 1 Corinthians 8:6, Oneness teachers (e.g., Bernard, 1983: 126) also use Ephesians 4:6 to “prove” the unitarian view that only the Father is God, but the same refutation above suffices. It is this foundation, then, that gives formulation to Jesus as the one Person behind the disguises or masks of the Father, Son and Holy Spirit. Conversely, though, and it will be clearly demonstrated below, Jesus as God was personally distinct from His Father, even before time (e.g., John 1:1; 18; 17:5; Phil. 2:6). Such exegetical evidence leaves the Oneness position without any textual refuge.

### 3.3.2 Oneness Standard Proof-Texts to show that Jesus is the Father

As indicated above, the most common proof texts employed by Oneness defenders are Isaiah 9:6; John 5:43; 10:30, 14:9; and Colossians 2:9. There is also a technical argument concerning the Greek conjunction *kai* in the salutations of Paul.

**Isaiah 9:6:** “For a child will be born to us, a son will be given to us; and the government will rest on His shoulders; and His name will be called Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God, Eternal Father, Prince of Peace.” Because of the phrase “Eternal Father,” Oneness advocates argue that the passage is teaching that the prophesied Messiah, Jesus Christ, is the “Eternal Father.” However, there are several flaws in this kind of modalistic interpretation:

1. Oneness teachers commit the fallacy of equivocation by asserting that the term “father” has only one meaning. As discussed above, the term “father” (*ab*) has various meanings in the Old Testament, depending on the context.
2. When the term “father” is applied to God (or Yahweh) in the Old Testament (only fifteen times), it typically denotes His parental

character to His children, namely, Israel (cf. Isa. 63:16; Jer. 31:9). As seen, the usage of “father” also denoted God as Creator (cf. Duet. 32:6; Isa. 64:8; Mal. 2:10). The fact is, the term “father” was never a standard recurring title for God in the Old Testament—again, applied to God only fifteen times.

3. The word translated “name” (*shem*) as in “His name will be called” (*shem + qara*) was not a formal title for God, but rather it denoted the essence or essential characteristics of who someone is (Young, 1972: 331). This was clearly the Semitic concept of “name.” Hence, as to the essence and character of the Messiah, He is Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father and Prince of Peace.
4. Corresponding with the meaning of Creator and Provider, the term “father” carries the idea of “possessor” or “founder,” as with His creation. For example, 2 Samuel 23:31 speaks of Abialbon, which name means “father (or possessor) of strength,” *strong one*. Exodus 6:24 speaks of a man named “Abiasaph,” whose name means “father of gathering,” *he who gathers*. Thus, the Messiah is *ab* of eternity, that is, *possessor of eternity*. Richards (1991: 266) further explains:

The key word for “father” in the Bible is *ab*. It occurs 1,191 times in Hebrew and 9 times in Aramaic form. It is a complex word. Although it usually indicates a literal father or grandfather, it may also be used as a title of respect for a governor or prophet or priest ... *Ab* is also used to indicate the founder of a guild. Thus Ge 4:21 identifies Jubal as “father of all who play the harp and flute”, i.e., he was the first musician ... It is probable that the title “Everlasting Father” ascribed to Messiah by Isaiah (Isa 9:6) is better understood as “father of eternity,” i.e., founder of the ages.

5. Syntactically, the Hebrew term “father” precedes the word translated “eternal” (lit. “father eternal”) indicating the eternal

nature of the Messiah. The Aramaic Targums<sup>6</sup> reveal this thought well: “For us a child is born, to us a son is given ... and his name will be called the Wonderful Counselor, the Mighty God, *existing forever* [or “He who lives forever”]. The Messiah in whose days peace shall increase upon us (*Targum Jonathan*; emphasis added).”

6. There has never been a Jewish commentator, Rabbi, or Christian scholar or writer that has interpreted Isaiah 9:6 as Oneness teachers do. Beisner (1998: 32) dismantles the Oneness exegesis here simply by pointing out that “I am a father, but I am not my father.” Oneness teachers must prove that Jesus is specifically called the Father of the Son of God (i.e., His own Father). Isaiah 9:6 only calls Him “father of eternity.”

**John 5:43:** “I have come in My Father’s name, and you do not receive Me; if another comes in his own name, you will receive him.” Oneness doctrine holds to the position that the name of the unipersonal deity is “Jesus.” Thus, Oneness teachers argue here that when Jesus claims that He comes “in His Father’s name,” He is actually claiming that the “name” of the Father (and the Son) is “Jesus.” In support of a modalistic understanding of the passage, Bernard (1983: 126-27) first lays his unitarian foundation, “The Bible plainly states that there is one Father (Malachi 2:10; Ephesians 4:6). It also clearly teaches that Jesus is the one Father (Isaiah 9:6; John 10:30).” Then he goes on to say:

It is important to note that the name of the Father is Jesus, for this name fully reveals and expresses the Father. In John 5:43, Jesus said, “I am [*sic*] come in my Father’s name.” In other words, the Son inherited His Father’s name ... In what name did the Son come? What name did He obtain from His Father by inherence? What name did the Son manifest? The answer is apparent. The only name He used was the name of Jesus, His Father’s name.

As clearly seen thus far, Oneness teachers circumvent the immediate context and the document context of asserted passages. At the outset,

---

<sup>6</sup> The Targum was an ancient Aramaic translation providing explanations and paraphrases of the Hebrew Old Testament. In the post-exilic period, Aramaic began to be broadly spoken in the Jewish community in conjunction with Hebrew. As it will be shown (Chapter 4, 4.4.5), there is solid evidence indicating that the targumic usage of the Memra (“Word”) was the background for John’s Logos theology.

when one plainly reads the entire chapter of John 5, one cannot escape the clear distinctions that exist between the Father and Jesus. Note the straightforwardness in which Jesus differentiates Himself from the Father in John 5:30-32:

“I can do nothing on My own initiative. As I hear, I judge; and My judgment is just, because I do not seek My own will, but the will of Him who sent Me. If I alone testify about Myself, My testimony is not true. There *is another* [*allos estin*] who testifies of Me, and I know that the testimony which He gives about Me is true” (emphasis added).

Jesus said, “There is another,” not one, but *another* (*allos*). Bauer (2000: 46) defines *allos*, “other” as “pertinent to that which is other than some other entity, other ... distinguished from the subject who is speaking or who is logically understood ...” Jesus’ audience would have understood Jesus’ words clearly. To abandon the plain reading, “There is another witness,” and exchange it for a modalistic understanding is patently eisegetical that is, *reading into the text* a meaning that is foreign or external to the passage itself.

There is even a larger strike against the Oneness interpretation of the passage. It concerns the term *onoma*. We find the term no less than one hundred and fifty-six times in the New Testament (NA<sup>28</sup>). As explicitly discussed and established below (3.5.1.2), the normal first-century application of the phrase *eis to onoma* was predominantly to signify “authority,” “power,” “on behalf of.” This New Testament import extends back to such Old Testament passages as in the David and Goliath narrative: “You come to me with a sword, a spear and a javelin, but I come to you in the *name of the LORD* [Yahweh] of hosts, the God of the armies of Israel, whom you have taunted” (1 Sam. 17:45; emphasis added).

David had informed the Philistines that he came in the “name” of the Lord, that is, by the authority/power of the Lord, on His behalf. Hence, the Oneness dogma that Jesus is the name of the Father does not follow, for just as David was not claiming *to be* the Lord himself, only coming in the *authority* of the Lord, so also Jesus was not claiming *to be* the Father, only coming in His authority. Even in modern parlance, this import is recognized, as in the phrase, “Stop in the name of (or authority) of the law!” In the same way, then, Jesus here comes in the *authority* or *on behalf* of the Father (cf. Acts 4:7).

**John 10:30:** “I and the Father are one.” This passage is seemingly the single most cited passage by Oneness supporters (e.g., Bernard, 1983: 126-7). However, a Oneness understanding of this passage would be foreign both in a first-century Jewish and biblical context. The Oneness doctrinal argument concerning John 10:30 is rather straightforward: Jesus said, “I and the Father are one,” therefore, Jesus and the Father are the same Person. The use of this text is not new to the modern era, for there have been many through the centuries who have sought to preserve the Oneness premise by appealing to this passage. An exegetical analysis of the passage in its grammatical structure actually proves the very converse of the Oneness assertion. First, notice the Greek rendering: *egō kai ho patēr hen esmen*, literally, “I and the Father one we are.”

What directly challenges the Oneness assertion is the fact that the verb “are” is the first person plural form (*esmen*) of the Greek verb *eimi*. Hence, Jesus did not say, “I and the Father am [*eimi*] one,” but rather, “I and the Father are [*esmen*] one.” The plural verb differentiates Jesus from the Father. When Modalism first emerged, Christian theologians brought out this grammatical point against misinterpretations of this commonly implemented passage. Early church polemicist and defender of Christian Orthodoxy, Hippolytus (*Against Noetus* 7, in Roberts and Donaldson, 1994: vol. 5:226) responds to the use of John 10:30 in the modalistic assertion made by the first known modalist, Noetus of Smyrna:

If, again, he [Noetus] alleges His [Christ’s] own word when He said, “I and the Father are one,” let him attend to the fact, and understand that He *did not say*, “I and the Father am one, but *are* one.” For the word “are” *is not said of one person, but it refers to two persons, and one power* (emphasis added).

In the same way, Tertullian (*Against Praxeas* 22, in Roberts and Donaldson, 1994: vol. 3:618) grammatically refutes the modalistic mishandling of the passage:

He says, “My Father, which gave them to me, is greater than all,” adding immediately, “I and my Father are one.” Here, then, they take their stand, too infatuated, nay, too blind, to see in the first place that there is in this passage an intimation of Two Beings—“I and my Father;” then that there is a plural

predicate, “are,”—inapplicable to one person ... They argue that this passage teaches that Jesus unquestionably claims to be His own Father.

Lastly, there is another grammatical factor. The word *hen*, “one,” is in the neuter gender. In Greek, the neuter *hen* carries the idea of unity of essence, not absolute identity (cf. Thayer, 1996: 186; Rogers and Rogers, 1998: 207; Bauer, 2000: 291). In John 17:21- 22, for example, John uses the neuter *hen* to denote this concept: “that they may be perfected in unity” (v. 23). If Jesus desired to communicate that He *was* Himself the Father, He surely would have used the masculine *heis* (cf. Mark 12:29; 1 Tim. 2:5). Robertson (1932: 5:186) comments on the specific application of the neuter *hen* in John 10:30: “One (*hen*). Neuter, not masculine (*heis*). Not one person (cf. *heis* in Gal. 3:28), but one essence or nature.” Likewise, New Testament scholar Murray Harris (1992: 285) observes that

This dual conception of “distinction of person-community of essence” also comes to expression in John 10:30, *egō kai ho patēr hen esmen*, which refers to neither personal identity (which would require *heis esmen*) nor simply to agreement of will and purpose (since John 10:28b, 29b implies at least an equality of power).

In his skilled commentary on the Gospel of John, biblical exegete David J. Ellis (1986: 1249) notes:

The neuter gender rules out any thought of meaning ‘one Person.’ This is not a comment on the nature of the Godhead. Rather, having spoken of the sheep’s security in both Himself and the Father, Jesus underlines what He has said by indicating that in action the Father and He can be regarded as a single entity, because their wills are one.

The Oneness presupposition regarding John 10:30 is promptly refuted by the grammatical certainty of the passage, namely, that the plural verb *esmen* and the neuter *hen* are utilized rather than the masculine *heis*. John 10:30 actually contradicts Oneness theology. As Robertson (1932: 5:186) concludes: “By the plural *sumus* [“are”] (separate persons) Sabellius is refuted, by *unum* [“one in essence”] Arius.”

**John 14:9:** “Jesus said to him, ‘Have I been so long with you, and *yet* you have not come to know Me, Philip? He who has seen Me has seen the Father; how *can* you say, ‘Show us the Father?’” The Oneness people routinely quote this passage, usually in the same breath with John 10:30, as though it was part of the passage. Only by removing this passage from the document and immediate context can Oneness teachers (e.g., Bernard, 1983: 197-8) posit a modalistic understanding. At the outset, as with John 10:30, Jesus never states in this passage, “I am the Father,” only that “He who has seen Me has seen the Father.” There are four exegetical features, which provide a cogent refutation to the Oneness handling of this passage.

1. **Context:** In verse 6 Jesus says, “I am the way, and the truth, and the life; no one comes to the Father but through Me.” In verse 7, He explains to His disciples that if they “had known” Him they would “have known” the Father also. Jesus then says to His disciples, “From now on you know Him, and have seen Him.” Thus, by knowing Him they “have known” and “have seen” the Father (note the parallel: “have known,” “have seen”). Still not understanding (i.e., by knowing Jesus they know and see the Father), Philip says to Jesus, “Show us the Father” (v. 8). Jesus then reiterates (as a corrective) that by seeing Him they can see, that is, “know” or recognize the invisible Father (v. 9). The context is obvious: by *knowing* and *seeing* Jesus (as the *only way to* the Father; cf. v. 6), they could really *see* (i.e., know/recognize, cf. John 9:39) the invisible Father (cf. John 1:18; Col. 1:15; 1 Tim. 6:16). As we will present in a more expansive and exegetical way in Chapter 4, the Son is and has been eternally subsisting as the perfect and “exact representation” (*charaktēr*) of the *very nature* (*hupostaseōs*) of Him (*autou*, “of Him,” not “as Him”; Heb. 1:3). Therefore, when they see Jesus, they “see” the *only way to*, and an exact representation of, the invisible unseen Father, for Jesus makes Him known, He explains or exegetes Him. In John 1:18, we read: “No one has seen God [the Father] at any time; the only begotten God who is in the bosom of the Father, He has explained Him.” The word translated “explained” is *exēgēsato* (the aorist middle indicative of *echēgeomai*), which means, “to lead out, unfold, declare” (Thayer, 1996: 223). Hence, it is God the Son who is the very image of the invisible

Father (cf. Col. 1:15) who brings out, that is, exegetes the Father: “He [Jesus] has made known or brought news of (the invisible God)” (Bauer, 2000: 349). One cannot have the Father except through the Son, Jesus Christ: “Whoever denies the Son does not have the Father; the one who confesses the Son has the Father also” (1 John 2:23; see also John 17:3). Note also that in 14:10, Jesus clearly differentiates Himself from the Father when He declares: “The words that I say to you I do not speak on My own initiative, but the Father abiding in Me does His works.” To reiterate, the undisputable fact is this: not one time in the New Testament does Jesus (or any other person) state that He Himself is the Father.

2. ***The Father is spirit:*** When Jesus said, “He who has seen Me has seen the Father,” the only thing His disciples literally *saw* was Jesus’ *physical body*. Both Oneness believers and Trinitarians agree that the Father is invisible and does not have a physical body. Hence, Jesus could not have meant that by seeing Him they were *literally* seeing the Father.
3. ***First and third person personal pronouns and verb references:*** Throughout John 14 and 16 Jesus clearly differentiates Himself from the Father. He does so by using *first person* personal pronouns (“I,” “Me,” “Mine”) and verb references to refer to Himself and *third person* personal pronouns (“He,” “Him,” “His”) and verb references to refer to His Father. Notice John 14:16: *I will ask* [*kagō erōtēsō*, first person] the Father, and *He will give* [*dōsei*, third person] you *another* Helper, that He may be with you forever” (John 14:16; emphasis added; also cf. 14:7, 10, 16; etc.). As marked out below, Jesus also differentiates Himself from God the Holy Spirit.
4. ***Different prepositions:*** Throughout John 14 (and chapters 15-16), Jesus distinguishes Himself from His Father by using different prepositions. Beisner (1998: 34) points out that the use of different prepositions “shows a relationship between them [i.e., the Father and Son]” and clearly denotes essential distinction. Jesus says in John 14:6 and verse 12: “No one comes *to* [*pros*] the Father but *through* [*dia*] Me ... he who believes *in* [*eis*] Me ... I am going *to* [*pros*] the Father”

(emphasis added; cf. also John 15:26; 16:28). Paul frequently uses different prepositions to differentiate the Father from Jesus. In Ephesians 2:18, Paul teaches that by the agency of the Son, Christians have access *to* the Father *by means of* the Spirit: “For *through Him [di’ autou, i.e., the Son]* we both have our access *in [en] one Spirit to the Father [pros ton patera]”* (Eph. 2:18; emphasis added). Only by circumventing these significant details can one establish Modalism from John 14:9.

**Philippians 2:10:** “So that [*hina*] at the name of Jesus EVERY KNEE WILL BOW, of those who are in heaven and on earth and under the earth.” Philippians 2:6-11 is a beautiful high Christological hymn known as the *Carmen Christi* (Hymn to Christ). Although an exegetical analysis of the *Carmen* will be provided in Chapter 4, what is relevant here is the Oneness understanding of the phrase in verse 10: “at the name of Jesus.” Oneness adherents (e.g., Bernard, 1983: 223) typically utilize it, along with John 5:43, to assert that the name of the unipersonal deity is “Jesus.”

First, in refutation of the Oneness position, it is not the mere name “Jesus” that is “above every name,” for the name *Iēsous* was a common name in first-century Palestine. Rather, it was the “name” that *belonged* to Jesus. Grammatically, *Iēsous* here in verse 10 is in the genitive case (*Iēsou*), namely, a *genitive of possession* (cf. Moule, 1977: 95-96; Morey, 1996: 525). This semantic category seems most fitting in light of the context and source of Paul’s citation as explained below. Therefore, the “highest name” in which every knee will bow and every tongue will confess was the name that Jesus *possessed* or the name that *belonged to Him* and not merely the linguistic symbols of the name “Jesus.” For the name that belonged to Him, keeping with Paul’s context (i.e., Jesus as the fulfillment of Isa. 45:23) is revealed in verse 11: *kurios Iēsous Christos*—“Lord Jesus Christ”; thus, Paul identifies Jesus as the Yahweh of Isaiah 45:23. For Yahweh, which the LXX translates as *kurios* is the name that the Son possessed. Accordingly, the Apostle Paul places *kurios* in the emphatic position (i.e., first word in the clause) emphasizing the Son’s exaltation as Yahweh, the name that *belonged to Him* (cf. Wallace, 1996: 474; Reymond, 1998: 312; this point will be well established in Chapter 4, 4.5).

**Colossians 2:9:** “For in Him all the fullness of Deity dwells in bodily form.” As thoroughly established, Oneness teachers presuppose that

monotheism equals unipersonalism, hence rejecting the doctrine of the Trinity. A unipersonal (or unitarian) view is not biblically coherent to the graspable fact that the very foundation of the doctrine of the Trinity is unequivocal monotheism: one true God. Scripture reveals that God is an indivisible, inseparable, unquantifiable spirit.

He is omnipresent, existing everywhere: “But who is able to build a house for Him, for the heavens and the highest heavens cannot contain Him?” (2 Chron. 2:6; cf. 6:18; Jer. 23:23-24; Heb. 4:13). Therefore, in Colossians 2:9, one would expect that “all the fullness of Deity” dwells in Christ, as it also dwells in the Father and the Holy Spirit—*God cannot be divided into thirds or parts.*

As previously pointed out, the book of Colossians sharply refuted the dualistic ideology (i.e., spirit vs. matter) of Gnosticism. The Gnostics repudiated the idea that the so-called “supreme God” would ever dwell in (or create) “evil matter,” and hence they repudiated the concept of Jesus being *God in the flesh*. For that reason, Paul firmly presented his anti-Gnostic polemic by saying in essence: “Jesus created all things, in fact, all the fullness (*plērōma*) of the supreme the Deity (*theotētos*) presently, continuously, and permanently dwells (*katoikei*) in bodily form (*sōmatikōs*). Thus, Paul’s intention and purpose in his letter to the Colossians was to refute the very heart of the Gnostic idea by arguing that (a) Jesus Christ (the Son; cf. 1:14-15) was absolutely *God in flesh* (*theotētos sōmatikōs*; cf. 2:9) and (b) that Christians are reconciled “in His fleshly body through [His physical] death” (1:22, again emphasizing His *real* flesh).

Therefore, against the Gnostics, Paul stressed in the strongest way that in the Person of the Son, Jesus Christ, constantly dwells all the fullness of God in human flesh. Paul was not teaching here that Jesus was the Father, which would have been completely out-of-flow with his anti-Gnostic polemic (and his entire theology). Nor was Paul simply providing an expressive essay on the doctrine of the Trinity; this was not his aim. Paul’s main purpose was to present Jesus Christ as the God-man, Creator of all things (cf. 1:16-17), whose *physical* death provides redemption (cf. 1:20-22). The Jesus that Paul preached sliced explicitly through the Gnostic flesh-denying system—Jesus was *God in human flesh*.

The Gnostic controversy did not surround the Father, but rather it centered on the notion that “in Him,” Jesus Christ, the “fullness” of the supreme God dwells permanently and continuously in human flesh. This

was the absolute zenith of Paul's theology and the main thrust of his argument against Gnostics in his letter to the Colossians.

**3.3.3 *Kai* and the Salutations of Paul:** "Grace to you and peace from God our Father, *and* [*kai*] the Lord Jesus Christ." The specific benchmark of the Pauline corpus was Paul's salutations. He included them in the opening of every one of his epistles (e.g., Rom. 1:7; 1 Cor. 1:3; 2 Cor. 1:2; Gal. 1:3; Eph. 1:2; Phil. 1:2; Col. 1:2 (partial); 1 Thess. 1:1 (inverted); 2 Thess. 1:2; 1 Tim. 1:2; 2 Tim. 1:2; Titus 1:4; and Philem. 1:3).

Paul clearly recognizes that the grace and peace flows equally *from* God the Father and Jesus Christ. In the salutations, Paul clearly delivers his point: the grace and peace is *from* (*apo*) God the Father and the Lord Jesus. Paul does not say that the grace and peace is from God the Father *through* (*dia*) the Lord Jesus Christ, as if Jesus were a mere instrument and not a direct source of the grace and peace. Paul's passion surges when he stresses that the grace and peace flows equally from (*apo*) *both* God the Father and the Lord Jesus Christ. Both Persons are the very objects of Paul's praise.

As discussed above, Paul comprehends the terms *theos* and *kurios* as equal descriptions of deity. A plain reading of his salutations devoid of a prior theological commitment clearly distinguishes God the Father *from* the Lord Jesus Christ. In spite of this, Oneness teachers (e.g., Bernard, 1983: 208-9) insert Modalism into the salutations by proposing the idea that the conjunction *kai* should be translated, not as a simple *connective* "and," but as the *ascensive* "even." Paul's salutations are not teaching a distinction of Persons, Oneness teachers argue, but rather, they are teaching that Jesus is God the Father. In view of that, the so-called "correct" rendering, as Oneness teachers surmise, would be, "God the Father, *even* the Lord Jesus Christ." To sustain this Oneness grammatical assumption, Bernard (1983: 208-9) attempts to explain that

A study of Greek is very interesting in connection with these greeting passages. The word translated 'and' is from the Greek word *kai*. It can be translated as "and" or as "even" (in the sense of "that is" or "which is the same as"). For example, the KJV translates *kai* as "and" in II Corinthians 1:2 but as "even" in verse 3 [Bernard then proceeds to give a few more examples] ... So the greetings could read just as easily "from God our Father, even the Lord Jesus Christ."

This argument as applied to the Pauline salutations is fundamentally flawed, *grammatically* and *theologically*.

**Grammatically:** The predominant usage of the logical conjunction *kai* in the New Testament is the connective “and”, *not the ascensive* (“even”). There are 9,153 instances of *kai* in the New Testament (Mounce, 1993: 422). Of the total New Testament occurrences of *kai*, 4,829 times it is translated (in virtually every translation) as the simple connective “and,” with only 97 times as the ascensive “even” (Kohlenberger *et al.*, 1997: 401). Although passages such as Ephesians 5:3 present a proper use of the ascensive conjunction, the burden of proof unquestionably falls headlong on the one claiming that *kai* should be translated as “even.”

In addition, according to Greek grammar (*viz.*, Granville Sharp’s rule #5; cf. 3.2 above) when there are multiple personal nouns in a clause that are connected by *kai* and the first noun lacks the article, each noun must denote a distinct person (Sharp, 1803: 12-14; Beisner, 1998: 36, 46). We see this in all of the Pauline salutations: *charis humin kai eirēnē apo theou patros hēmōn kai kuriou Iēsou Christou*, literally, “Grace to you and peace from God Father of us and Lord Jesus Christ.” However, the salutation in Colossians 1:2 reads: “Grace and peace to you from God our Father” in most modern translations in which the phrase “and the Lord Jesus Christ” is absent, even though most manuscripts, including some important ones ( Ⲛ A C F G I [P] 075 *et al* M it vg<sup>cl</sup> [sy<sup>h\*\*</sup>] bo; Hier), read *kai kuriou Iēsou Christou* at the end of verse 2, corresponding to the standard wording of the Pauline salutation. There are, however, excellent and early witnesses (B D K L Ψ 33 81 1175 1505 1739 1881 *al a m* vg<sup>st.ww</sup> sy<sup>p</sup> sa; Ambst) that exclude this phrase.

Since there is no textual reason for the omission as being derived from the longer reading (otherwise, these manuscripts lacking the phrase would certainly have omitted the phrase in the other Pauline salutations), its authenticity is firm (cf. NA<sup>28</sup>, 1993: 523; Metzger, 1994: 552).<sup>7</sup> Surveying the specific grammatical features that personally

---

<sup>7</sup> The salutations in the Pastoral letters contain a variant reading as compared to Paul’s earlier salutations. In 1 and 2 Timothy (1:2), the salutations read: *charis eleos eirēnē apo theou patros kai Christou Iēsou tou kuriou hēmōn*, literally, “Grace, mercy, peace from God Father and Christ Jesus the Lord of us.” As compared to the salutations in 1 and 2 Timothy, in Titus 1:4, Paul substitutes *sōtēros* for *kuriou*: *charis kai eirēnē apo theou patros kai Christou Iēsou tou sōtēros hēmōn*, literally, “Grace and peace from

distinguish the Father from Jesus Christ in the salutations, New Testament scholar Murray Harris (1992: 266) notes:

The formula *theos kai kurios* in reference to one person is not found in the NT or LXX and is rare elsewhere ... whenever *theos* and *kurios Iēsou Christos* are conjoined or occur in close proximity (viz., within the same sentence), two persons are always being referred to (31 instances).

In point of fact, there is no grammatical or contextual justification offered by Oneness teachers in support of their view. The grammatical conclusion is simply this: *unless the context deems otherwise, in light of the plain normal predominant New Testament usage, the logical conjunction kai, “and,” should be translated as the simple connective “and,” not the ascensive “even.”* In spite of the grammatical analysis regarding the rules of Greek, Oneness teachers must force a pre-decided theology into the salutations to avoid the obvious: Jesus and His Father are two distinct Persons.

**Theologically:** Due to their *a priori* unitarian assumption, Oneness teachers infer the most unnatural rendering into the text. The end result of the Oneness hermeneutic is the wholesale abandonment of the clear reading of the text. In conclusion, the unipersonal deity of Oneness theology is clearly absent in the salutations. Scripture presents in the clearest way that the Father and the Son are two distinct, self-aware Persons. The entire Pauline corpus clearly denotes a tri-personal God.

### 3.3.4 Additional Considerations

The Old Testament Law was clear: “On the evidence of *two* witnesses or three witnesses, he who is to die shall be put to death; he shall not be put to death on the evidence of *one* witness” (Deut. 17:6; emphasis

---

God Father and Christ Jesus the Savior of us.” Nevertheless, the case of the missing articles before the first noun *theou* in the salutations of all three Pastoral letters thoroughly protects against the assertions of Oneness unitarianism and indicates a distinction of Persons, God the Father and the Lord Jesus Christ. In fact, in the salutations of ten of his letters, *all* personal nouns (*theou* and *kurion*) lack the article, clearly differentiating the Person of the Father from the Person of the Lord Jesus Christ.

added). In John 8:16-18, Jesus points to the authority of the Old Testament Law to validate His testimony to the unbelieving Jews:

“But even if I do judge, My judgment is true; for *I am not alone* in it, but *I and the Father* who *sent Me*. Even in your law it has been written that the testimony of *two men is true*. I am He who testifies about Myself, and the Father who sent Me testifies about Me” (John 8:16-18; emphasis added).

Jesus says *two*, which the Jews would have understood to mean simply two. He does not say, as Oneness theology asserts, that His *divine* nature testifies for His *human* nature, which would not line up with the Jewish or Christian interpretation of Deuteronomy 17:6, which naturally implies that the witnesses are two persons, not two natures. There are also further considerations that militate against the Oneness conclusion that Jesus is the Father:

**1. *The Oneness unitarian position denies essential historic biblical doctrines.*** For example:

- i. *Oneness theology denies* that the Son is the Creator. As briefly seen already (and I will revisit this point in Chapter 4) in Oneness theology Jesus as the Father is viewed as the Creator. Therefore, since only Jesus as the Father preexisted, Oneness teachers conclude that the “manifestation” of the “Son” had its beginning at Bethlehem. In this sense, Bernard (1983: 104-5) explains that the “Sonship—or the role of the Son—began with the child conceived in the womb of Mary ... From all of these verses, it is easy to see that the Son is not eternal, but was begotten by God almost 2000 years ago.” Oneness Christology clearly denies the Son as Creator even in the face of Paul’s clear presentation of the Son as the very Agent of creation (cf. Col. 1:16-17; 1 Cor. 8:6).
- ii. *Oneness theology denies* the preexistence of the Son, maintaining that Jesus as the Father preexisted (cf. Bernard, 1983: 104-5; Magee, 1988: 25; UPCI, 2008c).
- iii. *Oneness theology denies* the biblical teaching of the incarnation by asserting that the Father, not the Son, came down and *wrapped* Himself (not became) flesh. John 1:14 declares, “The Word

became flesh.” The Greek here (*sarx egeneto*, lit., “flesh became”) clearly indicates that the eternal Word (cf. John 1:1a) did not simply “wrap” Himself in flesh as one would put on an outfit or a costume, but rather He *actually became* (*egeneto*) flesh. Unfortunately, too many pastors and commentators miss the grammatical significance of this passage and declare, “God *wrapped* Himself in flesh” (a popular epithet among them). As a result, they unknowingly gratify Oneness believers who think that it was God the *Father* that *put on* or *wrapped* Himself in a flesh-body without actually *becoming* flesh, as if the Father dressed in flesh or put flesh on, as an actor would *put on* a mask without, of course, becoming the person that he or she is portraying.

- iv. *Oneness theology denies* Jesus’ role as Mediator between God (the Father) and His elect (cf. 1 Tim. 2:5). By definition, a mediator mediates between two parties other than himself. Since Oneness theology holds to the idea that Jesus *is* the Father (same person), the notion of Jesus being Mediator between the Father and men would be senseless.
- v. *Oneness theology denies* the Son as divine intercessor (cf. Rom. 8:34). Jesus cannot intercede *before the Father* on behalf of the believer if He Himself is the Father. For whom would He intercede?
- vi. *Oneness theology denies* Jesus as the substitutionary atoning sacrifice that provided satisfaction *before* the Father (i.e., the *hilasmos*; cf. 1 John 2:2). If Jesus is *both* the Father and the Son, to whom did His sacrifice on the cross provide satisfaction? The mutual operation of the three Persons infallibly accomplishes the work of salvation (viz., the soteriological Trinity).

## ***2. Jesus’ use of first person references to refer to Himself and third person references to refer to the Father and the Holy Spirit.***

As discussed above, Jesus’ use of *first* person personal pronouns to refer to Himself and *third* person personal pronouns to refer to the Father and

the Holy Spirit positively dissolves the modalistic claim (e.g., John 14:7, 10, 16, 26; 15:10; 16:13-14; 17:5).

### **3. Jesus used first person 'plural' verbs to refer to both Himself and the Father.**

For example, in John 14:23, Jesus specifically used two first person *plural* verbs (*eleusometha*, "We will come" and *poiēsometha*, "We will make") in reference to *both* Himself and His Father, which clearly and precisely distinguished Jesus *from* His Father. And, as we saw above, in John 10:30, Jesus used the first person *plural* verb *esmen* ("are") to differentiate Himself from His Father and yet show that they are *one (hen)* in essence, as Trinity so vividly and consistently teaches: "I and the Father *are [esmen]* one"; emphasis added).

### **4. Speaker-hearer distinctions.**

There are many examples of a clear speaker-hearer relationship between the Father and Jesus, thus demonstrating that they are distinct cognizant Persons. This would be extremely inconsistent if Jesus and the Father were the same Person: "After being baptized, Jesus came up immediately from the water ... behold, a voice out of the heavens said, 'This is *My* [speaker] beloved *Son*, [hearer] in whom *I* [speaker] am well-pleased'" (Matt. 3:16-17; emphasis added; see also Matt. 17:5); "*I* [speaker] glorified *You* [hearer] on earth, having accomplished the work which *You* [hearer] have given *Me* [speaker] to do" (John 17:4; emphasis added; see also Luke 23:34, 46). The Father and the Son, Jesus Christ, stand in an "I" - "You" relationship to each other; Jesus refers to the Father as "You" and Himself as "I." The Father likewise refers to Jesus as "You" and Himself as "I." Jesus personally and distinctly relates to the Father and the Holy Spirit, and the reverse is altogether true of the Father and the Holy Spirit relating to each other.

### **5. The early church universally rejected Modalism.**

Since its inception, the early church universally and unambiguously rejected both modalistic and dynamic forms of Monarchianism, and condemned those who promulgated it (e.g., Theodotus, Noetus, Praxeas, Sabellius, Paul of Samosata, etc.). As well, many important early church fathers sharply spoke out against it (e.g., Hippolytus, Tertullian, Dionysius of Alexandria, Dionysius bishop of Rome). What is more, every important ecumenical council (and resulting creed) from Nicaea (A.D. 325) to the Third Council of Constantinople (A.D. 680) was

firmly Trinitarian. They clearly affirmed and safeguarded the distinctions between the Persons of the Trinity as well as the unipersonality and dual nature of the Son. In Chapter 5 these historical facts will be fully exposed and used as a main line of refutation to show that the early church was not Oneness, but rather envisaged God as triune.

**6. *Biblical scholarship throughout church history (and subsequently) has rejected the teachings of Modalism.***

There have never been any recognized Greek grammarians or recognized biblical scholars/commentators who have endorsed the UPCI or any other Oneness organization or agreed with Oneness theology.

**3.3.5 The Final Analysis: Jesus is not the Father**

Nowhere in Scripture do Jesus or His apostles ever claim that Jesus is the Father. The writers of the New Testament always identified Jesus as the “Son” never as the Father: “Over fifty times Jesus and the Father are rendered distinct in the same verse” (Boyd, 1992: 68-69). In a straightforward way, the New Testament presents the Father and Son interacting with each other as two distinct Persons.

In addition, there are specific grammatical features, as seen above, which clearly denote an authentic and actual personal distinction between them: 1) the case of the missing articles in the salutations of Paul, 2) repeated and different prepositions, 3) the repetition of the article, and 4) speaker-hearer distinctions between the Father and the Son. The idea that Jesus is both the Father and the Son turns their intimate relationship into a mere simulation. The Father and Son intimately and lovingly relate to one another: “The Father loves the Son and has given all things into His hand” (John 3:35; cf. 5:20; 10:17); and Jesus really does love the Father: “So that the world may know that I love the Father, I do exactly as the Father commanded Me ...” (John 14:31). This love exchange plainly differentiates between the Person of the Father and the Person of the Son as well as the Person of the Holy Spirit.

The Oneness solution to the many passages that speak of the personal loving interaction between the Father and the Son is the assertion that “The expression of love between Father and Son are explained as communication between the divine and human natures of

Christ” (Bernard, 1983: 22). In other words, the “Father” mode loves the “Son” mode, or Jesus’ human nature loves His own divine nature, and the reverse. This does not follow. By way of definition and logic, two abstract natures cannot have fellowship and love for each other. Natures cannot intellectually express emotion. Natures can neither give love nor receive love, for they are not *self-aware* nor cognizant. Only conscious persons are capable of giving and receiving love. The Son is the object of the Father’s love. In Scripture, either two of all three Persons *give* as well as receive love (e.g., John 14:23; Rom, 15:30; 2 Cor. 13:14; 2 Thess. 2:16; Jude 1:1).

The Son is not the Father. It is the Son who is presented as God-man, the very image and perfect representation of His Father (cf. John 1:18; Heb. 1:3). In the Son’s preexistence (cf. John 1:1-3; Col. 1:16-17), He had loving intercourse and glory *with* the Father (cf. John 1:1; 17:5).

The Son is clearly presented as the divine Priest (cf. Heb. 7:1ff.) who revealed His Father to mankind (cf. John 1:18). The Son is the one and only Mediator between the Father and humans (cf. 1 Tim. 2:5). As a result, it was the Son, Jesus Christ, the *monogenēs theos* (John 1:18), who said: “No one comes *to* [*pros*] the Father but *through* [*dia*] Me” (John 14:6; emphasis added). The unipersonalism of Oneness theology nullifies Jesus’ own authentication: “*If I alone* testify about Myself, My testimony is not true. There is *another* [*allos*: other than the one speaking] *who testifies of Me*, and I know that the testimony which *He gives* about *Me* is true” (John 5:31-32; emphasis added; cf. 8:17-18). Jesus and the biblical authors utilized plain uncomplicated language that established a real distinction existing simultaneously between the Persons of the Trinity. The essential distinctions between the Father and the Son (and of the Spirit) were not merely distinctions of illusory modes, or functions, but actual:

“For just as the Father raises the dead and gives them life, even *so the Son, also gives life* to whom *He wishes* ... For I have come down from heaven, not to do My own will, but the will of Him who sent Me” (John 5:21; 6:38; emphasis added).

### 3.4 JESUS IS NOT THE HOLY SPIRIT

As we have shown, in Oneness theology Jesus is the Father, Son and Holy Spirit. This premise rejects the biblical revelation of Jesus Christ. So far, we have centered on the Oneness Christological assertion that Jesus is the Father. So now, we will address the Oneness doctrine of the Holy Spirit. Bernard (1983: 128) briefly explains the Oneness position regarding the Holy Spirit:

The Holy Spirit is simply God. God is holy (Leviticus 11:44; 1 Peter 1:16). In fact, He alone is holy in Himself. God is also a Spirit (John 4:24), and there is one Spirit of God (1 Corinthians 12:11; Ephesians 4:4). Therefore, “Holy Spirit” is another term for the one God.

In Oneness doctrine, the “Father” and the “Holy Spirit” are merely names or descriptions of the divine nature of Jesus. Thus, the divine nature of Christ is the Holy Spirit as well as the Father.

This is yet another example of the patent denial of both the unipersonality of Jesus Christ and the unipersonality of the Holy Spirit (cf. UPCI 2008b). Keeping consistent with this Oneness notion, in all passages where the Holy Spirit is said to be the speaker (e.g., Acts 8:29; 13:2; 21:11; Heb. 3:7-11), it is merely Jesus switching from the Son or Father mode to the Holy Spirit mode. Yet there no indication or mention to Jesus’ audience of this vacillation between modes. In point of fact, Jesus was a masterful communicator; if indeed Jesus was really the Holy Spirit, He would not have been so secretive, so utterly evasive or vague as to hide this so-called important truth, for He was absolutely clear pertaining to His deity (e.g., John 5:17ff.; 8:58; 10:30) and His humanity (e.g., Matt. 26:26, 28, 38; John 8:40). In contrast, there are many passages where we read that the Holy Spirit was “sent” by the Father and Son. In John 15:26, we read that the Son sent the Holy Spirit *para* (“from”) the Father to testify of the Son: “When the Helper comes, whom I will send to you *from the Father* [*para tou patros*], that is the Spirit of truth who proceeds *from the Father* [*para tou patros*], He will testify about Me” (emphasis added; cf. John 14:26).

Nevertheless, in spite of the plain reading of many passages, Oneness doctrine maintains that Jesus is the Holy Spirit, rendering any so-called implied distinction (such as 2 Cor. 1:14) as nothing more than a divine charade, namely, Jesus’ divine nature being distinguished from His human nature. It is not biblically justified nor is it a reasonable inference to suggest that Jesus was speaking to His disciples in such a

way as to lead them to believe that there were three subjects, the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit, when in fact there was really only one subject, Jesus.

### **3.4.1 Oneness Standard Proof-Texts to show that Jesus is the Holy Spirit**

Oneness teachers have fewer arguments in presenting Jesus as the Holy Spirit than in presenting Jesus as the Father. As demonstrated, the fundamental premise upon which the entire Oneness position rests is the assumption that God is unipersonal. This conviction provides the governing hermeneutic for Oneness teachers. The most frequently employed passages in which Oneness teachers maneuver to teach that Jesus is the Holy Spirit are John 4:24; Romans 8:9-11; 2 Corinthians 3:17 and Ephesians 4:4.

Aside from that, Oneness teachers posit the “same attributes” argument in that the works attributed to Jesus are the same works attributed to the Holy Spirit. Said another way, what Jesus does, the Holy Spirit does (e.g., creation, the resurrection of Jesus, salvation, being called the *paraklētos* dwelling with the believer, etc.). External influences enslave the biblical text when exegesis is abandoned.

The Oneness conclusion that Jesus is the Holy Spirit derives from a faulty method of proof-texting: citing a sequence of passages entirely detached from their defining contexts. Generally, the sequence forms around Romans 8:9-11 and Philippians 1:19 where the phrase “the Spirit of Christ” appears. Ephesians 4:4 is then cited: “There is one ... Spirit” connected with 1 Corinthians 8:6: “one Lord Jesus Christ.” Concluding with 2 Corinthians 3:17 (a most used text): “Now the Lord is the Spirit.” Therefore, Oneness teachers (cf. Bernard, 1983: 128; UPCI, 2008b) deduce that Jesus must be the Holy Spirit. In terms of John 4:24 (“God is spirit”) and Ephesians 4:4, Oneness teachers assert that the word “spirit” (or “Spirit”) is speaking specifically of the Holy Spirit (Bernard, 1983: 128 Magee, 1988: 16; UPCI, 2008b). As attractive as this scheme above may sound to Oneness believers, this kind of biblical hopscotching only equivocates and confuses the terms “spirit” and “Lord.”

**John 4:24:** “God is spirit, and those who worship Him must worship in spirit and truth.” The Oneness assumption of unipersonalism dictates how the phrase “God is spirit” is to be taken in that the “spirit” in this passage is a reference to the Holy Spirit (Bernard, 1983: 128). As

previously presented, Oneness theology maintains the notion that Jesus as the Father/Holy Spirit is God while the “Son” refers to His non-divine human nature (cf. Paterson, 1966: 22; Bernard, 1983: 99, 103). To assert here that “spirit” is the Holy Spirit is a fallacy of equivocation. It confuses the term translated “spirit” (*pneuma*) as having only one meaning—Holy Spirit. Although some older translations (e.g., KJV, YLT, ASV) render *pneuma* as a capitalized “Spirit,” no standard biblical commentary presents a modalistic understanding of the passage.

First, as briefly touched upon, the Greek term *pneuma* appears many times in the New Testament carrying a wide-range of meanings. For instance, *pneuma* is applied to the inward part or simple essence of a human being (e.g., 1 Cor. 6:20; Heb. 4:12). Scripture generalizes the nature of humans as dichotomous consisting of the *outer* quality (i.e., *soma*, *sarx*, etc.) and the *inner quality*, in which *pneuma* and *psuchē*, synonymously describe this element (cf. Reymond, 1998: 420-24). *Pneuma* is also applied to the unregenerate (e.g., 1 John 4:3); human characteristics (e.g., 2 Tim. 1:7); Jesus’ human spirit (e.g., John 19:30); angels both good (e.g., Heb. 1:14) and demonic (e.g., Mark 9:17; Acts 5:16), etc. *Pneuma* is also used symbolically, such as where Paul says: “I am present in spirit” (1 Cor. 5:3) or when he speaks of the “spirit of gentleness” (1 Cor. 4:21). Likewise, in 2 Thessalonians 2:8, *pneuma* is translated “breath” representatively of the Lord’s judgment against the “lawless one”: “Then that lawless one will be revealed whom the Lord will slay with the breath of His mouth.”

Even though the preponderance of the New Testament occurrences of *pneuma* signifies the third Person of the triune God, the Holy Spirit, it cannot be hastily assumed that at all times *pneuma* signifies the Holy Spirit (esp. at John 4:24). *Pneuma* occurs about 380 times in the New Testament (cf. NA<sup>27</sup>/UBS<sup>4</sup>). In the so-called *Textus Receptus*, it occurs 385 times. Hence, the KJV, for example, translates these occurs of *pneuma* as (Jesus’ own) ghost, 2 times; (Jesus’ own) spirit, 6 times; (My) Spirit, 3 times; (evil) spirit, 47 times; Holy Ghost, 89 times; Spirit, 111 times; Spirit (of Christ), 2 times; Spirit (of God), 13 times; Spirit (of the Lord), 5 times; Spirit (of truth), 3 times; human spirit, 49 times; miscellaneous, 21 times; spirit, 8 times; and spirit (general), 26 times. The ultimate deciding factor in determining a particular word’s function and definition is the context. Therefore, it is simply a gross misreading of any text to assume that a term carries the exact same meaning in every occurrence. Contextually, the dialogue leading up to verse 24 centers on the woman’s misconception that worshipping God is limited

geographically (i.e., on Mount Gerizim; cf. v. 20), a misconception which Jesus corrects.

Second, note how the phrase reads: *pneuma ho theos*, literally, “spirit the God” (the verb *estin* is implied). Grammatically speaking, *pneuma* is an anarthrous predicate nominative. The predicate *pneuma* expresses information pertaining to the subject, *theos*, that is, as to God’s *quality* of nature or essence He *is* spirit, not “flesh and bones” (Luke 24:39). When *pneuma* has the article, the Person is usually being thought of; and when *pneuma* is anarthrous, His nature (i.e., what He is) or His activity is usually being thought of (Greenlee, 1986: 24). Semantically, then, *pneuma* is not definite (i.e., “the Spirit”). Nor, is it indefinite (i.e., “a spirit,” one of many) as the KJV mistranslates. Rather, *pneuma* is *qualitative* (Wallace, 1996: 270). Hence, the anarthrous predicate emphasizes the character and nature as with *theos* in John 1:1c (Rogers Jr. and Rogers III, 1998: 189; this point will be fully discussed in the next chapter).

A similar example is found in John 1:14: *ho logos sarx egeneto*. The Greek syntax of John 1:1 and 4:24 differ only on one minor aspect; in 4:24, the verb is implied, as indicated above, while in John 1:14, the verb (*egeneto*) is stated. The Logos did not become *the flesh* (tagging *sarx*, as definite) or *a flesh* (indefinite, one of many), but rather the eternal Logos became flesh. He partook *qualitatively* of human nature. It is for this reason that most modern translations do not capitalize “spirit” keeping faithful to the qualitative tag of *pneuma*.

So, in contrast to the Oneness interpretation, Jesus taught in John 4:24 that 1) God is omnipresent, hence, He can be worshiped anywhere and 2) His Father as to His *essential quality* or essence was spirit, but not the Holy Spirit (i.e., not as to His identity) which a definite tag would surely denote. In other words, Jesus uses *pneuma* here in John 4:24, to refer to the nature of the Godhead, and not the third Person of the Trinity (cf. Geneva Study Bible, 1995).

**Romans 8:9-11:** “However, you are not in the flesh but in the Spirit, if indeed the *Spirit of God* [*pneuma theou*] dwells in you. But if anyone does not have the *Spirit of Christ* [*pneuma Christou*], he does not belong to Him. If Christ is in you, though the body is dead because of your sin, yet the spirit is alive because of righteousness. But if the *Spirit* [*pneuma*] of Him who raised Christ from the dead dwells in you, He who raised Christ Jesus from the dead will also give life to your mortal bodies

through His Spirit [*autou pneumatos*] who dwells in you” (emphasis added).

In verse 9, we read of the “Spirit of God” and “Spirit of Christ.” And in verse 11, we read of the “Spirit” and “His Spirit.” So starting with a modalistic premise, Oneness teachers (e.g., Bernard, 1983: 16, 128; Magee, 1988: 16; UPCI, 2008b) deduce that because each of these occurrences of “Spirit” (or “spirit”) specifically denote the Holy Spirit, and thus the phrase “Spirit of Christ” proves that Jesus is the Holy Spirit. In Oneness doctrine, the “Spirit of Christ” is the Holy Spirit, thus merely a mode of Jesus’ divine nature (cf. Bernard, 1983: 128; UPCI, 2008b). However, this line of argumentation is defective. First and most importantly, the text does not explicitly state anywhere that Jesus is the Holy Spirit as promptly assumed by Oneness advocates. Second, in pointed contrast to the entire system of Oneness theology, Romans 8:3 clearly differentiates the Father from the Son: “For what the Law could not do, weak as it was through the flesh, God did: sending His own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh and as an offering for sin, He condemned sin in the flesh” (emphasis added).

There is no contextual (or theological) justification for the Oneness assertion that the term *pneuma* used repetitiously identifies Jesus as the Holy Spirit. A careful exegesis of these passages positively controverts the Oneness position. In verse 9, *Christou* (as in *pneuma Christou*) is in the genitive case—namely, a genitive of source or origin in that the Spirit originated from Christ (Sanday and Headlam, 1904: 196; Greenlee, 1986: 25). Jesus promised His disciples: “When the Helper comes, whom I will send to you *from the Father* [*para tou patros*], that is, the Spirit of truth who proceeds *from the Father* [*para tou patros*], He will testify about Me” (John 15:26; emphasis added; cf. 14:26). Thus, the Holy Spirit originates from the Father and from the Son. The same semantic force can be seen in 2 Corinthians 3:3, where Christians are said to be *epistolē Christou*, “a letter *from* Christ” (see also Rom. 9:16; and Rev. 9:11).

There is absolutely no exegetical or contextual justification to assert that Paul was teaching here that Jesus was the Holy Spirit. In reference to Romans 8:9-11, Calvin (1989: 1.13.18) states:

The Son is said to be of the Father only; the Spirit of both the Father and the Son. This is done in many passages, but none more clearly than in the eighth chapter of Romans, where the

same Spirit is called indiscriminately the Spirit of Christ, and the Spirit of him who raised up Christ from the dead.

In Philippians 1:19 we see the same grammatical significance: “For I know that this will turn out for my deliverance through your prayers and the provision of the Spirit of Jesus Christ [*tou pneumatos Iēsou Christou*; i.e., the Spirit originating from Jesus Christ]” (emphasis added). A usable way of illustrating this point is the phrase “Son of David.” This appellation denoting the royal line and kingly office of our Savior obviously does not mean that Jesus was Himself David. The phrase, in addition to being a kingly title, expresses the relationship that Jesus has with David in that Jesus is the royal descendent *from* David, and the rightful Messianic heir to the Davidic throne.

Therefore, in light of that, the “Spirit of Christ” does not mean that Christ is the Holy Spirit, only that the Spirit proceeds or originates from Jesus Christ. Robertson (1931: 4:373) sees the “Spirit of Christ” and the “Spirit of God” as the same Spirit—the Holy Spirit from both God and Christ:

The Spirit of Christ (*pneuma Christou*). The same as “the Spirit of God” just before. See also Philippians 1:19; I Peter 1:11. Incidental argument for the Deity of Christ and probably the meaning of II Corinthians 3:18 “the Spirit of the Lord.” Condition of first class, assumed as true.

Hawthorne and Martin (1993: 407) rightly observe that “The Spirit of Christ (as with the Spirit of God) seem to overlap or even become completely interchangeable ... where ‘the Spirit of God,’ ‘the Spirit of Christ’ and ‘Christ in you’ all refer to the same reality.” The Holy Spirit bears a relationship to both the Father and Christ, and yet is distinct from both of them as a divine Person. Allowing the context to define the understanding of *pneuma* in Romans 8:9-11 (and v. 3) actually leads to the very opposite of the Oneness position: the Spirit is intimately connected to the Father and the Son, so that He is identified as belonging to and *proceeding from* both. Yet the Spirit is neither the Father nor Jesus. Therefore, to suggest that the *Father sent Himself* is not only a misreading of the passage, but removes the plain intended meaning of the biblical author.

**2 Corinthians 3:17-18:** “Now the Lord is the Spirit, and where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is liberty. But we all, with unveiled face,

beholding as in a mirror the glory of the Lord, are being transformed into the same image from glory to glory, just as from the Lord, the Spirit.” Oneness teachers (e.g., Bernard, 1983: 16, 128; Magee, 1988: 16) see the phrase “The Lord is the Spirit” as a solid so-called proof-text confirming that Jesus, who is “Lord,” is the Holy Spirit. However, as with Romans 8:9-11, nowhere do these passages state that Jesus is the Holy Spirit, only that “the Lord is the Spirit.”

Note first that the context actually prevents a Oneness interpretation. In verses 1-18, Paul is simply contrasting the Old Testament Law, which “kills” and “fades away” (vv. 7, 11), with the New Testament Spirit of grace, which “gives life” and will “last.” In keeping with Paul’s theme, the Lord, Christ Jesus, is the Spirit that gives life. Paul had previously stated in reference to Christ: “The last Adam became a life-giving spirit” (1 Cor. 15:45). The ministry of the Spirit of grace is Jesus Christ (cf. v. 8). Jesus is that Spirit, but He is not the Holy Spirit. 2 Corinthians cannot be taken as so-called evidence that the identity of the Holy Spirit is Jesus Christ. The first occurrence of “Lord” in the passages refers to the wording of Exodus 34:34 (in the LXX). Hawthorne and Martin (1993: 407) observe that

When those in this age “turn to the Lord” (i.e., God) as Moses did at Sinai, a veil of spiritual blindness is lifted from their eyes; only now “Lord” signifies “the Spirit” who is the key to knowledge of God. This is Paul’s interpretation of the OT passage’s meaning, which he applies to his conflict with Jews and Jewish Christians. The next verse must be understood in this context: it is the work of “the Lord who is the Spirit” to transform believers into the image of Christ, the Last Adam, the pattern of a new humanity (2 Cor. 3:18).

The expression, “Spirit of Christ” cannot be taken as “an exegetical genitive phrase, meaning ‘the Spirit which = Christ’” (Hawthorne and Martin, 1993: 407). Throughout Paul’s epistles, Jesus and the Holy Spirit are always personally distinguished. Jesus is portrayed as 1) the Father’s Son (cf. Rom. 1:3; Gal. 4:4), 2) possessing a human nature (cf. Rom. 1:3; 8:3; Gal. 4:4; Phil. 2:7; 1 Tim. 2:5), 3) dying “for our sins” (1 Cor. 15:3; Rom. 5:8; 2 Cor. 5:15), and 4) being resurrected physically to life and seated at God’s right hand (cf. Col. 3:3; Phil. 2:9). These are not works said of the Holy Spirit (cf. Hawthorne and Martin, 1993: 407).

To assert that *pneuma* in 2 Corinthians 3:17-18 (and Eph. 4:4) is the Holy Spirit ignores Paul's own theology (Paul constantly distinguishes the Holy Spirit from Jesus), the surrounding context, and Paul's pressing connection with the Old Testament concept of the Spirit in Exodus 34. John 4:24; Romans 8:9-11; 2 Corinthians 3:17-18; and Philippians 1:19 are passages that Oneness teachers mishandle to avoid the biblical truth that Jesus Christ is not the Holy Spirit.

**Ephesians 4:4-6:** "There is one body and one Spirit, just as also you were called in one hope of your calling; one Lord, one faith, one baptism, one God and Father of all, who is over all and through all and in all." As with other passages that read, "one God" and/or "one Father" (e.g., Mal. 2:10; 1 Cor. 8:6), the Oneness unitarian assumption governs how they are to be interpreted. Here, as with John 4:24, the terms "one" and "Spirit" are equivocated and thus a Oneness meaning is posited: "Spirit" equals "Holy Spirit" and "one" equals unipersonal. Therefore, according to Oneness reasoning (Bernard, 1983: 128), the "one" describes the unipersonal God (Jesus), and the terms "Spirit," "Lord" and "God/Father" are descriptions of Jesus' three modes or manifestations.

At the outset, Ephesians 4:4 does not specifically indicate that "one Spirit" is the Person of the "Holy Spirit." Since *Pneuma* here is not preceded by the adjective *hagios* (*hen sōma kai hen pneuma*), any intended reference to the Holy Spirit must be demonstrated contextually. This is not to say that only where *hagios* precedes *pneuma* does *pneuma* denote the Holy Spirit. For there are places in Paul's epistles (and other New Testament books) where Paul specifically refers to the Holy Spirit as *pneuma*, and lacks the adjective *hagios* (e.g., 1 Cor. 12:13; 1 Tim. 4:1; etc.). At these places, however, there is a clear contextual justification to conclude as much. Some see the Holy Spirit here in Ephesians 4:6, but within a Trinitarian context, for Robertson (1931: 4:535) says: "One God and Father of all ... Not a separate God for each nation or religion. One God for all men. See here the Trinity again (Father, Jesus, Holy Spirit)."

Even so, there is no contextual reason to interpret the passages as Oneness teachers do, assuming what they have not proved. However, even if Ephesians 4:4 were pertaining specifically to the Holy Spirit, which is possible, the passage would actually support the doctrine of Trinity, presenting the essential unity of the three Persons: "There is ...

one Spirit ... one Lord ... one God (vv. 4-6). Either way, the verse is definitely not teaching Modalism.

That God is one Being (one Spirit) and three separate Spirits is consistent with the doctrine of the Trinity. To connect these passages to 2 Corinthians 3:17-18 (as Oneness teachers do; cf. Bernard, 1983: 16, 128; Magee, 1988: 16) ignores the fact that Ephesians 4:4 specifically speaks of “one Spirit,” and 2 Corinthians (“the Lord is the Spirit”) may be, as indicated above, speaking of the fundamental nature or essence of God. Oneness believers may attempt to turn these passages into modalistic proof-texts, but the Oneness dilemma still remains: there is no place in the New Testament that states explicitly that Jesus *is* the Holy Spirit.

### 3.4.1.1 Same Attributes Argument

Since Scripture presents the full deity of the Holy Spirit, one would expect to find references to the Holy Spirit as having the same attributes as God the Father. The biblical evidence of the full deity of the Holy Spirit is extensive:

1. ***Scripture presents the Holy Spirit as “God”*** (cf. Acts 5:3-4). In addition, Scripture presents the Holy Spirit as *kurios*, “Lord” in a *religious context* (cf. 2 Thess. 3:5).
2. ***The New Testament authors cite Old Testament passages referring to Yahweh and apply them to the Holy Spirit*** (cf. Acts 5:9; 28:25-27, Heb. 3:7; 10:15). This is also true of the Son. For example, compare Psalm 102:25-27 with Hebrews 1:10-12; Isaiah 6:1-10 with John 12:39-41; Isaiah 8:12-13 with 1 Peter 3:14-15; Isaiah 45:23 with Philippians 2:10-11; Joel 2:32 with Romans 10:13.
3. ***The Holy Spirit possesses the same attributes as God.*** For example, the Holy Spirit is presented as eternal (cf. Heb. 9:14); omnipresent (cf. Ps. 139:7); omniscient (cf. 1 Cor. 2:10-11); omnipotent (cf. Luke 1:35); and Creator (cf. Gen. 1:2; Job 33:4; Ps. 104:30).
4. ***The Holy Spirit accomplishes works that are exclusively divine.*** He is the very Agent of Mary’s pregnancy: “She was

found to be with child *by the* [*ek* + genitive, lit., “from the source/means/agency of”] the Holy Spirit” (Matt. 1:18; emphasis added). He regenerates the spiritually dead person (cf. John 3:5; Titus 3:5). He dwells in the believer (cf. 1 Cor. 3:16). He distributes spiritual gifts according to His own will (cf. 1 Cor. 12:11). He seals the believer for redemption (cf. Eph. 1:13). He works sanctification in the believer’s life (cf. 2 Thess. 2:13), etc. Only because He is God, omnipotent, omniscient and omnipresent, is He able to accomplish these acts.

**5. *The Holy Spirit is worshiped as God.*** In Matthew 28:19, Jesus commands His disciples to baptize new converts into the Name (i.e., “authority”) of the triune God. Water baptism is an act of *spiritual worship* to God, namely, to the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit. It signifies a *unification* or *identification* with the triune God and the one baptized, as illustrated in section 3.5.1.5 below. The Holy Spirit is truly God—coequal, coeternal and coexistent *with* (distinct from) the Father and the Son (cf. Matt. 28:19; 2 Cor. 13:14; Eph. 2:18; Titus 3:5-7). As God, He receives worship and honor *in the same sense* as that of the Father and the Son. For *only* in a Trinitarian context is the Person and deity of the Holy Spirit biblically tenable. Trinitarianism biblically maintains that all three Persons share the nature of the one true God and therefore all three Persons possess the very attributes of God.

The “same attribute” argument, however, is used by Oneness teachers (e.g., Paterson, 1966: 22), but in a different sense. Oneness teachers reason that because Scripture teaches that both Jesus and the Holy Spirit (and the Father) possess and have accomplished and/or completed the same works (e.g., creation, resurrection of Jesus, salvation, dwelling with the believer, empowering the church, etc.), Jesus, as God, must be the Holy Spirit (and Father, as to His divine nature).

Specifically, Oneness teachers (e.g., Paterson, 1966: 22) point to biblical passages where Jesus makes intercession for His people (e.g., Heb. 4:15; 7:25) and passages where the Spirit likewise makes intercession for the people of God (e.g., Rom. 8:26). In the case of Matthew 28:20, Jesus exhorts His followers that He will abide with

them forever, and yet the same is true with the Holy Spirit, according to John 14:26. There are many more examples. However, the “same attribute” argument put forward by Oneness advocates only demonstrates their theological presupposition that molds and shapes Oneness theology, namely, unitarianism/unipersonalism.

In other words, if Jesus (or the Father) and the Holy Spirit share the same attributes, they must be the same Person. This, of course, is to be expected. If one starts with the assumption of unipersonalism, then any attributes possessed by both Jesus and the Holy Spirit (and the Father) are attributes possessed by a unipersonal deity, Jesus, in either the Father or the Holy Spirit mode. Oneness advocates use this same kind of erroneous argument in their effort to identify Jesus as the Father as well. Such reasoning has no merit. Because Jesus and the Holy Spirit do in fact share equivalent attributes, it does not follow that they are the same Person. The three Persons in the Trinity indivisibly and inseparably share the nature of the one Being; what is said of one Person can be said of all, which is entirely harmonious with the doctrine of the Trinity. In other words, as God, any one of the three Persons can accomplish the same things.

Thus, one or all of the three Persons can claim to be the “Alpha and Omega,” “Yahweh,” or the “one true God.” The biblical doctrine of the Trinity asserts one Being, not one Person or three separate Gods, but three distinct Persons or Selves.

There is no place in Scripture which indicates that the *works of God* are limited to only the Father, or only the Son, or only the Holy Spirit. The works of God are the works that all three Persons in the Trinity accomplish. These works include the specific functions accomplished by designated Persons in the Godhead, which are aspects of the *economic* Trinity.

### **3.4.2 The Biblical Teaching: Jesus is not the Holy Spirit**

Scripture plainly presents the unipersonality of the Holy Spirit and thus the Spirit’s personal distinction from Jesus. One cannot accept this premise, however, if one starts with an *a priori* theological assumption that is adventitious to an exegetical examination of Scripture. Contrary to the faulty hermeneutical method employed by Oneness teachers, to understand correctly the interpretation of any biblical text, one must attain the biblical authors’ intention. Bearing that in mind, we shall

focus on some biblical key points that exegetically establish the Holy Spirit as a divine Person existing distinct from Jesus.

### 3.4.2.1 The Holy Spirit is Distinct

On its own merit, Scripture indicates that the Holy Spirit is personally distinct *from* the Father and the Son, Jesus Christ. In fact, “the Holy Spirit,” as Boyd (1992: 117) observes, “is distinctly referred to over two hundred times in the New Testament!” Thus, throughout the New Testament, Scripture speaks of the Holy Spirit and Jesus as distinct Persons over two hundred times. Never once does Scripture call Jesus the “Holy Spirit.” In passages such as 2 Corinthians 13:14, the Holy Spirit is grammatically distinguished from the Father and Jesus. The Greek reads: *Hē charis tou kuriou Iēsou Christou kai hē agapē tou theou kai hē koinōnia tou hagiou pneumatōs meta pantōn humōn*, literally, “The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ and the love of the God and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit with all of you.” According to the rules of Greek grammar, when the Greek conjunction (i.e., the copulative *kai*) is inserted between nouns of the same case and each of those nouns are preceded by the article (*ho*) each noun denotes “a different person, thing, or quality from the preceding noun” (Sharp, 1803: 14-19; cf. Beisner, 1998: 36, 46). Within the particular limitations of the rule, there exist no exceptions.<sup>8</sup>

---

<sup>8</sup> The validity of the six grammatical rules discovered by Sharp (1803) are limited within the specifications of the rule itself. For example, according to Sharp (cf. 1803: 3-7), TSKS constructions (i.e., rule #1) that involve plurals and/or proper nouns, etc., do not properly fall under the category of rule #1. In terms of Sharp’s rule #6 (i.e., TSKTS constructions), Oneness advocates may point to John 20:28 in order to nullify the rule. In other words, John 20:28 and 2 Corinthians 13:14 and Matthew 28:19 contain TSKTS constructions, thus falling under rule #6. On one side, Trinitarians would happily point out to Oneness believers that the TSKTS construction contained in 2 Corinthians 13:14 and Matthew 28:19 denote three distinct Persons according to the rules of Greek grammar. On the other side, however, Trinitarians would point out that John 20:28 is referring to only one Person, Jesus Christ. Thus, Oneness advocates would assert the inconsistency of the rule as applied to 2 Corinthians 13:14 and Matthew 28:19. In response, first, within the specifications of the rule itself, as stated by Sharp (1803: 14-19), TSKTS constructions do in fact distinguish between things or persons as in the case of 2 Corinthians 13:14 and Matthew 28:19. Second, exceptions to rule #6 *are those to which nouns refer to the same person*. However, “The context must explain or point out plainly the persons to whom the two nouns relate” (Sharp, 1803: 15). In the case of John 20:28, Sharp (1803: 16) stated: “The context clearly

Therefore, in 2 Corinthians 13:14, “*the Lord Jesus Christ and ... the God and ... the Holy Spirit*” (emphasis added) are clearly distinguished from each other as distinct Persons. There are many places in the Bible (in the same verse or context) where this grammatical construction is found differentiating either all three Persons in the Trinity or Jesus from the Father (e.g., Matt. 28:19, as discussed below; Col. 2:2; 1 Thess. 3:11; 1 John 1:3; 2:22-23; 2 John 1:3; Rev. 5:13; etc.). To revisit this point of evidence, which clearly demonstrates a personal distinction between Jesus and the Holy Spirit, Jesus uses *first person* personal pronouns and verb references to refer to Himself and *third person* personal pronouns and verb references to refer to the Holy Spirit:

“But the Helper, the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in *My* [*mou*, first person] name, *He* [*ekeinos*, third person, i.e., indirect reference], will teach you all things, and bring to your remembrance all that *I* [*egō*, first person] have said to you” (John 14:26; cf. also 14:16; 16:13-14).

### 3.4.2.2 The Holy Spirit is a Person

Oneness theology depersonalizes the Holy Spirit. The Oneness idea of the Holy Spirit bears many similarities to the definition offered by Jehovah’s Witnesses: an impersonal active force likened to electricity (cf. Watchtower, 1989a: 380-81). Bernard (1983: 128) provides his understanding of the Oneness idea of a non-personal Holy Spirit:

When we speak of the Holy Spirit, we are reminding ourselves of God’s invisible work among men and of His ability to anoint, baptize, fill, and indwell human lives. The term [Holy Spirit] speaks of God *in activity*: “And the Spirit of God moved upon the face of the waters” (Genesis 1:2) (emphasis added).

---

expresses to whom words were addressed by Thomas.” The context of John 20:28, unlike 2 Corinthians 13:14 and Matthew 28:19, clearly shows that Thomas was directly *applying/addressing* both nouns (“Lord” and “God”) to the one Person, Jesus Christ: *Apekrithē Thōmas kai eipen autō*, literally, “Answered Thomas and said to Him” (note the dative pronoun of address, *autō*, “to Him”). Therefore, when no such *direct address* clause occurs within a context to whom the nouns clearly refer to a single person, the nouns refer either different or distinct things or persons in TSKTS constructions as with 2 Corinthians 13:14 and Matthew 28:19, clearly refuting the Oneness position.

Consider the following:

**1. *Personal pronouns applied to the Holy Spirit.***

Antithetical to the modalistic understanding is the way in which Scripture plainly speaks of the Holy Spirit as a *personal* Self. Indeed, as just presented, Jesus Himself uses personal pronouns to refer to the Holy Spirit, demonstrating very clearly His view of the Spirit as a self-aware Person. In passages such as John 14:26, the masculine demonstrative pronoun *ekeinos* is used in contextual reference to the Holy Spirit who is said to be the *paraklētos*. However, the grammatical referent is not the neuter *pneuma*, but rather the masculine *paraklētos*. Thus, the pronoun is naturally translated as “He.”

In Greek, pronouns generally match their referents in person and gender (Tsoukalas, 1999: 218). However, in John 16:13-14, this “general” rule is not followed. As some would point out (*ibid.*), Jesus notably emphasizes the Spirit’s personhood by the use of the *masculine* personal pronoun *ekeinos* (and the reflexive masculine personal pronoun *heautou*, lit., “He Himself”) to denote specifically the *neuter* noun *pneuma*, “Spirit”:

“But when *He* [*ekeinos* - masculine], the *Spirit* [*pneuma* - neuter] of truth, comes, He will guide you into all the truth; He will not speak on *His own initiative* [*heautou*, masculine], but whatever He hears, He will speak; and He will disclose to you what is to come. *He* [*ekeinos* - masculine] will glorify Me, for He will take of Mine and will disclose it to you” (emphasis added).

Notice here that the *masculine* pronoun *ekeinos* does not match the *neuter* noun *pneuma*. If this general (but not absolute) rule were followed, the pronoun would have been the neuter *ekeino* agreeing with the corresponding neuter noun *pneuma*. Thus, Jesus may have purposely emphasized the Spirit’s personhood by using masculine pronouns, which disagree grammatically with their referent, *pneuma*.

**2. *The Holy Spirit coherently and intelligently communicates.***

Scripture is replete with references to the Holy Spirit communicating, hence, personally interacting with *other persons* (e.g., Acts 8:29; 13:2; 28:25, 26; Heb. 3:7-11; 10:15-17). Interestingly, the Jehovah's Witnesses (Watchtower, 1973: 27), who also deny the deity and personhood of the Spirit, define "person" as one with the ability to communicate with others. This explains their reason for identifying Satan as a person and not an impersonal entity. Only cognizant persons can exercise intelligent communication. In Acts 10:19-20, not only does the Holy Spirit personally communicate (i.e., issues commands) to Peter, but He even refers to Himself as *egō*: "While Peter was reflecting on the vision, the Spirit said to him, "Behold, the three men are looking for you. But get up, go down stairs and accompany them without misgivings, for *I [egō]* have sent them *Myself*" (emphasis added).

The same is true in Acts 13:2, where the Holy Spirit personally communicates using first person personal references (pronoun/verb) to refer to Himself: "While they were ministering to the Lord and fasting, the Holy Spirit said, "Set apart for *Me [moi]* Barnabas, and Saul for the work to which *I have called [prospeklēmai]* them" (emphasis added).

### **3. *The Holy Spirit possesses personal attributes.***

Along with personal communication, the Holy Spirit possesses emotions and personal attributes, which only self-aware persons or selves can experience:

- He can be blasphemed (cf. Mark 3:29, 30)
- He can be lied to (cf. Acts 5:3)
- He intercedes or prays on the behalf of the believer (cf. Rom. 8:26)
- He issues commands (cf. Acts 6:6; 10:19-20; 13:2)
- He is intelligent in that He investigates and searches (cf. 1 Cor. 2:10-11; Rom. 8:27)
- He has a will (cf. 1 Cor. 12:9-11)
- He can be grieved (cf. Isa. 63:10; Eph. 4:30)
- He testifies (cf. Neh. 9:30; John 15:26; Heb. 10:15) and teaches (cf. John 14:26)
- He loves and has fellowship with believers (cf. Rom. 15:30; 2 Cor. 13:14; as further emphasized below)

By way of biblical definition, then, the Holy Spirit is a distinct Person from Jesus Christ. He is God, having the same attributes as God. He possesses all the qualities and attributes that self-aware persons inherently have. The biblical presentation of the Holy Spirit is in opposition to the Oneness description. Bernard (cf. 1983: 128) sees the Holy Spirit as merely “God in activity.” Passages such as Acts 10:19-20 and 13:2 clearly indicate that the Holy Spirit identifies Himself as an *egō*, a self-aware Person. The theological commitment to unipersonalism prevents the Oneness advocate from envisaging the Holy Spirit as a distinct Person. The Holy Spirit is a relational distinct Person in contrast to the modalistic idea of the Holy Spirit as a unipersonal temporary mode of Jesus. In spite of the biblical substantiation of the personhood of the Holy Spirit, the UPCI (2008c) asks, “Does the Bible call the Holy Ghost a second or third person in the Godhead?” to which they sharply respond: “No. The Holy Ghost is the one Spirit of God, the one God Himself at work in our lives. John 4:24; 1 Corinthians 3:16-17; 6:19; 12:13.”

Oneness Christology maintains the idea that Jesus is Father, Son and Holy Spirit, differing only in function, not in Person. When reading the Gospels, Oneness believers must determine if Jesus is speaking as the Father, or Son, or as the Holy Spirit. In contrast to this unnatural way of reading the text, Jesus speaks very plainly regarding His personal distinction from the Holy Spirit.

#### ***4. The Holy Spirit gives, loves and continually has fellowship with believers.***

The Apostle Paul was certainly bold and clear when it came to exhorting the people of God with grand Trinitarian benedictions. Turning again to 2 Corinthians 13:14, notice how Paul comforts the saints in Corinth with these words: “The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, and the love of God, and the *fellowship [koinōnia]* of the *Holy Spirit* be with you all” (emphasis added).

Again, only self-aware persons can experience and give true fellowship. This same *koinōnia* believers have with the Father and the Son: “We proclaim to you also, so that you too may have *fellowship [koinōnia]* with us; and indeed our *fellowship* is with the Father and with His Son Jesus Christ” (1 John 1:3; emphasis added). As a distinct emotional Person, the Holy Spirit *gives* love. Thus, the Apostle Paul provides absolute solace with these encouraging words

to the Christians in Rome: “Now I urge you, brethren, by our Lord Jesus Christ and *by [dia]* the love of the Spirit, to strive together with me in your prayers to God for me” (Romans 15:30; emphasis added). Observe also here how Paul again grammatically distinguishes the three Persons: “*Our Lord [tou kuriou]* Jesus Christ,” and *[kai]* “*the Spirit*” [*tou pneumatos*], and “God” [*pros ton theon*, lit., “to God”]. First, as discussed above (cf. 3.4.2.1), the repeated article *tou* and the insertion of *kai* between *tou kuriou* and *tou pneumatos* denotes a clear distinction between Jesus and the Holy Spirit. Second, note that the love *comes by/from (dia)* the Holy Spirit. Love is an act accomplished solely by self-aware persons, not natures, offices, modes, or manifestations. True emotion expresses true personhood.

### 3.4.3 The Final Analysis: Jesus is not the Holy Spirit

The Oneness assertion that Jesus is the Holy Spirit Himself, as to His divine nature, in which no personal differentiation exists, does not take into account the profuse amount of ink that the biblical authors spent distinguishing Jesus from the Holy Spirit *in the same context* (esp. John chaps. 14-16). In Luke 10:21-22, Luke records a very intimate and beautiful prayer of Jesus Christ addressed to the Father in which Jesus rejoices in the Holy Spirit:

At that very time He rejoiced greatly in the Holy Spirit, and said, “I praise You, O Father, Lord of heaven and earth, that You have hidden these things from the wise and intelligent and have revealed them to infants. Yes, Father, for this way was well-pleasing in Your sight. All things have been handed over to Me by My Father, and no one knows who the Son is except the Father, and who the Father is except the Son, and anyone to whom the Son wills to reveal Him” (Luke 10:21-22).

In the same decidedly Trinitarian context, the Apostle Paul speaks of salvation accomplished by means of the triune God:

He saved us, not on the basis of deeds which we have done in righteousness, but according to His mercy, by the washing of regeneration and renewing by the Holy Spirit, whom He

poured out upon us richly through Jesus Christ our Savior, so that being justified by His grace we would be made heirs according to the hope of eternal life (Titus 3:5-7).

This examination has exegetically demonstrated, yet again, the ability of the Scriptures to distinguish clearly between Jesus and the Holy Spirit. When one allows the plain reading of the text to govern the exegesis, one sees clearly the lack of substance in the Oneness claim. Biblically seen, the Holy Spirit is a divine Person *distinct* from Jesus Christ in the Trinity.

### **3.5 BAPTISMAL FORMULA - A CASE STUDY**

As mentioned, the largest of the Oneness churches is the UPCI. While there is diversity of belief on many minor issues, all Oneness churches share one fundamental common denominator: an *a priori* commitment to unipersonalism, and consequently an utter rejection of the doctrine of the Trinity. Among the many minor differences between Oneness churches are the issues of water baptism and salvation. Observably though, some Oneness churches do not hold to the notion that water baptism is a necessity for salvation. Others, including the UPCI, take a firm and very unalterable stand on baptismal regeneration, which is the view that water baptism is *necessary* for regeneration (salvation). Bernard (1984: 133) affirms that water “baptism has become a means of salvation.” The “official” UPCI website (2008b) under the title “Salvation” openly asserts that water baptism is essential for salvation:

The New Testament experience of salvation consists of repentance from sin, water baptism in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ for the remission of sins, and the baptism of the Holy Ghost, after which the Christian is to live a godly life (Acts 2:36-41) ... Water baptism is an essential part of New Testament salvation and not merely a symbolic ritual. It is part of entering into the kingdom of God (God’s church, the bride of Christ), and therefore, it is not merely a part of local church membership. (See John 3:5; Galatians 3:27).

In terms of the issue of “speaking in tongues” (i.e., the perpetuity of spiritual gifts), there is an assortment of dissimilar views among Oneness churches. In this section, however, we will discuss primarily

the particular aspect of the UPCI doctrine of water baptism (viz., baptismal regeneration). Also discussed will be the UPCI inflexible assertion that water baptism (by immersion) employing the so-called “apostolic” verbal formula (“in the name of Jesus”) is the only valid and acceptable means of baptism—one’s salvation utterly depends on it (cf. Bernard, 1983: 138; Boyd, 1992: 132; UPCI, 2008b).

Aside from water baptism “in the name of Jesus” only, the UPCI system of salvation includes faith, repentance and the “baptism of the Holy Ghost” with the absolute evidence, as they assert (cf. Paterson 1953: 12, 27; Boyd, 1992: 132; Beisner, 1998: 52-54; UPCI, 2008b), of speaking in other tongues. Hyper-meticulous is the God of the UPCI who demands that if one is not water baptized “in the name of Jesus” only, their faith, repentance and sincerity are of no value (cf. UPCI, 2008b). However, not all Oneness churches hold to the same exact soteriological requirements. There are many UPCI breakaway churches, which do not hold to the same dogma as that of the UPCI in terms of the necessity of speaking in tongues and water baptism with an exact verbal formulation (e.g., the Pentecostal Church, Inc. [PCI]).

The UPCI system of salvation is, indeed, a *salvation based on a works* system. The official UPCI view of salvation is entirely opposed to the biblical doctrine of salvation (being monergistic). Thus, it becomes clear that the UPCI’s system of salvation has no room for the biblical doctrine of justification through *faith alone*. The UPCI sees (2008b) faith *plus* the “work” of water baptism accompanied by the unyielding Jesus’ name baptismal formula as a necessary requirement for salvation, teaching that the “New Testament experience of salvation consists of repentance from sin, water baptism in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ for the remission of sins, and the baptism of the Holy Ghost” (emphasis added).

The UPCI (2008b) in addition teaches that “speaking in tongues” is the *evidence* that one has received the Holy Spirit, thus, salvation. Of course, this severely opposes Paul’s definitive theology of justification, which is *apart* from any works (including the sinner’s faith-act), which is exegetically seen in great passages such as Romans 4:4-8; 5:1; 8:1, 28-30; Ephesians 2:8; Philippians 1:29; 2 Thessalonians 2:13; 2 Timothy 1:9; Titus 3:5-7; etc. Indeed, justification through the lone instrument of faith is clearly seen throughout the entire New Testament (e.g., Luke 10:22; John 1:13; 5:21, 24; 6:37-40, 47; 10:28; Acts 10:43; 13:48; 1 Cor. 1:30; 1 Pet. 1:1-2; 1 John 5:12; etc.).

As many former UPCI members and pastors (e.g., Boyd, 1993) have observed, there is great fear within the UPCI Church, which serves a legalistic deity that is watching and judging every move of its creatures. The many that have left, admittedly, experienced fear as a result of a bound conscience that believes they have really left God. This kind of sociological spiritual abuse is commonplace in many non-Christian cults (Hutchinson, 1994: 182-183). I have personally helped those who, in tears, have told me of the traumatic fear they experienced as members of the UPCI. It is commonplace to see members leave such religious systems—systems that are based on precise formulas and/or that require works so as to merit a “right-standing” before God, systems that are spiritually and intellectually bankrupt.

The antithesis of the UPCI works/faith system of justification is the firmness of the biblical doctrine of justification through faith alone, by God’s grace alone, seen throughout the pages of Scripture. Thus, baptismal regeneration as taught by the UPCI (cf. Paterson, 1953: 12, 27; Vouga, 1967: 18; Bernard, 1984: 132-33; UPCI, 2008b) radically contradicts the biblical presentation of justification. It diminishes and thus rejects the sufficiency of the cross-work of Jesus Christ, asserting that the ordinance of water baptism contributes to the work of the Son. Hence, it is not the sole work of Christ that saves, in UPCI thinking, but rather “another” work is required—water baptism accompanied by the specific formula, “in the name of Jesus.”

### **3.5.1 Baptism: “In the Name of Jesus” Only**

Although the UPCI rejects the concept of “infant baptism,” seeing it as heresy, the UPCI teaches that water baptism “in the name of Jesus” is, in fact, a necessary condition to receive salvation (Clanton *et al* 1984: 79; Bernard, 1984: 132-33; UPCI, 2008b). As UPCI writer Oscar Vouga (1967: 18) explains: “There is remission of sins in no other name but the name of Jesus (Acts 4:12), therefore, baptism cannot possibly signify that the believer receives remission of sins, unless the “name of Jesus” is used as the baptismal formula. Of all the distinct Oneness churches, it is the UPCI that is most dogmatic and absolutely inflexible regarding their view of baptizing with the “correct” formula and, of course, baptismal regeneration. Their official position (UPCI, 2008b) is quite clear:

The church is “built upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Jesus Christ himself being the chief corner stone” (Ephesians 2:20). The apostles not only preached baptism in Jesus’ name, but they practiced it. Nowhere can we find that they baptized using the words “in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost.” Instead, we find them baptizing in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ. In baptizing in Jesus’ name, they fulfilled the command of the Lord in Matthew 28:19. Paul said, “But though we, or an angel from heaven, preach any other gospel unto you than that which we have preached unto you, let him be accursed” (Galatians 1:8). Let this be a solemn warning to us.

As previously revealed, when the UPCI first emerged in 1913-1916 various Pentecostal leaders (e.g., R. E. McAlister) taught that baptism should be done in the “name of Jesus” only (based largely on Acts 2:38), and hence, not in the Trinitarian formula (Beisner, 1998: 7). The baptismal formula issue was one of the main reasons many broke away from the Trinitarian Pentecostals to Oneness theology early in the twentieth century.

### 3.5.1.1 Bad Hermeneutics

In Chapter 2 (2.5), we saw the effects and resulting condition when a faulty hermeneutic is employed upon the biblical text. At bottom, Oneness theology is the result of the lack of a proper hermeneutical method and a defective exegetical approach. In regard to the UPCI’s “in the name of Jesus” assertion, its principal theological argument rests solely on a few selected passages, particularly from Acts and, of course, Matthew 28:19. Unmistakably, the UPCI’s “Jesus’ name only” doctrine was mainly fashioned out of Luke’s historical narrative in the book of Acts.

However, before turning to the exegesis of utilized passages in Acts, one must take into account that Luke wrote Acts as a *historical narrative* to someone named Theophilus (cf. Acts 1:1). Hence, his overall purpose was not to teach a course in systematic theology, but rather provide a historic account of the first thirty years or so of the early church. A proper interpretation of Acts will be unattainable if one does not consider this point. In biblical hermeneutics, there is a very important rule known as the *priority of didactic*. The rule states that the

didactic or teaching portions of Scripture are to interpret all historical narratives (Crampton, 1986: 27). Because of an enormous ignorance in the area of biblical hermeneutics, whole doctrines have been wrongly developed from narrative portions of Scripture. Note the following examples:

- The first two chapters of Acts are the sole reason why many charismatic churches see the so-called baptism of the Holy Spirit as a second infilling, which normally results in speaking in tongues.
- The long ending of Mark has caused more than a few churches to literally drink poison and handle snakes, as well as promote the perpetuity of speaking in tongues for all believers.
- Various Old Testament passages, which are narrative in nature, are used by pastors to teach their hearers the necessity of “tithing” and other Old Testament theocratic activities for Christians today, in spite of the fact that these Old Testament directives were specifically given to the Israelites, not to the not yet established New Testament church.

Reformed theologian W. Gary Crampton (1986: 27), comments on this significant hermeneutical rule:

Didactic passages are those that are specifically meant to teach theological truth. For example, the gospels teach us about the life of Christ and the New Testament epistles further interpret for us the significance of the things Christ did and taught. They are didactic in nature. On the other hand, the book of Acts is a history of the New Testament church. The main purpose of Acts is not to teach doctrinal truth, but rather to give a brief history of the workings of the apostles and the first century church.

This does not mean that the book of Acts does not provide any teachings for the Christian church. It means that we are to analyze the narratives of Acts in light of the doctrinal portions of the New Testament. Building biblical doctrines on historical narrative sections of the Bible can lead to flawed interpretations. Only by violating this hermeneutical rule can the UPCI establish their “in the name of Jesus” dogma from Acts—they

confuse *description* (narrative) with *prescription* (the epistles and other teaching portions of Scripture).

### 3.5.1.2 The Contextual and Historical Significance of the *Onoma*, “Name”

Understanding the priority of didactic will reveal the fatal flaws in the UPCI exegesis regarding their idea of the meaning of passages that use the phrase “in the name of Jesus.” As mentioned, when one comes to Scripture, the foremost objective should be to ascertain the authors’ intended meaning. In 2 Timothy 2:15, Paul inculcates pastors to “Be diligent to present yourself approved to God as a workman who does not need to be ashamed, accurately handling the Word of truth.” The phrase “accurately handling” is from the Greek term, *orthotomeō*, which literally means, “cutting straight” (Mayhue, 1986: 74; Bauer, 2000: 722). In early Greek literature, the term describes the task of a guide, whose goal was to cut a straight path. It also describes the priest cutting the sacrificial animals according to divine instructions. In all cases, it carries the idea of precision. As previously underscored in Chapter 2 (2.5), in order to establish an accurate interpretation of any biblical passage one must meticulously consider and thus analyze the grammar, lexical meaning of words, historical setting, and context.

In Scripture, the phrase “in the name of” is certainly not uncommon. Both Jesus and others use the phrase with varied meanings and varied emphases. To prove the idea that the only valid water baptism is one done “in the name of Jesus,” the UPCI points to times where the phrase appears with water baptism (e.g., Acts 2:38; 8:16; 10:48; etc.). On the face of it, passages such as Acts 2:38 seem to support the UPCI’s notion. However, to properly deal with the UPCI’s hallmark “proof-texts,” it is important first to be cognizant of the Jewish contextual meaning of the phrase “in the name of” (Heb. *shem*, Gk. *eis to onoma*).

This certainly plays a major role in understanding the import of the phrase within the cultural context of the day. Along with a grammatical and syntactical analysis of the biblical text, there must be an evaluation of the historical-cultural context/setting in order to achieve an exegetically correct interpretation. In other words, in the places where the phrase “in the name of” occurs, the interpretation must be consistent within a first-century Jewish context.

To begin with, the phrase “in the name of” (*eis to onoma*)<sup>9</sup> has various meanings depending on the context. When Jesus and others employ the phrase (as indicated above in our discussion of John 5:43), it has the denotative meaning, “in/by the authority of.” In his *Grammar*, Robertson (1934: 740) cites Matthew 28:19 as an example where *onoma* carries the meaning of “in the authority of.” Likewise, Bietenhard sees the formula “in the name of Jesus” as another way of saying, “according to His will and instruction” (1976, 2:654). Therefore, the “name” of Jesus is the manifestation of His authority as the only true Lord (Spence and Exell, 1962: 155); it also denotes “the authority of the person” (Moulton and Milligan, 1982:451). This idea becomes apparent at the arrest of Peter and John recorded in Acts 4:

On the next day, their rulers and elders and scribes were gathered together in Jerusalem, and Annas the high priest was there, and Caiaphas and John and Alexander, and all who were of high-priestly descent. When they had placed them in the center, they began to inquire, “*By what power, or in what name, [onoma] have you done this?*” (Acts 4:5-7; emphasis added; also cf. Vine, 1966: 100).

Concerning the phrase “in My name” in Matthew 18:20 (“For when two or three have gathered together in My name [*eis to emon onoma*], I am there in their midst”), Ellison (1986: 1140) explains:

The rendering ‘unto my name’ (J. N. Darby) is more literal but hardly intelligible, *eis to onoma* in the papyri means ‘to the account of,’ ‘into the possession of,’ i.e., they meet as the conscious possession of Jesus ... it offers no support to those who think that by using a verbal formula they have become God’s favorites.

### 3.5.1.3 Acts and the “Name of Jesus”

The hermeneutical error of confusing *narrative* with *didactic* or teaching portions of Scripture inevitably leads to a distorted exegesis. In the book of Acts, Luke was simply providing an accurate account of the events of the first thirty years or so of the church to a man named

---

<sup>9</sup> Or any of its prepositional variants: “in/by/on/upon/ the name of.”

Theophilus. Thus, Luke tells *what happened* (narration), not *how it ought to happen* (didactic) in the early church.

Because of this hermeneutical *faux pas*, UPCI teachers (e.g., Paterson, 1953: 12, 27; Bernard, 1984: 132) take and dissect the book of Acts thoroughly disregarding the context and grammar, deducing that baptism should only be done using the verbal formula, “in the name of Jesus” in order to achieve salvation. The UPCI’s (2008b) foundational assertion of following the “apostolic doctrine” exposes two major hermeneutical flaws: 1) it neglects the Semitic concept and significance of what the expression “in the name of” meant to a first-century audience as addressed above, and 2) it confuses narrative with didactic portions of Scripture.

Because there are many places in Scripture where the term “baptism/baptize” is mentioned, lacking the so-called “Jesus’ name” formula (e.g., Rom. 6:3-4; Gal. 3:27; Col. 2:10-12), the UPCI faces even more difficulties in its assertion since the UPCI (2008b) sees the terms “baptism,” “baptize,” etc. as referring exclusively to water baptism.

#### **3.5.1.4 UPCI Standard Proof-Texts and Arguments**

Although there exist other passages that contain the phrase “in the name of Jesus” (e.g., Acts 8:16; 10:48), the UPCI (2008b) Oneness advocates use Matthew 28:19 and Acts 2:38 as their chief witnesses in support of their position. Matthew 28:19: “Go therefore and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit.” Verifiably, both the early church (as outlined below) as well as more recent scholarship (see Reymond, 1998: 225-26) has benefited greatly from Matthew 28:19 in substantiating the doctrine of the Trinity. Regardless of this, the UPCI (along with *all* other Oneness groups) actually use it to challenge the plain and historic understanding of the passage. The UPCI and Oneness groups maintain that Jesus was in reality teaching that the three names, “Father,” “Son” and “Holy Spirit” are mere titles (or modes) of Himself, the unipersonal deity (cf. Bernard 1983: 136; UPCI, 2008b).

The basic Oneness argument (cf. Paterson, 1953: 12; UPCI, 2008b) centers on the singularity of the term “name” (*onoma*) used in the baptismal command. Hence, Jesus says to baptize in the “name of” and not the “names of.” The direct basis of the Oneness doctrinal assertion is the assumption of unipersonalism. Stated another way, according to

Oneness theology, since the term “name” is singular, the Father, Son and Holy Spirit must represent a single name—the one Person, Jesus. Therefore, it is concluded that baptism should be administered “in the name” of Jesus and not with a Trinitarian formula. However, one cannot derive a modalistic conclusion from a plain reading of this text; one must *read into* this text a modalistic understanding.

**“Name” (singular), not “Names” (plural)?** To get an accurate representation of how the UPCI draws a modalistic conclusion from the passage, Bernard (1983: 136) clarifies:

In this passage, Jesus commanded His disciples to baptize “in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost.” However, this verse of Scripture does not teach that the Father, Son, and Holy Ghost are three separate persons. Rather, it teaches the titles of Father, Son, and Holy Ghost identify one name and therefore one being. The verse expressly says “in the name,” not “in the names.”

At the very start of his exegesis, Bernard clearly starts with his conclusion: God is a unipersonal Being. In fact, all of Bernard’s arguments start with this basic presupposition. Hence, he and other Oneness teachers will always end up with the Jesus of their starting point: a unipersonal deity. Bernard’s assertion is clear: “The verse expressly says ‘in the name,’ not ‘in the names.’” The Oneness interpretation of Matthew 28:19, then, is that the “name” (singular) “Father,” “Son,” and “Holy Ghost” are the offices, roles, or modes that Jesus temporarily assumed. The UPCI (2008b) maintains the position that

Jesus is the name in which the roles of Father, Son, and Holy Ghost are revealed. The angel of the Lord instructed Joseph, “She shall bring forth a son, and thou shalt call his name JESUS: for he shall save his people from their sins” (Matthew 1:21). Jesus said, “I am come in my Father’s name,” and, “The Comforter, which is the Holy Ghost . . . the Father will send in my name” (John 5:43; 14:26). Thus by baptizing in the name of Jesus, we honor the Godhead. “For in him dwelleth all the fullness of the Godhead bodily” (Colossians 2:9).

Such an argument is exegetically unsound. In point of fact, never in church history has any church father interpreted Matthew 28:19 in this way. As mentioned, the canned argument set against the obviously Trinitarian baptismal formula found in Matthew 28:19 centers on the singularity of the word “name” (cf. Bernard, 1983: 136; UPCI, 2008b). However, in refutation, that the singularity of a word necessarily implies absolute solitude is a gratuitous assumption. Genesis 11:4 records the people of Babel saying: “Come let us build for ourselves a city, and a tower whose top will reach into heaven, and let us make for ourselves a *name* [Heb. *shem*, LXX, *onoma*, “name”], otherwise we will be scattered abroad over the face of the whole earth” (emphasis added). Certainly, “name” here applies to a *whole multitude* of people. Although, as noted previously, the UPCI’s method of hermeneutics starts at its prior theological assumption: Jesus is the one unitarian deity behind the masks or manifestations of “Father,” “Son” and “Holy Spirit.” Oneness teachers misapprehend monotheism to mean that God is unipersonal. Again, there is no statement in the Bible that says that God is “one Person,” but rather monotheism indicates that God is one Being. Thus, the three Persons share the nature of the one Being under the *single* name Yahweh.

In Matthew 28:19, Jesus commands the apostles to baptize their converts “in the name of the Father, and the Son, and the Holy Ghost.” It does not say “in the names” (plural), which would teach three separate Beings enumerated, each with merely a distinguishing name. Rather, Christian baptism symbolizes the unification of the new convert *into* (cf. *eis* at 1 Cor. 10:2) the name, that is, the power/authority of the one Triune God, Yahweh. Jesus is very precise in His command, identifying Himself as “Son,” placing Himself *along the same plane of equality* together with the Father and the Holy Spirit signifying the one true God. It is, of course, the Trinity, which He is describing, and that is as much as to say that He announces Himself as one of the persons of the Trinity. This is what Jesus, as reported by the Synoptics, understood Himself to be (Warfield, 1988: 204). In his brilliant expository on the passage, Warfield (1988: 153-54) states:

With stately impressiveness it asserts the unity of the three by combining them all within the bounds of the single Name; and then throws up into emphasis the distinctness of each by introducing them in turn with the repeated article: “In the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost”

(Authorized Version). These three, the Father, and the Son, and the Holy Ghost, each stand in some clear sense over against the others in distinct personality: these three, the Father, and the Son, and the Holy Ghost, all unite in some profound sense in the common participation of the one Name.

In the Old Testament, Yahweh was the name of God. Here Jesus commands that new converts unite under the “*name* of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit.” The ordinance of Christian water baptism (as with the Lord’s Supper) is an act of obedience and worship to God alone. To comprehend fully the import of Jesus’ statement, one must appreciate the significance of the term “name” for the Hebrew mind. In the Old Testament, the term does not merely serve as a designation of the person. Rather, it refers to the essence of the person himself (Reymond, 1998: 226). Therefore, “What Jesus did in this great injunction,” says Warfield (1988: 204), “was to command His followers to name the name of God upon their converts, and to announce the name of God which is to be named on their converts in the threefold enumeration of ‘the Father’ and ‘the Son’ and ‘the Holy Ghost.’”

The three Persons, then, “Father,” “Son,” and “Holy Ghost,” *are* the one God, Yahweh. As well, the use of the plural (*onomata*, “names”) in this text would supply a polytheistic implication (three separate Gods) severely contradicting Jesus’ own monotheistic teachings (cf. Mark 12:29).

There are also grammatical considerations noted by many biblical commentators (e.g., Sharp, 1803: 14-19; Beisner, 1998: 47; Reymond, 1998: 225-226). Notice first that the text does not read: “In the name of the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit.” This reading would grammatically imply what Oneness teachers have been asserting all along. For in this reading, only the “Father” is preceded by the article (*ho*), grammatically negating any distinction of the Persons. Nor does the text read: “In the *names* of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit.” This reading would in fact teach polytheism—three separate Beings. Nor is the preposition *eis* (“in,” or “into”) repeated as in the reading: “*In* the name of the Father and *in* the Son and *in* the Holy Spirit,” which also can be construed as teaching three separate Beings. Rather, the Scripture reads: “In the name of the Father, and the Son, and the Holy Spirit” (*eis to onoma tou patros kai tou hiou kai tou hagiou pneumatos*).

As discussed (3.4.2.1), in this passage the repetition of both the article (*tou*) and conjunction (*kai*) grammatically differentiates the

Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit as three distinct Persons (cf. Sharp, 1803: 14-19): “In the name of the [*tou*] Father, and the [*kai tou*] Son, and the [*kai tou*] Holy Spirit.” The same contextual juxtaposition is found in passages such as Matthew 3:16-17; Luke 10:21-22; 2 Corinthians 13:14 (as cited above); Galatians 4:6; Ephesians 2:18; 1 Thessalonians 1:3-6; 2 Thessalonians 2:13; Titus 3:5-7; 1 Peter 1:2-3; and Jude 1:20-21. This grammatical construction (viz., Sharp’s rule #6) clearly indicates, particularly in Trinitarian contexts where a juxtaposition of all three Persons exists in the same passage, a distinction between the Persons.

**Acts 2:38:** “Repent, and be baptized every one of you, in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins ...” (KJV). Along with Matthew 28:19, UPCI members as well as all Oneness believers redundantly cite this passage. The Oneness theological position is clear: Peter commands hearers to repent and be water baptized “in the name of Jesus” for the remission or forgiveness of sins (justification). Thus, according to the UPCI (2008b), one must repent (and have faith) and be water baptized using the formula “in the name of Jesus” to achieve salvation.

That God requires that one must enunciate a precise formula at baptism in order to receive forgiveness of sins does prompt the question: Which precise formula is the correct apostolic baptismal formula: “on,” “into,” or “in” the name of Jesus? Reducing Luke’s intent to the bare words of the UPCI proof texts outside of the author’s intended meaning creates more problems than the UPCI advocate is prepared to handle.

Consider for a moment what the recorded baptisms in Acts actually say. There are at least three “Jesus’ name” formulas stated in Acts: “*on* [*epi* + dative] the name of Jesus Christ” (2:38); “*into* [*eis* + accusative] the name of the Lord Jesus” (8:16; 19:5); and “*in* [*en* + dative] the name of Jesus Christ” (10:48). If in fact these baptisms recorded in Acts were performed by means of a “verbal” baptismal formula (which will be argued against shortly) and thus mandated to the church, as is supposed, then according to the record, the early Christians did not utilize any “exact” verbal formula by which they baptized.

The UPCI vigorously argues that they exactly follow the “apostolic doctrine.” They insist that the “Jesus’ name” formula is the apostolic formula (cf. Paterson, 1953: 12, 27) in spite of the fact that the apostles did not use (verbal or not) the *same exact* baptismal formula. What is more, in every recorded water baptism in Acts, the apostles did not use the same exact title for Jesus; sometimes it was in the name of

“Jesus Christ” (2:38; 10:48) and at other times it was in the name of the “Lord Jesus” (8:16; 19:5).

Acts 2:38 is also used (along with a few other passages such as John 3:5 and Acts 22:16) to teach baptismal regeneration (i.e., the notion that water baptism is necessary for regeneration/justification). A careful exegetical analysis of Acts 2:38, however, precludes that assertion. The doctrine of baptismal regeneration clearly controverts the entire theology of Luke (e.g., Acts 10:43; 16:30-31) as well as the totality of Scripture (cf. Rom. 4:4-8; 5:1; Phil. 1:29; 2 Tim. 1:9; Titus 3:5-7; 1 Pet. 1:1-2; 1 John 5:12; etc.). Even so, UPCI teachers (e.g., Bernard, 1983: 139) maintain that Acts 2:38 teaches the salvific necessity of water baptism. Admittedly, there is diversity of opinion amongst Christian theologians (as cited below) in the interpretation of this text, which requires some exegetical homework.

Even though there are differences of opinion on the exact meaning of this passage, no recognized New Testament grammarian, biblical theologian/scholar, or commentator has even suggested baptismal regeneration as a tenable interpretation. Noted Greek grammarian J. R. Mantey (1927: 104) offers one acceptable interpretation. He argues that the preposition *eis*, “for,” could be taken in a *causal* sense. In this way, the passage would read: “And Peter said to them, ‘Repent, and be baptized—each one of you—at the name of Jesus Christ because of/for/unto [*eis*] the forgiveness of your sins.’” In other words, the preposition *eis* should be translated “because of,” or “in view of,” not “in order to” or “for the purpose of” forgiveness of sins. Mantey (cf. Wallace, 1996: 370-71) believes that if a causal *eis* were not evident in Acts 2:38, it would violate the concept of salvation by grace. Robertson (1930: 3:35-36) also agrees with Mantey in his analysis of Acts 2:38.

There is also another grammatical aspect that one should consider. There is a shift from *second* person plural to *third* person singular and back to *second* person plural. The verb *metanoēsate* (“repent”) is a *second person plural* and is in the *active* voice. *Baptisthētō*, (“be baptized”) is a *third person singular* and is in the *passive* voice; and the Greek pronoun *humōn* (“your”) is a *second person plural*. Therefore, the grammatical connection is *metanoēsate* (*second person, active plural*) with *humōn* (*second person, plural*); thus, repent “for the remission of *your* sins.” The usual connection of the forgiveness of sins in Luke-Acts is with repentance and not with baptism at all (Polhill, 1992: 117). In fact, Mark 1:4 and Luke 3:3 use the same wording, “for the remission of your sins,” in reference to John’s baptism. John’s

baptism did not save; it was a preparatory baptism of the coming Messiah and a call to repentance (cf. Acts 19:1-5). Wallace (1996: 370-71) suggests an additional and perhaps more likely view where the baptism mentioned here represents both the *spiritual reality* and the *ritual*, which works well within the scope of the context:

It is possible that to a first-century Jewish audience (as well as to Peter), the idea of baptism might incorporate both the spiritual reality and the physical symbol. In other words, when one spoke of baptism, he usually meant both ideas—the reality and the ritual . . . Water baptism is not a cause of salvation, but a picture; and as such it serves both as a public acknowledgment (by those present) and a public confession (by the convert) that one has been Spirit-baptized.

Notwithstanding the different pools of interpretation, which in fact are not opposing views, all are exegetically acceptable, whereas the UPCI baptismal regeneration position violates not only the *soteriology of Acts* (e.g., 10:43), but also the entire *soteriology of the New Testament*:

Knowing that a man is not justified by the works of the Law but through faith in Christ Jesus, even we have believed in Christ Jesus, so that we may be justified by faith in Christ and not by works of the Law; since by the works of the Law no flesh will be justified (Gal. 2:16; cf. 3:1ff).

### 3.5.1.5 Baptism: Unification/Identification

Understanding the relationship of (a) the Semitic significance of the term *onoma*, and (b) the exegetical import of what being baptized into something actually means will certainly supply a coherent perception as to the erroneous assertion of the UPCI. As pointed out above (3.5.1.2), the Jewish contextual meaning of the phrase “in the name of” (Heb. *shem*, Gk. *eis to onoma*) had the denotative meaning, “in/by the authority/power of.” In other words, in the papyri, *eis to onoma*, “in the name” means “to the account of,” or “into the possession of” in that they meet as the conscious possession of Jesus (Ellison, 1986: 1140). Hence, baptism “in the name of Jesus” signifies unification or identification with Him. The concept of baptism in the New Testament is unquestionably unification or identification. This concept is well

exampled in Scripture. In 1 Corinthians 10:2, the Israelites were all “*baptized into Moses*” (emphasis added; see also 1 Cor. 1:13, 15). The Apostle Paul frequently uses the term “baptism” (or the verbal form, *baptizō*) as an expressive picture of unification or identification with Jesus Christ at both His death and His resurrection:

How shall we who died to sin still live in it? Or do you not know that all of us who have been baptized into Christ Jesus have been *baptized into His death*? Therefore we have been *buried with Him* through *baptism into death*, so that as Christ was raised from the dead through the glory of the Father, so we too might walk in newness of life. For if we have *become united with Him* in the likeness of His death, certainly we shall also be in the likeness of His resurrection. (Rom. 6:2-5; emphasis added).

In Galatians 3:26-29, Paul presents a vivid picture of the unification Christians have with Christ, that is, “baptized into,” “clothed with,” and “one in” Him, thus, “Abraham’s descendants, heirs according to promise.”

For you are all sons of God through faith in Christ Jesus. For *all of you who were baptized into Christ* have *clothed yourselves with Christ*. There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither slave nor free man, there is neither male nor female; for *you are all one in Christ Jesus*. And if you *belong to Christ*, then you are Abraham’s descendants, heirs according to promise (Gal. 3:26-29; emphasis added).

In his definitive commentary on Romans, Wuest (1955: 96-97) explains the meaning of baptism mentioned in Romans 6:3-4:

The word is used in the classics of a smith who dips a piece of hot iron in water, tempering it, also of Greek soldiers placing the points of their spears in a bowl of blood. In the LXX (Lev. 4:6) we have, “The priest shall dip his finger in blood ... where “dip” is *baptō* (related to *baptizō*), and “sprinkle,” *rantizō*, *baptō*, referring to the action of placing the finger in the blood. In Luke 16:24, the rich man asks that Lazarus dip (*baptō*) his finger in water and cool his tongue. The usage of the word as seen in the above examples resolves itself into the following definition of the word *baptizo*: “the

introduction or placing of a person or thing into a *new environment* or *into union with something else* so as to alter its condition or its relationship to its previous environment or condition.” And that is its usage in Romans 6. It refers to the act of God introducing a believing sinner into vital union with Jesus Christ.

Groups that hold to baptismal regeneration, in whatever form, misunderstand what New Testament baptism was (in contexts of unification), limiting it exclusively to water baptism. Similar to circumcision for the Jew, Christian baptism identified those called or “set apart” from the surrounding pagan nations. However, the only commonality of Jewish washings and rituals (of the proselyte) and Christian baptism was unification/identification (cf. Richards, 1985: 100). As with circumcision, the ordinance of water baptism did not save anyone (cf. Gal. 2:16). Keeping with the New Testament idea, when a new convert was “baptized,” he or she was (by way of outward significance) *united* into the name or *authority* (*exousian*, cf. John 1:12) of Jesus Christ as *adopted* children of God, Abraham’s descendants (cf. Gal. 3:27-29). Reymond (1998: 925-26) remarks on the New Testament import of baptism:

“Baptizing into the name” (*baptizontes eis to onoma*; see 1 Cor. 1:13, 15—“baptized into the name of Paul”; see 1 Cor. 10:2—“baptized into Moses”), it becomes apparent that the formula expresses a relationship to the person into whom or into whose name the person is being baptized. Baptism then basically denotes the fact of a relationship ... it becomes plain that the nature of the relationship is one of *union with Christ*, more particularly, union with Christ in his crucifixion, death, burial and resurrection (not just union with him in the last two).

The expression then, “in the name of Jesus,” in essence defined the *kind* of baptism. Correspondingly, when the early church would baptize the new convert, it was in the “name,” that is, the authority or *on behalf of* Jesus Christ, hence the phrase “in the name of Jesus.” The phrase does not seem to be an actual “verbal” formula.

To assert that it was, would be an argument from silence. In fact, there is no text (or patristic evidence) that indicates explicitly that a so-called “Jesus’ name” baptismal formula was a verbal pronouncement.

The actual verbal formula would have been, out of obedience, the Trinitarian formula that Jesus Christ inaugurated in Matthew 28:19, namely, unification with the three Persons of the Godhead.

As seen below, the early church seems to confirm this view. However, even if the phrase “on/into/in the name of Jesus” was a verbal pronouncement, this does not in any way, shape or form support the Oneness assertion of unipersonalism. Thus, while a verbal pronouncement is plausible, it is far more exegetically consistent to see the phrase, not as a verbal formula, but simply demonstrative of the *type* or kind of baptisms administered. They were Christian baptisms, or, technically speaking, unification ceremonies, signifying the unification of the new convert with Jesus Christ. Even if one grants the idea that early Christians actually used a verbal name formula, there clearly is no exegetical justification for asserting that the name formula or even the ordinance itself is a rigid doctrinal mandate in order to obtain salvation. This is something that the apostles never even intimated, but rather strongly controverted. Therefore, it was Jesus Christ the Messiah of Israel, God in the flesh, who was the fulfillment of the entire Old Testament sacrificial system, being the ultimate human sacrifice.

### **3.5.1.6 Baptizing in the Trinitarian Formula or “In Jesus’ name” only**

In this section, we will address the UPCI’s confusion between the Trinitarian baptismal formula found in Matthew 28:19 and the so-called “Jesus’ name” formula found in Acts. In order to circumvent the clear Trinitarian connotation of Matthew 28:19, the UPCI postulates a very awkward interpretation. UPCI teachers (e.g., Paterson, 1953: 12; Bernard, 1983: 136; UPCI, 2008b) start with the premise relating to the singularity of the term “name,” from which they then conclude that Jesus is the single unipersonal deity behind the masks or roles of “Father,” “Son” and “Holy Spirit.” This interpretation of Matthew 28:19 is exclusively Oneness. As already indicated, the grammar of the text (viz., Sharp’s rule #6) distinctly militates against such an assertion and in effect promotes the doctrine of the Trinity. Nevertheless, Oneness advocates assume that they have solved the dilemma of the two supposed baptismal formulas.

There are some key issues, some of which were previously addressed, that can aid in the understanding of the supposed formulaic discrepancy between Matthew and Acts. Even assuming that “in the

name of Jesus” was a verbal formula utilized in Acts, there is a plausible explanation that is wholly consistent without suggesting a “Matthew vs. Acts” tension.

The first detail to consider is that when Jesus gives His disciples the so-called Great Commission (Matt. 28:19), He instructs them to go out into *panta ta ethnē*—“all the nations.” Conceivably, many nations were pagan, worshiping creatures or things in creation and not the true Creator (cf. Rom. 1:18ff.). Hence, the full revelation of God, the Father, and the Son, and the Holy Spirit was at issue. On the other hand, in Acts, the new converts who were baptized were Jews (e.g., 2:5; 22:16), God-fearing Gentiles (e.g., 10:1-2, 22, 48) and disciples of John the Baptist (e.g., 19:1-5). The point is this: the new converts that were baptized as recorded in Acts had a prior knowledge of “God” *per se* (though, not the true God), thus the emphasis and salvific focus of the baptism was on Jesus Christ. He was the One in whom “all the prophets bear witness that through His name everyone who believes on Him receives forgiveness of sins” (Acts 10:43), and through Him, “there is salvation in no one else; for there is no other name under heaven that has been given among men by which we must be saved” (Acts 4:12).

However, whether or not a phrase “on/into/in the name of Jesus” was a verbal pronouncement in the recorded baptisms in Acts, one cannot deduce exegetically a modalistic concept of Jesus merely based on the phrase “on/into/in the name of Jesus.” Although both views, the Matthean Trinitarian pronouncement and the so-called “Jesus’ name” verbal formula in Acts, are theologically conceivable, the UPCI’s inept hermeneutic of Matthew 28:19, along with their hyper-dogmatic strict name formula, which is required for salvation, sharply opposes both the grammar and context as well as the entire theology of the New Testament.

### **3.5.1.7 The Trinitarian Formula in the Early Church**

If a “Jesus’ name” verbal baptismal formula was an essential part of justification as taught and practiced by the apostles themselves, then one would certainly expect to find this supposed apostolic tradition existing somewhere in patristic writings. Today there exists massive amounts of patristic writings, most of which are easily accessible. Many of these writings come down to us from the earliest of church fathers, namely, the apostolic fathers, who were actual disciples of the original apostles (e.g., Hermes; Clement bishop of Rome; Ignatius; Mathetes; Papias;

Polycarp; etc.). These men wrote copiously, teaching and commenting on all kinds of issues.

Within these writings, although, not one of these apostolic fathers taught or even implied that a “Jesus’ name” baptismal formula was the “correct” formula and thus essential to one’s salvation, as the UPCI teaches today. In Chapter 5 we will clearly present, in its proper context, numerous clear and unambiguous Trinitarian statements that are contained in the writings of the apostolic fathers, early apologists and theologians. When examining the issue of water baptism, one thing is clear: the baptismal formulaic *norm* of the early church was decidedly Trinitarian, *not* modalistic. In fact, no Christian writings from the first several centuries insisted on a “Jesus’ name” formula or specifically discussed what baptismal formula should be used (Beisner, 1998: 61). Also, it is wholly irrelevant to cite a few early church fathers who have “loosely” quoted the passage rendering it as “baptize them in the name of Jesus” or “baptizing them in my name” with no mention of the Trinitarian clause (cf. Nolland, 2005: 1286).

First, because of a great lack of available biblical manuscripts, many early church fathers cited (usually from memory) passages in short and/or in paraphrase as did some biblical authors (e.g., Phil. 2:10-11 from Isa. 45:23). Second, in the case of Eusebius, this is an argument from silence. His partial rendering of the passage does not indicate that he denied the concept of the Trinity or the Trinitarian formula enunciated in Matthew. It only shows that he loosely quoted the passage. In fact, Eusebius does use the full Trinitarian formula at least four times, twice in *Contra Marcellum*, once in *De Ecclesiastica Theologia*, and once in a letter written to the church at Caesarea (Ferrax, 1981: 152-59).

Adding to this, prominent textual scholars believe that Codex Vaticanus and Codex Sinaiticus were two of the fifty copies of the Scriptures that the Emperor Constantine commissioned Eusebius to have written, all containing the Trinitarian phrase (Metzger, 1994: 47-48). There are plenty of earlier church fathers (as referenced below) that quote the full Trinitarian clause of Matthew 28:19. Third, of all the extant Greek manuscripts that contain the ending of Matthew, not one omits the Trinitarian formula and no variant reading of the formula exists. Fourth, there has never been a church father (Greek or Latin), recognized Christian theologian, or biblical commentator that has provided a modalistic understanding of Matthew 28:19.

Despite the consequences of the historical evidence, the UPCI vigorously contends that “the early church Christian leaders in the days immediately following the apostolic age were Oneness” (Bernard, 1983: 236-37) and taught that water baptism must be done “in the name of Jesus” to achieve salvation (cf. Paterson, 1953: 12, 27; Vouga, 1967: 18; Bernard, 1984: 132-33; UPCI, 2008b). Note the following sample citations from early church fathers and patristic documents from the late first to the late fourth century concerning water baptism; these are decidedly Trinitarian. They will demonstrate and dispel the historical revisionism that leads the way for the present dogma of the UPCI.

***Didache*** (c. A.D. 90-120). The *Didache*, which in Greek means “teaching,” formally called *The Teaching of the Twelve Apostles*, was a very early church document. It was an instructional church manual read in the early churches. Although it never gained universal recognition as canonical, both Clement of Alexandria and Origen treated the *Didache* as “Scripture” (*graphē*). Athanasius saw it as “edifying and profitable to be read in the church” (Niederwimmer, 1988: 4, 7). Speaking of water baptism, the *Didache* (7, in Richardson, 1970: 174) provides Trinitarian instructions alluding to Matthew 28:19:

Now about baptism: this is how to baptize. Give public instruction on all these points, and then “baptize” in running water, “in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit.” If you do not have running water, baptize in some other. If you cannot in cold, then in warm. If you have neither, then pour water on the head three times “in the name of the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit.”

**Justin Martyr** (c. A.D. 155; *First Apology* 61, Richardson, 1970: 282):

Then they are brought by us where there is water, and are reborn by the same manner of rebirth by which we ourselves were reborn; for they are then washed in the water in the name of God the Father and Master of all, and of our Savior Jesus Christ, and of the Holy Spirit.

**Irenaeus**, bishop of the church at Lyons (c. A.D. 180, *A Discourse in Demonstration of the Apostolic Preaching* 3, in Kelly, 1978: 90):

We receive our baptism for [because of] the remission of sins in the name of God the Father, and the name of Jesus Christ, the Son of God, Who was incarnate, died, and rose again, and in the Holy Spirit of God.

**Tertullian** (c. A.D. 213, *Against Praxeas* 26, in Roberts and Donaldson, 1994: vol. 3:623):

After His resurrection He promises in a pledge to His disciples that He will send them the promise of His Father; and lastly, He commands them to baptize into the Father and the Son and the Holy Ghost, not into a unipersonal God. And indeed, it is not once only, but three times, that we are immersed into the Three Persons, at each several mention of Their names.

**Cyprian** (c. A.D. 250, *To Jubaianus, Concerning the Baptism of Heretics* LXXII:5, 17-18, in Roberts and Donaldson, 1994: vol. 5:380-83):

“Go therefore and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit.” He suggests the Trinity, in whose sacrament the nations were to be baptized ... How, when God the Father is not known—nay, is even blasphemed—can they who among the heretics are said to be baptized in the name of Christ judged to have obtained the remission of sins? ... Christ Himself commands the pagans to be baptized in the full and united Trinity.

**Apostolic Constitutions** (compiled c. A.D. 390, VII:3, in Roberts and Donaldson, 1994: vol. 7:476):

[The bishop] ... will anoint the head of those who are to be baptized (whether they are men or women) with the holy oil, as a representation of the spiritual baptism. After that, either you, the bishop or a presbyter that is under you, will in the solemn form pronounce over them the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit, and will dip them in the water ... For even our Lord exhorted us in this manner, saying first, “Make disciples of all nations,” But then he adds: “and baptize them into the name of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit.”

Commenting on the historical revisionism promulgated by UPCI and Oneness teachers, Beisner (1998: 61) explains:

Oneness authors Weisser and Bernard claim that historical evidence supports a Jesus' name formula as original and condemns a triune formula as a latter corruption of Christian practice ... Of the 23 they cite from the first four centuries, only 3 (the Marcionites and two Arians) require a Jesus' name formula; only 2 clearly and 6 possibly permitted either formula; 6 clearly and 4 possibly require a triune formula; and 6 clearly and 2 possibly present no evidence for any formula.

So bountiful are the explicit Trinitarian references penned by the early church Fathers (especially pre-Nicaea). However, it would be superfluous to provide here mounds of citations on an issue *never argued* about in church history. It was not until the UPCI/Oneness churches surfaced in the twentieth century that the Jesus' name formulation dogma first emerged (cf. Beisner, 1998: 7; Ankerberg and Weldon, 1999: 367).

### **3.6 SUMMARY**

Jesus Christ consistently affirmed that salvation consist of having accurate knowledge/assent/trust in the Son of biblical revelation (cf. John 8:24). One cannot deny the Person and nature of the Son and yet claim to have the Son, for he does not (cf. John 3:36). As exegetically outlined above, Jesus Christ is God the Son, the second Person of the Holy Trinity. As to the essence of the Son, He has full deity in the *same sense* ontologically as that of God the Father. He is the eternal Word, the Lord of Glory who became flesh; thus, He is the God-man. Undeniably, Oneness Christology radically departs from the exegetical presentation of the Son, thus redefining Him as a mode or a mere role. Because of its rejection of the Trinity, Oneness doctrine asserts another Christ than that of the biblical presentation.

The Oneness Christological divergences include a patent denial of the unipersonality and deity of the Son, His preexistence, and His role as Creator (cf. Chapter 4). Oneness theology maintains that Jesus *is* the Father, Son and Holy Spirit, thus asserting a unitarian/unipersonal concept of God. Yet, neither Jesus nor His apostles ever claimed this. Nor was Jesus ever called Father or Holy Spirit.

Over two hundred times Jesus is specifically referred to as "Son" and over fifty times Jesus and the Father are rendered distinct in the same

verse (Boyd, 1992: 68-69). The Oneness view of Jesus Christ along with its crass unipersonalism is in direct conflict with the New Testament presentation, responsible exegesis of which substantiates the following facts:

- The unipersonality of Jesus Christ
- The full deity and humanity of the Son (and His preexistence and role as Creator)
- The numerical and personal distinction between the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit
- The distinct personhood of the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit
- The personal intimate loving (giving and receiving love) interaction between the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit, which clearly differentiates between the three Persons

Scripture presents a clear Christology. The Person of the Son is fully God (cf. John 1:1; Titus 2:13). He has distinctly coexisted *with* (*pros/para*) God the Father (cf. John 1:1; 17:5). He became human (cf. John 1:14; Phil. 2:7-8) and *was sent* by the Father (cf. John 6:37ff.) to redeem the elect of God by His sacrificial death on the cross (cf. Mark 10:45; Rom. 5:9-11; 8:32). The Son is the only mediator and intercessor between the Father and humans (cf. Rom. 8:34; 1 Tim. 2:5). Thus, the Christ of biblical revelation is the divine Son, a personal self-aware subject distinct from the Father and the Holy Spirit. This is the Christ that saves, this is the Christ that Paul and the other New Testament authors preached. The very *ground* of justification is through this God-man's vicarious, infallible, and efficacious cross-work; the very *instrument* being faith alone, not the ordinance of water baptism (i.e., a work) accompanied by a five word formula (viz., "in the name of Jesus") to which the church has never prescribed.

The rejection of the unipersonality and deity of the Son, the rejection of the unipersonality of both the Father and the Holy Spirit, and the rejection of the personal distinctions between Jesus, the Father and the Holy Spirit constitute a rejection of the very nature of God Himself (cf. John 17:3; 1 John 2:22-23).



# *Chapter Four*

## **THE PREEXISTENCE OF THE SON**

### **4.1 INTRODUCTION**

The preexistence and deity of the Person of Jesus Christ was well established in the early Councils of the Christian church such as Nicaea and in the theology and hymns of the Faith. It is the very bedrock of historical biblical Christianity. Jesus Christ made this point clear many times in His life (e.g., Matt. 8:26; 12:6, 18; John 2:19; 3:13; 6:35-40; 8:58; 16:28). In contrast, as we have clearly shown, Oneness doctrine rejects the unipersonality, deity, and eternality of the Son (cf. Chapter 3, 3.1). Oneness Christology further maintains that only for the sake of redemption did the unipersonal deity named “Jesus” manifest as the “Son.” Prolific Oneness author and teacher David K. Bernard (1983: 104-5) explains the Oneness position concerning the non-eternal Son:

The Sonship—or the role of the Son—began with the child conceived in the womb of Mary. The Scriptures make this perfectly clear ... The Son was made under the law—not before the law (See also Hebrews 7:28) ... Hebrews 1:5-6 also reveals that the begetting of the Son occurred at a specific point in time and that the Son had a beginning in time ... From all of these verses, it is easy to see that the Son is not eternal, but was begotten by God almost 2000 years ago.

As delineated below, the exegesis of particular passages and analysis of biblical terms proves false the Oneness position of a non-eternal, non-personal Son. Specifically, the biblical presentation of 1) the eternality of the Son, 2) His role as the Agent of creation, and 3) His eternal existence *with* the Person of the Father will be the driving force that demolishes the Oneness theological position.

## 4.2 PERSONHOOD AND BEING

Since the fundamental premise upon which Oneness theology is built is the notion that God is unitarian or unipersonal (as previously established), the Oneness position denies the deity, unipersonality and preexistence of the Son. By way of definition, modes, roles and offices are non-personal. Oneness theology asserts that Jesus is unipersonal, thus the Father, Son and Holy Spirit are mere modes or roles, not Persons. Thus, the Oneness idea of the Son differs severely from the biblical presentation. To deny the deity and preexistence of the Son is to deny the very essence of Jesus Christ. Commenting on John 8:24, Luther (1959: 365) can say: “The Lord Christ is angry below the surface and says: ‘Do you know who I am? I am God, and that in the fullest sense. Do as you please. If you do not believe that I am He, then, you are nothing, and you must die in your sins.’”

## 4.3 THE “ONENESS” POSITION

Bernard (1983: 105) declared, “There was a time when the Son did not exist,” thus rejecting the preexistence of the Son. This resembles the very center point of the controversy at Nicaea. Bernard’s statement here is theologically comparable to the key phrase in Arius’s teaching: “There was a time when He [the Son] was not.” However, the historic Christian church’s belief was quite different, for Arius was roundly condemned for his teachings. As will be vividly shown in Chapter 5, the early church was not tolerant in any way, shape or form towards heresies that denied the nature of God and the full deity and humanity of Jesus Christ, the Son of God. Oneness theology (or Modalism) maintains that God exists as a unipersonal deity (cf. Chapter 1). Hence, the fundamental Oneness position regarding Jesus Christ is this: the unitarian or unipersonal deity named Jesus has two natures: *divine*, as the mode of the Father/Holy Spirit and *human*, as the mode of the Son of God (though not God the Son).

In Oneness thinking, the meaning of “Son of God” (or “Son of Man”) refers primarily to the humanity (viz., the human nature) of Jesus, not to the deity. Bernard (1983: 99, 103) indicates that the “Son of God” may refer to

God manifested in flesh—that is, deity in the human nature ... We can never use the term “Son” correctly apart from the humanity of Jesus Christ ... The Son always refers to the Incarnation and we cannot use it in the absence of the human element ... The Son did not have preexistence before the conception in the womb of Mary. The Son pre-existed in thought but not in substance.

Since unitarianism is the starting point, Oneness teachers (e.g., Paterson, 1966: 22; Bernard, 1983: 102-3) see Jesus *as the Father*, not as the Son, existing before time. Only in this sense, can Oneness advocates say that Jesus (as the Father) is eternal in that He preexisted. Therefore, as sufficiently documented thus far, Oneness theology rejects the idea that the Son preexisted *with* the Father (cf. Bernard 1983: 184). Oneness teachers (e.g., Bernard, 1983: 103-4; Magee, 1988: 25) further argue that according to John 3:16, Hebrews 1:5 and 5:5,<sup>10</sup> the Son cannot be eternal because the Bible says He was “begotten” on a certain day.

Although the translation of *monogenēs* is subject to translators, Oneness teachers, nevertheless, assume the meaning, of “origin” or “beginning” to show that the Person of the Son had a beginning. However, as pointed out below, the lexical support and contextual meaning of *monogenēs* militates against this assertion.

Passages that depict the Son’s preexistence (e.g., the “sending” of the Son passages; John 3:16; Col. 1:16-17) are explained away by Oneness teachers as mere references to the so-called future plan of the coming of the Son mode to earth. Bernard (1983: 102-3) explains that the “plan of the future Sonship existed with God [the Father] from the beginning—an idea in the mind of God.” The Son preexisted as a divine *thought*, but not as a divine *Person* in Oneness theology. While this may sound plausible as an explanation in denying the preexistence of the Son in those passages, it is a hollow claim lacking exegetical support. To adopt such a view is to rip the heart out of passages that specifically speak of the Son as the divine Agent of creation, the very Creator of all things.

---

<sup>10</sup> Cf. note 22 below for a discussion of these passages.

#### 4.4 AN ORTHODOX RESPONSE TO THE “ONENESS” POSITION

As demonstrably established in Chapter 5, when Monarchianism (modalistic and dynamic) first emerged early in the second century, it was roundly and universally condemned as non-Christian. What marks Oneness theology as non-Christian, as thus far substantiated, is their denial of the deity and unipersonality of the Son. It re-defines the biblical doctrine of the Son, sinking Him to the level of a mere mode or office of a unitarian deity named “Jesus.”

We will also show subsequently that the Old Testament authors, the apostles, the earliest of church fathers, early important ecumenical councils and creeds, present-day scholarship, and the people of God directly attested to and positively proclaimed the preexistence of the preincarnate Son. The Christian church has stalwartly refuted the denial of the preexistence of the Son by Oneness and other unitarian groups.

The words of Christ Himself in John 8:24 should send shock waves through the many groups that deny His preexistence: “Therefore I said to you that you will die in your sins; for unless you believe that I am *He* [*egō eimi*, i.e., the eternal God; cf. Chapter 2, 2.4.5], you will die in your sins.”

#### 4.5 THE PREINCARNATE SON

Thus far, we have seen the New Testament affirmation of the full deity of the Person of the Son (cf. Chapter 3, 3.2), and hence, His eternity. Here in this chapter, the biblical declaration and establishment of the Son’s eternal existence *with* the Father (pre-incarnation) will be the chief focus. Although this presentation will consist of specific passages primarily from the New Testament, the Old Testament provides many references to the preexistence of the preincarnate Son (e.g., Gen. 19:24; Prov. 30:4; Isa. 6:1ff.,<sup>11</sup> Dan. 7:9-14; Micah 5:2; “the angel of the Lord”

---

<sup>11</sup> John 12:41 reveals that the “Lord” (*adonay*, lit., “sovereign master”) and His divine glory that Isaiah saw (6:1-2) was the preincarnate Son. We find at several places, New Testament authors citing Old Testament passages referring to Yahweh and yet applies them to the Son (e.g., compare Ps. 102:25-27 with Heb. 1:10-12; Isa. 6:1-10 with John 12:39-41; Isa. 8:12-13 with 1 Pet. 3:14-15; Isa. 45:23 with Phil. 2:10-11; Joel 2:32 with Rom. 10:13).

[lit., “angel of Yahweh”] appearances<sup>12</sup> [e.g., Gen. chaps. 18-19; 22:9-14; Exod. 3:6-14; 23:20-21; Num. 22:21-35; Judg. 2:1-5; 6:11-22; 13:9-25; Zech. 1:12; etc.]; and the targumic<sup>13</sup> identification of the “angel of the Lord” as the Memra of the Lord.<sup>14</sup>

Of the many New Testament passages and terms that exegetically affirm the preexistence of the Son, John 1:1; 17:5; Philippians 2:6-11; and the “sending” of the Son passages (esp. in John) provide a weighty amount of exegetical evidence. Further evidence (viz., John 1:3, Col. 1:16-17 and Heb. 1:8-10) will include passages that clearly designate the Son as the Creator, that is, the Agent of creation. In conclusion, there will be a discussion of the theological implications of the participle *ōn* (articular and anarthrous) as applied to the Son (John 1:18; 1:3; 2 Cor.

---

<sup>12</sup> The “angel of the Lord” references in the Old Testament provide a strong and clear refutation to the unitarianism of Oneness doctrine. The “angel of the Lord” claimed *to be* Yahweh on several occasions, yet being distinct from Yahweh (the Father). In Zechariah 1:12, we read that the angel of the Lord (who had been claiming *to be* Yahweh previously throughout the Old Testament) *prayed to* Yahweh—*Yahweh praying to Yahweh*, as we see in the New Testament, God the Son praying to God the Father.

<sup>13</sup> Again, the Targum was an ancient Aramaic translation providing explanations and paraphrases of the Hebrew Old Testament.

<sup>14</sup> Both the Hebrew and LXX of Genesis 19:24 irrefutably presents two distinct Yahweh’s (“Then the Lord [Yahweh] rained on Sodom and Gomorrah brimstone and fire from the Lord [Yahweh] out of heaven”), which utterly shatters the Oneness-unitarian view of God. Even more, notice how the Aramaic Targum renders Genesis 19:24:

And the *Word* [Memra] of the Lord had caused showers of favour to descend upon Sedom and Amarah, to the intent that they might work repentance.... Behold, then, there are now sent down upon them sulphur and fire from *before the Word* of the Lord from Heaven.... (*Targum Pseudo-Jonathan*; emphasis added).

And the *Word* [Memra] of the Lord Himself had made to descend upon the people of Sedom and Amarah showers of favour, that they might work repentance from their wicked works. But when they saw showers of favour, they said, So, our wicked works are not manifest before Him. *He* [i.e. the *Word*] turned (then), and caused to descend upon them bitumen and fire from before the Lord from the heavens. (*Fragmentary Targum*; emphasis added).

As revealed below, the Apostle John presents the Logos *in the same sense* as that of the targumic presentation of the Word (Memra)—namely, as Yahweh/God, Creator, distinct from *another* divine Person referred to as Yahweh/God. Thus, as in Daniel 7:9-14 and passages already cited, we repeatedly find that the Old Testament authors/believers embraced a multi-personal God.

8:9; Heb. 1:3) and the implications of the Son as the *monogenēs huios/theos*.

**John 1:1:** “In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God” (*En archē ēn ho logos, kai ho logos ēn pros ton theon, kai theos ēn ho logos*). From a theological and grammatical standpoint, the three clauses of John 1:1 powerfully and effectively refute the theology of every non-Christian group that denies the full deity of Jesus Christ and His distinction from God the Father. Consider the three clauses of John 1:1:

**John 1:1a:** *En archē ēn ho logos*, literally, “In [the] beginning was the Word.” The first clause of John 1:1 teaches the eternity of the Son. The Greek verb *ēn* is the imperfect tense of *eimi*. The force of an imperfect tense indicates a *continuous action* normally occurring *in the past*. Hence, the Word did not *originate* at a point in time, but rather in the beginning of time the Word *ēn* already existing. Note the contrast between *ēn* and *egeneto* (the aorist indicative form of *ginomai*). The aorist indicative normally indicates a punctiliar action normally occurring in the past (cf. Greenlee, 2000: 49). In the prologue of John, *ēn* is exclusively applied to the eternal Word in verses 1, 2, 4, 9, and 10, while in verses 3, 6, and 10, the aorist *egeneto* is applied to everything created. Not until verse 14 does *egeneto* refer to the Son denoting His new nature—“the Word *became* [*egeneto*] flesh.”

**John 1:1b:** *kai ho logos ēn pros ton theon*, literally, “and the Word was with the God.” The second clause of John 1:1 teaches the absolute personal distinction between the eternal Logos and *ton theon* (the Father), as we will thoroughly discuss below.

**John 1:1c:** *kai theos ēn ho logos*, literally, “and God was the Word.” The third clause of John 1:1 teaches the deity of Jesus Christ. This is so stunningly clear that one would have to alter the actual rendering of the clause and/or *read into* the clause a polytheistic (“a god”) or, as with Oneness theology, a modalistic interpretation to circumvent the author’s intended meaning. The “Word in Oneness theology is basically the Father’s spoken “word” or His thought or plan. Hence, Oneness believers deny the unipersonality of the Word—namely, His identification as the Person of the Son.

Another severe blow to the Oneness notion of the “Word” is the targumic usage of the *Memra* (“Word”). There is compelling evidence substantiating that the theological and conceptual background for the opening of John’s gospel and his other literature (esp. his Logos theology) was the ancient Targum—particularly with reference to the deity *and unipersonality* of the Word, Jesus Christ (cf. Martin McNamara, John L. Ronning *et al.*).<sup>15</sup> Noted Reformed apologist, Anthony Rogers (2015: 19-20), observes:

The ancient Targums identify the speaker in Deuteronomy 32:39 as the Word of God, which is the very title John gives to Jesus in the prologue to his gospel (John 1:1, 14; cf. 1 John 1:1–3, Rev. 19:13). In other words, according to the ancient Jews who paraphrased this passage in Aramaic, the one who originally said “I Am” in the Old Testament is the Divine Word, even as the one who said “I Am” in John’s gospel is the Divine Word, the Lord Jesus Christ.

John 1:1b is particularly relevant concerning the Oneness denial of the preincarnate Son: *kai ho logos en pros ton theon*. In spite of the clear differentiation between *ho logos* and *ton theon* denoted by the preposition *pros* (“with”), Bernard (1983: 102-3) claims:

The Word or Logos can mean the plan or thought as it existed in the mind of God. The Word can also mean the plan or thought of God as expressed in the flesh, that is in the Son. What is the difference, therefore, between the two terms, *Word* and *Son*? The Word had preexistence and the Word was God (the Father), so we can use it without reference to humanity. However, the *Son always refers to the Incarnation* and we cannot use it *in the absence of the human element* (emphasis added).

---

<sup>15</sup> To recall, the “angel of the Lord” in the Old Testament is frequently identified as the “*Memra*” of the Lord in Targum. Further, at many places, the Targum identifies the *Memra* as the Creator of all things (e.g., the targumic reading of Gen. 1:27; Ps. 33:6; etc., see also Gen. 1:1, *Neofiti Targum*). So too, the Apostle John identifies the “Word,” who in John’s mind was the Son (cf. John 1:14, 18; 1 John 1:3), as the Creator of all things (cf. John 1:3). To affirm again, that the Son, Jesus Christ, was the Creator of all things is a constant and recurring teaching in the New Testament (cf. John 1:3, 10; 1 Cor. 8:6; Col. 1:16-17; Heb. 1:2, 10), as thoroughly and exegetically treated below.

Thus, the “Word” in Oneness theology was merely a plan of the Father. This is the most abnormal application of the passage, thoroughly distorting what John was actually saying. As seen in Chapter 2 (2.6), in spite of Bernard’s position, other Oneness teachers have dissimilar views as to exactly what or who the Word was. One group of Oneness teachers (e.g., Paterson, 1966: 29 and Graves, 1977: 35) seems to be saying that the Word was the Father Himself, but manifested in the flesh, while others (e.g., Weisser, 1983: 35; Bernard, 1985: 22) see the Word as merely the thought or plan of the Father. This, however, prompts the question: “Who is the Son in Oneness theology?” As previously recognized, Oneness theology identifies the Son with the humanity and not the deity of Jesus.

They also assert that since the Sonship began (was created) in Bethlehem, the Sonship will cease to exist after time (cf. Bernard, 1983: 106). Historically, the early church used John 1:1 to show that the eternal Word was fully God and *distinct from* the Father. Clement of Alexandria (*Fragments* 3, in Alexander and Donaldson, 1994: vol. 2:574) declares: “The Word itself, that is, the Son of God, who being, by equality of substance, one with the Father, is eternal and uncreated. That the Son was always the Word is signified by saying, ‘In the beginning was the Word.’” Hippolytus (*Against Noetus* 14, Alexander and Donaldson, 1994: vol. 5:228) likewise comments on John 1:1 to refute the first known modalist, Noetus of Smyrna:

If, then, the Word was with God, and was also God, what follows? Would one say that he speaks of two Gods? I shall not indeed speak of two Gods, but of one; of two Persons however, and of a third economy (disposition), viz., the grace of the Holy Ghost. For the Father indeed is One, but there are two Persons, because there is also the Son; and then there is the third, the Holy Spirit.

In his commentary on the Gospel of John, John Calvin (1994: 15) remarks on the distinction of the three divine Persons expressed in John 1:1b:

We have already said that the Son of God is thus placed above the world and above all the creatures, and is declared to have existed before all ages. But at the same time this mode of expression attributes to him a distinct personality from the Father; for it would have been absurd in the Evangelist to say

that *the Speech* was always *with God*, if he had not some kind of subsistence peculiar to himself in God. ... This passage serves, therefore, to refute the error of Sabellius, for it shows that the Son is distinct from the Father.

Expounding on John 1:1, Warfield (1988: 190-92) remarks:

In three crisp sentences he declares at the outset His eternal subsistence, His eternal intercommunion with God, His eternal identity with God: ‘In the beginning the Word was; and the Word was with God; and the Word was God’ (John i. 1) ... He was nevertheless *not a separate being from God*: “And the Word was”—still the eternal “was”—“God.” In some sense distinguishable from God, *He was in an equally true sense identical with God*. There is but one eternal God; *this eternal God, the Word is*; in whatever sense we may distinguish Him from the God whom He is “with,” *He is yet not another than this God, but Himself is this God* ... John would have us realize that what the Word was in eternity was not merely God’s coeternal fellow, *but the eternal God’s self* (emphasis added).

***And the Word was—pros ton theon.*** The modalistic interpretation of John 1:1 is annihilated by both the grammar and syntax of John 1:1b: *ho logos ēn pros ton theon*. To highlight the intimate loving fellowship that the Word shared with the Father, the Apostle John specifically used the preposition *pros*, translated “with” here. The preposition *pros* has various meanings depending on the context (e.g., to, toward, in the presence of, pertaining to, against, etc.; Greenlee, 1986: 39-40). When applied to persons, however, *pros* regularly denotes intimate fellowship and *always* their distinction. Of all the prepositions that John could have utilized, which can be mean “with” (e.g., *en, meta, para, sun*), he chose *pros* (lit., “facing”/“toward,” with the accusative, *theon* as the object of the preposition). Hence, *pros* with the accusative clearly indicates that the Word was “at, with, in the presence of ... God” (Greenlee, 1986: 39). In reference to John 1:1b, *pros* indicates “by, at, near; *pros tina einai*: be (in company) with someone” (Bauer, 2000: 875). Robertson (1932: 5:4) elucidates the significance of the preposition *pros* in John 1:1b:

*With God (pros ton theon)*. Though existing eternally with God the Logos was in perfect fellowship with God. *Pros* with the accusative presents a plane of equality and intimacy, face

to face with each other. In 1 John 2:1 we have a like use of *pros*: “We have a Paraclete with the Father” (*paraklēton echomen pros ton patera*). See *prosōpon pros prosōpon* (face to face, 1 Cor, 13:12), a triple use of *pros*.

Examining John 1:1b, Moloney (1998: 4:35) notes:

The Word preexists the human story, and the Word does not preexist for its own sake but in relationship with God (*pros ton theon*). The proposition *pros* means more than static “with.” It has a sense of motion toward the person or thing that follows. The translation therefore reads, “the Word was *turned toward* God.” There is dynamism in the relationship that must somehow be conveyed.

White (1998: 52) remarks as to the personal intimacy expressed by the preposition *pros*:

Just as Greek verbs are often more expressive than their English counterparts, so too are Greek prepositions. Here John uses the preposition *pros*. The term has a wide range of meanings, depending on the context in which it is found. In this particular instance, the term speaks to a personal relationship, in fact, to intimacy. It’s the same term the apostle Paul uses when he speaks of how we presently have a knowledge comparable to seeing in a dim mirror, but someday, in eternity, we will have a clearer knowledge, an intimate knowledge, for we shall see “face to (*pros*) face” (Corinthians 13:12). When you are face-to-face with someone, you have nowhere to hide. You have a relationship with that person, whether you like it or not.

Commenting on the intimate nature of *pros*, Robertson (1934: 625) correlates John 1:1b and 2 Corinthians 5:8: “It is the face-to-face converse with the Lord that Paul has in mind. John thus conceives the fellowship between the Logos and God.” So Vincent (1973: 2:34) says,

The preposition *pros*, which, with the accusative case, denotes motion towards, or direction, is also often used in the New Testament in the sense of *with*; and that not merely as *being near* or *beside*, but as a living union and communion; implying the active notion of intercourse ... Thus John’s

statement is that the divine Word not only *abode* with the Father from all eternity but was in the living, active relation of communion with Him.

Lenski (1943: 32-33) similarly shows that *pros* in John 1:1b signified the inseparable communion that the distinct Person of the Word had with the Father:

The preposition *pros*, as distinct from *en*, *para*, and *sun*, is of the greatest importance ... The idea is that of presence and communion with a strong note of reciprocity. The Logos, then, is not an attribute inhering in God, or a power emanating from him, but a person in the presence of God and turned in loving, inseparable communion toward God, and God turned equally toward him. He was another and yet not other than God. This preposition *pros* sheds light on Gen. 1:26, "Let us make man in *our* image, after *our* likeness."

*Pros* expresses the intimate and special relationship that Christians will experience "at home with [*pros*] the Lord" (2 Cor. 5:8). In Romans 5:1, Paul teaches that the believer, having been justified *from faith* (*ek pisteōs*), presently and permanently *has* (*echomen*) peace with God (*pros ton theon*). Notwithstanding the mass of biblical scholarship, Oneness teachers postulate a unitarian assumption, denying the appropriate and natural meaning of *pros* in John 1:1b. Evading the lexical denotation and contextual substance of *pros* in John 1:1b, Bernard (1983: 188-89) states:

We should also note that the Greek word *pros*, translated here as "with," is translated as "pertaining to" in Hebrews 2:17 and 5:1 ... Furthermore, if *God* in John 1:1 means God the Father, then the Word is not a separate person for the verse would then read, "The Word was with the Father and the Word was the Father" To make this imply a plurality of persons in God would necessitate a change in the definition of *God* in the middle of the verse.

Here Bernard attempts to make a grammatical connection, asserting that *pros* in John 1:1b means the same in Hebrews 2:17 and 5:1. He then commits the fallacy of equivocation when he implies that *theos* in 1:1b and *theos* in John 1:1c refer to the same thing: *the identification of the Father*.

First, let us deal with the use of *pros* in John 1:1b and Hebrews 2:17 and 5:1. Bernard’s assertion overlooks the grammatical differences. In both Hebrews 2:17 and 5:1 (and Rom. 15:17), the phrase *ta pros ton theon* appears. However, note that the neuter plural article *ta* (“the things”) precedes the preposition *pros*, while in John 1:1b, the imperfect form of *eimi* (i.e., *ēn*) precedes the preposition *pros*. The neuter plural article points to impersonal concepts, “*the things* pertaining to God,” while *pros* is preceded by the imperfect verb (*ēn*) in John 1:1b, which points to a personal interaction—the Word “was *with* God.” Second, the specific phrase *pros ton theon* as in John 1:1b and Hebrews, occurs twenty times in the Greek New Testament. In each occurrence, *pros* differentiates between a person or persons and God (except, of course, the three times where the neuter plural article precedes the phrase). In 1:1b, John envisages a marked distinction between two Persons—*ton theon* and *ho logos*. *Pros ton theon* expresses the distinct personality of the Logos, which another preposition (such as *en*, *meta*, *para*, or *sun*) would have obscured. It is a “face-to-face” with God or “at home with God” that is indicated (Plummer, 1900: 64).

Next, Bernard attempts to make *theos* in both 1:1b and 1:1c have the same referent (the Father) and thus, the same semantic meaning (definite). As a result, he implies that the equative verb *ēn* carries the same force as the mathematical equal symbol: *theos* in 1:1c (the Word) equals *theos* in 1:1b (the Father). In other words, his assumption of unitarianism brings about his conclusion that “God” can only refer to the Father. Therefore, Oneness teachers see both occurrences of *theos* in John 1:1 as referring to the Father, which, of course, tags *theos* in 1:1c as semantically definite.

In response, grammatically speaking, *logos*, is the subject of the clause (1:1c) and *theos*, is the predicate nominative, technically, an anarthrous pre-verbal predicate nominative. The predicate nominative describes the class or category to which the subject (*logos*) belongs (Wallace, 1996: 262, 265). Hence, *theos*, is the category to which the *logos* belongs in terms of nature, *not identity*. Generally, as Wallace illustrates (*ibid*), there are three semantic categories to which the anarthrous predicate nominative *theos* may belong: definite, indefinite, or qualitative—although, “80 percent of anarthrous preverbal PNs are qualitative” (*ibid*). To which category *theos* belongs is determined by the grammar, syntax, and, most importantly, the context of the passage. Regarding John 1:1c:

**Is *theos* Definite?** If *theos* were tagged as definite it would indeed force Modalism into John 1:1. The predicate nominative tells *what* the *logos* is, not *who* He is (Greenly, 1986: 24). John could easily have established Modalism in John 1:1c by definitizing *theos* (i.e., *ho theos ēn ho logos*, “the God was the Word”), turning John 1:1c into a “convertible proposition” (i.e., the subject, *logos* being interchangeable with the predicate, *theos*, in contrast to a “subset proposition”). Rebutting the Oneness position, New Testament scholar Harris (1992: 61) provides this analysis:

What is grammatically admissible [viz. the rendering: *ho theos ēn ho logos*, “the God was the Word”] is contextually inadmissible. If *theos* were taken as subject and as equivalent to *ho theos* ... the clause would contradict what precedes (“the Word was with God,” distinguishing two persons) and would reduce the *logos* to merely a divine attribute (cf. 1 John 4:8: *ho theos agapē estin*).

In the same vein, Robertson (1932: 5:4) comments on the way John actually guards against Sabellianism (i.e., Modalism):

And the Word was God (*kai theos ēn ho logos*). By exact and careful language, John denied Sabellianism by not saying *ho logos ēn ho theos*. That would mean that all of God was expressed in *ho logos* and the terms would be interchangeable, each having the article.

Oneness teachers that comment on John 1:1 (e.g., Paterson, 1966: 29 and Graves, 1977: 35; Bernard, 1983: 188-89) do not provide any scholarly sources, which agree or even imply that John 1:1 teaches Modalism or that John 1:1c is a convertible proposition.

The pre-decided unitarian theology precludes Oneness teachers from exegetically interacting with the text. Hence, the intended meaning of John 1:1b is removed by the Oneness unitarian conviction. Even though the theological consequence of a definitized *theos* is a modalistic understanding of John 1:1, many well-meaning Christian apologists and counter-cult writers incorrectly regarded *theos* as definite (e.g., Rhodes, 1993: 107; Martin, 1997: 138; Ankerberg and Weldon, 1999: 170). This is mainly due to a sizeable misunderstanding of E. C. Colwell’s grammatical rule (viz., asserting the converse; cf. Wallace 1996: 257-

62).<sup>16</sup> In sharp contrast to a definite tag, Wallace (1996: 26) indicates that

Calling *theos* in 1:1c definite is the same as saying that if it had followed a verb it would have had the article ... (i.e., “the Word” = “God” and “God” = “the Word”). The problem with this argument is that the *theos* in 1:1b is the Father ... This, as older grammarians and exegetes point out, is embryonic Sabellianism or modalism. The Fourth Gospel is about the least likely place to find modalism in the NT.

Adding even more credence against the modalistic definite view of *theos* is John 1:1c (“and the Word was with [*pros*] God”) and the unalterable fact the three Persons of the Trinity are constantly differentiated throughout the Gospel of John (esp. 14-16). Therefore, to say that *theos* is definite (i.e., seeing 1:1c as a convertible proposition) would clearly induct a unitarian/modalistic concept of God into the passage. Against such a view is both the grammar of the passage and

---

<sup>16</sup> In 1933, Ernest Cadman Colwell published an article entitled, “A Definite Rule for the Use of the Article in the Greek New Testament,” in the *Journal of Biblical Literature* (52:12-21; cf. Wallace 1996: 257). We must distinguish, however, between “Colwell’s construction” and “Colwell’s rule.” The Colwell *construction* is an anarthrous pre-verbal (before the equative verb) predicate nominative, whereas Colwell’s *rule* states:

Definite predicate nouns which precede the verb *usually* lack the article ... a predicate nominative which precedes the verb cannot be translated as an indefinite or a ‘qualitative’ noun solely because of the absence of the article; if the *context suggest* that the predicate is definite, it should be translated as a definite noun (cf. Wallace 1996: 257; emphasis added).

Though the rule is more involved than indicated by this summary citation, it nevertheless denotes the main spotlight of the rule. It was from this initial statement that so much confusion emerged—mainly, from citing the *converse* of the rule, which is “Anarthrous pre-verbal predicate nominatives are definite,” rather than citing the rule itself: “Definite predicate nouns which precede the verb usually lack the article.” The other problem in applying (i.e., misapplying) Colwell’s “rule” to John 1:1 was that Colwell had stated at the onset of his study that he only examined definite predicate nominatives (Wallace, 1996: 259). Hence, Colwell was mainly concerned with *definite* (not qualitative) predicate nominatives. Forty years later in a more expansive work on Colwell’s rule, Philip B. Harner (published in the *Journal of Biblical Literature*, [1973]: 92:85; cited in Wallace, 1996: 259) remarked and compared his study to that of Colwell: “As Colwell called attention to the possibility that such nouns may be definite, the present study has focused on their qualitative force.”

the context and John's own theology envisaging a distinction between the Persons of the Trinity.

**Is *theos* Indefinite?** An indefinite rendering (such as the rendering, “a god,” in the Jehovah's Witnesses' NWT, 1984) reduces Jesus to an *indefinite* non-eternal god (one of others). Whereas a definite tag throws Modalism into John 1:1, an indefinite tag throws polytheism (i.e., many gods) into the passage. If Jesus is a true “mighty god” (“a god”) and Jehovah is a true “Almighty God,” as Jehovah's Witnesses argue, this would also present a decidedly Gnostic theological construct: a supreme God (Almighty) and a demigod (mighty god). Either way, an indefinite rendering introduces the idea of multiple true gods/Gods. The NWT's grammatical assumption at John 1:1c that the anarthrous *theos* = an indefinite rendering, “a god” (Watchtower, 1989a: 212) is both flawed and inconsistent.

If the NWT were to be consistent, then John 1:6 should read: “There came a man sent from *a god*” (*theos* is anarthrous). Verse 12 should read: “But as many as received Him, to them He gave the right to become children of *a god*” (*theos* is anarthrous). Verse 13 should read: “Who were born, not of blood nor of the will of the flesh nor the will of man, but of *a god* (*theos* is anarthrous). And verse 18 should read: “No one has seen *a god*” (*theos* is anarthrous).<sup>17</sup> If John had envisaged Jesus as an indefinite “god” that would be utterly cacophonous with his entire presentation of Jesus Christ, the Son, as fully God (e.g., 1:3, 18; 2:19; 8:24; 58; 10:27-30; 20:28; 1 John 5:20; Rev. 22:13). Again, it is not grammar alone that refutes the Watchtower (and Oneness unitarian) understanding of John 1:1, but rather it is the context of the prologue (and the entirety of John's literature).

Besides the polytheism that an indefinite rendering produces, there are two additional problems with an indefinite tag. The first problem is that *theos* in 1:1c is placed in the *emphatic position*, which makes an indefinite rendering all the more improbable. The second problem is that John 1:1a indicates clearly that the Word was eternal: “In the beginning *was* [*ēn*] the Word” (emphasis added). We have already seen above the import of the imperfect *ēn*. In addition, John 1:3 teaches that the eternal

---

<sup>17</sup> There are approximately 282 occurrences of the anarthrous *theos* in the Greek New Testament (NA<sup>27</sup>). At sixteen places, the NWT has either “a god,” “god,” “gods,” or “godly.” Sixteen out of 282 means that the translators of the NWT were faithful to their translation principle (viz., the anarthrous *theos* = an indefinite rendering) only six percent of the time (Countess, 1982: 54-55).

Word was the actual Agent of creation: “All things came into being *through Him [di’ autou]*”<sup>18</sup> (emphasis added). Clearly, it was not the grammar that determined how the NWT was to render John 1:1c, but rather, it was the theological bias (unitarianism) of the Jehovah’s Witnesses.

**Is *theos* Qualitative?** In view of John’s theology, along with the grammar and context, the highest semantical possibility for *theos* in 1:1c is qualitative. Pre-verbal anarthrous predicate nominatives fall predominantly into this category (Wallace, 196: 269). As a predicate nominative (pre-verbal), *theos* is the category or class to which the divine Logos belongs.

The Word as to His essence or nature was definitely God. He was “identical” to *ton theon* in 1:1b, not in identity or Person, but rather identical (i.e., coequal) in ontological “quality” (cf. Heb. 1:3). There are numerous examples in the New Testament of anarthrous pre-verbal predicate nominatives that are qualitative in semantic force. In John 1:14 we read: “the Word became flesh.” He did not become “a flesh” (indefinite), or “the flesh” (definite), but rather He became “flesh”—*as to His nature* (qualitative).<sup>19</sup> Robertson (1932: 5:4-5) refers to 1:14 to exemplify the qualitative force of *theos* in 1:1c and the semantic problem of a definite tag:

The subject is made plain by the article (*ho logos*) and the predicate without it (*theos*) ... So in John 1:14 *ho Logos sarx egeneto*, “the Word became flesh,” not “the flesh became Word.” Luther argues that here John disposes of Arianism also because the Logos was eternally God, fellowship of the Father and Son, what Origen called Eternal Generation of the Son ... Thus in the Trinity we see personal fellowship.

---

<sup>18</sup> We will examine below the significance of the preposition *dia* + the genitive here in John 1:3 and passages such as Colossians 1:16-17 where the same construction (*dia* + the gen.) appears.

<sup>19</sup> The qualitative force of the anarthrous predicate nominative is well exemplified at John 4:24: *ho theos [estin—implied verb] pneuma*, literally, “the God [is] spirit,” not “a spirit,” or “the Spirit,” but “spirit”—*as to God’s* essence or nature (qualitative). Other clear examples of *qualitative* predicate nominatives include John 5:10; Romans 14:23; 1 Corinthians 2:14; 3:19; 2 Corinthians 11:22, 23; Philippians 2:13; 1 John 1:5; and 1 John 4:8.

In clear opposition to Oneness unitarian assertion of a definite *theos* in 1:1c, Reymond (1998: 300) notes that John wrote *theos* anarthrously most likely to his desire to keep the Word hypostatically distinct from the Father to whom he had just referred as *ton theon*.

In conclusion, the Word as to His very *nature* was God. Though God, He *was not* the very Person of Father, in which case *theos* in 1:1c would be definite (*ho theos*). Nor was He one of a pantheon of gods or *aeons*, which an indefinite rendering of *theos* would produce. Rather, as to His inherent sum quality, He possessed all the *fullness* (*plērōma*) of God in *human flesh*, as Scripture loudly presents: “The Word was God.” Only by reading the Bible through the lens of unitarianism/unipersonalism can one maintain the false Oneness notion that God was only one Person (the Father) and the Word was the Father.

Before we leave John 1:1, there is one more point to address. It is the question of who or what the Word is in Oneness doctrine. We have seen the disagreement among Oneness writers as to the identity of the Word (the Father Himself or the “plan or thought” of the Father). In spite of the differences, one thing is clear in Oneness doctrine: the Word is the Father (either in Person or in thought/plan). Let us deal first with the Oneness view that the Word is the Person of the Father (i.e., viewing *theos* in 1:1c as definite). As we have shown, along with John 14-16, John 1:1b provides a clear refutation to this notion: the Word *was* (*ēn*) *with* (*pros*) God (the Father).

In glaring refutation to the alternative view postulated by Oneness teachers (e.g., Weisser, 1983: 35; Bernard, 1985: 22) that the Word was a mere plan or thought (or prophecy) of the Father, and thus an impersonal concept, the Word possessed *personal attributes*:

- “The Word was with [*pros*] God” (1:1b).
- “In Him was life and He was the Light of men” (v. 4).
- John “came as a witness to testify about the Light, so that all might believe through Him” (v. 7). John did not testify about the Father’s impersonal future concept or a plan, but rather, He proclaimed the Person of the Word, the Light of all people.
- The Word *created* “all things” and “the world was made *through Him*” (*di’ autou*, vv. 3, 10). The Word is the Agent of creation and not a mere instrument, which John’s use of *dia*

followed by the genitive *autou*, shows. There will be a thorough discussion of this exegetical characteristic below (4.6).

- “He came to His own, and those who were His own did not receive Him. But as many as received Him, to them He gave them right to become children of God, even to those who believe in His name” (vv. 11-12).
- “And the Word [not the Father] *became* flesh, and dwelt among us, and we saw His glory, glory as of the *only begotten* [*monogenēs*] of the Father, full of grace and truth” (v. 14; emphasis added).

### **John’s own commentary and explication of John 1:1 in 1 John 1:1-2:**

What was from the beginning, what we have heard, what we have seen with our eyes, what we have looked at and touched with our hands, concerning the Word of Life— 2 and the life was manifested, and we have seen and testify and proclaim to you the eternal life, which was with the Father and was manifested to us.

Note the remarkable similarities:

- **John 1:1:** In the *beginning* [*archē*] *was the Word* [*ēn ho logos*], and the Word *was with God* [*ēn pros ton theon*] (emphasis added).
- **1 John 1:1-2:** What *was* [*ēn*] from the *beginning* [*archēs*] ... *concerning the Word* [*peri tou logou*] of life... which *was with the Father* [*ēn pros ton patera*] (emphasis added).

Both John’s gospel and epistle use the same and highly significant Greek nouns, prepositions, and verbs to denote “the Word” and His relationship *with* the Father. Both use *archē* (“beginning”) and both use the imperfect verb *ēn* (“was”). Both use the same preposition *pros* (“with”) indicating the eternal Word’s intimate relationship *with* (distinct from) God the Father (“was [*ēn*] ... from the beginning”). The

prepositional phrase in 1 John 1:2 (the Word was “*with [pros] the Father*”) identifies<sup>20</sup> “God” in John 1:1b as the Father, who was *with* the Word: “and the Word was with God”—that is, the Word was *with* the Father, not *was* the Father. What is also worth mentioning is that the Word is referred to as *zōē* (“life”) in both the prologue of John (in 1:4) and in 1 John 1:1-2. “Life” seems to be a distinguishing motif of the Son throughout John’s literature (cf. John 11:25; 14:6; 1 John 5:12); “an epithet nowhere else used of the Father” (Wallace, 1996: 327).

Lastly, as we clearly observed in the prologue of John, the apostle portrays the Word as personal—not as an impersonal plan or concept as Oneness theology maintains. In the same way, in 1 John 1:1-2, the apostle expresses clearly that the “Word of Life” is a divine Person:

what we *have heard*, what we *have seen with our eyes*, what we *have looked at* and *touched with our hands*, concerning the Word of Life and the life was manifested, and *we have seen* and *testify* and *proclaim* to you....

If the “Word” (*logos*) were merely a plan or thought, which only preexisted in the Father’s mind, as Oneness believers argue, how could John legitimately say to his readers regarding the Word that he has *heard, seen with his eyes, looked at, touched with his hands, testified of* and *proclaimed* a mere non-corporeal plan or thought?

It is of no use and entirely inconsistent for Oneness teachers to apply a different meaning to the “Word” in 1 John 1:1-2 than that of the prologue of John. In John’s theology, the Person of the Word is the same Person in His preexistence (John 1:1-3, 10), in His incarnate life and ministry (John 1:4-18; 1 John 1:1-2), and in His glory (Rev. 19:13).

The prologue of John proves false the Oneness idea that the Word was only a plan, thought, or a mere concept in the Father’s mind devoid of personhood. This beautiful prologue presents the Word as the “Light of men,” the *monogenēs* (“one and only/unique One”) of the Father, and the Creator of all things (in vv. 3, 10), to whom *personal pronouns* are applied. We have shown above that John 1:1 (and the prologue) powerfully and exegetically refutes those who deny 1) the eternity of Christ (because of the imperfect *ēn* in 1:1a), 2) His *distinction* from the Father (because of the preposition *pros* in 1:1b), and 3) the full deity of

---

<sup>20</sup> Both nouns, “God” in John 1:1b and “Father” in 1 John 1:2 are articular, thus, both signifying identification: John 1:1b: *ēn pros ton theon* (lit., “was with the God”) and 1 John 1:2: *ēn pros ton patera* (lit., “was with the Father”).

Christ (because of both 1:1a and the qualitative and emphatic force of *theos*, in 1:1c). Although a few technical issues regarding some points of grammar were discussed, we must keep in mind: it is the *entire content* of this significant prologue and not the grammar alone in 1:1 that shows Oneness theology as biblically incoherent,

**John 17:5:** “Now, Father, glorify Me *together with Yourself*, [*para seautō*] with the glory which *I had* [*eichon*] *with You* [*para soi*] before the world was” (emphasis added). In Jesus’ High Priestly prayer to the Father, He *commands* or requests (we will discuss the import of the imperative *doxason* below) the Father to glorify Himself together with the Father with the glory that He *had* or *shared* (*eichon*) *with* (*para*) the Father *before the world was* (*pro tou ton kosmon einai*). According to the Son’s own words, He preexisted *with* the Father *before time*.

It is on this biblical plane alone that we see the falsity of the Oneness claim. The exegetical significance is undeniable. It is a shared glory here, the Father and the Son. It is the divine glory that Yahweh does “not share” with anyone else (cf. Isa. 42:8). Notice that the glorification applies to both the Father and the Son here, with the glory they shared before the creation. It is not glory *apart* from the Father that the Son seeks, but rather glory *alongside* (*para*) of the Father. The glory of which Jesus speaks is a “Me *with You*” glory. No creature can make this claim. This glory here is a defined glory exclusive to Yahweh alone (as in Isa. 42:8). Whereas the glory that Jesus gives to His disciples in verse 22 is undefined, thus, not the same.

In verse 24, this glory is given in the sense of participating with, seeing it, experiencing it, etc. (“in order that they may see My glory”)—thus, not sharing it with the Father. The verb *theōrōsin* (“they may see”) denotes the idea of “looking at/gazing at/experiencing,” etc., in contrast to the unshared divine glory that the Son said *hē eichon* (“that I had”) *with the Father* “before the world was.” In terms of this divine glory that the Son had with the Father, Hebrews 1:3 corresponds in a remarkable way to John 17:5: *Hos ōn apaugasma tēs doxēs kai charaktēr tēs hupostaseōs autou* (lit., “Who is [*ōn*] [the] radiance of the glory and [the] exact representation of the nature of Him”). Hence, the Son is (always, timelessly) the radiance or effulgence of the Father’s *glory* and the exact representation of His nature.

In Isaiah 6:1, Isaiah *saw* (*eidon*) the glory of Yahweh (*tēs doxēs autou*, lit., “the glory of Him”; also at v. 2). Amazingly, this glory that Isaiah saw was the glory of Jesus, according to the author:

“These things Isaiah said because *he saw [eiden] the glory [tēn doxan]* of Him [Jesus, cf. v. 37] and he spoke of Him” (John 12:41; emphasis added). The same terms found in verses 1 and 2 in the LXX of Isaiah (*horaō* and *ho doxa*) are used in John 12:41 to reveal that the glory of Yahweh that Isaiah saw was the glory of Jesus Christ. As Calvin says (1989: 1.13.23): “For assuredly the God who appeared to Isaiah was the one true God, and yet John declares that he was Christ (Isa. vi; John xii. 41).” Aside from this amazing passage, which clearly displays the intimate relationship between the Father and the Son and their distinction, there is the issue of the aorist imperative form of *doxazō* (*doxason*). The most common usage of the imperative mood is for commands (Wallace, 1996: 485; Kevern and Gooder, 2004: 125). However, the imperative can also denote a request. On occasion, “the request imperative will be used by a superior when addressing an inferior” (Wallace, 1996: 485). Wallace (1996: 485) further elaborates: “With the *aorist*, the force generally is to *command the action as a whole*, without focusing on duration, repetition, etc.” (emphasis his).

Since the Son is biblically presented as ontologically coequal *with* the Father (cf. John 1:1c; Phil. 2:6-11; Heb. 1:3), His “commanding” the Father to glorify Him would not infringe on the doctrine of the Trinity—one divine Person commanding another divine Person of the same ontological class or category. Although it is possible that the imperative here can be one of request, it is in the assumption of unipersonalism, denying that the Son is a divine Person coequal with Father, that we find a natural and automatic rejection of the imperative of command. Even though the plainness of the passage cannot be denied (the Father and the Son *sharing* glory before time), Oneness teachers (cf. Bernard, 1983: 116-17) argue that the glory that Jesus (the Son) had *with the Father* only signified the *future* glory or plan in the Father’s mind. The fact is, plans, thoughts, ideas, etc. are abstract, not personal.

In other words, the Father “can regard things *that do not exist* as though they do exist ... that is why the man Jesus could pray, ‘O Father, glorify thou me with thine self with the glory which I had with thee before the world was’” (Bernard, 1983: 116-17). In this way, Oneness teachers often assert that believers were also “foreknown” before the world was—before they existed without literally being “with” God.

They usually point to passages such as Ephesians 1:4: “He chose us before the foundation of the world, that we would be holy and blameless before Him.” This attempt to remove the Son from His preexistence demonstrates an obvious unfamiliarity with the normal meaning of words, grammar and context of both passages, for God’s elect cannot make this claim. Christians cannot say they *had*, shared, or possessed something *with* the Father before the world was—this glory is a divine glory (not the same as in v. 22). This is a glory that Yahweh does not share with anyone. Ephesians 1:4 speaks of God’s *election*, not possession. To take this verse any other way is blatant eisegesis.

***Para with the Dative.*** What erases the Oneness notion is that, grammatically, when the preposition *para* (“with”) is followed by the dative case (as in this verse: *para seautō*, lit., “together with Yourself”; *para soi*, lit., “together with You”) especially in reference to persons, it indicates “near,” “beside,” or “in the presence of” (cf. Wallace, 1996: 378). In the exhaustive Bauer (2000: 757), the preposition *para* with the dative is well defined: “[*para*] w.[ith] the dat., the case that exhibits close association ... marker of nearness in space, at/by (at the side of), beside, near, with, acc.[ording] to the standpoint fr.[om] which the relationship is viewed.” Robertson (1932: 5:275-76) brings to light the exegetical particulars of verse 5:

With Thine own self (*para seautōi*). “By the side of Thyself.” Jesus prays for full restoration to the preincarnate glory and fellowship (cf. 1:1) enjoyed before the Incarnation (John 1:14). This is not just ideal preexistence, but actual and conscious existence at the Father’s side (*para soi*, with thee) “which I had” (*hēi eichon*, imperfect active of *echō*, I used to have, with attraction of case of *hēn* to *hēi*, because of *doxēi*), “before the world was” (*pro tou ton kosmon einai*), “before the being as to the world.”

Likewise, Reymond (1998: 230) remarks on the Son’s eternal preexistence as taught in John 17:5:

The Gospel of John witnesses that Jesus claimed eternal preexistence: “Glorify me, Father,” Jesus prayed, “with yourself, with the glory which I had with you before the world was” (John 17:1, 5), indeed, with “my glory which you have given me because you loved me before the foundation of the world” (John 17:24). This claim in Jesus’ part to an eternal

preexistence with the Father is not an aberration, for he speaks elsewhere, though in somewhat different terms, of that same preexistence.

In a desperate attempt to rescue Oneness theology from the plain teaching that the Son preexisted as a divine Person sharing glory “with” the Father, Oneness advocates find it commonplace to engage in *lexical abuse*. That is, they will appeal to various lexicons that show *para* with the dative can have the meaning of “in the mind.” However, *no standard lexicon ever applies that meaning to John 17:5*, but only to unrelated passages. In point of fact, all *standard* lexicons (regarding *para* + dat.), recognized Greek grammars, and the mass of biblical scholarship affirm John 17:5 as exegetically affirming the Person of the Son sharing glory *with* (in the presence/association of) the Father, before time—thus a true preexistence of the divine Son. Again, this “is not just ideal preexistence, but actual and conscious existence at the Father’s side.”

In fact, in John’s literature, *para* with the dative is used *ten times* (John 1:39; 4:40; 8:38; 14:17, 23, 25, 17:5 [twice]; 19:25; and Rev. 2:13). In every place, *para* with the dative carries a meaning of a literal “alongside of” or “in the presence of,” that is, “with” in a most literal sense—thus, *nowhere in John’s literature does para with the dative denote “in one’s mind—unless one sees 17:5 as some kind of exception.* For example, note John 14:23:

“Jesus answered and said to him, “If anyone loves Me, he will keep My word; and My Father will love him, and We will come to him and make Our abode *with him [par’ autō]*” (emphasis added; again, the first person *plural* verbs (*eleusometha*, “We will come,” and *poiēsometha*, “We will make”) clearly distinguish Jesus from His Father).

And John 19:25:

“Therefore, the soldiers did these things. But standing *by the cross [para tō staurō]* of Jesus were His mother, and His mother’s sister, Mary the wife of Clopas, and Mary Magdalene” (emphasis added).

So with John 17:5, *para* with the dative denotes a meaning of a literal “alongside of” or “in the presence of.”

What is also worth mentioning (as referenced in Chapter 5, 5.6.2.1) is the remarkable parallel in Ignatius’s letter to the Magnesians (c. A.D. 107) with John 17:5: “Jesus Christ, who *before the ages* [*pro aiōnōn*] was *with the Father* [*para patri*] and appeared at the end of time” (6, in Holmes, 1999: 153, 155; emphasis added). Specifically, both use *para* with the dative denoting a marked distinction between Jesus and the Father and both use the preposition *pro* (“before”) to indicate that their distinction existed from eternity—“before time.” Thus, Ignatius following the apostolic tradition envisages Jesus Christ as being *para* (“with/in the presence of”) the Father— *pro aiōnōn* (“before time”)—, which again is consistent with Trinitarianism, not Oneness unitarianism. Oneness doctrine contorts Jesus’ High Priestly prayer to the Father. It reduces it to a mere un-intimate mirage: Jesus as the non-divine Son praying to His *own* divine nature (the Father), only appearing to be numerically distinct. In sum, John 17:5 presents a potent affirmation of the preexistence of the Son as outlined in the following points:

- The Son, not the Father, is praying (“Now, *Father*, glorify Me”).
- The Son commands the Father to glorify Him, signifying His coequality with the Father.
- This divine glory is *shared* between the Father and the Son, and
- The Son declares that He possesses this divine glory *alongside of/with* (*para*) the Father, before time.
- *Para* with the dative is used only *ten times* in John’s literature. In every single case, *para* denotes a literal “alongside of,” “in the presence of,” “in association of/with”).

**Philippians 2:6-11:** “Who [Christ], although He existed in the form of God, did not regard equality with God a thing to be grasped, but [He] emptied Himself, taking the form of a bond-servant, and being made in the likeness of men. Being found in appearance as a man, He humbled Himself by becoming obedient to the point of death, even death on a cross. For this reason also, God highly exalted Him, and bestowed on Him the name which is above every name, so that at the name of Jesus

EVERY KNEE WILL BOW, of those who are in heaven and on earth and under the earth, and that every tongue will confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father.”

Philippians 2:6-11, known as the *Carmen Christi* (“Hymn to Christ”) and also known as the Kenosis Hymn (from *kenōō*, “to make empty”) was utilized by the early Christian church to teach and magnify the preexistence, incarnation, and the full deity of Jesus Christ. Hippolytus in *The Extant Works and Fragments, Exegetical, On Genesis* (Roberts and Donaldson, 1994: vol. 5:167) says of the Hymn:

For as the only begotten Word of God, being God of God, emptied Himself, according to the Scriptures, humbling Himself of His own will to that which He was not before, and took unto Himself this vile flesh, and appeared in the “form of a servant,” and “became obedient to God the Father, even unto death ...” And it is for this reason that, when He had assumed, by divine arrangement, the lowly estate of humanity, He said, “Father, glorify me with the glory which I had,” etc. For He who was co-existent with His Father before all time, and before the foundation of the world, always had the glory proper to Godhead.

The context of Philippians 2 is clear: Paul stresses to the Philippians that they ought to act in a harmonious and humble way. Paul then instructs them to have an attitude in themselves “which was also in Christ Jesus”—humility (v. 5). Which then leads Paul in verse 6 to present the ultimate act of humility: Christ, who was always subsisting as God, “*emptied Himself [heauton ekenōsen]*, taking the form of a bond-servant ... becoming obedient to the point of death.” In these seven short verses, Paul provides a beautiful delineation of the gospel of Jesus Christ. This Hymn to Christ *as God* systematically encapsulates Jesus’ nature as subsisting as God (preexisting), His incarnation, His cross-work, His exaltation, and His distinction from God the Father whom He glorifies. The philosophy of Modalism, conversely, eradicates the high Christological significance and Paul’s summit illustration of humility. To avoid the Hymn’s Christological significance, Oneness teachers have offered various views, all of which are unusual, awkward, and out of context. There seem to be two main interpretations offered by Oneness teachers: 1) the Hymn *is not* referring to eternity past; rather, the time-frame of the words “existing in the form of God” is actually a reference to earthy life and ministry of Christ, *as the human Son* (cf.

Boyd, 1992: 106-7, 222). Or 2), the Hymn is a reference to the Father who supposedly *emptied* Himself (cf. Bernard, 1983: 220-24).

Let us first address Paul's clear presentation of the deity of the Son. Unquestionably, the consciousness of Paul was so fixed on the deity of Christ that he implicitly and explicitly asserted it in virtually every one of his epistles (e.g., Rom. 1:3-4; 9:5; 1 Cor. 2:8; 2 Cor. 8:9; Gal. 4:4; Eph. 2:18ff; Phil. 2:6-11; Col. 2:9; 1 Tim. 3:16; Titus 2:13). In verse 6, Paul utilizes very specific terms to bolster his case in which he plainly asserts that Jesus was *always subsisting* as God: "Who although He existed [*huparchōn*] in the form of God [*morphē theou*]" (emphasis added). The word translated "existed" is *huparchōn*, which is the present active participle of *huparchō*.

The participle here indicates a *continuous existence* or state of continually subsisting (Thayer, 1996: 638; Bauer, 2000: 1029). Hence, Jesus, the Son of God (cf. 1:2; 2:9, 11), did not *become* the very form or nature of God at a certain point in time, rather He always existed as God, just as Paul definitely expressed. The word translated "form" (NASB) or "nature" (NIV) is *morphē*. This word denotes the specific qualities or essential attributes of something. Here, it denotes "the expression of divinity in the preexistent Christ" (Bauer, 2000: 659). It expresses that which is intrinsic and essential to the thing. Thus, here it means that our Lord in His preincarnate state possessed essential deity (Ryrie, 1986: 261). Warfield (1988: 177) clearly expresses its semantic force:

Paul does not simply say, "He was God." He says, "He was in the form of God," employing a turn of speech which throws emphasis upon Our Lord's possession of the specific quality of God. "Form" is a term, which expresses the sum of those characterizing qualities which make a thing the precise thing that it is ... And "the form of God" is the sum of the characteristics which make the being we call "God," specifically God, rather than some other being—an angel, say, or a man. When Our Lord is said to be in "the form of God," therefore, He is declared, in the most expressed manner possible, to be all that God is, to possess the whole fullness of attributes which make God God.

To deny that the Son was truly the *morphē* of God is to deny that the Son was truly the *morphē* of man, "taking the form [*morphē*] of a bond-servant." This obliterates the Oneness argument that "existed in the

form of God” is a reference to the non-divine human Son’s earthy ministry, posited by such Oneness writers as Robert Sabin (cf. Boyd, 1992: 106-7). However, Bernard’s view differs from that of Sabin.

Bernard holds to the view that “existed in the form of God” is a reference to Jesus *as the Father* who took on a new nature—the Son. He thus concludes that the “Lord” mentioned in verse 11 is merely Jesus as the human non-divine Son (cf. Bernard, 1983: 222). Because of his theological commitment to unitarianism, Bernard (1983: 222) says of the Hymn: “From the Oneness point of view, Jesus is not God the Son, but He is all of God, including Father and *Son* [i.e., the human nature]. Thus, in His divinity, He is truly equal to, or identical to God.” In the face of both Oneness interpretations, which deny both the deity and the preexistence of the Son, there are several grammatical and contextual reasons, which (a) refute the Oneness exegesis of the Hymn and (b) positively affirm the deity and preexistence of the distinct Person of the Son:

**1.** Throughout this epistle, Paul plainly distinguishes between God the Father and the Lord Jesus Christ as two distinct subjects (e.g., 1:11; 2:6-11; and esp. in Paul’s salutation [1:2] as exegetically brought out in Chapter 3, 3.3.3). In the Hymn itself, Paul clearly differentiates between the Father whom Jesus glorified (v. 11) and the Lord Jesus Christ whom the Father exalted (v. 9). In effect, we see the distinction between the Father and Jesus uncomplicatedly.

**2.** Oneness teachers also err to think that the phrase “equal with God” (*isa theō*; v. 6) means “identical to God [Father].” In Bernard’s (1983: 222) claim that Paul is speaking here of Jesus as the Father, he distorts the meaning of the word translated “equal” (*isa*): “In His divinity, He is truly equal to, or identical to God. The word *equal* here means that the divine nature of Jesus *was the very nature of God the Father*” (emphasis added). Contrary to Bernard’s understanding of the term, the adjective *isa* (which is the neuter plural of *isos*) carries the meaning of “equal, in quality, or in quantity ... to claim for one’s self the nature, rank, authority, which belong to God, Jn. v. 18” (Thayer, 1996: 307); “pertaining to being equivalent in number, size, quality, equal” (Bauer, 2000: 480-81).

In point of fact, there is no standard lexicon that offers “identical” (or a synonym) as a possible meaning for *isos* in the New Testament. Of the eight uses in the New Testament, not once does *isos* mean identical

(cf. Matt. 20:12; Mark 14:56, 59; Luke 6:34; John 5:18; Acts 11:17; Phil. 2:6; Rev. 21:16). Boyd (1992: 106) says, “There are a number of ways in Greek for saying one thing is ‘identical to’ or ‘the same as’ something else, but Paul does not employ them here.” The passage is indisputably teaching that Jesus was in very *morphē theou huparchōn*, literally, “nature of God subsisting.” What the passage is not saying, however, is that Jesus “existed in the form of the Father.”

**3.** It was *the Son* who voluntarily “made Himself nothing [*heauton ekenōsen*], taking [*labōn*] the nature of a servant” (v. 7). Note the reflexive pronoun *heauton*, “Himself.” The force of reflexive pronoun here indicates that the subject (Jesus) is also the object (i.e., the one receiving the action of the verb—the verb being *ekenōsen*, “emptied”). Therefore, Jesus Christ, in His preexistent state, emptied Himself; it was a “self-emptying” (lit., “He Himself emptied”; cf. Wallace, 1996: 350-51; Reymond, 1998: 263). Also, note the parallelism in verses 7 and 8 in regards to the reflexive self-action of the Son: *heauton ekenōsen* (“He Himself emptied Himself”) and in verse 8: *etapeinōsen heauton* (“humbled, He Himself”).

The term “taking” is from the Greek aorist active participle, *labōn*. Semantically, this is a *participle of means* (cf. Wallace, 1996: 630). The participle of means describes the means or manner of the emptying. Hence, the Son emptied Himself *by means of* His incarnation (cf. John 1:14). The emptying did not involve His deity, for Paul safeguards against such an assertion in verse 6: *hos en morphē theou huparchōn*, “Who [Christ] *always and continually subsisting* in the very nature and substance of God” (translation mine). It was not the Father, as Oneness teachers suppose, but the Son who voluntarily emptied Himself and became obedient to death—“even death on a cross” (v. 8).

**4.** Verse 9 reads: “Therefore God [the Father] exalted *Him* [the Son; cf. v. 5] to the highest place.” Hence, God the Father did not *exalt Himself*, but rather the Father exalted Jesus, God the Son. It was God the Son *who Himself emptied Himself* (*heauton ekenōsen*) *by taking* (*labōn*) the nature (*morphē*) of a servant (cf. John 1:14) and being obedient to death, even death on a cross.

**5.** In verses 10-11 (starting at v. 9), Paul concludes his glorious Christological Hymn with a “purpose of exaltation” (*hina*) clause. *The purpose* of God highly exalting Him and bestowing on Him “the name

which is above every name” (v. 9) was *for the result* of (“So that,” *hina*) “at the name of Jesus EVERY KNEE WILL BOW ... and that every tongue will confess that Jesus Christ is Lord [*kurios Iēsous Christos*], to the glory of God the Father” (vv. 10-11). Most English translations read, “Jesus Christ is Lord,” whereas the Greek reads, *kurios Iēsous Christos*, literally, “Lord Jesus Christ.” In biblical Greek, the placement of a word in a sentence was not always dependent on the subject-verb word order, but rather on emphasis. In verse 11, the anarthrous predicate nominative *kurios*, occupies the “emphatic position” (i.e., first word of the clause; cf. Chapter 3, 3.3.2): “*Lord Jesus Christ.*”

As we have shown, the same is true in John 1:1c where the anarthrous predicate nominative *theos*, is also in the emphatic position: *theos ēn hō logos*, drawing attention to the Word’s nature as God. In verses 10-11, Paul coherently emphasizes that Jesus *is* the Lord—namely, the Yahweh of Isaiah 45:23 (cf. Rom. 14:11). Without question, Paul here is loosely drawing from Isaiah 45:23, which is an undeniable reference to Yahweh. Paul, however, applies it here to Jesus Christ *the Lord* who glorifies the Father. According to Paul’s own theology, Jesus Christ is the fulfillment of Isaiah’s prophecy: every knee *will* bow and every tongue *will* confess that the Son, Christ Jesus, is Yahweh (cf. Rom. 14:11). There are further exegetical details that enhance the force of Paul’s Jesus-Isaiah connection.

First, both Isaiah 45:23 (LXX) and Romans 14:11 contain future indicatives: “every knee *will bow* [*kampsēi*] ... every tongue *will confess* [or “will swear,” *exomologēsetai*]” indicating the future certainty of the event. However, Paul modifies the original tenses and moods of the verbs in Isaiah and Romans (to aorist subjunctives) to make Philippians 2:10-11 a *purpose and result* clause (cf. Wallace, 1996: 474). Again, the *purpose* of God the Father exalting the Son and bestowing on Him “the name which is above every name” was for the *result* of every knee bowing and every tongue confessing that “Jesus Christ is Lord,” thus, the Yahweh of Isaiah 45:23—*hence the fulfillment of Isaiah’s (future) prophecy.*

Second, as shown in Chapter 3 (3.3.2), Oneness teachers maintain that according to the phrase *onomati Iēsou*, in verse 10, the “name” of the unipersonal deity is “Jesus” (cf. Bernard, 1983: 223). However, the grammar of the text does not indicate what Oneness believers assume. It was not the mere name *Iēsous* that was “above every name,” rather, it was the *onoma* that *belonged* to Jesus, thus, *Iēsou* being a *genitive of possession*, as previously mentioned. In light of Paul’s own argument,

the “highest name” in which every knee will bow and every tongue will confess *was the name that belonged to Jesus*, the name that Jesus possessed. Verse 11 reveals that name (i.e., authority): “Lord Jesus Christ”—thus, Yahweh, the fulfillment of Isaiah 45:23.

Therefore, both Oneness interpretations of the Hymn cannot stand exegetically. The view that the Hymn is merely referring to the non-divine non-eternal Son’s “earthly ministry” goes against Paul’s words in verse 6: “He [continuously] existed in the form of God.” Bernard’s view (Jesus *as the Father* who became flesh, i.e., the Son) goes against Paul’s words in verse 10-11: “So that [*hina*] at the name of Jesus EVERY KNEE WILL BOW ... and that every tongue will confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father.” There is another serious defect shared by both views. They both assert the “Lord” in verses 10 and 11 is the human *non-divine* Son. If so, this would mean that a man (viz., the human Son according to Oneness belief) could *be* Yahweh (the name that He possessed) and the fulfillment of Isaiah’s prophetic word pertaining to Yahweh alone.

The Oneness interpretations of the Hymn do not follow theologically or contextually. From start to finish, the Hymn presents a positive affirmation that the Son was in the very nature of God subsisting and preexisting. It was the Son who emptied Himself, becoming incarnate, *taking* the very nature of humanity. He Himself humbled Himself and became obedient to the point of death, even death on a cross. Paul sees the Son as the Yahweh of Isaiah’s prophecy in 45:23 who glorifies the distinct Person of God the Father.

**6.** What is most problematic for the Oneness advocate is to answer the question: Who is the subject of the participles in the Hymn particularly in verse 7, *labōn* (“taking”) and *genomenos* (“being made”), the Father or the Son? That the Father was the one doing the action of the participles is clearly inconsistent with the entire New Testament revelation of God the Father. How did God the Father “not regard/consider equality with God [Himself?] a thing to be grasped”? Or, when did God the Father “*became obedient to death*”? But, as most Oneness believers see it, the Son is the subject of the participles; however, in Oneness thinking, it is the *human* non-preexistent non-divine Son in His “earthly” life/ministry that is in view.

The most revealing flaw to this assertion is simply Paul’s statement in verse 6. How is it that the human non-divine Son *is always subsisting* (*huparchōn*) in the nature of God? It would be a hermeneutical error to

disconnect the subject of the participle in verse 6 (i.e., *the one who is always existing in the nature of God*) from the participles (and verbs) in verses 7 and 8. It is the *same subject* throughout the Hymn: the Son who glorifies the Father by His self-emptying and self-humbling.

So, at which point did the human non-divine Son do the actions of the participles, *taking* the nature of a servant and *being made* in human likeness if He never preexisted? If, as Oneness teachers suggest, the “Son” represents merely Jesus’ humanity whose life started in Bethlehem, then, what exactly did the Son empty of Himself? If the participles and self-emptying refer merely to the Son’s non-preexistent *human birth*, then, could Paul or anyone else say that their human birth was some kind of emptying?

If the Son represents merely Jesus’ humanity, at what point in the Son’s human life did He humble Himself? Again, this was a *self-humbling* that the Son Himself did. In contrast to the Oneness notion, was not the Son always in a state of humiliation while on earth? Of course He was! The fact is, both the self-emptying (incarnation) and self-humbling were *parallel actions* describing the eternal Son’s redemptive work. Even if Oneness teachers respond by saying that the “Son” preexisted, but as a mere concept or plan in the Father’s mind, that does not explain how an impersonal “plan” or “thought” can self-empty and self-humble itself.

Biblically, there is no refuge for Oneness advocates. Remember, the context of Philippians 2 is humility of which Paul provided the ultimate example: *The Person of the Son, who was always existing in the nature of God (“rich” in glory; 2 Cor. 8:9), emptied Himself (“He became poor”; 2 Cor. 8:9) by taking the nature of a servant being made in human likeness, He humbled Himself becoming obedient to death, even death on a cross, in which every knee shall bend and every tongue shall confess that Jesus Christ is Lord (Yahweh), to the glory of God the Father.* Whichever way Oneness advocates see the subject of the participles (and other verbs), either the Father or as the human non-divine Son, this high Christological Hymn turns Oneness theology upside down.

**The implications of the present active participle *ōn* (articular and anarthrous).** The biblical evidence of the preexistence of the Son irrefutably proves the Oneness position false. Just as the present active participle *huparchōn*, in Philippians 2:6 communicates the perpetual existence of the divine Son, more than a few passages contain the

present active participle *ōn* (from *eimi*), which also denotes the Son's eternal existence (cf. Harris, 1992: 157-58). In explicit reference to the Son's eternality, the present active participle *ōn* is used both articularly (*ho ōn*) and anarthrously (*ōn*). Two such examples of the articular form of the participle are John 1:18 and Romans 9:5.

- **John 1:18:** “No one has seen God at any time; the only begotten God *who is* [*ho ōn*, i.e., “the One who is/being always”] in the bosom of the Father, He has explained Him” (emphasis added).
- **Romans 9:5:** “Whose are the fathers, and from whom is the Christ according to the flesh, *who is* [*ho ōn*, i.e., “the One who is/being always”] over all, God blessed forever. Amen” (emphasis added).

Note the defining context of both passages: the Son's absolute deity. Both authors even call the Son *theos*, which further supports the affirmation of the Son's deity and His preexistence. Referring to John 1:18, Reymond (1998: 303) remarks on the significance of the articular participle: “The present participle *ho ōn* ... indicates a continuing state of being: ‘who is continually in the bosom of the Father.’”

In the LXX of Exodus 3:14, we find the same articular present participle to denote Yahweh's eternal existence: *Egō eimi ho ōn*, literally, “I am the eternal/always existing One.” Also note, the *egō eimi* phrase precedes the participle here (cf. John 8:24, 58). We moreover find the use of the anarthrous present active participle *ōn*, in contexts where the deity of the Son is clearly in view. In Hebrews 1:3, the present active participle (i.e., *hos ōn*) “marks the Son's continuous action of being, which denotes total and full deity” (Robertson, 1932: 5:17-18; cf. Tenney, 1981: 34).<sup>21</sup>

It “refers to the absolute and timeless existence” (Rodgers and Rodgers, 1998: 516).<sup>22</sup> The participle *ōn* in Hebrews 1:3 is set in

---

<sup>21</sup> The prologue of Hebrews provides a marked contrast between things created (viz., the angels, the heavens, and the earth) and the eternal divine Son (cf. vv. 3, 8) whom the author presents as the Creator of all things (cf. vv. 2, 10). There will be a thorough examination of this important prologue below.

<sup>22</sup> In Revelation 1:8, the articular participle (*ho ōn*) is used to denote the “timeless existence” of the “Lord God,” which is especially amplified by the title, “Alpha and Omega”: “‘I am the Alpha and the Omega,’ says the Lord God, ‘who is [*ho ōn*] and who was and who is to come, the Almighty.’” Although it is possible that the speaker

contrast with *genomenos*, in verse 4. This is similar to the use of *ēn*, in John 1:1, which is set in contrast with *egeneto*, in 1:14, and of *huparchōn*, in Philippians 2:6 (cf. 2 Cor. 8:9), which is set in contrast with *genomenos*, in verse 7. In each case, there is an outstanding contrast between the eternal preincarnate Son and *all things created*.

### **The Preincarnate Son sent from the Father**

“The very works I do testify about Me, that the Father has sent Me. And the Father who sent Me, He has testified of Me. You have neither heard His voice at any time nor seen His form. You do not have His word abiding in you, for you do not believe Him whom He sent” (John 5:36-38).

Scripture presents in plain and normal language the preincarnate Person of the Son that *was sent* from the Father (e.g., John 3:13; 16-17; 6:33, 38, 44, 46, 50-51, 62; 8:23, 38, 42, 57-58; 16:28; Gal. 4:4). Nowhere in the New Testament, however, do we see Jesus sending the Son. If Jesus were the Father, as Oneness teachers contend, one would expect to find a clear example of Jesus sending the Son—at least one passage. As we have shown, in Oneness doctrine, the Father (Jesus’ divine nature) came down out of heaven and *put on* a flesh outfit, calling it “Son.” In full denial of the incarnation of the preincarnate Son, Bernard (1983: 122) states: “God the Father so loved the world that *He robed Himself in flesh* and *gave Himself as the Son* of God to reconcile the world to Himself” (emphasis added; see also Bernard, 1983: 104-5; Magee, 1988: 32).

This teaching unquestionably contradicts the unadorned words of Jesus Christ: “No one has ascended into heaven but He who descended *from heaven: the Son of Man*” (John 3:13). The Bible so fluently states

---

in verse 8 could be the Father, the evidence identifying the Son as the speaker is more compelling and more contextually apparent (esp. in light of v. 7 and 22:13). Plus, as seen, not only is the *articular participle* applied to the Son at John 1:18 and Romans 9:5 (and the anarthrous *ōn* at Heb. 1:3), but note the targumic rendering of Deuteronomy 32:39, which the speaker is the Memra, that is, the “Word” of the Lord:

When the Word [Memra] of the LORD shall reveal Himself to redeem His people, He will say to all the nations: “Behold now, that I am He who am, and was, and will be, and there is no other God beside Me.

The phrase, “I am ... *who am, and was, and will be*,” which the Memra ascribes to Himself, is virtually the same phrase as in Revelation 1:8, “I am ... *who is [ho ōn]* and *who was* and *who is to come*,” which the “Alpha and the Omega” ascribes to Himself (note the same tense sequence: *present, past, and future*). Hence, further evidence of the Apostle John’s targumic reliance.

that the Person of the Son preexisted in heaven *prior to His coming to earth*. The Son *prior to Bethlehem* was *with* the Father who sent Him (e.g., Dan. 7:9-14; John 1:1b; 17:5). The Father sent the Son of Man *ek tou ouranou* (“from out of the heaven”; John 3:13).

The massive amounts of biblical evidence confirming that the Father sent the preincarnate Son crushes the Oneness unitarian/unipersonal view of Christ. It proves false the entire Oneness system of a Jesus who as the Father existed in absolute aloneness prior to creation. Notwithstanding the overwhelming biblical evidence of the Father sending the preincarnate Son, Oneness exegesis maintains that passages that speak of the *sending of the Son* are in reality speaking of Jesus as the Father sending His “plan” (i.e., the future Son) to earth. It claims that the Father “put flesh on” (without actually *becoming* flesh) at Bethlehem. Bernard (1983: 184) further explains this decidedly modalistic notion:

*He [the Father] gave of Himself; He did not send someone else* (John 3:16). The Son was sent from God as a man, not as God: “God sent forth His Son, made of a woman” (Galatians 4:4). The word *sent* does not imply preexistence of the Son or preexistence of the man. John 1:6 states that John the Baptist was a man sent from God, and we know he did not pre-exist his conception. Instead, the word *sent* indicates that God appointed the Son for a special purpose. *God formed a plan, put flesh on that plan, and then put that plan in operation ... God [the Father] manifested Himself in flesh* in order to achieve a special goal (emphasis added).

Bernard argues, “The word sent does not imply preexistence of the Son,” concluding that the word “sent” in Galatians 4:4 is the same “sent” as in John 1:6, where we read that John was “sent.” This assertion, however, is incorrect. His assumption that the word “sent” carries the exact same meaning in both passages displays his unfamiliarity in the area of Greek grammar. Simply, in John 1:6, the word translated “sent” (“There came a man sent from God”) is *apestalmenos* (the perfect passive participle of *apostellō*). The term carries the normal meaning of “to send” with no indication of preexistence (cf. Liddell *et al*, 1996: 219; Bauer, 2000: 120-21).

However, the word translated “sent forth” in Galatians 4:4 (“God *sent forth* His Son”) derives from a different Greek word than that of John 1:6. The term is *exapesteilen*, which is the aorist active indicative

of *exapostellō*. This verb, unlike *apostellō*, has the meaning of being sent *from* a place, “to send away from one’s self ... out of the place” (Thayer, 1996: 221) or “for fulfillment of a mission in another place” (Bauer, 2000: 345-46). Note the prefixed preposition *ek* (“out of/from”) of the verb *exapostellō* (*ek* + *apostellō*), which clearly expresses the preexistence of the Person of the Son (cf. Wallace, 1996: 371; Bauer, 2000: 295). Hence, God the Father sent Jesus Christ, God the Son, *from* heaven *to* earth:

“For God did not send the Son into the world to judge the world, but that the world might be saved through Him ... For I have come down from heaven, not to do My own will, but the will of Him who sent Me ... I am the bread that came down out of heaven ... This is the bread, which comes down out of heaven, so that one may eat of it and not die. I am the living bread that came down out of heaven ... What then if you see the Son of Man ascending to where He was before?” (John 3:17; 6:38, 41, 50-51, 62).

#### 4.6 JESUS CHRIST THE SON AS CO-CREATOR

In Chapter 3, we demonstrated the overwhelming Scriptural evidence for the full deity of Jesus Christ, the Son of God. We have also shown that the New Testament presents the Son as the very object of divine worship. In addition to these verifiable proofs of the Son’s deity, the New Testament shows that the Son was the very Agent<sup>23</sup> of creation,

---

<sup>23</sup> In the New Testament, *agency* is commonly expressed in three ways: *ultimate* agency (the ultimate source of the action; the one directly responsible for the action—*apo*, *hupo*, *para*, + the genitive); *intermediate* agency (that which the ultimate Agent uses to *carry out* the action—*dia* + the genitive); and *impersonal* agency (that which the *ultimate* Agent uses to *perform* the action—*en*, *ek* + the dative; cf. Wallace, 1996: 431-32). Biblically, then, the Father was the *source* (*ultimate* Agent) of creation, the Son being the *intermediate* Agent in that He *carried out* the act for the ultimate Agent (cf. *ibid*, 431). That the Son is the *intermediate* Agent of creation does not mean that He was a mere “helper” of sorts, or a secondary agent of God, but rather, He was the actual Agent of creation—namely, that which the *ultimate* Agent (the Father) used to *carry out* the action—namely, the Creator of all things. As further discussed in detail, several passages unambiguously and exegetically reveal this important truth (viz. John 1:3; 1 Cor. 8:6; Col. 1:16-17; Heb. 1:2, and vv. 10-12). To say again, this point alone utterly collapses and destroys the entire theological foundation of Oneness theology.

Keeping consistent with the assumption of unitarianism, Oneness teachers (e.g., Bernard, 1983: 116-17; Segraves, 1996: 31-32) reject this idea. The normal Oneness response to passages that apparently show the Son as Creator is to argue that the Father (Jesus' divine nature) was the Creator and had the *future* human non-divine Son *in view* or on His mind when He created. Thus, Oneness teachers are quick to point out that the Father, *through the Son* (i.e., the Son in view) created all things (cf. Bernard, 1983: 183; Weisser, 1983: 35).

To establish that the Son was the Creator would mean that He preexisted, hence refuting all Oneness claims. It would turn the Oneness position on its head. For if the Son were the actual Creator, that would mean that He 1) existed before time, thus, was not a part of creation, 2) coexisted *with* the Father, and hence, 3) is a distinct Person *alongside* of the Father, as co-Creator. We shall now examine John 1:3, Colossians 1:16-17 and Hebrews 1:2, 10, which affirm that the Son was the actual Creator.

**John 1:3:** “All things came into being through Him, and apart from Him nothing came into being that has come into being.” The Greek reads: *panta di' autou egeneto, kai chōris autou egeneto oude en ho gegonen*. As noted above, the prologue of John presents a well-defined contrast between *all things created or that had origin* (i.e., *egeneto*; cf. vv. 3, 6, 10, 14) and the *eternal* divine Word (*ēn*; vv. 1, 2, 4, 9) who *created all things*. In verse 3, we see the creative activity viewed as one event in contrast to the continuous existence in verses 1 and 2 (Robertson, 1932: 5:5). The phrase *panta di' autou* seems to be particularly appropriate to describe the role of the Logos *vis-à-vis* God and the world (Rodgers and Rodgers, 1998: 175).

What deepens the argument even more is John's usage of the preposition *dia*, followed by the genitive *autou*. This is a very significant aspect as it relates to the exegesis of the passage. In Greek, *dia* followed by the genitive clearly indicates “agency” or “means” (cf. Greenlee, 1986: 31; Wallace, 1996: 368; Bauer, 2000: 225). In our exegesis of Colossians 1:16-17 below, this important grammatical point will take precedence in establishing that the Son was the Agent of creation—thus refuting again the Oneness notion of a non-eternal Son. In such a comprehensible and undeniable way, the Apostle John

presents the Son, the eternal Word, *who was “with” the Father*, as the Creator of all things.<sup>24</sup>

**Colossians 1:16-17:** “For by Him all things were created, both in the heavens and on earth, visible and invisible, whether thrones or dominions or rulers or authorities—all things have been created through Him and for Him. He is before all things and in Him all things hold together.” Despite the biblical simplicity, Bernard (1983: 116-17) attempts to circumvent the biblical truth that the Son is the Creator of all things:

Perhaps these scriptural passages have a deeper meaning that can be expressed as follows: Although the Son *did not exist at the time of creation except as the word in the mind of God*, God used His foreknowledge of the Son when He created the world ... *The plan of the Son was in God’s mind* at creation and was necessary for the creation to be successful. Therefore, He created the world by the Son (emphasis added).

This is an obvious case of eisegesis. Bernard’s assertion is clear: passages that speak of the Son as the Creator mean that when the Father created all things, He had the “plan of the Son” in mind or in view, that is, “God used His foreknowledge of the Son when He created the world.” Bernard’s conclusion assumes unitarianism and disallows normal exegesis.

In the first place, Colossians 1:13-15 clearly differentiates Jesus from the Father. These verses contextually prohibit the Oneness notion that Jesus *is both* the Father and the Son: “For He rescued us from the domain of darkness, and transferred us to the kingdom of His beloved Son, in whom we have redemption, the forgiveness of sins. He [the Son] is the image of the invisible God [the Father].” Consider also, as we have shown (cf. Chapter 2, 2.4.4), that Paul’s main purpose for writing

---

<sup>24</sup> Another interesting note pertains to our repeated contention that the Targum may have been the source of John’s Logos theology. Both the Targum and John present the “Word” as the Creator of all things. For example, we read in places such as the targumic rendering of Isaiah 44:24: “I am the LORD, who made all things; I stretched out the heavens by My Memra...” And Isaiah 45:12: “I by My Memra made the earth, and created man upon it; I by My might stretched out the heavens.” There are many other places where the Targum identifies the “Word” (Memra) as the Creator of all things, as in John 1:3 (cf. also Gen. 14:19 [*Neofiti*]; Ps. 33:6; Isa. 48:13; Jer. 27:5; etc.).

the book of Colossians was to provide a meaningful refutation of the proto-Gnostic ideology concerning spirit *versus* matter.

The Gnostic system did not allow Jesus to be the Creator of something so inherently evil as “matter.” In light of this, Paul provides a clear anti-Gnostic polemic by firmly demonstrating that Jesus the Son of God did *in fact* create all things. Note the clear and forceful (and even redundant) way he presents this: “*By Him [en autō] all things [panta] were created ... all things [panta] have been created through Him [di’ autou] and for Him [eis auton]. He is before all things [autos estin pro pantōn], and in Him [en autō] all things [panta] hold together*” (emphasis added). The following grammatical aspects pointedly codify Paul’s argument:

1. Along with John 1:3, Paul employs the neuter *panta*, which indicate that the Son was the actual Creator of *all things*. White (1998: 213) remarks on the theological implication of Paul’s use of the neuter:

It is significant that Paul does not use the more popular terms *pas* or *pan*, both of which had meanings in Greek philosophy that allowed the creation to be a part of God or God a part of creation (as in *pantheism*). Instead, he uses a term that makes the creation a concrete, separate entity with the real existence.

2. Paul utilizes four different prepositions to magnify his affirmation that the Son was the Agent of creation: All things were created “by/in Him” (*en* + dative; vv. 16, 17); “through Him” (*dia* + genitive; v. 16); “for Him” (*eis* + accusative; v. 16); and, He is “before all things” (*pro* + genitive; v. 17). To say again, Paul is speaking here of the Son, not the Father (cf. v. 14).

3. As a final point, as with John 1:3, what immediately demolishes the “Son in view” theory is that Paul specifically states that “all things” were created “through [*dia*] Him [*autou*]” (viz., the Son). As observed above, we find the preposition *dia*, followed by the genitive *autou* grammatically revealing that the Son was the actual Creator Himself. There is no stronger way in which Paul could have articulated that the Son was the real and actual Agent of creation.<sup>25</sup> If Paul wanted to

---

<sup>25</sup> In 1 Corinthians 8:6 and, as discussed below, Hebrews 1:2, *dia*, is followed by the genitive signifying the Son as the Agent of creation.

convey the idea that the Son was merely “in view” of the Father or an absent mere conceptual *instrument* of creation, as Oneness teachers assert, he would not have used *dia* followed by the genitive. Rather, he would have exclusively used *dia* followed by the accusative, but he does not.<sup>26</sup> The Oneness theological assumption that the Son was not the Agent of creation,<sup>27</sup> but merely *in view* of creation, cannot stand grammatically or contextually—it changes the intended meaning of the text and ignores the chief theme of Paul’s letter.

**Hebrews 1:2, 10:** “In these last days [God the Father] has spoken to us in His Son, whom He appointed heir of all things, through whom also He made the world ... And, ‘YOU, LORD, IN THE BEGINNING LAID THE FOUNDATION OF THE EARTH, AND THE HEAVENS ARE THE WORKS OF YOUR HANDS.’” The prologue of Hebrews annihilates the Oneness position regarding its rejection of the preexistence of the Person of the Son.

In this prologue the full deity and unipersonality of the Son is cogently expressed (esp. vv. 3, 8). Relative to the preexistence and creatorship of the Son, verses 2 and 10 more than adequately communicate both truths. As with John 1:3 and Colossians 1:16-17 (and 1 Cor. 8:6), verse 2 affirms that the Son was the Creator. In this passage we find again the preposition *dia*, followed by the genitive: “In these last days has spoken to us in His Son, whom He appointed heir of all

---

<sup>26</sup> Although Paul does use the accusative case in verse 16 (*auton*), but he uses it after the preposition *eis* meaning “for” or “because of” and not after *dia*.

<sup>27</sup> Oneness teachers along with other unitarian groups (esp. Jehovah’s Witnesses and Muslims) argue that the Son could not have been the Creator because passages such as Isaiah 44:24 and 1 Corinthians 8:6 teach that God (viz. the Father) *alone* created all things. But as consistently pointed out, Oneness teachers assume unitarianism/unipersonalism in that they envisage God as one Person—the Father. The doctrine of the Trinity, in contrast to a unitarian assumption, teaches that God is one undivided and unquantifiable Being who has revealed Himself as three distinct coequal, coeternal, and coexistent Persons. The three Persons *share* the *nature* (*ousia*) of the one Being. As fully God it can be said that the Father is the Creator (cf. Acts 17:24), the Son was the Creator (cf. John 1:3; Col. 16-17; Heb. 1:2, 10), and the Holy Spirit is the Creator (cf. Job 33:4). For the one God is indivisible and inseparable (cf. Deut. 6:4; Isa. 45:5). Therefore, passages like Isaiah 44:24, which speak of God creating *by Himself* and alone are perfectly consistent with Trinitarian theology. Again, the three Persons are not three *separate* Beings; they are distinct self-conscious Persons or Selves sharing the nature of the one Being. Unless one clearly realizes what the biblical doctrine of the Trinity actually teaches, the doctrine will be confounded and misrepresented as tritheism.

things, *through whom* [di' hou] also He made the world” (emphasis added). Contextually, the core line of evidence that the author presents, which promptly affirms the Son’s creatorship, is the well defined contrast between *created things* (viz., angels and the heavens and the earth) and the *eternality* of the divine Son (cf. vv. 2-3, 8-10). In verses 10-12, the author (quoting the Father) applies Psalm 102:25-27 (101:25-27 in the LXX) to the Son. This is so heavily significant because (a) the Psalm is a reference to Yahweh and (b) the Father is speaking *to the Son* differentiating Himself from the Son (esp. in light of vv. 8-9). The referent to the pronoun *su*, “You” at the beginning of verse 10 (*kai su*) is back in verse 8: *pros de ton huion*— “but of the Son He [the Father] says.” Irrefutably, *it is God the Father directly addressing the Son*. In verse 8, the *nominative* for the *vocative of address*<sup>28</sup> is used, whereas in verse 10, the actual vocative of *kurios* (*kurie*) is used, which strengthens the author’s argument even more: “YOU, LORD [*kurie*], IN THE BEGINNING LAID THE FOUNDATION OF THE EARTH, AND THE HEAVENS ARE THE WORKS OF YOUR HANDS.”

Conclusively, the prologue of Hebrews is one of the most theologically devastating prologues in all of the New Testament for Oneness defenders. Not only does the prologue affirm the deity and eternality of the Son as well as the distinction between the Father and the Son, but also it clearly presents the Son as the actual Agent of creation, the Creator Himself.

#### 4.7 THE IMPLICATIONS OF *MONOGENĒS HUIOS*

On several occasions, the phrase *monogenēs huios* (and *monogenēs theos*, at John 1:18)<sup>29</sup> is applied specifically to the Son at John 3:16, 18;

---

<sup>28</sup> The fact that the nominative *theos* with the vocative force is used does not in any way remove the meaning of *direct address*. The usual way of addressing God in both the LXX and the New Testament was the nominative for the vocative (cf. Wallace, 1996: 56-57; Reymond, 1998: 272; also cf. John 20:28; Rev. 4:11). So common was the nominative for the vocative that every time *theos* is directly addressed in the New Testament, only in one verse (Matt. 27:46) does *theos* actually appear in the vocative case: *thee mou thee mou*— “My God, My God ...”

<sup>29</sup> In John 1:18, Jesus is called the *monogenēs theos*. However, there are a few variant renderings contained in extant Greek manuscripts of the Gospel of John. The three renderings are *monogenēs theos*; *ho monogenēs theos*; and (in later manuscripts) *ho monogenēs huios*. The textual support is as follows (cf. NA<sup>28</sup>, 2012: 293):

*monogenēs theos*: P<sup>66</sup> Ⲛ\* B C\* L sy<sup>p,hmg</sup>; Or<sup>pt</sup> Did

*ho monogenēs theos*: P<sup>75</sup> Ⲛ<sup>1</sup> 33; Cl<sup>pt</sup> Cl<sup>exThd pt</sup> Or<sup>pt</sup>

and 1 John 4:9).<sup>30</sup> Because of the standard translation of *monogenēs huios*, as “only begotten Son,” Oneness advocates, along with other leading non-Christian groups (esp., Muslims, Jehovah’s Witnesses, and Mormons), pour a meaning into the term *monogenēs* that is foreign to the biblical meaning—namely, assuming a meaning of “origin” in some sense. We must first address the Oneness interpretation of the term before examining the term in its original significance. As we have consistently shown, the Oneness theological conclusions are largely based on English word meanings (esp. that of the KJV) not on the original. For this reason, Oneness teachers detach *monogenēs* from its lexical (and contextual) denotation. Bernard (1983: 103-4), for instance, with no contextual markers or lexical support, explains that the term means:

“To procreate, to father, to sire.” Thus, *begotten* indicates a definite point in time—the point at which conception takes place. There must be a time when the begetter [the Father] exists and the begotten [the Son] is not yet in existence, and there must be a point in time when the act of begetting occurs ... So, the very words *begotten* and *Son* each contradict the word *eternal* as applied to the Son of God.

---

*ho monogenēs huios*: A C<sup>3</sup> K G L Q Y f<sup>1.13</sup> 565. 579. 700. 892. 1241. 1424. M lat sy<sup>c.h.</sup>; C<sup>Ipt</sup> C<sup>IexThd pt</sup>

*Monogenēs theos* is contained in the NA<sup>28</sup> (2012: 293). It is the rendering *theos* and not *huios* after *monogenēs* that is concurred with most textual scholars (e.g., Westcott and Hort, 1896: 166; Metzger, 1994: 169-70; cf. also Harris, 1992: 82). In support of the rendering *monogenēs theos*, Robertson (1932: 5:17) states that “The best old Greek manuscripts (N<sup>\*</sup> B C L) read *monogenēs theos* (God only begotten) which is undoubtedly the true text.” *Theos* (articular and anarthrous) and not *huios* is also supported by many important early church fathers (e.g., Clement of Alex., Clement<sup>from Theodotus</sup>, Origen, Didymus, Eusebius, Gregory of Nyssa, Epiphanius, Serapion, Cyril). Because the majority of manuscripts contain the rendering *ho monogenēs huios*, the KJV follows respectively. In the face of the earliest and best manuscripts, Oneness supporters gladly hold to the late variant rendering in order to reinforce their *a priori* theological commitment, namely, the Son is not God. “We do not believe,” says Bernard (1983: 100), “these variant readings [i.e., *monogenēs theos*] are correct.”

<sup>30</sup> Although John 1:14 contains a similar phrase (*monogenous para patros*), it nevertheless carries the same meaning. All together, *monogenēs* is used nine times in the New Testament: Luke 7:12; 8:42; 9:38; John 1:14, 18; 3:16, 18; Hebrews 11:17; and 1 John 4:9.

In the same unscholarly fashion, Oneness teacher Gordon Magee (1988: 25) states: “Indeed the Bible flatly and plainly contradicts the eternal ‘Son idea’ in John 3:16 and everywhere it mentions the ‘begotten Son.’ The Words *eternal* and *begotten* are contradictory and mean completely opposite things” (emphasis his).

The fundamental problem with these definitions is that they conveniently impose a concept of origin or derivation to the term *monogenēs*. *Monogenēs* is a relational term. As applied to the Son, it has nothing whatsoever to do with origin or derivation. Thus, when used in reference to the Son, the term signified the unique relationship that He has with His Father. The English phrase “only begotten” (KJV, NASB) is translated from the single Greek term *monogenēs*. “Only begotten” is ambiguous and misleading, and could indeed imply a concept of begetting and/or generation. However, the English meaning of any New Testament word or phrase “must, in all cases, be consistent with the Greek original, and we must take any emphasis from the Greek, not from the English” (White, 1998: 201).

Some modern translations (e.g., NIV, NET, NLT), recognizing the lexical meaning, render *monogenēs* as “one and only.” The compound word *monogenēs* is derived from *monos* meaning “alone,” or “one” (Bauer, 2000: 658) and *genos* meaning “class” or “kind” (Bauer, 2000: 194-95). Hence, *monogenēs huios* simply means “one and only Son,” “unique Son,” or “one of a kind Son,” lacking any notion of origin or beginning. Warfield (1950: 56) says of the term: “The adjective ‘only begotten’ conveys the idea, not of derivation and subordination, but of *uniqueness* and co-substantiality: Jesus is all that God is, and He alone is this.” The lexical support is undeniable and overwhelming (cf. Moulton and Milligan, 1930: 416-17; Liddell *et al*, 1996: 1144; Thayer, 1996: 417-18; Bauer, 2000: 658).

As stated, the term *monogenēs* is a compound word, *monos*, “alone/one” + *genos*, “class/kind.” Erroneously assuming that second part of the word (*genos*) comes from *gennaō*, which does mean “to beget” or “to give birth” (or “to bring forth”; Bauer, 193-94), Oneness teachers grossly misinterpret the term, asserting that the Son had a beginning (cf. Magee, 1988: 25). Quite the opposite, the second part of the word is not *gennaō*, but *genos*. Notice the two nu’s (*nn*) in *gennaō*, compared to the one nu (*n*) in *genos*. It is *genos*, not *gennaō*, which forms the second part of *monogenēs*. This shows that the derivation of *genos* is from a different word than that of *gennaō*.

The derivation of *genos* is from *gignesthai/ginomai*, and *gennaō* is from *gennasthai* (cf. White: 1998: 202). “Etymologically,” Harris (1992: 86-87) observes, “*monogenēs* is not associated with begetting (*gennasthai*) but with existence (*gignesthai*) ... This leads us to conclude that *monogenēs* denotes ‘the only member of a kin or kind.’” Hebrews 11:17 provides even more clarification as to a proper understanding of the term. In this passage, Abraham’s son Isaac is called, *ho monogenēs*. Yet, Isaac was not his first or only son (cf. Gen. 16:15-17). Thus, Isaac was the *unique* son or *one of a kind* son from whom God’s “covenant would be established” (Gen. 17:19-21). For God’s covenant was with Abraham’s *monogenēs* son Isaac, not with his first son Ishmael.

Therefore, the lexical and contextual evidence shows that the term does not carry the idea of “beget,” “to give birth,” “origin,” etc., as Oneness teachers claim (Bernard, 1983: 103-4).<sup>31</sup> Certainly, it would be utterly nonsensical for the authors of the anti-Arian Nicene Creed (A.D. 325) to use the term if it had any denotation of origin. As noted in Chapter 5, the Creed positively affirmed the full deity of the Son (against Arius) and His distinction from the Father (against Modalism): “Jesus Christ, the Son of God, begotten of the Father the *only begotten* [*monogenē*]; that is, of the essence of the Father, God of God, Light of Light, very God of very God, begotten, *not made*, of one substance [*homoousion*] with the Father ...” (emphasis added). Jesus Christ is the *unique* Son of God. He is God’s Son in a *one of a kind* sense. In every use of *monogenēs* contained in the Gospel of John (1:14, 18, 3:16; and 3:18), we observe this meaning.

---

<sup>31</sup> Two other passages should also be mentioned, Hebrews 1:5 and 5:5. Oneness teachers argue that the Son had a beginning because both passages contain the phrase “TODAY I HAVE BEGOTTEN [*gegennēka*] YOU” (from Ps. 2:7). However, the term *sēmeron* (“today”) is clearly a relational term. It denoted His Sonship in reference to His Messianic kingship, not deity. His Sonship was openly declared at several different times throughout His life (e.g., at His baptism [cf. Matt. 3:16-17]; at the Transfiguration [cf. Matt. 17:5]; at His resurrection [cf. Acts 13:33]). We also see this open declaration in Romans 1:3-4, where the Son was “declared the Son of God [in reference to Messianic kingship] with power by the resurrection from the dead, according to the Spirit of holiness ...” Here the two attributive participles, *genomenou* (“was born”) and *horisthentos* (“was declared”) modify *huiou* at the beginning of verse 3. Hence, verse 3 indicates that Jesus was *already* the Son of God when He was declared to be the Son of God in verse 4. In Acts 13:32-34, Paul cites the same Old Testament passage (Ps. 2:7), but he applies it to Jesus’ resurrection. Consequently, if “today” in Hebrews 1:5 and 5:5 means that the Son did not exist before Bethlehem, as Oneness teachers suppose, then “today” in Acts 13:33 would likewise mean that He did not exist before His resurrection.

The correct understanding of the term *monogenēs* in its proper sense when applied to the Son negates the idea of origin, derivation, or beginning. It establishes the Son's unique status as the "one and only God" who is (*ho ōn*, i.e., "the One who is always subsisting") in the bosom of the Father explaining (viz. exegeting) Him (cf. John 1:18).

#### 4.8 SUMMARY

To remove the Person of the Son from the Trinity is to remove God from Scripture: "Whoever denies the Son does not have the Father; the one who confesses the Son has the Father also" (1 John 2:23; cf. John 5:23; 8:24; 1 John 5:20). The customary term *agennētos* (i.e., "uncreated") was used by the early church to denote God's eternal nature and His self-existence (i.e., His unoriginateness). In his letter to the Ephesians, Ignatius (7, in Holmes, 1999: 140-41), applies *agennētos* to the Son: "There is one Physician who is possessed both of flesh and spirit; both made and *not made* [*agennētos*]; God existing in flesh; true life in death; both of Mary and of God; first possible and then impossible, even Jesus Christ our Lord" (emphasis added). Explicitly demonstrated, Scripture presents the preexistence of the preincarnate Person of the Son. In John 1:1 (and 1 John 1:1-2), the Son is presented as 1) eternal (on the account of the imperfect *ēn*), 2) coexisting *with* the Father (on account of the preposition *pros*), and 3) coequal *with* God the Father (on account of the qualitative *theos*, in 1:1c).

In John 17:5, the Son Himself states that He possessed/shared (*eichon*) glory *with* (*para*) the Father *before the world was* (*pro tou ton kosmon einai*). In the gospels (esp. John's), the Son expresses His preexistence by consistently claiming that He was sent by the Father *out from heaven* (e.g., John 3:13; 16; 6:38, 46, 62; 8:23, 38, 42; 16:28). In Paul's high Christological Hymn (i.e., Phil. 2:6-11), Paul poetically and directly delineates both the *humiliation* and *exaltation* of the God the Son, who, as Paul so deliberately points out, was the fulfillment of Isaiah's prophecy in 45:23. These passages are so clear, so expressive, that Oneness teachers, must resort to the most unnatural and eisegetical ways of interpreting the passages.

The biblical presentation of the Son as the Agent of creation annihilates the Oneness notion that the Son's life started in Bethlehem (cf. Chapter 2, 2.4.4). As we have shown exegetically, the Son is the Creator of all things (cf. John 1:3; Col. 1:16-17; Heb. 1:2, 10-12).

Scripture militates against the Oneness idea that the non-eternal non-personal Son was a mere *thought* or *plan* that originated in the Father's mind. The apostles of Jesus Christ clearly and cogently affirmed that Jesus Christ the eternal Son was the Agent of creation, God in the flesh.

# *Chapter Five*

## **ORTHODOXY UNITED AGAINST HERESY**

### **5.1 INTRODUCTION**

Since the Garden of Eden (where the first deception occurred; cf. 2 Cor. 11:3; 1 Tim. 2:14), false teachings have subsisted amongst the people of God. There are many examples of false prophets and false teachers found in the Old Testament (e.g., Deut. 13:1ff.; Isa. 47:13-15; Jer. 23:9ff.). In the first century, Jesus continually warned about false teachers and false teachings (e.g., Matt. 7:15-23) and the apostles provided pointed and specific polemics against the false teachings of the day. For example, both Paul (in Colossians) and John (in 1 and 2 John) provided a potent anti-Gnostic polemic and a positive affirmation of the humanity of the Son of God (as discussed below). Further, the Apostle Paul made a clear case against the Judaizers in Romans and especially in Galatians.

Subsequent to the death of the apostles, false teachings were pervasive and escalating, as Paul had predicted (cf. Acts 20:29-31; 1 Tim. 4:1ff.). Thus, the early church continuously battled and vigorously stood up against heresies that were just as prevalent then as they are today. Some of the main Christological heresies in the first few centuries included Gnosticism (especially Docetism), Modalism and Arianism. There were many other heresies; however, these seem to have had the greatest impact on the Christian church. Even today, although repackaged under different names, these heresies still live on.<sup>32</sup>

Although this chapter will provide a brief examination of some of the important heresies, the chief focus will be on Modalism, exploring both its origin and some of its key proponents. This chapter will also provide an objective, concise and accurate presentation of the orthodox

---

<sup>32</sup> Notice the theological parallels between the following groups: Gnosticism then, now Christian/Religious Science; Modalism then, now Oneness Pentecostalism; Arianism then, now Jehovah's Witnesses.

reaction (refutation) to Modalism and factually substantiate that the early church believed and taught a triune concept of God.

The repetitious assertion made by Oneness teachers (Bernard, 1983: 43, 236) that “the early Christian church leaders in the days immediately following the apostolic age were Oneness” is proven false by the profuse amount of patristic documentation affirming the concept of the Trinity and the definitive Trinitarian implications set forth in every important early Christian Council and its resulting creed

It has been well observed that every important ecumenical Council (including the first at Jerusalem, cf. Acts 15) and its subsequent creed was reactionary. In other words, the early church sharply reacted (i.e., affirming and defending/refuting) to any teaching that rejected and/or convoluted the Person, nature and finished work of Jesus Christ. The overall encompassing thought of the early church was to stand unwaveringly on the solid ground of Scripture, from which they would filter and test all teachings. Accordingly, the universal church vociferously opposed Modalism. Modalism denied the biblical view of the triune God, denying both the unipersonality and deity of the Son and the unipersonality of the Holy Spirit. The early church rightly condemned Modalism as patent heresy that denied the only source of salvation, Jesus Christ.

## 5.2 DOCETIC GnosticISM

Aside from the Judaizing heresy, which was the first major heresy that the church had to combat (cf. Gal. 2:14; Acts 15), there was, as briefly defined in Chapter 2 (2.4.4), a form of Gnosticism<sup>33</sup> known as Docetism.<sup>34</sup> Whereas the Judaizing teaching was an attack against justification by faith alone, Docetism was an attack on the very Person of Christ, namely, a denial, not of His deity (as is the case with most modern non-Christian cults), but rather of His real humanity (cf. White, 1998: 107). Some Docetics taught that “Christ” appeared as Jesus, but that Jesus was never really a physical human (Olson and English, 2005: 10). Docetism and Oneness theology share a significant commonality:

---

<sup>33</sup> The greater part of information regarding Gnosticism is primarily drawn from the writings of Irenaeus, Hippolytus, Tertullian, Origen, and some later manuscripts discovered in the eighteenth century such as the Codex Askew, Codex Bruce, the Berlin Gnostic Codex, and the recent discoveries in the Nag Hammadi collection.

<sup>34</sup> From *dokein* (“to seem”), which Serapion of Antioch first expressed in A.D. 200 (Maier, 1999: 216).

they both deny that the Son was God in human flesh. As we have shown, Gnosticism was a dualistic system seeing matter (flesh, world, etc.) as inherently evil, and only that which is spiritual was good (e.g., soul, angels, God). Docetism, however, denied that “matter” even existed (White, 1998: 107).

Since their system of salvation consisted of obtaining certain “knowledge” (*gnōsis*) by which they could escape their “evil body,” they viewed Jesus (as good “Aeon”) as bodiless and denied that He was the Creator of all things (cf. Harris, 1999: 132-33). Noted early Docetic Gnostics include Cerinthus, Simon Magus, Basilides, Marcion of Sinope, Simon Magus’ pupil, Menander of Antioch, and Valentinus (Maier, 1999: 138-46).

It was quite natural that the Apostles John and Paul (as well as Peter and Jude) provided a pointed refutation against it and a most positive affirmation of the incarnation of God the Son. As we have shown, the book of Colossians was a piercing refutation of the heresy of Gnosticism, which, of course, taught that Jesus did not create “all things” or anything consisting of matter, and especially that He did not become flesh. The refutation Paul provided in Colossians was so perfect and so detailed that it shot right through the heart of the flesh-denying Gnostics. The theological highlights of this refutation include the teaching that 1) Jesus as the Agent of creation, the Creator of all things (cf. 1:16-17), 2) Jesus’ “physical” death provides redemption (cf. 1:20-22), and 3) all the “fullness” of “Deity,” presently, continuously, and permanently “dwells” in human flesh/bodily. The Docetic view separated Jesus from the so-called Christ spirit (esp. the teachings of Cerinthus<sup>35</sup>; cf. González, 1988: 132). Conversely, the Apostle John resolutely argued that Jesus *is the Christ* (cf. 1 John 5:1) who became *and remains* in the flesh. This was John’s ultimate test of orthodoxy:

By this you will know the Spirit of God: every spirit that confesses that Jesus Christ *has come* [*elēluthota*, lit., “having come and remains”]<sup>36</sup> in the *flesh* is from God; every spirit

---

<sup>35</sup> Cerinthus (c. A.D. 100), with whom the Apostle John was well acquainted (Maier, 1999: 146), denied that Jesus was the Christ. According to Irenaeus in *Against Heresies* (III: 11:1-3, in Roberts and Donaldson, 1994, vol. 1:426-27), Cerinthus viewed the “Christ” as a heavenly spirit separate from the man Jesus. He also asserted that the Demiurge, a subordinate power, created the material world.

<sup>36</sup> As noted, the verb *elēluthota* is the perfect active participle of *erchomai*. Thus, the perfect tense indicates a completed action in the past with continuous effects (Greenly,

that does not confess Jesus [ellipsis: *has come and remains in the flesh*] is not from God, this is the spirit of antichrist, of which you have heard that it is coming and now it is already in the world (1 John 4:2-3; emphasis added; cf. 2 John 7).

Subsequent to the time of the apostles, the early Christians roundly and universally condemned all forms of Gnosticism and affirmed both the humanity and deity of the Son.

### 5.3 ARIANISM

In A.D. 318, in Alexandria, Egypt, confusion and tensions grew between professing Christians to the point of riots in the streets over a single but quite essential point of theology (Olson and English, 2005: 29). It all started with a debate between Alexander, the bishop of Alexandria, and the striving presbyter named Arius (A.D. 250-336) on the issue of the nature of Jesus Christ. Both men held to the ontological immutability and impassibility of God. Arius argued that if Jesus was God in the flesh that would indeed involve a change in the nature of God. Hence, because of his essentially unitarian belief, Arius accused Alexander of having Sabellian views and pontificated his own view in a sermon:

If ... the Father begat the Son, he that was begotten had a beginning of existence: and from this it is evident that *there was a time when the Son was not* [*ēn pote hote ouk ēn*]. It therefore necessarily follows, that he had his subsistence [*hupostasis*] from nothing (Socrates, *Ecclesiastical History* I:5, in Schaff and Wace, 1994: 2nd. ser., vol. 2:3; emphasis added).

Notice the key phrase above, which became a catch phrase for all Arians, that is, all who deny the deity of the Son: “There was a time when the Son was not.” Bernard (1983: 105) makes a near identical statement in his rejection of the deity of Son: “There was a time when the Son did not exist; God prophesied about the Son’s future existence.”

For Arius, the Son was a product of creation, but He Himself was *before* all things in time here on earth. Thus, as a *part* of creation, He is

---

1986: 50): Christ came in the flesh, God incarnate (the completed action), and He forever remains in the flesh (the continuous effect).

“Son,” but merely in the lesser sense of adoption, as with all Christians. In this way, Arius can call Jesus “God,” but only in a secondary sense or as God’s representative on earth, not “God” in the same sense as the Father (just as Jehovah’s Witnesses teach). To show that the Son was not God, the Arians would focus on passages dealing with the Son’s humanity, for example, He had to grow in wisdom (e.g., Luke 2:52) or passages where the Son is said to be ignorant of future events (e.g., Mark 13:32), arguing that any such human development or ignorance would violate God’s immutable perfect nature. Schaff (2006: vol. 3: 9:384-85) explains:

The Arians drew their exegetical proofs from the passages of Scripture which seem to place Christ in any way in the category of that which is created, or ascribe to the incarnate (not the pre-temporal, divine) Logos growth, lack of knowledge, weariness, sorrow, and other changing human affections and states of mind, or teach a subordination of the Son to the Father.

There was also a confusion of terms such as “begotten.” As applied to the Son, the Arians understood the term as meaning “originate” (created) while the Father being *agennētos*, “unoriginate.” However, as indicated before (cf. Chapter 4, 4.7), the term *monogenēs* as applied to the Son, carries the denotative meaning of *unique one, one of a kind, or one and only*—hence, not originate or created. Constantine had a high regard for Christianity although his doctrinal understanding was scant. Even so, his objective throughout the controversy was peace and unity. When he first discovered that there was a controversy between Arius and Alexander, he accused them of arguing about “small and very insignificant questions” (Eusebius, *The Life of Constantine* II:71, in Schaff and Wace, 1994: 2nd. ser., vol. 1:517).

The heresy of Arius grew until it hit a point of major disunity in Constantine’s Empire (Olson and English, 2005: 33). At the advice of his theological advisor, Hosius (Maier, 1999: 365), he called for an ecumenical council at Nicaea and invited about 300 bishops from all the churches in the Empire to attend. Because Arius denied the deity of the Son, virtually all the bishops in attendance greatly opposed the position of Arius.

The main issue at Nicaea revolved around three Greek terms: *homoousion* (“co-essential” or “same substance”) represented by the

orthodox party (including Alexander, Hosius, Athanasius), *homoiousion* (“like” or “similar substance”) represented by the semi-Arians (including Eusebius of Caesarea), and *heteroousian* (“different substance”) represented by the Arian party (viz. Arius and Eusebius of Nicomedia). Regarding the term proposed by the orthodox party *homoousion*, which described the Son as co-essential with the Father, many bishops did not readily accept the term, at first, for the term had been previously condemned at the Council of Antioch in A.D. 268 along with the condemnation of Paul of Samosata, who used the term (in a false sense) promoting his doctrine of dynamic Monarchianism (or Adoptionism).

Because of a confusion of terms, the “middle group” or semi-Arians were very resistant to the term *homoousion*—it sounded too modalistic. Many in the East had fought long and hard against Sabellianism/Modalism (cf. White, 1998: 187). Those who objected to the word *homoousios* conceived that those who approved it favored the opinion of Sabellius and they therefore called them blasphemers, as subverting the existence of the Son of God (Socrates, *Ecclesiastical History* I:23, in Schaff and Wace, 1994: 2nd. ser., vol. 2:27).

Hence, with good intentions, the semi-Arians had sought a compromise acceptable to both the catholic (i.e., universal) church and the Arians by offering *homoiousion* (“like substance”) instead of *homoousion* (“same substance”). However, the Arians rejected the comprised term for they saw the Son “unlike” the Father—a “different substance.” Therefore, it was incumbent on the orthodox party to explain clearly to the semi-Arians that their use of *homoousion* did not denote in any way an adoptionist or modalistic understanding. Nor did it compromise the distinction and existence of the three co-equal Persons in the Trinity, rather it affirmed and defended the full deity of the Son (cf. Reymond, 1998: 318).

In the end, the biblical evidence prevailed. Scripture was the deciding factor, according to which the church countered the arguments of the Arian party. Unanimously, the bishops at the Council declared that the Son was of the “same substance” (*homoousion*) as that of the Father. The resulting creed of the Council proclaimed the Son’s co-equality and co-eternality with the Father (that is, the expression of the *homoousion* of the Son with the Father): “[The Son was] God of God, Light of Light, very God of very God, begotten, not made, being of *one substance [homoousios]* with the Father ...” (emphasis added). Only Eusebius of Nicomedia and four others refused to sign the Creed.

Arius was not there because he was not a bishop and the church at Alexandria had previously excommunicated him. No doubt, the Nicene fathers were satisfied that they had carefully guarded the full deity of the Son by their affirmation of the *homoousia* and by their insistence that the Son was “begotten not made” (Reymond, 1998: 326).

Constantine banished Arius from the empire, at least for a short time. However, this was not the end of Arius, nor was it the end of his views for Arius eventually gained sympathy from Constantine. Constantine even tried to reinstate Arius to the fellowship of the Alexandrian church. However, Athanasius, the bishop of Alexandria at that time, repudiated Arius and refused to readmit him (Schaff, 2006: vol. 3: 9:376). For nearly six decades, Arianism saw many victories and there were many Arian bishops. The once condemned Arian doctrine had reversed. Subsequent to Constantine’s death, under Constantius’s reign (his son), numerous councils met, producing Arian and semi-Arian creeds (White, 1998: 189). In reference to this dark time in church history, Jerome said (Greenslade, 1996: 206), “The whole world groaned and marveled to find itself Arian.”

During this time, the great defender of the deity of the Son, Athanasius, bravely proclaimed the *homoousion* even when it seemed as though everyone was against him. Thus, his motto *Athanasius contra mundum*, “Athanasius against the world”<sup>37</sup> is a well-known sentiment, which strikingly expresses his fearless independence and immovable fidelity to his convictions (Schaff, 2006: vol. 3: 10:523-28). Even though various emperors banished him from his See (five times), Athanasius would not capitulate. His faith in the full deity of the Son was uncompromising. So firm was his commitment to Scripture. In reference to the Council, Athanasius (*De Synodis* 6, in Schaff and Wace, 1994: 2nd. ser., vol. 4:453) would later explain:

For divine Scripture is sufficient above all things; but if a Council be needed on the point, there are the proceedings of the Fathers, for the Nicene Bishops did not neglect this matter, but stated the doctrine so exactly, that persons reading their words honestly, cannot but be reminded by them of the religion towards Christ announced in divine Scripture.

---

<sup>37</sup> The full quote reads *Athanasius contra mundum, et mundum contra Athanasius*, “Athanasius against the world, and the world against Athanasius” (Schaff, 2006: vol. 3: 10:523).

Ultimately, the church repudiated Arianism, re-establishing and firmly solidifying the Nicene definition of God in A.D. 381 at the Council of Constantinople. Just as the church reacted to Gnosticism, they rightfully reacted to the patent heresy of Arianism, affirming and defending the full deity of the Son, Jesus Christ.

## 5.4 MODALISM

The unity of the Being of God is justly an orthodox belief. However, when it is overstressed or modified for the sake of a radical approach to monotheism, the biblical meaning of the “Trinity” is abandoned and serious errors result. As a result, the third great heresy that crept into the church (after the Judaizer and Gnostic heresy) was Monarchianism (from *monarchia*, meaning, “single principle”). Both forms, *dynamic* and *modalistic*, first emerged around the end of the second century. This was a time when the passion for the “rule of faith” (*regula fidei*) consumed the early Christian apologists and theologians. For them, all things were to be judged by Scripture, the infallible, sole authority and rule of faith for the church.

### 5.4.1 Dynamic Monarchianism

We revealed previously that there were two forms of the Monarchian heresy, both of which were launched around the same time: *modalistic* and the less popular form, *dynamic*. Dynamic Monarchianism, also called (more appropriately) *Adoptionism*, held to the idea that God merely “adopted” Jesus as Son (at His baptism), after which He worked miracles without becoming divine. Some adoptionists, however, did teach that He became deity (in some sense) at His baptism (e.g., Paul of Samosata). Theodotus, the leather merchant from Byzantine, first brought this doctrine to Rome around A.D. 190. Information regarding the particularities of the Monarchian controversy and its theology is derived primarily from the great polemicist, theologian, Roman antipope and martyr, Hippolytus (c. A.D. †235) and early church historian Eusebius of Caesarea (c. A.D. 260-339).

In his most important work, *The Refutation of All Heresies*, Hippolytus speaks of the beginnings of dynamic Monarchianism and its distinctive theology (VII:23, in Roberts and Donaldson, 1994: vol. 5:114-15):

But there was a certain Theodotus, a native of Byzantium, who introduced a novel heresy ... he alleges that (our Lord) appeared in some such manner as I shall now describe. (According to this, Theodotus maintains) that Jesus was a (mere) man, born of a virgin, according to the counsel of the Father, and that after he had lived promiscuously with all men, and had become pre-eminently religious, he subsequently at his baptism in Jordan received Christ, who came from above and descended (upon him) in the form of a dove. And this was the reason (according to Theodotus) why (miraculous) powers did not operate within him prior to the manifestation in him of that Spirit which descended, (and) which proclaims him to be the Christ. But (among the followers of Theodotus) some are disposed (to think) that never was this man made God, (even) at the descent of the Spirit; whereas others (maintain that he was made God) after the resurrection from the dead.

Accordingly, Victor, the bishop of Rome, excommunicated Theodotus for his teaching. However, the most noted adoptionist was Paul of Samosata, of whom Eusebius of Caesarea speaks of his excommunication at the Third Council in Antioch in A.D. 268 (Maier, 1999: 274-79; Kelly, 2006: 247). Apparently, dynamic Monarchianism did not flourish, since the popularity of the early church held immovably to the full deity of Jesus Christ. For that reason, it was very difficult to retain followers of dynamic Monarchianism. Regardless of theological variations, both systems, dynamic and modalistic, shared the same core foundation: unitarianism.

#### **5.4.2 Modalistic Monarchianism**

Monotheism was, to be sure, the bedrock of Christianity. The early Christians shuddered at the thought of polytheism (or henotheism), that is, the idea of *many* true gods. The people of God constantly had to deal with polytheism starting from the days of Eden (cf. Gen. 3:5). The early modalists were equally as valiant to uphold the monotheism of their religion. Nevertheless, their idea of monotheism as one undifferentiated single monad (unipersonal) was a radical and distorted view. Modalism attempted to answer the question of how one could truly hold to monotheism and yet maintain the deity of Jesus Christ. Even though we should applaud the early modalists for their determined stance for the oneness of God in the face of polytheism, they were far too quick to

sacrifice the biblical presentation of a multi-personal God for their unbending view of what they thought monotheism was—God as an undifferentiated unipersonal Being.

## 5.5 ORTHODOXY FIGHTS BACK

The Apostle Paul instructs Titus to refute those who oppose sound doctrine (Titus 1:9, 13). The Apostle Peter charges the church to be ready always to give a defense (*apologia*, i.e., biblical refutation) and a reason (*logos*, i.e., positive affirmation) for the faith (1 Pet. 3:15). Jude says to contend earnestly for the faith (Jude 1:3). God has clearly instructed His people to affirm and defend the gospel of Jesus Christ. So naturally, sincere devoted Christians in the early church followed this command, even to point of martyrdom. Just as the apostles put up a fight for the faith, affirming and defending the gospel, so did the early church. So when they were faced with Modalism they reacted and treated it as a destructive heresy that attacked the very nature of God.

### *Against Noetus* by Hippolytus (c. A.D. 203)

The first known generator of Modalism was Noetus of Smyrna in around A.D. 190 (Kelly, 1978: 120). Still, there is some evidence of a modalistic idea percolating prior to Noetus. About thirty years before him, Justin Martyr made an interesting statement in his First Apology (63, in Richardson, 1970: 284-85): “For they who affirm that the Son is the Father, are proved neither to have become acquainted with the Father, nor to know that the Father of the universe has a Son; who also, being the first-begotten Word of God, is even God.” Nevertheless, the first person historically identified for introducing Modalism was Noetus. So disturbing was Noetus to the Christian community that Hippolytus devoted an entire work against him entitled, *Against the Heresy of One Noetus* (in Roberts and Donaldson, 1994: vol. 5:223-31). From the start, Noetus’s position was clear: “If therefore I acknowledge Christ to be God, He is the Father Himself, if He is indeed God; and Christ suffered, being Himself God; and consequently the Father suffered, for He was the Father Himself” (*Against Noetus* 1, in Roberts and Donaldson, 1994: vol. 5:223; emphasis added).

Hippolytus also reports that Noetus claimed he was Moses and that Aaron was his brother. In response to the presbyters who criticized him,

Noetus asked, “What evil, then, am I doing in glorifying Christ?” (Against Noetus 1, in Roberts and Donaldson, 1994: vol. 5:223). The heresies of both Noetus (Modalism) and Theodotus (Adoptionism) were the product of a misunderstanding of Scripture—namely, assuming God to be unipersonal. Hippolytus went on to say in his refutation:

The Scriptures speak what is right; but Noetus is of a different mind from them ... Theodotus employed when he sought to prove that Christ was a mere man. But neither has the one party nor the other understood the matter rightly, as the Scriptures themselves confute their senselessness, and attest the truth. See, brethren, what a rash and audacious dogma they have introduced, when they say without shame, the Father is Himself Christ, Himself the Son, Himself was born, Himself suffered, Himself raised Himself. But it is not so. The Scriptures speak what is right; but Noetus is of a different mind from them (*Against Noetus* 3, in Roberts and Donaldson, 1994: vol. 5:224).

Because of his passion for truth, Hippolytus devoted his life to defending the nature of God and His Word. This is clearly marked in all of his works, especially in his later work, *Refutation of All Heresies*. So clear was his refutation of the Modalism of Noetus, that his writings have long been, along with Tertullian’s, the most referenced literature pertaining to the Christological error of Modalism.

### ***Against Praxeas* by Tertullian** (c. A.D. 213)

The second leading modalist was Praxeas. The identity of Praxeas is difficult to determine. Some have even speculated that Praxeas was really Callistus the Roman bishop (A.D. 217-22) since Hippolytus accused him of helping to promote Modalism. All the same, whoever Praxeas was, he and his Modalism were sternly refuted, primarily by the brilliant Latin church theologian from Carthage, Tertullian (cf. Kelly, 1978: 121-22). We saw in Chapter 3 (3.3.2), Tertullian’s response to the modalizing of John 10:30 in *Against Praxeas*. It is worth mentioning here that Tertullian was the first church father in the West to use the word “Trinity” (Lat. *trinitas*) in reference to the three Persons of the

Godhead<sup>38</sup> against the Modalism of Praxeas: “Unity into a Trinity, placing in their order the three Persons—the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit three ...” (*Against Praxeas* 2, in Roberts and Donaldson, 1994: vol. 3:598). Tertullian was a man utterly enthralled with perpetuating and defending the church’s *rule of faith* against the crass Modalism of Praxeas (*Against Praxeas* 1, in Roberts and Donaldson, 1994: vol. 3:597):

He [Praxeas] maintains that there is one only Lord, the Almighty Creator of the world, in order that out of this doctrine of the unity he may fabricate a heresy. He says that the Father Himself came down into the Virgin, was Himself born of her, Himself suffered, indeed was Himself Jesus Christ.

It amazes Tertullian that the modalists are so convinced of their misunderstanding that monotheism means unipersonalism. “In the case of this heresy,” Tertullian writes, “which supposes itself to possess the pure truth, in thinking that one cannot believe in One Only God in any other way than by saying that the Father, the Son and the Holy Ghost are the very selfsame Person” (*Against Praxeas* 2, in Roberts and Donaldson, 1994: vol. 3:598).

Interestingly, Tertullian experienced the same arguments that Oneness teachers assert today, namely *that the Trinity is three separate Gods*: “They [modalists] are constantly throwing out against us that we are preachers of two gods and three gods, while they take to themselves pre-eminently the credit of being worshippers of the One God” (*Against Praxeas* 3, in Roberts and Donaldson, 1994: vol. 3:599). In addition, as we have also noted, early and present-day Oneness teachers misconstrue John 1:1, asserting that the “Word” was a non-entity, future plan, or “reason” of the Father. Tertullian demonstrates the absurdity that follows this thinking:

Is that Word of God, then, a void and empty thing, which is called the Son, who Himself is designated God? “The Word was with God, and the Word was God.” It is written, “You shall not take God’s name in vain.” This for certain is He

---

<sup>38</sup> However, Theophilus, in a letter to his friend *Autolytus* (*To Autolytus II:15*, in Roberts and Donaldson, 1994, vol. 2:101) was the first church father in the East to use the term “Trinity” (*triados*) to describe God in AD. 180.

“who, being in the form of God, thought it not robbery to be equal with God.” In what form of God? Of course he means in some form, not in none. For who will deny that God is a body, although “God is a Spirit?” (*Against Praxeas* 7, in Roberts and Donaldson, 1994: vol. 3:602).

Tertullian shows that Modalism, when taken to its logical end, is biblically incoherent:

Either, then, the Son suffered, being “forsaken” by the Father, and the Father consequently suffered nothing, inasmuch as He forsook the Son; or else, if it was the Father who suffered, then to what God was it that He addressed His cry? ... The Son, then, both dies and rises again, according to the Scriptures. It is the Son, too, who ascends to the heights of heaven, and also descends to the inner parts of the earth. “He sits at the Father’s right hand”—not the Father at His own (*Against Praxeas* 30, in Roberts and Donaldson, 1994: vol. 3:626-27).

Throughout his polemic, Tertullian never ceases in underscoring the *rule of faith* and stressing the inseparability of the Being of God. Through his writings, we can easily see how the modalists did not absorb the fact that the doctrine of the Trinity does not *separate* nor does it divide the Being of God:

This is the rule of faith, which I profess; by it I testify that the Father and the Son and the Spirit are inseparable from each other, and so will you know in what sense this is said. Now, observe, my assertion is that the Father is one, and the Son one, and the Spirit one, and that They are distinct from Each Other ... God regarded as the Son of God, not as the Father ...” (*Against Praxeas* 9, in Roberts and Donaldson, 1994: vol. 3:603).

At the conclusion of Tertullian’s polemic, he emphasizes the eternal consequence of embracing a Jesus other than the Jesus revealed in the biblical text as he cites 1 John 5:12: “He that has not the Son, has not life. And that man has not the Son, who believes Him to be any other than the Son” (*Against Praxeas* 31, in Roberts and Donaldson, 1994: vol. 3:627).

### 5.5.1 Against Sabellius

A few decades later, a Libyan priest named Sabellius brought new light and popularity to Modalism. The modalistic arguments of Sabellius were by far more refined and sophisticated than that of his predecessors. He came to Rome toward the end of Zephyrinus's reign (A.D. 198-217). After enjoying the confidence of the Bishop Callistus, he was attacked fiercely by Hippolytus, and eventually excommunicated by Callistus (Kelly, 1978: 121). Rejecting the concept of the ontological Trinity, Sabellius postulated his own version of an "economic Trinity."

He saw God as one indivisible substance, but with three fundamental activities, or modes, appearing successively as the Father (the creator and lawgiver), as the Son (the redeemer), and as the Holy Spirit (the maker of life and the divine presence within people) (Kelly, 1978: 121-22). Subsequently, the term "Sabellianism" included all sorts of speculative ideas attached to the original ideas of Sabellius and his followers. He traveled to Rome, where he gained many devoted followers on account of his craftiness and cerebral arguments.

It should also be noted here, as pointed out in Chapter 2, that early modalists, particularly Sabellius, taught *successive* or developmental Modalism, in which the modes are successive, starting with the mode of the Father in creation, *then* the Son for the task of redemption, *and after*, the Holy Spirit for regeneration. Patristic authority Philip Schaff explains (Schaff, 2006, vol. 2: 11:262):

Sabellius embraces the Holy Spirit in his speculation, and reaches a trinity, not a simultaneous trinity of essence, however, *but only a successive trinity of revelation*. The Father reveals himself in the giving of the law or the Old Testament economy (not in the creation also, which in his view precedes the trinitarian revelation); the Son, in the incarnation; the Holy Ghost, in inspiration ... The revelation of the Son ends with the ascension; the revelation of the Spirit goes on in regeneration and sanctification.

This view is somewhat dissimilar to that of modern Oneness theology, which teaches *simultaneous* or static Modalism, in which God can project all of His so-called manifestations or modes simultaneously. For instance, Oneness teachers use the baptism of Jesus (Matt. 3:13-17) to prove that Jesus' so-called three modes can simultaneously exist (cf.

UPCI, 2008b). Of course, the event of Jesus' baptism plainly and naturally affirms the Trinity—all three Persons are directly and distinctly involved. What obviously proves simultaneous Modalism false are the numerous passages indicating a personal distinction between the three Persons of the Trinity (e.g., Luke 10:21-22; John 1:1b; 6:37-40; 14:23; 2 Cor. 13:14). Promoting Modalism throughout Rome, Sabellius aggressively opposed the ontological Trinity. As a result, in A.D. 220, Callistus excommunicated him as a heretic. Athanasius traced the doctrine of Sabellius to the Stoic philosophy (Schaff, 2006, vol. 2: 12:582-83). As it had condemned previous heretics, the universal church condemned Sabellius and his ideas.

The error of Sabellianism was no small matter to the Christian church. It attacked the very nature of God. Thus, Oneness theology in all forms was universally condemned. In order to achieve a correct understanding of the attitude of the early church one must realize that the massive amounts of information written against the Modalism of Sabellius show beyond doubt that the early Christians did not see Oneness theology as simply a non-essential matter, it was of the utmost importance.

### **The Passion of Dionysius Bishop of Alexandria**

Dionysius “the Great” was bishop of Alexandria from A.D. 248 until his death in A.D. 265. He was a student of Origen and a respected leader of the church as well as an esteemed theologian. He passionately proclaimed and defended the Trinity. Dionysius wrote against many major Christological heresies such as the Adoptionism of Paul of Samosata and Sabellianism. He also commented on many controversies of the day such as re-baptism, Easter, and the authorship of the Apocalypse (i.e., Revelation). His writings were abundant. Athanasius and Eusebius preserved most of his work. At least forty years after Callistus excommunicated Sabellius, Dionysius, in his outrage towards the unipersonal theology of Modalism, also excommunicated Sabellius around A.D. 260. His strong passion for the Trinity incited him to write many polemics against Sabellius.

Both Dionysius of Alexandria and Dionysius the bishop of Rome championed the doctrine of the Trinity. They were not alone in their open and rigid affirmation and defense of the doctrine of the Trinity and their railing refutation against the Modalism of Sabellius. Because of his over-emphasis on the personal distinctions existing between the

Persons of the Trinity, Sabellius accused Dionysius of dividing the Father and Son (in essence) and failing to acknowledge that the Jesus was of the “same substance” (*homoousios*) with the Father (cf. Kelly, 1978: 133-34). Of course, Sabellius interpreted *homoousios* not only as “same substance,” but also as “same Person.”<sup>39</sup>

They even accused him of stating that the Son was a creature. They also made a formal complaint to the bishop of Rome whose name was also Dionysius (Kelly, 1978: 133-34). Even so, Athanasius in his *Defense of Dionysius* (9, in Schaff and Wace, 1994: 2nd. ser., vol. 4:179) says that Dionysius rightly “acted as he learned from the Apostles.” In a response, Dionysius, the bishop of Rome, wrote a short epistle entitled *Against the Sabellians* (in Roberts and Donaldson, 1994: vol. 7:365) around A.D. 259, which was not directly addressed to Dionysius, the bishop of Alexandria, but was to censure his “language of separation” on account of his fixated desire to refute Sabellius. Dionysius’s epistle also clarified and defined Trinitarian theology. Note some of the highlights of the epistle:

Next, then, I may properly turn to those who divide and cut apart and destroy the Monarchy, the most sacred proclamation of the Church of God, making of it, as it were, three powers, distinct substances, and three godheads ... He, [Sabellius] in his blasphemy, says that the Son is the Father and vice versa ... For it is the doctrine of the presumptuous Marcion, to sever and divide the Divine Monarchy into three origins—a devil’s teaching, not that of Christ’s true disciples and lovers of the Saviour’s lessons, For they know well that a Triad is preached by divine Scripture, but that neither Old Testament nor New preaches three Gods.

In the concluding remarks of the epistle, Dionysius stressed his essential key point, which the modalists (and Oneness believers today) clearly misunderstood: the Trinity does not divide God into three parts. God is inseparable and indivisible: “Neither then may we divide into three Godheads ... we must believe in God the Father Almighty, and in Christ Jesus His Son, and in the Holy Ghost, and hold that to the God of the

---

<sup>39</sup> We will see below, in our discussion of the Council of Nicaea, that the inclusion of the key term *homoousios* was the principal reason why some bishops were hesitant in signing the Creed. For nearly a hundred years before Nicaea, the church had condemned the term on account of its usage by the modalists and adoptionists, but in a different sense.

universe the Word is united.” After which, Dionysius of Alexandria responded to the bishop to Rome, toning down his emotional anti-Sabellian fury. Undeniably, Dionysius’s view on the Trinity was solidly orthodox. However, to clarify and confirm to the bishop of Rome that he did not in any way separate or divide the Persons of the Trinity, Dionysius of Alexandria redefined and disambiguated his position in an *Epistle to the Bishop of Rome*. Below are some important excerpts from the epistle (in Roberts and Donaldson, 1994: vol. 6:92-93):

The Son alone, always co-existing with the Father, and filled with Him who is, Himself also is, since He *is* of the Father ... neither the Father, in that He is *Father*, can be separated from the Son, for that name is the evident ground of coherence and conjunction; nor can the Son be separated from the Father, for this word *Father* indicates association *between* them. And there is, moreover, evident a Spirit who can neither be disjoined from Him who sends, nor from Him who brings Him. How, then, should I who use such names think that these are absolutely divided and separated the one from the other? ... Thus, indeed, we expand the indivisible Unity into a Trinity; and again we contract the Trinity, which cannot be diminished, into a Unity ... For on this account after the Unity there is also the most divine Trinity ... And to God the Father, and His Son our Lord Jesus Christ, with the Holy Spirit, be glory and dominion for ever and ever. Amen.

### **Additional church fathers against Sabellius**

Novatian (c. A.D. 250) in *A Treatise of Novatian Concerning the Trinity* (12, in Roberts and Donaldson, 1994: vol. 5:622) argues persuasively against the heresy of Sabellius: “The *sacrilegious heresy of Sabellius* is embodied. Since Christ is believed to be not the Son, but the Father; since *by them He is asserted to be in strictness* a bare man, in a new manner, *by those, again, Christ is proved to be God the Father Almighty* (emphasis added). Gregory Thaumaturgus (c. A.D. 262), in *A Sectional Confession of Faith* (7, in Roberts and Donaldson, 1994: vol. 6:42) speaks against the unipersonal God of Sabellius and defends the Trinity:

*But some treat the Holy Trinity in an awful manner, when they confidently assert that there are not three persons, and introduce (the idea of) a person devoid of subsistence.*

Wherefore we clear ourselves of Sabellius, who says that the Father and the Son are the same [Person] ... we believe that *three persons*, namely, Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, are declared to *possess the one Godhead*: for the one divinity showing itself forth according to nature in the Trinity establishes the oneness of the nature (emphasis added).

And of course, Athanasius, the great defender of the doctrine of the Trinity, who championed the *homoousion* at the Council of Nicaea, speaks very assertively against Sabellius in his *Discourses Against the Arians* (III:23, in Schaff and Wace, 1994: 2nd. ser., vol. 4:395):

They [the Father and the Son] are one, not as one thing now divided into two, but really constituting only one, nor as one thing twice named, so that the same becomes at one time the Father and at another his own Son. This latter is what Sabellius held, and he was judged a heretic. On the contrary, they are two, because the Father is Father and is not his own Son, and the Son is Son and not his own Father.

In his teaching on the Holy Spirit, Cyril of Jerusalem (c. A.D. 348) in his *Catechetical Lectures* (XVI:4, in Schaff and Wace, 1994: 2nd. ser., vol. 7:116), after referring to the Trinitarian baptismal formula, explains: “We preach not three Gods; let the Marcionites be silenced; but with the Holy Ghost through One Son, we preach One God ... *We neither separate the Holy Trinity, like some; nor do we, as Sabellius, work confusion [into it]*” (emphasis added). Aside from these men of great faith, and many others, the Christian church is greatly indebted to the three Cappadocian Fathers: Basil the Great, Gregory of Nazianzus, and Basil’s younger brother, Gregory of Nyssa. They persistently affirmed the doctrine of the Trinity in precise language.

In his letter, *To the Notables of Neocaesarea*, Basil speaks expressively on the Trinity, sharply countering the Sabellian heresy (CCX:3, in Schaff and Wace, 1994: 2nd. ser., vol. 8:249-251): “*Sabellianism is Judaism* imported into the preaching of the Gospel *under the guise of Christianity* ... And I hear that even rasher innovations than those of the foolish Sabellius are now ventured on among you ... *For of Father, Son, and Holy Ghost there is the same nature and one Godhead*” (emphasis added). In the end, Basil sees Sabellianism as denying Jesus Christ:

Now Sabellius ... saying as he did that the same God, being one in matter, was metamorphosed as the need of the moment required, and spoken of now as Father, now as Son, and now as Holy Ghost. The inventors of this unnamed heresy are renewing the old long extinguished error ... denying the name of the Son of God. They must give over uttering iniquity against God, or they will have to wail with them that deny the Christ (emphasis added).

As with all the Christological heresies in the first four centuries, the church did not tolerate blatant denials of Jesus Christ in any form. Even with the sophisticated arguments of Sabellius and the inflated ego of Paul of Samosata, the church universally condemned both dynamic and modalistic Monarchianism. Because of heresies such as Monarchianism, the early church greatly increased its effort to codify the creeds in precise language, to advance the church's *rule of faith*, and protect the people of God from the false teachings that were rampant in those first four centuries.

The theory of Sabellius broke the way for the Nicene church doctrine, by its full coordination of the three persons. He differed from the orthodox standard mainly in denying the Trinity of essence and the permanence of the Trinity of manifestation; making Father, Son, and Holy Ghost only temporary phenomena, which fulfill their mission and return into the abstract monad (Schaff, 2006: vol. 2: 12:583).

## **5.6 THE DOCTRINE OF THE TRINITY AND THE EARLY CHURCH**

To maintain the idea that the early church was Oneness is a complicated task for Oneness teachers, for in order to do so, Oneness teachers must revise history. For instance, Bernard (1983: 236-37) claims:

1. *As far as we can tell, the early church Christian leaders in the days immediately following the apostolic age were Oneness.* It is certain they did not teach the doctrine of the trinity as it later developed and as it exists today. 2. Even after the emergence of the trinitarian doctrine in the latter part of the second century, the doctrine of the trinity did not replace Oneness as the dominant belief until around 300 A.D., and it did not become universally established until late in the fourth

century. 3. Even after trinitarianism became dominant, Oneness believers continued to exist throughout church history (emphasis added).

As we will see, Oneness teachers routinely practice this kind of historical revisionism in order to substantiate the notion that the early church taught distinctive Oneness doctrines. Bernard's assertion that the Trinity "did not replace Oneness as the dominant belief until around 300 A.D." is the very conclusion he has yet to establish. His assertion prompts two questions. First, if Oneness theology was the *rule of faith*, the apostolic doctrine, or, as Bernard argues, "the dominant belief until around 300 A.D.," then why did the early Christians not only abandon the doctrine, but also, as substantiated below, condemn and denounce it as Christological heresy? And, if the second and third century Christians actually held to Oneness doctrine, then why did the early church fathers prior to A.D. 325 make explicit statements that clearly speak, not of a unipersonal God, but rather a tri-personal God? In dissimilarity to Bernard's historical delusion, Kelly (1978: 88) makes these observations:

The reader should notice how deeply the conception of a plurality of divine Persons was imprinted in the apostolic tradition and the popular faith. Though as yet uncanonized, the New Testament was already exerting a powerful influence; it is a commonplace that the outlines of a dyadic and a triadic pattern are clearly visible in its pages.

Bernard's argument that "after trinitarianism became dominant, Oneness believers continued to exist throughout church history" does not prove anything, only that there were some Oneness believers existing after the third century. If one follows Bernard's logic to its conclusion, then Gnosticism must be true, since Gnostic believers continued to exist throughout church history as well, even to this very day. Bernard's main assertion (1983: 236) that "The early church Christian leaders in the days immediately following the apostolic age were Oneness" demonstrates his lack of data and/or understanding in the area of church history.

The problem with Bernard's statements alleging what particular early church fathers said or what they *meant to say* is that he does not provide the exact addresses of the citations. This is a fundamental requirement in order to authenticate the very claims made. Ascertaining

the historical data of the early church is not, by any means, a monumental task. We have masses of extant and very accessible data on the early church fathers, councils, creeds, and virtually every heresy and teaching promulgated in the early church. There is no excuse. Those who write or teach on church history should objectively examine and thus offer an accurate presentation of the historical record in context, providing the specific addresses of all citations submitted.

Before examining the early church regarding their view of the nature of God, one must bear in mind that the specific doctrinal words and phrases such as “coequal,” “Trinity,” “Godhead,” “incarnation,” etc., which are not “biblical” words, simply define the biblical data. In other words, because of the absence of particular key doctrinal words and phrases prior to Nicaea, Oneness teachers and other unitarian groups like the Jehovah’s Witnesses (cf. Watchtower, 1989b: 8) allege that the Trinity was not developed until the fourth century. This argument mistakenly assumes that *prior* to the utilization of doctrinal words and phrases by the early church these doctrines could not have existed.

Here we see a confusion of the biblical *data* with the biblical *doctrine*. It does not violate the principal of *sola Scriptura* (“Scripture alone”) to use non-biblical words or phrases in defining a biblical doctrine as long as the non-biblical words or phrases accurately describe the biblical revelation. For example, the non-biblical term “incarnation” describes the biblical revelation communicated in John 1:14: “The Word became flesh.” Whereas non-biblical phrases such as “coequal,” “coeternal” and “coexistent” suitably describe the biblical revelation set forth in passages such as John 1:1 and 17:5. So the dreaded word “Trinity,” which the unitarians outright despised, rightly describes or defines the biblical revelation of three divine Persons sharing the nature of the one God.

On the same plane, although the pre-Nicene early church fathers lacked the eloquent definitive language to define in exact terms particular biblical doctrines, their statements clearly show contextually that (a) they conceived God as existing as a tri-personal Being and (b) they did not hold to a lone unitarian undifferentiated concept of God as Oneness teachers presuppose. To achieve a coherent and objective understanding of how the early church envisaged God we shall present two branches of evidence that concisely and clearly demonstrate what the early universal church believed and taught: 1) important ecumenical councils and 2) early patristic documents.

### 5.6.1 Ecumenical Councils

Unarguably, the leading reason for ecumenical councils, starting with the first in Jerusalem (Acts 15:1ff.), was heresy. The function of these councils was to confirm, defend and standardize important biblical doctrines. They effectively and clearly affirmed the full deity and humanity of the Son, Jesus Christ, as well as safeguarded the essential distinctions between the Persons in the Godhead. *The theological bedrock of these councils and creeds of the Christian church was the doctrine of the Trinity.* Thus, the theology contained in these councils and creeds presupposes that God is triune and God the Son became flesh. Since this is the case, it is an extraordinarily difficult task for Oneness teachers to explain why the most important councils and creeds of Christendom for the first several hundred years not only affirmed the doctrine of the Trinity, but also specifically condemned the anti-Trinitarian teachings of Modalism.

We have already explored briefly the first ecumenical Council of Nicaea and have seen the positive affirmation of both the full deity of Jesus Christ (against Arius) and the distinctions existing between the Persons of the Trinity (against Modalism). Aside from Nicaea, here below are some excerpts (Schaff and Wace, 1994: 2nd. ser., vol. 14:3-540) from some of the significant ecumenical councils,<sup>40</sup> which affirm the Trinity and militate against the modalistic/unitarian position.

#### **First Council of Constantinople (A.D. 381):**

We believe in one God the Father all-powerful, maker of heaven and of earth, and of all things both seen and unseen. *And in one Lord Jesus Christ, the only-begotten Son of God, begotten from the Father before all the ages, light from light, true God from true God, begotten not made, consubstantial with the Father, through whom all things came to be ... And in the Spirit, the holy, the lordly and life-giving one, proceeding*

---

<sup>40</sup> There were seven important ecumenical councils (aside from the Council of Jerusalem around A.D. 50; cf. Acts 5:1ff): I. First Council of Nicaea (A.D. 325); II. First Council of Constantinople (A.D. 381); III. Council of Ephesus (A.D. 431); IV. Council of Chalcedon (A.D. 451); V. Second Council of Constantinople (A.D. 553); VI. Third Council of Constantinople (A.D. 680-681); and VII. Second Council of Nicaea (A.D. 787).

*forth from the Father, co-worshipped and co-glorified with the Father and Son (emphasis added).*

### **The Council of Ephesus (A.D. 431).**

We confess, then, our Lord Jesus Christ, the only begotten Son of God, perfect God and perfect man, of a rational soul and a body, begotten before all ages from the Father in his godhead, the same in the last days, for us and for our salvation, born of Mary the virgin, according to his humanity, *one and the same consubstantial with the Father in godhead and consubstantial with us in humanity, for a union of two natures took place.* Therefore we confess one Christ, one Son, one Lord (emphasis added).

### **The Council of Chalcedon (A.D. 451):**

This selfsame one [the Son] is perfect *both in deity and in humanness*; this *selfsame one* is also *actually God and actually man*, with a rational soul and a body. He is of the same reality as God as far as his deity is concerned and of the same reality as we ourselves as far as his humanness is concerned; thus like us in all respects, sin only excepted ... this one and only Christ-Son, Lord, only-begotten—in *two natures* ... The *distinctiveness of each nature* is not nullified by the union. Instead, the “properties” of each nature are conserved and both natures concur in *one “person”* and in one reality. They are not divided or cut into two persons, but are together the one and only and only-begotten Word of God, the Lord Jesus Christ (emphasis added).

### **Second Council of Constantinople (A.D. 553):**

If anyone shall not confess that the nature or essence of the Father, of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost is one, as also the force and the power; [if anyone does not confess] a consubstantial Trinity, one Godhead to be worshipped in three subsistences or Persons: let him be anathema. For there is but one God even the Father, of whom are all things, and one Lord Jesus Christ, through whom are all things, and one Holy Spirit, in whom are all things.

When we scrupulously examine the masses of documentation, we do not find a single council or creed that affirmed Modalism. As we have shown and will continue to show below, the early church universally condemned modalistic/Oneness theology and affirmed the doctrine of the Trinity.

### 5.6.2 The Trinity and the Early Church

There is no disputation as to the distinctive Trinitarianism taught and defended in the church after the fourth century. Thus, the references provided below are primarily from the *apostolic* church fathers, the *apologists*, and the *theologians* of the early church prior to the fourth century. The historical evidence indisputably shows that the early church believed in a tri-personal God and not a unitarian/unipersonal deity. In light of this, Oneness writers provide revised and disjointed historical information in order to convince the Oneness people that the early church fathers were modalists. Revising the historical record, William B. Chalfant (1979: 116-18) makes these remarks:

The trinity doctrine exists only on paper ... No apostle of our Lord Jesus Christ ever taught such a doctrine ... None of the immediate disciples of the apostles (e.g., Clement Ignatius, Hermas, or Polycarp) taught such a doctrine ... Who began such a teaching? ... Trinities abound in the ancient, false religions.

Here Chalfant assumes the conclusion he is wishing to reach, namely, that the early church fathers were modalists. With no objective historical justification provided, Oneness writers (e.g., Bernard 1991: 24, 264-65) engage frequently in this kind of patent historical revisionism. The foremost and most recognized Christian theologians and church historians<sup>41</sup> strongly oppose the Oneness historical premise that “the early church Christian leaders in the days immediately following the apostolic age were Oneness” (Bernard, 1983: 236). On the contrary, we will show that the evidence consistently verifies that the early church envisaged God as tri-personal. Note that the examples provided below are not an exhaustive list of every citation of every church father attesting to the triune nature of God. However, these examples do

---

<sup>41</sup> Such as Eusebius, Socrates, J. B. Lightfoot, Philip Schaff, J. N. D. Kelly, Francis Beckwith, etc.

provide corroborating evidence that supports the supposition that the early church held to the concept of the Trinity.

### 5.6.2.1 Apostolic Fathers

The earliest patristic writings are those that belong to the category of the *apostolic fathers* (c. A.D. 70-150). As the name indicates, many of these church fathers had personally known the original apostles. Their testimony is of great worth in evaluating the theology of the early church subsequent to the days of the original apostles.

#### **The Epistle of Barnabas** (c. A.D. 70)

The document is the work of an anonymous teacher. It is extremely unlikely that it was the biblical character Barnabas (Holmes, 1999: 271). *The Epistle of Barnabas* was written very early, when perhaps some of the original apostles were still alive (Holmes, 1999: 272). Notice in this citation (5, in Holmes, 1999: 285) the usage of the plural verb, “Let Us make” (citing Genesis 1:26) in reference to the preincarnate Son:

And further, my brethren, if the Lord [Jesus] endured to suffer for our soul, he being the Lord of all the world, to *whom God said at the foundation of the world*, ‘Let us make man after our image, and after our likeness,’ understand how it was that he endured to suffer at the hand of men (emphasis added).

Note, when the early church fathers appealed to the first person plural verbs, nouns, and prepositions in the Old Testament that were applied to the one true God, they did not see them, as often postulated by unitarians, as “plural of majesty” references. The church used the first person plurals references to mark out and demonstrate the multi-personal nature of God. In point of fact, there is absolutely no clear Old Testament example where a so-called “plural of majesty” was used of Yahweh or of any human king including secular ones, as anti-Trinitarians ignorantly assume.<sup>42</sup>

---

<sup>42</sup> Regarding the misuse of the anachronistic “plural of majesty” assertion, biblical scholar, R. A. Torrey (1923: 64), correctly states:

The best answer that they [ancient Hebrew lexicographers and grammarians] could give was that the plural form used for the name (or title) of God was the “pluralis majestatis,” that is the plural of majesty.... In other

## **Clement bishop of Rome** (c. A.D. 96)

Clement of Rome wrote an epistle to the original Corinthian church. He was perhaps the same Clement who was Paul's close companion mentioned in Philippians 4:3. Schaff (2006: vol. 1: 13:637) says of Clement that he was a "name of great celebrity in antiquity, was a disciple of Paul and Peter, to whom he refers as the chief examples for imitation. He may have been the same person who is mentioned by Paul as one of his faithful fellow-workers in Philippi (Phil. 4:3)." Early Church historian Eusebius (*History of the Church* III:4, in Maier, 1999: 95) says that "Clement too, who became the third bishop of Rome, was Paul's co-worker and co-combatant, as the apostle himself testifies." In Clement's salutation (*To the Corinthians*, in Holmes, 1999: 29), he clearly differentiates God the Father from the Lord Jesus Christ:

The Church of God which sojourns in Rome, to the Church of God sojourning at Corinth, to those who are called and sanctified by the will of God, through our Lord Jesus Christ: Grace to you, and peace, from almighty God through Jesus Christ, be yours in abundance.

## **Ignatius bishop of Antioch** (c. A.D. 98-107)

Ignatius was an important apostolic church father. He was a bishop of the original church at Antioch. In his writings, Ignatius constantly refers to Jesus as the "Son of the Father." In reference to the Son, he frequently declares *ho gar theos hēmōn Iēsous ho Christos* ("For our God, Jesus the Christ," or a similar phrase), thus referring to the "Son" as *theos* (*Ephesians* 18; *Romans* 3; and *To Polycarp* 8).

As we read, in his letter to the original church at Ephesus, he writes (7, in Holmes, 1999: 141): "There is one Physician who is both flesh and spirit; born and *unborn* [*agennētos*] God in man, true life in death, both from Mary and from God" (emphasis added). To recall, the early

---

words, they concluded that a plural name was used for God because of the majesty of His person. Now, to say nothing of the fact that it is not at all certain that the "pluralis majestatis" is ever found in the Old Testament, there is an explanation much nearer at hand and much simpler, and that is, that a plural name was used for the one God, in spite of the intense monotheism of the Jews, because there is a plurality of person in the one Godhead.

church used the term *agennētos* to denote God’s unoriginate eternal existence. Rightfully so, Ignatius applied *agennētos* to the Son. Clearly, Ignatius does not see the Father and Jesus as the same Person. In the same letter (9, in Holmes, 1999: 143), he differentiates the Father from both the Son and the Holy Spirit: “Stones of a temple, prepared beforehand for the building of *God the Father*, hoisted up to the heights by the crane of *Jesus Christ*, which is the cross, using as a rope the *Holy Spirit*” (emphasis added). Challenging the Oneness view of a non-eternal Son, in his letter to the Magnesians, Ignatius speaks of “Jesus Christ, who before the ages was with the Father and appeared at the end of time” (6, in Holmes, 1999: 153, 155).

At the beginning of his letter to the church at Rome, Ignatius uses very detailed language to differentiate the Father and Jesus (in Holmes, 1999: 167, 169): “In the majesty of the Father Most High and Jesus Christ, his only Son ... Jesus Christ our God, which also presides in the place of the district of the Romans ... I also greet in the name of Jesus Christ, Son of the Father.” In spite of the Ignatius’s own words (in context), Bernard (1991: 33) actually says of Ignatius: “The writings of Ignatius (c. 110-115) equate Jesus with the One God so strongly that some historians have called his doctrine modalistic ... Assuming Ignatius understood God to be the Father ... he thought of Jesus as God the Father incarnate.” Yet Bernard does not provide a single reference to the “some historians” that have supposedly called Ignatius’s doctrine modalistic. Nor does he provide any examples from the writings of Ignatius that reveal that Ignatius believed that Jesus was the Father. When Ignatius refers to Jesus and the Father in the same passage or same context, the grammatical constructions always denote a distinction of two Persons.<sup>43</sup>

## **Hermas** (c. A.D. 120)

---

<sup>43</sup> As shown earlier in Chapter 4 (4.5, “John 17:5”), in his letter to the Magnesians (as cited above), Ignatius grammatically differentiates between Jesus and the Father. To recall, notice closely this portion in the Greek: *Iēsou Christou, hos pro aiōnōn para patri*, literally, “Jesus Christ, who *before ages* [was] *with* [the] Father.” Ignatius makes an obvious parallel with John 17:5 using *para* with the dative denoting a marked distinction between Jesus and the Father and using the preposition *pro* (“before”) indicating that their distinction existed from eternity, “before time”—as consistently affirmed in both the Old and New Testament revelation (cf. Gen. 19:24; Den. 7:14; John 1:1, 18; Heb. 1:10-12; Rev. 22:13).

Hermas was perhaps the same Hermas to whom Paul sends greetings in Romans 16:14, around the year A.D. 57. Eusebius says of Hermas (*History of the Church* III:3, in Maier, 1999: 94): “But as the same apostle, in the salutations at the end of the Epistle to the Romans, has made mention among others of Hermas, to whom the book called *The Shepherd* is ascribed.” In his *Shepherd*, Hermas believes that the “Son of God is older than all his creation, so that he became the Father’s adviser in his creation. Therefore, also he is ancient” (III Sim. IX:12, in Holmes, 1999: 491).

### **Polycarp bishop of Smyrna** (c. A.D. 130-150)

The beloved Polycarp, bishop of Smyrna, who claimed he had been a Christian for eighty-six years, was also, according to both Irenaeus and Eusebius, a disciple of the Apostle John. In his last prayer just before he was martyred, Polycarp glorifies not a unipersonal God, but rather a tri-personal God (*The Martyrdom of Polycarp* 14, in Holmes, 1999: 239):

O Lord God Almighty, the Father of thy beloved and blessed Son Jesus Christ ... I praise you, I bless you, I glorify you, through the eternal and heavenly High Priest, Jesus Christ, your beloved Son, through whom to you with him and the Holy Spirit be glory both now and for the ages to come. Amen.

### **Mathetes,**<sup>44</sup> *Letter to Diognetus* (c. A.D. 130)

In his letter to Diognetus (11, cited in Holmes, 1999: 551), Mathetes, who claimed himself “having been a disciple of the Apostles,” speaks clearly of the eternity of the Son: “*He sent the Word*, namely, that he might appear to the world ... This is the Eternal One, who today is accounted as Son” (emphasis added).

### **5.6.2.2 The Apologists**

The next category of church fathers subsequent to the apostolic fathers is the category of the *apologists*. These early apologists courageously

---

<sup>44</sup> Although the author of the *Letter to Diognetus* is anonymous, he gives himself the title “Mathetes”—*apostolōn genomenos mathētēs* (“having been a disciple of the Apostles”).

defended and affirmed biblical truth against the prevalent heresies of the day.

### **Justin Martyr** (c. A.D. 155)

Justin Martyr consistently distinguishes the Persons of the Trinity throughout his writings. As we saw in Chapter 3 (3.5.1.7), Justin, in his *First Apology* (61, Richardson, 1970: 282), naturally quotes the Trinitarian baptismal formula: “For they are then washed in the water in the name of God the Father and Master of all, and of our Savior Jesus Christ, and of the Holy Spirit.” In *Dialogue with Trypho* (62, in Roberts and Donaldson, 1994: vol. 1:228), Justin explains that the usage of the first person plural verb (“Let Us make”) by Moses in Genesis 1:26 signifies God the Father conversing with someone “numerically distinct [*arithmō heteron*] from Himself”—another Person:

“Let Us make”—I shall quote again the words narrated by Moses himself, from which we can indisputably learn that [God] conversed with someone who was *numerically distinct from Himself* ... [Moses] has declared that [there is a certain] *number of persons associated with one another* ... [The Son] was with the Father before all the creatures, and the Father communed with Him (emphasis added).

### **Athenagoras** (c. A.D. 175)

Athenagoras in *A Plea for the Christians* (10, in Richardson, 1970: 309) speaks in reference to the Son as “not as having been brought into existence. It astonishes Athenagoras that any man could declare someone as an atheist, if they “speak of God the Father, and of God the Son, and of the Holy Spirit, and who declare both their power in union and their distinction in order.”

### **Theophilus bishop of Antioch** (c. A.D. 180)

As noted, Theophilus uses the term “Trinity” (*triados*) in a letter to his friend Autolytus (*To Autolytus* II:15, in Roberts and Donaldson, 1994: vol. 2:101) in describing God: “In like manner also the three days which were before the luminaries, are types of the trinity, of God, and His Word, and His wisdom”

### 5.6.2.3 Theologians

The next category of church fathers is the *theologians*. These men devoted their lives to the extreme study and meticulous examination of Scripture. Their refutations of false teaching were brilliant and their biblical proclamations were powerful and textually substantiated. The theologians, as with their predecessors, defended and affirmed the church's *rule of faith* exposing the destructive false teachings of their day.

#### **Irenaeus bishop of Lyons** (c. A.D. 180)

A true champion of orthodoxy, Irenaeus provided the Christian church with scholarly polemics against various heresies, particularly in his greatest work, *A Refutation and Overthrow of Knowledge Falsely So-Called* (i.e., *Against Heresies*, in Roberts and Donaldson, 1994: vol. 1:315-567). “Irenaeus is an enemy,” says Schaff (2006: vol. 2: 13:751), “of all error and schism, and, on the whole, the most orthodox of the ante-Nicene fathers.” From his youth, Irenaeus benefited greatly by having Polycarp, bishop of Smyrna and a disciple of the Apostle John (and perhaps other apostles), as his instructor. An examination of his own doctrinal statement reveals clearly that he held to a Trinitarian concept of God.

As with the *Epistle of Barnabas*, in *Against Heresies* (IV:20, in Roberts and Donaldson, 1994: vol. 1:487-88), Irenaeus refers to the first person plural verb in Genesis 1:26 to show that God is multi-personal: “For *with Him were always present the Word and Wisdom, the Son and the Spirit*, by whom and in whom, freely and spontaneously, He made all things, to whom also He speaks, saying, “Let Us make man after Our image and Our likeness.” In this same work, notice a mere few of a massive collection of decidedly Trinitarian references made by Irenaeus:

[The church believes] in one God, the Father Almighty, Maker of heaven, and earth, and the sea, and all things that are in them; and in one Christ Jesus, the Son of God, who became incarnate for our salvation; and in the Holy Spirit, who proclaimed through the prophets the dispensations of God (I:10, in Roberts and Donaldson, 1994: vol. 1:330).

As it has been clearly demonstrated that the *Word, who existed in the beginning with God*, by whom all things were made ... [it follows] that every objection is set aside *of those who say*, “If our Lord was born at that time, Christ had therefore no previous existence. *For I have shown that the Son of God did not then begin to exist*, being with the Father from the beginning; but when He became incarnate, and was made man ... (III:18, in Roberts and Donaldson, 1994: vol. 1:446; emphasis added).

The Son who “*was always with the Father*; and that Wisdom also, which is the Spirit, was present *with Him* (IV:20, in Roberts and Donaldson, 1994: vol. 1:488; emphasis added).

Throughout *Against Heresies* Irenaeus unmistakably differentiates the Person of the Father from the Person of Jesus Christ and the Holy Spirit, thus presenting a tri-personal God.

### **Hippolytus** (c. A.D. 203-228)

Hippolytus was adamant in defending against Christological heresy, especially that of Oneness doctrine in his polemic *Against Noetus*: “For us, then, it is sufficient simply to know that there was nothing contemporaneous with God. Beside Him there was nothing; but He, while existing alone, yet existed in plurality” (10, in Roberts and Donaldson, 1994: vol. 5:227). In this same work, Hippolytus explains: “For the Father indeed is One, but there are two Persons, because there is also the Son; and then there is the third, the Holy Spirit” (14, in Roberts and Donaldson, 1994: vol. 5:228).

### **Tertullian** (c. A.D. 213)

We have shown above the firm anti-Oneness polemic of Tertullian in *Against Praxeas*, where he refuted the modalistic interpretation of John 10:30 (cf. Chapter 3, 3.3.2). We also saw how he uses, as do so many church fathers, the Trinitarian baptismal formula in Matthew 28:19 to prove to the modalists that God is not unipersonal: “He commands them to baptize into the Father and the Son and the Holy Ghost, not into a unipersonal God. And indeed it is not once only, but three times, that we are immersed into the Three Persons, at each several mention of

Their names” (*Against Praxeas* 26, in Roberts and Donaldson, 1994: vol. 3:623).

### **Novatian the Roman Presbyter** (c. A.D. 250)

The Roman Presbyter Novatian wrote expansively on the Trinity. In his *Treatise Concerning the Trinity* (18, in Roberts and Donaldson, 1994: vol. 5:629), appealing to Genesis 19:24, he argued against Sabellianism, showing that although Jesus was fully God, He was not the Father:

“Then the Lord [Yahweh] rained upon Sodom and upon Gomorrah fire and brimstone *from the Lord* [Yahweh] out of heaven.” *But although the Father, being invisible, was assuredly not at that time seen, He who was accustomed to be touched and seen was seen and received to hospitality. But this the Son of God ... It was not the Father, then, who was a guest with Abraham, but Christ. Nor was it the Father who was seen then, but the Son; and Christ was seen. Rightly, therefore, Christ is both Lord and God, who was not otherwise seen by Abraham, except that as God the Word He was begotten of God the Father before Abraham himself* (emphasis added).

His entire *Treatise* reveals how strong was his devotion to affirm and defend the Trinity, especially against the Modalism of Sabellius:

Many heretics, as we have said, have so accepted Him as God, as to think that He must be pronounced not the Son, but the Father ... This, however, we do not approve; but we quote it as an argument to prove that Christ is God, to this extent, that some, taking away the manhood, *have thought Him God only*, and some have thought Him God the Father Himself; when reason and the proportion of the heavenly Scriptures show Christ to be God, *but as the Son of God*; and the Son of man, having been taken up, moreover by God, that He must be believed to be man also (23, in Roberts and Donaldson, 1994: vol. 5:634; emphasis added).

### **Gregory Thaumaturgus the Wonder-worker** (c. A.D. 262-265)

Gregory Thaumaturgus the Wonder-worker was a student of Origen, as was Dionysius of Alexandria. In his decidedly Trinitarian essay, A

*Declaration of Faith* (in Roberts and Donaldson, 1994: vol. 6:8), he opposes the Modalism of Sabellius and the Adoptionism of Paul of Samosata:

God the Father, who is above all and in all, and *God the Son*, who is through all. There *is a perfect Trinity*, in glory and eternity and sovereignty, *neither divided nor estranged*. Wherefore there is nothing either created or in servitude in the Trinity; nor anything super induced, as if at some former period it was non-existent, and at some later period it was introduced. And thus, neither was the Son ever wanting to *the Father, nor the Spirit to the Son; but without variation and without change, the same Trinity abideth* ever (emphasis added).

### **Methodius of Olympus** (c. A.D. 305)

Writing in the very early fourth century, Methodius's work was widely read and highly valued. Jerome refers to him several times, as does Epiphanius, Gregory of Nyssa, Andrew of Caesarea, Theodoret and Eustathius of Antioch. His Trinitarian view of God was extremely definitive. In *Oration on the Psalms* (in Roberts and Donaldson, 1994: vol. 6:396-97), he states: "For the kingdom of the Father, of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost, is one, even as their substance is one and their dominion one. Whence also, with one and the same adoration, *we worship the one Deity in three Persons*" (emphasis added).

In *Oration concerning Simon and Anna on the Day that they met in the Temple*, Methodius declares (in Roberts and Donaldson, 1994: vol. 6:384):

Glory to be adored by all of that one of the sacred Trinity ... together with the Son, who was made man for our sakes, according to the good pleasure of His will, *was also present the Father*, who is inseparable from Him as to His divine nature, and also the Spirit, who is of one and the same essence with Him (emphasis added).

Even though the above examples are concise, they do provide an objective and honest sketch of how the early church fathers, some of whom were disciples of the original apostles, conceived God. Contrary to Oneness teachers, as the record indicates, the early church fathers

envisaged a triune God. They strongly opposed the modalistic concept of God that denied the unipersonality of Jesus Christ and thus, the deity and preexistence of the Son.

## 5.7 SUMMARY

In view of the colossal amount of historical evidence attesting to the early church's Trinitarian belief, one wonders how Oneness teachers can honestly affirm the converse. Bernard (1983: 176) admits that the post-Nicene church fathers believed in the Trinity, however, he claims that these early theologians made a great "blunder in their belief of the Trinity. They failed to purge themselves of the pagan ideas of their own past and culture." Notwithstanding the historical revisionism put forward by Oneness advocates, the records speak for themselves, militating against the Oneness position.

The factual evidence demonstrating that the early church taught and believed in the concept of the Trinity principally comes to us in two forms: 1) the documentation of important ecumenical councils and 2) the testimonies of the early church fathers (viz., the apostolic fathers, the apologists, and the theologians). Many of the early church leaders who attested to a triune God were disciples of the original apostles of Christ. Thus, their testimony is valuable in establishing what the early church believed. Although they lacked articulate language and modern doctrinal words, they clearly envisaged a Trinitarian concept of God.

The doctrine of the Trinity from the fourth century onwards saw considerable development in terms of the words and phrases that adequately defined the biblical revelation of the triune God. The church is ever indebted to men such as Athanasius of Alexandria and three great Cappadocian fathers who contributed so greatly in stating and defending the biblical doctrine of the Trinity.

Although the church uncompromisingly held to the biblical teaching of monotheism, they did not view monotheism as unipersonalism. So Hippolytus (*Against Noetus* 10, in Roberts and Donaldson, 1994: vol. 5:227) can affirm in reference to God: *Monos ōn polus ēn*— "While existing alone, [He] yet existed in plurality."

Incontrovertibly, as the record shows, the early Christian church embraced a multi-personal God—not a unitarian one. The apostolic tradition and the popular faith held to a conception of a plurality of divine Persons (Kelly, 1978: 88). As clearly shown, in substantiation of

the Trinity, the early church frequently utilized such passages as John 1:1 and the first person plural references in the Old Testament (“Let Us make,” “[one] of Us” et al; Gen. 1:26; 3:22; 11:7; Isa. 6:8). Some (e.g., Justin Martyr, Irenaeus, Tertullian, Novatian) appealed to Genesis 19:24 to prove that the Father and Jesus were two distinct Persons both referred to as Yahweh. Historically, it was the Trinitarians and not the modalists who conducted all of the major ecumenical councils and revivals worldwide. Furthermore, the great biblical scholars, theologians and Greek grammarians past and contemporary have been Trinitarian. Although there were modalists throughout the years following the fourth century, they did not represent the Christian church’s *rule of faith*, for the church roundly condemned Oneness theology on all fronts. Bernard’s statement (1983: 43), “As far as we can tell, the early church Christian leaders in the days immediately following the apostolic age were Oneness,” cannot stand in the face of the evidence. If Oneness unitarianism was the doctrine of the early church, then why did early church fathers (some of who were disciples of the apostles) and ecumenical councils condemn it universally?

The early church branded Oneness theology as heretical since the days of Noetus at the end of the second century. Victor, the bishop of Rome around A.D. 190 excommunicated Theodotus (the first known *dynamic* monarchianist; Maier, 1999: 201).

Around the same time, Hippolytus and the presbyters condemned Noetus (the first known *modalistic* monarchianist; Kelly, 1978: 120). Tertullian marked Praxeas as a heretic (Kelly, 1978: 121-22). Paul of Samosata was condemned at the Third Council in Antioch in A.D. 268. Dionysius of Alexandria and Dionysius bishop of Rome along with many important church fathers condemned Sabellius and regarded his teachings as Christological heresy (Kelly, 1978: 133-35; Maier, 1999: 274).

After Modalism/Oneness theology reemerged in the twentieth century, it was again rejected by the church (cf. Chapter 2, 2.3.1). Advocates of Monarchianism, modalistic and dynamic, held to a misunderstood view of monotheism resulting in a unitarian/unipersonal view of God. Oneness theology was reactionary in that Oneness proponents reacted to the Trinitarianism infused in the apostolic tradition, namely, the church’s *rule of faith*. They sacrificed the plain biblical teaching of a tri-personal God, at the expense of a heterodox unipersonal concept of God. Appropriately, the early church resisted this view with immense passion and commitment, gallantly contesting

it by way of ecumenical councils and detailed theological letters. The early church saw Oneness theology as a radical departure from the biblical teaching regarding the nature of God.

The historical records speak clearly: the early church envisaged a tri-personal God. Hence, they assertively condemned any teaching that controverted or rejected the essential distinctions among the divine Persons of the Trinity. For “the catholic (universal) Faith is this: that we worship one God in Trinity and Trinity in Unity; Neither confounding the Persons; nor dividing the Essence”<sup>45</sup> (Schaff, 2006: vol. 3: 9:690-91).

---

<sup>45</sup> The original Latin reads: *Fides autem catholica haec est: ut unum Deum in Trinitate, et Trinitatem in unitate veneremur. Neque confundentes personas, neque substantiam seperantes.* This statement comes from the beginning portion of the Athanasian Creed (also called, *Quicumque vult*, “Whosoever will [be saved]”). Although not penned by Athanasius himself (it probably originated about the middle of the fifth century, in the school of Augustine [Schaff, 2006: vol. 3: 9:696]), it nevertheless represents his views and the views of the early church (esp. that of Nicaea). Hence, it is one of the most defined and utilized creed of early and present-day Christendom.

## Chapter Six

### CONCLUSION

In 2 Timothy 3:16, Paul says that all of Scripture is *theopneustos*—“God breathed out.” Therefore, only if a doctrine is exegetically established can it be “biblical.” Hence, doctrine has to be formulated *under* the authority of Scripture, and be consistent with its teaching. The doctrine of the Trinity is God’s highest revelation to people. As we have shown in Chapter 5, the early church, important ecumenical councils, and resulting creeds valiantly affirmed and defended the biblical revelation of the triune nature of God. The doctrine of the Trinity has been shown exegetically and consistently to be truly biblical—“God breathed out.” God has revealed Himself in three Persons, the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit. To reject the triune God is to reject the God of biblical revelation: “The LORD, He is God; there is no other besides Him” (Deut. 4:35; cf. John 17:3). This is how God has chosen to reveal Himself to people. Bernard (1983: 299) states that Oneness theology “magnifies Jesus Christ, exalts His name, recognizes who He really is, and acknowledges His full deity.” However, denying the Trinity and the deity of the Son and thus, the way God revealed Himself in the pages of Scripture, does not magnify Christ, rather it renounces Him (cf. John 5:23).

We have shown that in Oneness theology, Jesus supposedly has two natures, divine and human. Although orthodox Christianity also sees Jesus as having both a divine and human nature, Oneness theology fundamentally differs in that it asserts that the divine nature of Jesus represents the “Father” and/or “Holy Spirit” mode, whereas the human nature of Jesus represents merely the “Son” mode, thus denying the biblical teaching that Jesus is unipersonal—that is, the two-natured Person. Naturally, Oneness theology rejects the preexistence of the Son since the “Son” signifies *only* the human nature of Jesus, not His divine nature. Thus, it wipes away the biblical presentation of the incarnation of the Son, asserting rather that the Father took flesh. Now attempting to prove that this position is consistent with Scripture requires one to accept the following propositions:

1. God exists as a unipersonal Being, namely, the Father.
2. Monotheism means one Person (unipersonalism).
3. The New Testament teaches that the name of the unipersonal God is “Jesus.”
4. The “Father,” “Son” and “Holy Spirit” cannot be Persons (because of proposition #1), but modes or roles of Jesus.
5. Passages that appear to indicate personal distinction between the Father, Son and Holy Spirit (e.g., Matt. 28:19; 2 Cor. 13:14) merely denote a distinction of modes or functions, not Persons.
6. Passages that appear to indicate that the Son preexisted (e.g., John 17:5; Col. 1:16-17; Heb. 1:2, 10-12) merely denote that the Son was *in view* of or a *future plan* of the Father.
7. The early church was Oneness.
8. The concept of the Trinity is pagan (i.e., derived from pagan sources) and thus false.

Beyond this, Oneness theology rejects justification through faith alone, asserting that water baptism “in the name of Jesus” is a necessary means of regeneration (esp. UPCI; cf. Chapter 3, 3.5). Therefore, Oneness doctrine is heterodox on two accounts: theological and soteriological. We have seen the exegetical affirmation of both the triune nature of God and the unipersonality of Jesus Christ throughout Scripture. The biblical evidence for the doctrine of the Trinity is so clear that Oneness teachers must disconnect their arguments from any meaningful exegetical interaction, as observed. Especially seen in the Gospel of John is the presentation of the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit as distinct, coexistent relational Persons (cf. John 5:31-32; 8:17-18; 14:16-17; 15:26). Again, note these highlights from the Gospel of John, which clearly support the doctrine of the Trinity:

- The differentiation between the Father and the Word grammatically and contextually expressed in 1:1b (*kai ho logos en pros ton theon*; cf. also 1:18)

- Passages that speak of the Father *sending* the Son (cf. 3:17; 6:38, 41, 50-51, 62)
- Passages that speak of the Son personally communicating *with* the Father (17:1ff.)
- Passages that speak of the Father loving the Son (and the reverse; cf. 3:35; 5:20; 10:17)
- Jesus utilizing *first* and *third* person pronouns and references to differentiate Himself from the Father and the Holy Spirit (14:7, 10, 16, 26; 15:10; 16:13-14; 17:5)
- The Son commanding/requesting the Father to glorify Him with the glory that He *shared with* (*para*) the Father before time (cf. 17:5)

Although John’s gospel contains a higher concentration of material on the essential nature of Jesus Christ, we have also shown that the synoptic gospels provide many refutations of the Oneness position and positive endorsements for a triune concept of God. Again, there are three biblical premises that factually exhibit the doctrine of the Trinity: 1) there is one God, 2) there are three divine Persons (or self-aware subjects), and 3) these three divine Persons are distinct from each other. Hence, the term “Trinity” appropriately defines the biblical data from which these three premises derive.

## **6.1 THE TRI-PERSONAL GOD REVEALED IN THE OLD TESTAMENT**

The New Testament provides the primary exegetical data for the concept of the Trinity—one God revealed in three distinct Persons. However, if the true God exists as a triune Being, we would certainly expect to see this revelation stated implicitly or explicitly in the Old Testament as well. Anti-Trinitarian groups categorically deny that the Old Testament believers conceived God as multi-personal. The unconcealed basis of this supposition is the *a priori assumption* that God is unipersonal, thus, the Oneness/unitarian theological starting point: monotheism *equals* unipersonalism. Nevertheless, this supposition disintegrates when we scrupulously examine the Old Testament

writings. In saying that though, we are not suggesting that the Old Testament authors clearly conceptualized or fully comprehended the full revelation of the Trinity as revealed in the New Testament. The nature of divine truth is *progressive* in that God has progressively unfolded many of His truths in the history of redemption. As Hodge (2003: 446) rightly points out:

The progressive character of divine revelation is recognized in relation to all the great doctrines of the Bible ... All that we find unfolded in the fullness of the gospel lies in a rudimental form in the earliest books of the Bible. What at first is only obscurely intimated is gradually unfolded in subsequent parts of the sacred volume, until the truth is revealed in its fullness.

Hence, important biblical doctrines such as the incarnation and substitutionary atonement exist principally in the shadows of the Old Testament narrative, poetry and prophecy while the full revelation exists in the New Testament: God's salvific work in the Person of Jesus Christ, the Son of God (cf. Rom. 5:6-10; Heb. 1:1-2).

The false notion that monotheism *equals* unipersonalism is the theological starting point that precludes Oneness advocates from considering the concept of the Trinity (which they see as *three Gods*). In the face of this assumption, we established first that monotheism denotes *one God*, not *one Person*. Second, the term used to denote that the Lord God is "one" in the Old Testament (e.g., Deut. 6:4) was *echad*. As we have shown, this term can carry the meaning of complex or compound oneness or unity (e.g., Gen 2:24; 11:6; Exod. 26:6, 11).

Also, dissimilar to *echad* and other Hebrew terms meaning "one," the term that is in fact limited to a meaning of solitary "one" or "alone" (Ps. 68:6) is *yachiyd*, but this word was never applied to God. This certainly prompts the question: If the Old Testament authors held to a unipersonal concept of God, thus seeing God existing as one sole Person, then, why would they apply *echad* to God and not *yachiyd*?

### 6.1.1 Multi-Personal References

There is no passage in the Old Testament (or in the New) that expresses or defines God as unitarian/unipersonal (cf. Henry, 1999: 153-55). The Old Testament authors used various terms and phrases which actually portrayed God as multi-personal. Earlier (Chapter 5, 5.6.2.1), we

showed that the early church utilized the first person plural verbs, nouns, adjectives, and prepositions to refer to Yahweh in the Old Testament to emphasize His multi-personal nature (Gen. 1:26-27; 3:22; 11:7-9; Isa. 6:8).<sup>46</sup> In the same way, Jesus made use of plural verbs to clearly differentiate Himself from the Father (cf. John 14:23). The Old Testament clearly describes Yahweh as a multi-personal Being. The evidence is irrefutable. Passages such as Genesis 19:24 and Daniel 7:9-14, for instance, clearly present two distinct divine Persons. And the differentiation between the Memra (“Word”) of Yahweh and Yahweh contained in the Targum is unquestionable (cf. Chapter 4, 4.5).

There are many explicit multi-personal descriptions of God in the Old Testament (cf. Isa. 48:16; Hosea 1:6-7). At many places, the Old Testament authors used plural nouns, adjectives, verbs, and prepositions to describe God. For example, Isaiah 45:9 reads, “Woe to him who quarrels with his Maker.” “Maker” here is singular in Hebrew. However, in Isaiah 54:5, “Maker” and “husband” are plural in Hebrew, literally, “For your *Makers* is your *husbands*, the LORD Almighty is His name” (emphasis added). Similarly with Psalm 149:2: “Let Israel be glad in his Maker [lit., Makers].” In Ecclesiastes 12:1, “Creator” is also plural in Hebrew, as accurately rendered in Young’s Literal Translation: “Remember also thy Creators in days of thy youth.”

Many other examples can be cited where the Old Testament authors use plural references to describe the one true God (e.g., plural nouns Gen. 1:26 [“our image, likeness”]; plural verbs: Gen. 1:26; 2:18 [LXX]; 11:7; Job 35:10; plural prepositions: Gen. 3:22, etc.). Again, only within a Trinitarian context are these plural references consistent with the strict monotheism of the Old Testament. For if indeed the Old Testament authors were unitarian, thus holding to the notion that God is unipersonal, we must ask: Why would these authors use plural words (i.e., nouns, adjectives,<sup>47</sup> verbs, and plural prepositions) in reference to God? And why would these inspired authors, “carried along by the Holy Spirit,” use *echad*, which can mean composite unity (e.g., Deut. 6:4) and not the Hebrew word *yachiyd* denoting absolute solitary oneness (e.g., Judg. 11:34; Ps. 68:6) when referring to the oneness of God? (cf.

---

<sup>46</sup> Again, of the early church Fathers cited, not one used a so-called “plural of majesty” postulation to explain the first person plural terms used of God.

<sup>47</sup> In Proverbs 30:3, Agur writes that he does not “have the knowledge of the Holy One.” The adjective “Holy” here is in the masculine plural (Heb. *qadoshim*, lit., “Holy Ones”; same as 9:10). Accordingly, the LXX renders *qadoshim* as *hagiōn*, which is the genitive plural of *hagios* (lit., “Holy Ones”).

Chapter 2, 2.2). This is the Oneness/unitarian presupposition emerging out of the false notion that monotheism *equals* unipersonalism. In contrast, the textual evidence supports the premise that the Old Testament presents Yahweh as a multi-personal Being referred to as “Makers,” “Creators” and “Holy Ones,” and had personal interaction and dialogue with “another” Person called Yahweh.<sup>48</sup>

## 6.2 GOD IN THREE PERSONS: A BIBLICAL CONCLUSION

“Go therefore and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all that I commanded you; and lo, I am with you always, even to the end of the age” (Matt. 28:19-20).

Going back to the three premises of the Trinity: Scripture presents that 1) there is one God, 2) there are three divine Persons (or self-aware subjects), and 3) these three divine Persons are distinct from each other. Said another way, Scripture presents three divine Persons, the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit that share the nature of the one Being. The three premises set forth above adequately and simply define the “biblical data” for what we call the Trinity. Oneness believers reject the doctrine of the Trinity and embrace a unitarian or unipersonal view of God mainly because of their *a priori* assumption that monotheism means unipersonalism.

### 6.2.1 Important Refutations Presented

**Contextual Refutations:** We have shown the biblical evidence for the deity and unipersonality of the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit and their personal distinction. Scripture presents that the Persons exist in an “I-You” continuous loving relationship *with* each other (esp. seen in John 1:1 and 17:5). Contextually, Jesus is plainly presented as someone “other” than the Father and Holy Spirit (esp. Matt. 28:19; Luke 1:35; 10:21; John 14-16; Rom. 15:16; 2 Cor. 13:14; Eph. 2:18; 4:4-6; 2 Thess. 2:13; Titus 3:5-7; Heb. 1:1-12; 1 Pet. 1:2-3; 1 John 1:1-3). Scripture provides no allowance for a modalist understanding. In contrast, we

---

<sup>48</sup> As pointed out (Chapter 4, 4.5), the “angel of the Lord” references are compelling evidence that God is multi-personal (e.g., Gen. chaps. 18-19; 22:9-14; Exod. 3:6-14; 23:20-21; Num. 22:21-35; Judg. 2:1-5; 6:11-22; 13:9-25; Zech. 1:12; etc.).

have seen that Oneness theology denies any idea of personal distinction between Jesus and the Father and/or the Holy Spirit. Further, Oneness teachers restrict any terminology that may imply a distinction between Jesus and the Father and/or the Holy Spirit to a distinction of mere function, not Person. However, Scripture controverts this notion in the clearest way. Neither Jesus nor His apostles ever claimed that Jesus was the Father or Holy Spirit. Nor was Jesus ever called “Father” or “Holy Spirit” in Scripture.

For over two hundred times, Jesus is specifically referred to as “Son” and over fifty times Jesus and the Father are rendered distinct in the same verse.

**Grammatical Refutations:** The principal Oneness assertion is that God is unipersonal (Jesus) and therefore, there are no distinctions between Jesus, the Father, and the Holy Spirit. However, we have shown comprehensively that from a grammatical perspective the three Persons of the Trinity are distinct.

**(a) Grammatical constructions involving the repetition of both the article *ho* and the conjunction *kai*.** Passages such as Matthew 28:19; 2 Corinthians 13:14; 1 John 1:3; 2:22; and Revelation 5:13 confirm a grammatical differentiation between two or all three Persons of the Trinity. In each of the passages above, the Greek conjunction *kai* is inserted between nouns of the same case and each of those nouns is preceded by the article *ho*; each noun denotes “a different person, thing, or quality from the preceding noun.” Within the particular limitations of the rule, *there exist no exceptions* (cf. Chapter 3, 3.4.2.1). Note the literal rendering of these passages:

- Matthew 28:19: “Baptizing them in the name of **the** [*tou*] Father, **and** [*kai*] **the** [*tou*] Son, **and** [*kai*] **the** [*tou*] Holy Spirit” (emphasis added).
- 2 Corinthians 13:14: “The grace of **the** [*tou*] Lord Jesus Christ **and** [*kai*] the love of **the** [*tou*] God **and** [*kai*] the fellowship of **the** [*tou*] **Holy Spirit** with all of you” (emphasis added).
- 1 John 1:3: “Indeed our fellowship is with **the** [*tou*] Father **and** [*kai*] with **the** [*tou*] Son of Him Jesus Christ” (emphasis added).

- Revelation 5:13: “**The** [tō] One sitting upon the throne **and** [kai] to **the** [tō] Lamb, the blessing and the honor and the glory and the dominion into the ages of the ages” (emphasis added).<sup>49</sup>

**(b) Grammatical constructions involving the lack of the article *ho* and the repetition of the conjunction *kai*.** In Paul’s salutations<sup>50</sup> the two personal nouns “God” (Father) and “Lord” (Jesus) are connected by *kai* and the first noun (“God”) lacks the article. According to the rules of Greek grammar, this means that each personal noun denotes a distinct person: *Charis humin kai eirēnē apo theou patros hēmōn kai kuriou Iēsou Christou*, literally, “Grace to you and peace from God Father of us and Lord Jesus Christ” (cf. Chapter 3, 3.3.3)

**(c) Different prepositions.** There are many places in Scripture where different and/or a repetition of prepositions denotes a clear distinction between Jesus and the Father (and the Holy Spirit). In 1 John 1:3, we find that the preposition *meta*, “with” is repeated before each of the personal nouns: “We proclaim to you also, so that you too may have fellowship *with* [*meta*] us; and indeed our fellowship is *with the* [*meta tou*] Father and *with* [*meta*] His Son Jesus Christ” (emphasis added).

Here, Christians (“us”), the Father, and His Son all are preceded by the preposition *meta*. Aside from this, as we just saw, the repetition of both the article and conjunction here also differentiates the Father and “His Son.” There are several passages where different prepositions denote a distinction between all three Persons in the Trinity (also cf. John 14:6, 12; 15:26; 16:28; Eph. 2:18).

**(d) Specific prepositions that mark a distinction of Persons.** John 1:1 and John 17:5 especially affirm the personal distinction between Jesus and the Father. In John 1:1b the Apostle John uses the specific preposition *pros* to make his case. We have shown in detail that *pros* in 1:1b signifies the personal distinction (and intimacy) between the Father and the Person of the Word who became flesh. Although the grammar

---

<sup>49</sup> Also, passages such as 1 Thessalonians 3:11; 2 Thessalonians 2:16; and 1 John 2:22-23 contain Sharp’s rule #6 constructions clearly differentiating two Persons—Jesus and God the Father.

<sup>50</sup> Paul’s salutations are found in Romans 1:7; 1 Corinthians 1:3; 2 Corinthians 1:2; Galatians 1:3; Ephesians 1:2; Philippians 1:2; Colossians 1:2 (partial); 1 Thessalonians 1:1 (inverted); 2 Thessalonians 1:2; 1 Timothy 1:2; 2 Timothy 1:2; Titus 1:4; and Philemon 1:3 (cf. Chapter 3, 3.3.3).

places *tou theou* (1:1b, the Father) and *theos* (1:1c, the Word) in the same category (viz., “God”) in terms of essence/nature, it does not place them in the same category of “Person” in terms of identity, for “the Word was *with* God” (cf. Chapter 4, 4.5).

In John 17:5, we previously read (Chapter 4, 4.5) of the beautiful and intimate High Priestly prayer of Jesus to His Father: “Now, Father, glorify Me *together with Yourself*, [*para seautō*] with the glory which I had [*eichon*] with You [*para soi*] before the world was” (emphasis added). The passage strongly refutes the Oneness position mainly on three counts. First, the Son claims that He *had* (*eichon*, “shared”/“possessed”) divine glory with the Father “before the world was” proving that the Son absolutely preexisted—thus existing *pro tou ton kosmon einai*—“before the world was.” Second, the Son claims that He had this preexisting glory *with* (*para*) the Father—that is, a *shared glory*. This critically opposes the Oneness position that maintains that the Son is non-divine and non-eternal (cf. Bernard, 1983: 116-17).

And third, the fatal strike against the Oneness position is the fact that the preposition *para* (“with”) is followed by the dative case two times in this passage (*para seautō*, lit., “together with Yourself”; *para soi*, lit., “together with You”) grammatically indicating a “near,” “beside,” or “in the presence of” meaning. As pointed out, *para* with the dative is used *ten times* in John’s literature and at no place in John’s literature does it mean “in the mind.” And, to say again, no standard lexicon applies such a meaning as “in the mind” to the text of John 17:5. To say otherwise is simply lexical abuse. Hence, the Son clearly affirmed His preexistence “alongside of” “in association with,” God the Father—*before time*. “This is not just ideal preexistence, but actual and conscious existence at the Father's side” (Robertson (1932: 5:275-76).

**(e) The significance of the preposition *dia* followed by the genitive case showing that the preexistent Son was the Creator.** We previously examined several passages exegetically, confirming that the Son was the Agent of creation—the Creator of all things. This point alone disproves the Oneness claim of a non-eternal, non-divine Son. Just as John 1:1, 18; and 17:5 indicate that the Son preexisted *with* the Father, passages such as John 1:3; Colossians 1:16-17; and Hebrews 1:2 show that the Son was the Creator of all things. We saw that in these passages, the Greek preposition *dia*, followed by the genitive case positively shows that the Son of man, Jesus Christ was the actual Creator. In

Greek, *dia* followed by the genitive denotes “agency” (cf. Chapter 4, 4.6).

***Historical Refutations:*** In Chapter 5, we explored the historical record of the early church, objectively examining the early ecumenical councils and their resulting creeds, and the documentation of the many unmodified statements of important early church fathers, mainly on the issue of the nature of God. The evidence is indisputable: the early church embraced a tri-personal God. We observed that 1) the most important ecumenical councils and their resulting creeds were definitely Trinitarian in nature, 2) many of these councils pointedly refuted and condemned the philosophy of Sabellianism/Oneness and affirmed the triune nature of God (esp. the deity of the Son) in a straightforward and unambiguous fashion, and 3) the early pre-Nicene Fathers, although lacking the definitive and articulate language to describe the Trinity, did not envisage God as unipersonal, but rather as a tri-personal Being.

As the years went on, biblical research considerably expanded and thus, the need to express doctrine in a more coherent manner was essential, especially in the challenge to heresy. So, by the fourth century, there was a marked increase in the utilization of formalized doctrinal words and phrases to define adequately the Trinity. The historical evidence proves verifiably that Bernard’s (1983: 43) assertion: “As far as we can tell, the early church Christian leaders in the days immediately following the apostolic age were Oneness,” is historically untrue.

***The Preexistence of the Son:*** In Chapter 3, we exegetically debunked the Oneness teaching that Jesus is the Father and the Holy Spirit. However, we contend that the exegetical presentation of the preexistence of the Son and His role as Creator is one of the strongest points of refutation against Oneness theology. The Son is the Creator and has been eternally existing *with* the Father (esp. seen in Dan. 7:9-14; John 1:1-3; 18; Col. 1:16-17; Phil. 2:6-11; and the prologue of Hebrews). This proves biblically beyond doubt that 1) the unipersonality and deity of the Son, 2) the actual preexistence of the Son, and 3) the Oneness fundamental teaching that the Son’s life emerged in Bethlehem is patently false.

## **6.2.2 Personal Loving Fellowship between the Persons in the Trinity**

The personal attributes and personal characteristics constitute personhood. In Chapter 3 we presented biblical evidence highlighting specific personal attributes, which the Father, the Son and Holy Spirit possess—especially emotive expression (e.g., love). The Oneness position of a unipersonal deity, which only manifested or projected its modes/roles at different times, turns the eternal and intimate relationship between the Father and the Son into a mere illusion. In contrast, Scripture presents the three Persons of the Trinity intimately and lovingly relating to each another. For example,

- “The Father loves the Son and has given all things into His hand” (John 3:35; cf. 5:20; 10:17).
- The Son really does love the Father: “so that the world may know that I love the Father, I do exactly as the Father commanded Me” (John 14:31).
- In the same way, the Holy Spirit really does love the believer (cf. Rom. 15:30).

Oneness teachers maintain that it was merely Jesus’ divine nature (the Father) loving the human nature (the Son). However, by way of definition, two abstract natures cannot have intimate fellowship and actual emotive love for each other, for natures cannot express emotion. Only self-aware subjects that are cognizant of their own existence can possess such emotion. In other words, only conscious persons can give and receive love. The Son was the very object of the Father’s love. Biblically we find either two of all three Persons engaging in expressed love (e.g., John 1:1; 14:23; Rom, 15:30; 2 Cor. 13:14; 2 Thess. 2:16; Jude 1:1).

## **6.2.3 Personal Loving Fellowship between the Persons of the Trinity and Believers**

What opposes further the Oneness unipersonal view is the way Scripture expresses the love and continuous fellowship that all three Persons of the Trinity have for believers.

Paul concludes his second letter to the Corinthians with this benediction: “The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, and the love of God, and the *fellowship* [*koinōnia*] of the Holy Spirit be with you all” (2 Cor. 13:14; emphasis added). Love and fellowship are definitive characteristics of personhood, not natures or modes. Again, the personal aspects of the grace of the Lord Jesus, and the love of the Father, and fellowship of the Holy Spirit grammatically differentiate all three Persons of the Trinity (cf. Chapter 3, 3.4.2.1). The Apostle John also expresses the unity and fellowship that believers have with the *distinct* Persons of the Father and the Son: “We proclaim to you also, so that you too may have *fellowship* [*koinōnia*] with us; and indeed our *fellowship* is with the Father and with His Son Jesus Christ” (1 John 1:3; emphasis added).

The Holy Spirit likewise *gives* love to believers: “Now I urge you, brethren, by our Lord Jesus Christ and by the *love of the Spirit*, to strive together with me in your prayers to God for me” (Rom. 15:30; emphasis added). The biblical data is rich with examples where the three Persons of the Trinity engage in loving intercourse, fellowship and communicative dialogue between each other and with believers.

#### 6.2.4 The Soteriological Trinity

Theologians have long noted three important aspects of the Trinity, *ontological*, *economic* and *soteriological*. Scripture clearly distinguishes these three aspects. The *ontological* Trinity focuses on the essence or nature of the three Persons. Thus, all three Persons are in nature God, being ontologically coequal. The *economic* Trinity, however, focuses on the mutual operations or functionality of the three Persons. The term “economic” comes from the Greek term, *oikonomikos* (“arrangement/management of a household). Now the *soteriological*<sup>51</sup> Trinity focuses on the specific functions or specified role each Person of the Trinity has in the redemptive or salvific work of God’s elect. Notice the following biblical examples, which clearly express the soteriological Trinity:

**The Father elects and justifies His people:** “Blessed be the God and *Father* of our Lord Jesus Christ, *who* has blessed us with every spiritual blessing in the heavenly realms in Christ” (Eph. 1:3; emphasis added)

---

<sup>51</sup> “Soteriological” is from the Greek word, *soteria* (“salvation”).

in which “He chose us” in Christ (Eph. 1:4; cf. 2 Thess. 2:13) and justified us (cf. Rom. 8:33).

**The sole ground of justification is the vicarious substitutionary atoning work of the Son in His perfect life and cross-work<sup>52</sup> (the sole instrument being faith):** “Therefore, having been justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ (Rom. 5:1). “In Him we have redemption through His blood, the forgiveness of sins” (Eph. 1:7). The Son completed the work that the Father had given Him. In John 6, the Son speaks of His preexistence *with* the Father and His promise (covenant) of redemption for the elect of God:

“This is the will of Him who sent Me, that of all that He has given Me I lose nothing, but raise it up on the last day. For this is the will of My Father, that everyone who beholds the Son and believes in Him will have eternal life, and I Myself will raise him up on the last day ... No one can come to Me unless the Father who sent Me draws him; and I will raise him up on the last day” (John 6:39-40, 44).

It was the Son who came from heaven (sent by the Father) and laid down His life for His sheep (cf. John 1:29; 10:15, 29).

**It is the Holy Spirit who effectually calls and regenerates** (cf. Ezek. 36:26-27; Titus 3:5), **and “is given as a pledge of our inheritance”** (cf. Eph. 1:14): We “are chosen according to the foreknowledge of God the Father, by the sanctifying work of the Spirit” (1 Pet. 1:2). Therefore, from start to finish, salvation is the work of the triune God. It was necessary that God the Son became flesh. If the Son was not God, as Oneness theology teaches, then the redemption of “the many” (Mark 10:45) could not have been accomplished. For “no man can by any means redeem his brother or give to God a ransom for him, for the redemption of his soul is costly, and he should cease trying forever” (Ps. 49:7-8). The biblical teaching of the soteriological Trinity challenges the entire Oneness theological system.

---

<sup>52</sup> The Son’s righteousness consists of His *active* or preceptive obedience (i.e., His sinless obedient life) and His *passive* or penal obedience (i.e., His cross-work). It is this perfect obedience of the Son that the Father *imputes* to the sinner at the time the sinner places his or her faith in Christ Jesus, God the Son (cf. Rom. 4:4-8; 2 Cor. 5:20-21).

The Oneness idea of a unipersonal God in which Jesus is the Father prompts a few serious theological questions regarding the biblical view of salvation. How is Jesus “mediator” if Jesus is the *same Person* as the Father? Between whom would He mediate? By definition, a mediator mediates on behalf of *two parties*. A mediator is not one of the parties himself, but a third party or go-between. 1 Timothy 2:5 makes this point clear: “There is one God, and one mediator also between God and men, the man Christ Jesus” (cf. Gal. 3:20). Only because Jesus Christ is a distinct Person *other than* the Person of the Father can He “mediate” between God and men. On the same lines, Paul says that Jesus “intercedes for us” (Rom. 8:34). However, if Jesus is the Father, between whom does Jesus intercede?

Even more, if Jesus is not a distinct Person from the Father, whom did He propitiate? (cf. 1 John 2:2). When Paul states that God “delivered Him [Jesus] over for us all” (Rom. 8:32), did Paul really mean that Jesus as the Father delivered Himself up as the Son for sacrifice? How does one interpret all the *sending of the Son* passages—Jesus the Father sending Jesus the Son? The Oneness understanding of salvation is apparently flawed when a careful evaluation of these questions and others are answered in light of the exegetical scrutiny of the biblical text. The testimony of Scripture speaks of infallible salvation accomplished by the triune God, not a unipersonal deity. The soteriological Trinity teaches that God “saved us, not on the basis of deeds which we have done in righteousness, but according to *His* [the Father] mercy, by the washing of regeneration and renewing by the *Holy Spirit*, whom *He* poured out upon us richly through *Jesus Christ* our Savior” (Titus 3:5-6; emphasis added).

### 6.3 SUMMARY

Oneness theology makes two significant doctrinal assertions, 1) there is only one eternal God and 2) Jesus Christ is fully God. From these two assertions, Oneness advocates conclude that the one God (i.e., one Person) is “Jesus” manifesting as Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. One’s particular theology can mold and shape the meaning of many doctrinal words and phrases. In other words, Mormons, Jehovah’s Witnesses, and Oneness Pentecostals pour decidedly different meanings into phrases such as “Son of God” or terms such as “God” and “Father”. Unless

doctrinal words and phrases are “biblically” justifiable, they cannot be “biblically” true.

Thus far, we have read the doctrinal definitions of many terms and phrases asserted by Oneness advocates. Their two main affirmations, “one God” and “Jesus is God” are defined through the lens of Modalism: “one God” meaning “one Person” and “Jesus is God,” meaning that Jesus is Father. From its theological origins in the second century, Oneness theology assumes a prior theological conclusion: God is unipersonal. Assuming that God exists as one Person, Oneness teachers naturally see “Jesus” as the name of this unipersonal God who merely manifests as Father, Son and Holy Spirit.

A unipersonal God is entirely antithetical to a triune God, thus, this is the basic reason why Oneness teachers categorically reject the concept of the Trinity. Oneness theology must redefine monotheism in order to maintain a unipersonal concept of God void of any pre-creation relationships. In opposition, we have exegetically shown that God is tri-personal in which each of the three Persons or Selves engage in loving intercourse and intimate fellowship before time *with* each other. Logically, unipersonalism and Trinitarianism (completely adversative to each other), cannot represent the true God simultaneously. The unitarian/unipersonal assumption is really the nucleus of Oneness theology.

Thus, Oneness believers falsely equate *three Persons* (Trinity) with *three Gods* (tritheism) and *one God* (monotheism) with *one Person* (unipersonalism). This is a gross misrepresentation of the biblical doctrine of the Trinity, which results, of course, in a tritheistic understanding. We have comprehensively documented the theological/Christological divergences of Oneness theology, demonstrating that Oneness theology is a non-orthodox system:

1. Oneness theology denies the Person and unipersonality of the Father by asserting that Jesus was the Father Himself, and by claiming that the Father was merely a mode or manifestation of the unipersonal deity named Jesus.
2. Oneness theology denies the Person and unipersonality of the Holy Spirit by asserting that Jesus was the Holy Spirit Himself, and by claiming that the Holy Spirit was merely a mode or manifestation of the unipersonal deity named Jesus.

3. Oneness theology denies the Person, unipersonality, preexistence and deity of the Son by asserting that the Son's life had a beginning and will have an end.
4. It claims that the Son was merely a *temporary* mode or manifestation of the unipersonal deity named Jesus.
5. Oneness theology denies the incarnation of the Son by asserting that the Father came down and *wrapped* Himself in human flesh (though, not actually *becoming* flesh).

Notwithstanding the indefatigable efforts of Oneness promoters to present a unipersonal God, the exegetical evidence affirming the Trinity is invincible and overwhelming. There are copious examples in the Old Testament where multi-personal references are specifically used of Yahweh. There is no passage or concept in the Old Testament or New Testament that explicitly or implicitly states that God is one Person as Oneness teachers presume. In dealing with the New Testament revelation of the triune nature of God, there follows a summary of the key exegetical affirmations that substantiate the Trinity and provide a well-defined refutation to Oneness theology:

1. The *context* of specific passages denotes a personal distinction between all three Persons of the Trinity.
2. The *grammar* of specific passages denotes a personal distinction between Jesus and the Father, and/or the Holy Spirit.
3. Specific passages denote contextually and grammatically the deity of the Son, contrary to the Oneness modalistic position that sees the "Son" as merely the humanity and not the deity of Jesus.
4. Specific passages denote the Person of the Son as (a) the actual Creator of all things and (b) preexisting *with* the Father.

The case for the Trinity, therefore, is biblically incontrovertible. There exist three distinct self-conscious Persons (or self-aware subjects cognizant of their own existence)—the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit. All three distinct Persons *share* the nature of the one God, being coequal, coeternal and coexistent. All three Persons are called *theos*, and *kurios*, *in a religious context*, sharing in the works of God and

possessing the very attributes of God. We find the truth of the Trinity contained in nearly every page of Scripture. The clear differentiation of all three Persons of the Trinity is well exemplified in the New Testament. We contended that for something to be “biblically true” the exegesis of the biblical text must substantiate it.

As we have demonstrated in careful detail, the doctrinal conclusions of Modalism historically and presently were not the result of an exegetical analysis of specific biblical texts, but rather a faulty understanding of monotheism, and thus they are distortions of biblical Trinitarianism. Monarchianism in both forms (modalistic and dynamic) attacks the biblical revelation of Jesus Christ. Far from being the “apostolic doctrine,” the early church roundly and universally condemned Modalism as Christological heresy.

Although Oneness advocates claim allegiance to Jesus Christ as their God and Savior, they embrace “another Jesus ... different spirit ... different gospel” (2 Cor. 11:4). Eternal life is having knowledge in “the only true God, and Jesus Christ” (John 17:3). The true God is triune. Reformed theologian Jonathan Edwards (Helm, 1971: 118) rightly stated that “the whole Divine essence does truly and distinctly subsist both in the Divine idea and Divine love, and that each of them are properly distinct persons.” The biblical revelation of God speaks of a triune God.

The Oneness rejection of the Trinity rejects the very nature of God Himself. Jesus spoke clearly on the subject: “You will die in your sins; unless you believe that I am” (John 8:24). To err on the biblical teaching of the Son is a deadly error (John 3:36; 1 John 5:12). Embracing the Trinity is a distinguishing characteristic of Christians; and that is to say that the doctrine of the Trinity is, according to our Lord’s own apprehension of it, the distinctive mark of the religion which He has founded (Warfield, 1988: 155).

Scripture presents a clear and definitive Christology. In sharp contrast to Oneness Christology, Scripture presents that the Person of the Son 1) is fully God, 2) was Creator of all things, 3) coexisted *with* the Father, 4) is personally distinct from the Father and the Holy Spirit, and 5) became fully man in order “to give His life a ransom for many” (Mark 10:45). It was the Son’s sacrificial death on the cross that redeemed sinners. The Son is the only mediator and intercessor between God the Father and human beings. The Jesus Christ of biblical revelation is the divine Son, the *monogenēs theos*, a personal self-aware subject, distinct from the Father and the Holy Spirit. “He who has the

Son has the life; he who does not have the Son of God does not have the life” (1 John 5:12).

Only the true God of biblical revelation can remove the heart of stone of a sinner, give that person a new heart of flesh, and thus declare that person righteous in His sight. Jesus affirmed in John 17:3 that eternal life is to *know* “the only true God and Jesus Christ.” The true God of biblical revelation is triune—the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit. This is the historic Christian faith.

## BIBLIOGRAPHY

- Aland, B. *et al.* ed. 1993. *Nestle-Aland Novum Testamentum Graece*. 27th. ed. Stuttgart: Deutsche Bibelgesellschaft.
- Aland, B. *et al.* ed. 2012. *Nestle-Aland Novum Testamentum Graece*. 28<sup>th</sup> ed. Stuttgart: Deutsche Bibelgesellschaft.
- Ankerberg, J. & Weldon, J. 1999. *Encyclopedia of Cults and Religions*. Eugene, OR: Harvest House.
- Apostolic Constitutions*. Book V11:3. In Donaldson, J. & Roberts, A. (eds). 1994, *Ante-Nicene Fathers*. Vol. 7. Peabody, MA: Hendrickson.
- Athanasius. *De Synodis*. In Schaff, P. & Wace, H. (eds). 1994, *Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers*. 2nd. series. Vol. 4. Peabody, MA: Hendrickson.
- \_\_\_\_\_. *Defense of Dionysius*. In Schaff, P. & Wace, H. (eds). 1994, *Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers*. 2nd. series. Vol. 4. Peabody, MA: Hendrickson.
- \_\_\_\_\_. *Discourses Against the Arians*. Discourse III. In Schaff, P. & Wace, H. (eds). 1994, *Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers*. 2nd. series. Vol. 4. Peabody, MA: Hendrickson.
- Athenagoras. *A Plea for the Christians*. In Richardson, CC. (ed.). 1970, *Early Christian Fathers*. New York, NY: Touchstone.
- Awake Magazine*. 8 December. 1973. Brooklyn, NY: Watchtower Bible and Tract Society.
- Basil the Great. *To the Notables of Neocaesarea*. Letter CCX. In Schaff, P. & Wace, H. (eds) 1994, *Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers*. 2nd. series. Vol. 8. Peabody, MA: Hendrickson.

- Bauer, W. 2000. *A Greek English Lexicon of the New Testament and Other Early Christian Literature*. 3rd. ed. (rev. and ed. by Danker, FW). Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press.
- Beisner, CE. 1998. *'Jesus Only' Churches*. Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan.
- Berkhof, F. 2003. *Principles of Biblical Interpretation*. Grand Rapids, MI: Baker.
- Bernard, DK. 1983. *Oneness of God*. Hazelwood, MO: Word Aflame.
- \_\_\_\_\_. 1984. "The New Birth." In Wallace, MH (ed.), *Series in Pentecostal Theology*. Vol. 2. Antioch, TN: Pentecostal Publication.
- \_\_\_\_\_. 1985. *Essentials in Oneness Theology*. Hazelwood, MO: Word Aflame.
- \_\_\_\_\_. 1991. *Oneness and the Trinity, A.D. 100-300: The Doctrine of God in Ancient Christian Writings*. Hazelwood: Word Aflame.
- Bethel Ministerial Association. 2008. Homepage. [Online]. <http://www.daveweb1.com/bma/Difference/articles.html> [Accessed 5 May 2008].
- Bietenhard, H. 1976. "Onoma." In Brown, C. (ed.), *The New International Dictionary of New Testament Theology*. Vol. 2. Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan.
- Bowman, RM. 1989. *Why You Should Believe in the Trinity: An Answer to Jehovah's Witnesses*. Grand Rapids, MI: Baker.
- Bowman, RM. & Komoszewski, JE. 2007. *Putting Jesus in His Place: The Case for the Deity of Christ*. Grand Rapids, MI: Kregel.
- Boyd, GA. 1992. *Oneness Pentecostals & The Trinity*. Grand Rapids, MI: Baker.

- \_\_\_\_\_. 1995. *Jesus Under Siege*. Wheaton, IL: Victor Books.
- \_\_\_\_\_. 2000. *God of the Possible: A Biblical Introduction to the Open View of God*. Grand Rapids, MI: Baker.
- Brown, F, Driver, SR & Briggs, CA. 1979. *The New Brown-Driver-Briggs-Gesenius Hebrew and English Lexicon, with an Appendix Containing the Biblical Aramaic*. Peabody, MA: Hendrickson.
- Brown, RE. 1997. *An Introduction to the New Testament*. New York, NY: Doubleday.
- Buzzard, AF & Hunting, CF. 1998. *The Doctrine of the Trinity: Christianity's Self-Inflicted Wound*. Lanham, MD: International Scholars Publications.
- Calvin, J. 1989. *Institutes of the Christian Religion*. Trans. by Beveridge, H. Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans.
- \_\_\_\_\_. 1994. "John." In Alister, MA & Packer, JI (eds). *Crossway Classic Commentaries*. Wheaton, IL: Crossway.
- Carson, DA. 1996. *Exegetical Fallacies*. Grand Rapids, MI: Baker.
- \_\_\_\_\_. 2002. *Telling the Truth: Evangelizing Postmoderns*. Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan.
- Chalfant, WB. *Ancient Champions of Oneness*. Hazelwood, MO: Word Aflame, 1979.
- Clanton, C, Croucher, D. & Dugas, P. 1984. *Bible Doctrines: Foundation of the Church*. Hazelwood, MO: Word Aflame.
- Clement of Alexandria. *Fragments*. In Donaldson, J. & Roberts, A. (eds). 1994, *Ante-Nicene Fathers*. Vol. 2. Peabody, MA: Hendrickson.
- Clement of Rome. *Letter to the Corinthians*. In Holmes, MW (ed.). 1999, *Apostolic Fathers: Greek Texts and English Translations*. Grand Rapids MI: Baker.

- Countess, RH. 1982. *The Jehovah's Witnesses' New Testament: A Critical Analysis of the New World Translation of the Christian Greek Scriptures*. Phillipsburg, NJ: Presbyterian and Reformed.
- Crampton, WG. 1986. *Biblical Hermeneutics*. Lakeland, FL: Whitefield Press.
- Graves, RB. 1977. *The God of Two Testaments*. Antioch, TN: Pentecostal Publication.
- Cremer, H. 1878. *Biblico-Theological Lexicon of New Testament Greek*. Trans. by Urwick, W. Edinburgh, UK: T & T Clark.
- Cunningham, DS. 1998. *These Three Are One*. Malden, MS: Blackwell.
- Cyprian. *To Jubaianus, Concerning the Baptism of Heretics*. In Roberts, A & Donaldson, J (eds). 1994, *Ante-Nicene Fathers*. Vol. 5. Peabody, MA: Hendrickson.
- Cyril of Jerusalem. *Catechetical Lectures*. Lecture XVI. In Schaff, P. & Wace, H. (eds). 1994, *Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers*. 2nd series. Vol. 7. Peabody, MA: Hendrickson.
- Dana, HE & Mantey, JR. 1927. *A Manual Grammar of the Greek New Testament*. New York, NY: Macmillan.
- Didache*. In Richardson, CC (ed.). 1970, *Early Christian Fathers*. New York, NY: Touchstone.
- Dionysius of Alexandria. *Epistle to the Bishop of Rome*. In Roberts, A. & Donaldson, J. (eds). 1994, *Ante-Nicene Fathers*. Vol. 6. Peabody, MA: Hendrickson.
- Dionysius of Rome. *Against the Sabellians*. In Roberts, A. & Donaldson, J. (eds). 1994, *Ante-Nicene Fathers*. Vol. 7. Peabody, MA: Hendrickson.
- Donaldson, J & Roberts, A (eds). 1994. *Ante-Nicene Fathers*. 10 Vols. Peabody, MA: Hendrickson.

- Edwards, J. 1971. "An Essay on the Trinity." In Helm, P. (ed.), *Treatise on Grace and Other Posthumously Published Writings*. Cambridge, MA: James Clarke and Co.
- Ellis, DJ. 1986. "The Gospel of John." In Bruce, FF (ed.), *The International Bible Commentary with the New International Version*. Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan.
- Ellison, HL. 1986. "The Gospel of Matthew." In Bruce, FF (ed.), *The International Bible Commentary with the New International Version*. Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan.
- English, AC & Olson, RE. 2005. *Pocket History of Theology*. Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity.
- Epistle of Barnabas*. In Holmes, MW (ed.). 1999, *Apostolic Fathers: Greek Texts and English Translations*. Grand Rapids MI: Baker.
- Eusebius of Caesarea. *History of the Church*. In Maier, P (ed.). 1999. Grand Rapids, MI: Kregel.
- \_\_\_\_\_. *Proof of the Gospel [Demonstratio Evangelica]*. In Ferrarx, WJ (ed.). 1981. Grand Rapids, MI: Baker.
- \_\_\_\_\_. *The Life of Constantine, Book II*. In Schaff, P. & Wace, H. (eds). 1994, *Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers*. 2nd series. Vol. 1. Peabody, MA: Hendrickson.
- Fales, RM. 2006. *Koine Greek: A Practical Handbook for the Study of the Greek New Testament*. Northridge, CA: The Biblical American Archaeologist.
- Fee, GD. 1985. *The Disease of the Health and Wealth Gospels*. Vancouver, BC: Regent College.
- Funk, FX. 1910. *A Manual of Church History*. Vol. 1. Trans. by Cappadelta, L. London, UK: Paul Kegan.

- Geisler, NL & Nix, WE. 1986. *A General Introduction to the Bible*. Chicago, IL: Moody.
- González, JL. 1988. *A History of Christian Thought*. Vol. 1. Nashville, TN: Abingdon.
- Greenlee, HJ. 1986. *A Concise Exegetical Grammar of New Testament Greek*. 5th ed. Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans.
- Greenslade, SL. 1996. *Early Latin Theology: Selections from Tertullian, Cyprian, Ambrose and Jerome*. Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox Press.
- Gregory Thaumaturgus. *A Declaration of Faith*. In Roberts, A. & Donaldson, J. (eds). 1994, *Ante-Nicene Fathers*. Vol. 6. Peabody, MA: Hendrickson.
- \_\_\_\_\_. *A Sectional Confession of Faith*. In Roberts, A. & Donaldson, J. (eds). 1994, *Ante-Nicene Fathers*. Vol. 6. Peabody, MA: Hendrickson.
- Guinness, O. 1983. *The Gravedigger File*. Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity.
- Gunton, CE. 2003. *Father, Son & Holy Spirit*. New York, NY: T & T Clark.
- Hanegraaff, H. 1993. *Christianity in Crisis*. Eugene, OR: Harvest House.
- Harris, JG. 1999. *Gnosticism: Beliefs and Practices*. Eastbourne, East Sussex, UK: Sussex Academic.
- Harris, MJ. 1992. *Jesus as God: The New Testament Usage of Theos in Reference to Jesus*. Grand Rapids, MI: Baker.
- Hawthorne, GF & Martin, RP (eds). 1993. *Dictionary of Paul and his Letters*. Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity.

- Hendriksen, W. 1980. *First and Second Timothy and Titus*. Grand Rapids, MI: Baker.
- Henry, CFH. 1999. *God, Revelation, and Authority*. Vol. 5. Wheaton, IL: Crossway.
- Hermas. *The Shepherd*. In Holmes, MW. (ed.). 1999, *Apostolic Fathers: Greek Texts and English Translations*. Grand Rapids MI: Baker.
- Heslam, J. 2006. "Rev-ved up over Joel; Country's hottest preacher hits Hub." *The Boston Herald*. 3 September 2006.
- Hippolytus. *Against the Heresy of One Noetus*. In Roberts, A. & Donaldson, J. (eds). 1994, *Ante-Nicene Fathers*. Vol. 5. Peabody, MA: Hendrickson.
- \_\_\_\_\_. *The Extant Works and Fragments, Exegetical, On Genesis*. In Roberts, A. & Donaldson, J. (eds). 1994, *Ante-Nicene Fathers*. Vol. 5. Peabody, MA: Hendrickson.
- \_\_\_\_\_. *The Refutation of All Heresies*. In Roberts, A. & Donaldson, J. (eds). 1994, *Ante-Nicene Fathers*. Vol. 5. Peabody, MA: Hendrickson.
- Hodge, C. 2003. *Systematic Theology*. Vol. 1. Peabody, MA: Hendrickson.
- Holmes, MW. (ed.). 1999. *The Apostolic Fathers: Greek Texts and English Translations* Grand Rapids MI: Baker.
- Hutchinson, J. 1994. *Out of the Cults and Into the Church: Understanding and Encouraging Ex-Cultists*. Grand Rapids, MI: Kregel.
- Ignatius. *Letter to the Ephesians*. In Holmes, MW. (ed.). 1999, *Apostolic Fathers: Greek Texts and English Translations*. Grand Rapids MI: Baker.

\_\_\_\_\_. *Letter to the Magnesians*. In Holmes, MW. (ed.). 1999, *Apostolic Fathers: Greek Texts and English Translations*. Grand Rapids MI: Baker.

\_\_\_\_\_. *Letter to the Romans*. In Holmes, MW. (ed.). 1999, *Apostolic Fathers: Greek Texts and English Translations*. Grand Rapids MI: Baker.

Irenaeus. *A Refutation and Overthrow of Knowledge Falsely So-Called [Against Heresies]*. In Roberts, A. & Donaldson, J. (eds). 1994, *Ante-Nicene Fathers*. Vol. 1. Peabody, MA: Hendrickson.

Jakes, TD. 2008. "Doctrinal Statement." *The Potter's House Church* [Online]. [www.thepottershouse.org/Local/About-Us/Belief-Statement.aspx](http://www.thepottershouse.org/Local/About-Us/Belief-Statement.aspx) [Accessed 1 May 15 2008].

Justin Martyr. *Dialogue with Trypho*. In Roberts, A. & Donaldson, J. (eds). 1994, *Ante-Nicene Fathers*. Vol. 1. Peabody, MA: Hendrickson.

\_\_\_\_\_. *First Apology*. In Richardson, CC. (ed.). 1970, *Early Christian Fathers*. New York, NY: Touchstone.

Kelly, JD. 1978. *Early Christian Doctrines*. San Francisco, CA: HarperCollins.

Kevern, P & Gooder, P. 2004. *Exploring New Testament Greek*. St. Albans, London: SCM Press.

Kohlenberger, JR III, Goodrick, EW & Swanson, JA. 1997. *The Greek-English Concordance to the New Testament*. Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan.

Kuschel, KJ. 1992. *Born Before all Time?: The Dispute over Christ's Origin*. Trans. by John Bowden. New York, NY: Crossroad.

*Larry King Live*. CNN. 20 June 2005, 21:00 ET. Television.

Lenski, RCH. 1943. *The Interpretation of John's Gospel*. Minneapolis, MN: Augsburg Fortress Press.

- Liddell, HG, Scott, R & McKenzie, R. 1996. *A Greek-English Lexicon*. 9th ed. with revised supplement. Oxford, UK: Oxford University Press.
- MacArthur, JF. 1993. *Charismatic Chaos*. Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan.
- \_\_\_\_\_. 1995. "The Sufficiency of the Written Word." In Kistler, D (ed.) *Sola Scriptura: The Protestant Position on the Bible*. Orlando, FL: Soli Deo Gloria.
- McNamara, MS. 1972. *Targum and Testament, Aramaic Paraphrases of the Hebrew Bible: A Light on the New Testament*. Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans
- Magee, G. 1988. *Is Jesus in the Godhead or Is The Godhead in Jesus?* Hazelwood, MO: Word Aflame.
- Martin, RP. 1983. *Carmen Christi: Philippians 2.5-11 in Recent Interpretation and in the Setting of Early Christian Worship*. 2nd ed. Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans.
- Martin, W. 1997. *Kingdom of the Cults*. (ed. and rev. by Hanegraaff, H.). Minneapolis, MN: Bethany.
- Mathetes. *Letter to Diognetus*. In Holmes, MW. (ed.). 1999, *Apostolic Fathers: Greek Texts and English Translations*. Grand Rapids MI: Baker.
- Mayhue, R. 1986. *How to Interpret the Bible for Yourself: Cutting it Straight*. Winona Lake, IN: Brethren Missionary Herald.
- Methodius of Olympus. *Oration concerning Simon and Anna on the Day that they met in the Temple*. In Roberts, A. & Donaldson, J. (eds). 1994, *Ante-Nicene Fathers*. Vol. 6. Peabody, MA: Hendrickson.

- \_\_\_\_\_. *Oration on the Psalms*. In Roberts, A. & Donaldson, J. (eds). 1994, *Ante-Nicene Fathers*. Vol. 6. Peabody, MA: Hendrickson.
- Metzger, BM. 1994. *A Textual Commentary on the Greek New Testament*. 2nd ed. Stuttgart, DE: Deutsche Bibelgesellschaft.
- Moloney, FJ. 1998. *The Gospel of John*. Sacra Pagina Series, Vol. 4. Collegeville, PA: The Liturgical Press.
- Moreland, JP. 1997. *Love Your God with all Your Mind: The Role of Reason in the Life of the Soul*. Colorado Springs, CO: NavPress.
- Morey, RA. 1996. *The Trinity: Evidence and Issues*. Iowa Falls, IA: World Bible Publishers.
- Morris, L. 1986. *New Testament Theology*. Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan.
- Moule, HC. 1977. *Philippians Studies*. Grand Rapids, MI: Kregel.
- Moulton, J & Milligan, G. 1982 (reprint). *Vocabulary of the Greek New Testament Illustrated from the Papyri and Other Non-literary Sources*. Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans.
- Mounce, WD. 1993. *Basics of Biblical Greek Grammar*. Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan.
- New World Translation of the Holy Scriptures*. 1984. Brooklyn, NY: Watchtower Bible and Tract Society.
- Niederwimmer, K. 1988. *The Didache: A Commentary*. Trans. Attridge, HW. Minneapolis, MN: Augsburg Fortress.
- Nolland, J. 2005. *The Gospel Of Matthew: A Commentary On The Greek Text*. *New International Greek Testament Commentary*. Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans.

- Novatian. *A Treatise of Novatian Concerning the Trinity*. In Roberts, A. & Donaldson, J. (eds). 1994. *Ante-Nicene Fathers*. Vol. 5. Peabody, MA: Hendrickson.
- Olson, RE & English, AC. 2005. *Pocket History of Theology*. Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity.
- Paterson, J. 1953. *The Real Truth About Baptism in Jesus' Name*. Hazelwood, MO: Pentecostal Publishing House.
- \_\_\_\_\_. 1966. *God in Christ Jesus*. Hazelwood, MO: Word Aflame.
- Pelikan, J & Poellot, DE (eds). 1959. *Sermons on the Gospel of St. John Chapters 6-8. Luther's Works*, Vol. 23. St. Louis, MO: Concordia.
- Plummer, A. 1896. "The Gospel According to S. John." In Perowne, JJS (ed.), *Cambridge Greek Testament for Schools*. London, UK: Cambridge Press.
- Polhill, JB. 1992. "Acts." In *New American Commentary*. Nashville, TN: Holman Reference.
- Polycarp. *The Martyrdom of Polycarp*. In Holmes, MW. (ed.). 1999, *Apostolic Fathers: Greek Texts and English Translations*. Grand Rapids MI: Baker.
- Reeves, KV. 1962. *The Godhead*. Hazelwood, MO: Word Aflame.
- Reymond, RL. 1998. *A New Systematic Theology of the Christian Faith*. Nashville, TN: Thomas Nelson.
- Richards, LO. 1991. *New International Encyclopedia of Bible Words*. Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan.
- Richardson, CC (ed.). 1970. *Early Christian Fathers*. New York, NY: Touchstone.

- Robertson, AT. 1930-33. *Word Pictures in the New Testament*. 6 Vols. Nashville, TN: Broadman.
- \_\_\_\_\_. 1934. *A Grammar of the Greek New Testament in the Light of Historical Research*. Nashville, TN: Broadman.
- Rogers, AJ. 2015. "Mark My Words." In *Puritan Reformed Journal*. Vol. 7. Num. 1. Grand Rapids, MI: Puritan Reformed Theological Seminary.
- Rogers, CI & Rogers, CL. 1998. *New Linguistic and Exegetical Key to the Greek New Testament*. Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan .
- Ryrie, CC. 1986. *Basic Theology*. Wheaton, IL: Victor Books.
- Schaff, P. 1887. *Creeds of Christendom, with a History and Critical Notes*. Vol. 3. New York, NY: Harper & Brothers.
- \_\_\_\_\_. 2006. *History of the Christian Church*. 8 Vols. 3rd. ed. Peabody, MA: Hendrickson.
- Schaff, P & Wace, H (eds). 1994. *Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers*. 1st. series. 14 Vols. Peabody, MA: Hendrickson.
- \_\_\_\_\_. 1994. *Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers*. 2nd. series. 14 Vols. Peabody, MA: Hendrickson.
- \_\_\_\_\_. 1994. *The Seven Ecumenical Councils*. 2nd. series. Vol. 14. Peabody, MA: Hendrickson.
- Segraves, DL. 1996. *Hebrews: Better Things*. Hazelwood, MO: Word Aflame.
- Sharp, G. 1803. *Remarks on the Uses of the Definite Article in the Greek Text of the New Testament*. 3rd. ed. London, UK: Vernor & Hood.
- Shedd, WGT. 1887. "Introductory Essay." In Schaff, P. & Wace, H. (eds). 1994, *Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers*. 1st series. Vol. 3. Peabody, MA: Hendrickson.

- Shepherd of the Hills. 2008. "What we believe." [Online]. <http://www.theshepherd.org/who-we-are/about-us/what-we-believe> [Accessed 2 May 2008].
- Smith, JF (ed.). 1976. *Teachings of the Prophet Joseph Smith*. Salt Lake City, UT: Deseret Book Company.
- Smith, W. 1986. *Smith's Bible Dictionary*. Rev. and ed. by Peloubet, FN & Peloubet, MA. Nashville, TN: Thomas Nelson.
- Socrates, *Ecclesiastical History*. Book I. In Schaff, P & Wace, H (eds). 1994. *Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers*. 2nd. series. Vol. 2. Peabody, MA: Hendrickson.
- Spence, HM & Exell, JS. 1962. "Colossians." In *The Pulpit Commentary*. Vol. 20. Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans.
- Sproul, RC. 1977. *Knowing Scripture*. Downers Grove IL: InterVarsity.
- Swanson, J. 1997. *The Dictionary of Biblical Languages With Semantic Domains: Hebrew (Old Testament)*. Electronic ed. HGK285. Oak Harbor: Logos Research Systems, Inc.
- Tenney, MC. 1984. "The Gospel of John." In *Expositor's Bible Commentary*. Vol. 9. Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan.
- Tertullian. *Against Praxeas*. In Roberts, A. & Donaldson, J. (eds). 1994, *Ante-Nicene Fathers*. Vol. 3. Peabody, MA: Hendrickson.
- Thayer, JH. 1996. *Thayer's Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament*. Peabody, MA: Hendrickson.
- The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints. 2009. "Statistical Report." [Online] <http://www.lds.org/conference/talk/display/0,5232,23-1-851-9,00.html> [Accessed 1 May 2008].
- The Greek New Testament [UBS<sup>4</sup>]. 2001. Aland, K. *et al.* (ed.). 4th ed. New York, NY: American Bible Society.

- Theophilus. *To Autolycus*. Book II. In Roberts, A. & Donaldson, J. (eds). 1994, *Ante-Nicene Fathers*. Vol. 2. Peabody, MA: Hendrickson.
- Torrance, TF. 1999. *Trinitarian Perspectives: Towards Doctrinal Agreement*. Edinburgh: UK: T & T Clark.
- Torrey, RA. 1923. *The God of the Bible*. New York, NY: George H. Doran Company.
- Tsoukalas, S. 1999. *Knowing Christ in the Challenge of Heresy: A Christology of the Cults, a Christology of the Bible*. Lanham, MD: University Press.
- United Pentecostal Church International. 2016a. Homepage. [Online]. <http://www.upci.org> [Accessed 1 February 2016].
- United Pentecostal Church International. 2008b. “The Apostles’ Doctrine.” [Online]. <http://www.upci.org/doctrine/apostles.asp> [Accessed 1 May 2008].
- United Pentecostal Church International. 2008c. “60 Questions on the Godhead.” [Online]. <http://www.upci.org/doctrine/60Questions.asp> [Accessed 1 May 2008]. Now (2016) at <https://rdtwot.wordpress.com/2008/09/23/60-questions-on-the-godhead-index/>
- Vine, WE. 1966. *An Expository Dictionary of New Testament Words with Their Precise Meanings for English Readers*. 17th ed. Old Tappan, NJ: Revell.
- Vincent, MR. 2004. *Word Studies in the New Testament*. Vol. 2. Whitefish, MT: Kessinger Publishing.
- Vouga, O. 1967. *Our Gospel Message*, St. Louis, MO: Pentecostal Publishing House.
- Walker, W *et al.* 1997. *A History of the Christian Church*. Edinburgh, UK: T & T Clark.

- Wallace, DB. 1996. *Greek Grammar Beyond the Basics: An Exegetical Syntax of the New Testament, with Scripture, Subject, and Greek Word Indexes*. Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan.
- Ware, BA. 2000. *God's Lesser Glory: The Diminished God of Open Theism*. Wheaton, IL: Crossway.
- Warfield, BB. 1950. *The Person and Work of Christ*. Philadelphia, PA: The Presbyterian and Reformed.
- \_\_\_\_\_. 1988. *Biblical Doctrines*. Carlisle, PA: Banner of Truth Trust.
- Watchtower Bible and Tract Society. 1985. *The Kingdom Interlinear Translation of the Greek Scriptures*. Brooklyn, NY: Watchtower Bible and Tract Society.
- Watchtower Bible and Tract Society 1989a. *Reasoning from the Scriptures*. 2nd. ed. Brooklyn, NY: Watchtower Bible and Tract Society.
- Watchtower Bible and Tract Society. 1989b. *Should you Believe in the Trinity?* Brooklyn, NY: Watchtower Bible and Tract Society.
- Watchtower Bible and Tract Society. 2009. Homepage. [Online]. <http://www.watchtower.org> [Accessed 9 May 2008].
- Weisser, T. 1983. *Three Persons from the Bible? or Babylon*. Antioch, TN: Pentecostal Publishing House.
- Westcott, BF & Hort, FJA. 1895. *The New Testament in the Original Greek*. New York, NY: Macmillan.
- White, JR. 1988. *The Forgotten Trinity: Recovering the Heart of Christian Belief*. Minneapolis, MN: Bethany House.
- \_\_\_\_\_. 1996. *The Roman Catholic Controversy: What Draws and Divides Evangelicals*. Minneapolis, MN: Bethany House.

\_\_\_\_\_. 2004. *Scripture Alone: Exploring the Bible's Accuracy, Authority, and Authenticity*. Minneapolis, MN: Bethany House.

\_\_\_\_\_. 2007. *The God who Justifies*. Minneapolis, MN: Bethany House.

William. S & Headlam, AC. 1904. *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the Epistle to the Romans*. New York, NY: Scribner..

Wuest, KS. 1955. *Romans in the Greek New Testament for the English Reader*. Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans.

Young, EJ. 1972. *Commentary on the Book of Isaiah*. Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans.

## About the Author

**EDWARD L. DALCOUR** is the President and Founder of the Department of Christian Defense, a Christian apologetic ministry based in Los Angeles, CA. He also serves as Tutor for Greenwich School of Theology (London, England) and holds the appointment of Senior Lecturer of the North-West University Faculty of Theology (Potchefstroom, SA). Dr. Dalcour holds a Master in Apologetics from Columbia Evangelical Seminary and a Doctorate of Philosophy in Dogmatic Theology from North-West University. Dr. Dalcour is an international speaker and has been featured on many Christian and secular Radio and TV Networks. He is a theological author and contributor to various Christian organizations, books, theological journals, publications, and numerous counter-cult and apologetic tracts and pamphlets. Dr. Dalcour currently resides with his wife and family in Los Angeles, CA.

**Dr. Dalcour can be contacted at:**

Department of Christian Defense

P.O. Box 2128

Winnetka, CA 91396

[edward@christiandefense.org](mailto:edward@christiandefense.org)

[www.christiandefense.org](http://www.christiandefense.org)

“Too often apologetics is a subject uniquely avoided in many denominations and evangelical circles. Edward Dalcour has not conveniently avoided the calling of the apologist to defend the faith in his book *A Definitive Look at Oneness Theology*. Because the Christian church, by and large, is greatly deficient in providing a clear biblical affirmation and a scriptural defense of the doctrine of the Trinity, those who champion Oneness theology (or Modalism) have circled the wagons and with persistence and have continued to make unfounded attacks on the core of biblical theology. Oneness theology is a doctrinal attempt to destroy and undermine the simple truth of the holy Trinity. Dalcour provides a refreshing affirmation of the doctrine of the Trinity and a cogent exegetical refutation of the ancient heresy known then as Modalistic Monarchianism, known today as Oneness Pentecostalism. This book is a much needed answer to the confusion that surrounds many unsuspecting Christians.”

—**Dr. Richard M. Fales**, Director and editor for the *Biblical and American Archaeologist*. Professor of Archaeology, Greek, and Apologetics for Cal Pacific, Theological Department of Pacific International University

“Let me be blunt, without faith in the true God of Holy Scripture, one cannot have salvation. Edward Dalcour has done the Christian church a great service through his book *A Definitive Look at Oneness Theology*. With his exegetical skills of the Holy Scriptures, vast knowledge of the topic, and immense passion for the subject, Dalcour clearly demonstrates who the one true God of the Bible is. Every apologetic group, pastor, and Bible teacher ought to have this book and a working knowledge of this subject.”

—**Timothy D. Oliver**, Director, Christian Soldiers Ministries

“Oneness theology cuts through the very heart of biblical theology. It rejects and distorts the biblical revelation of God. Regrettably, the Oneness view of God has found its way into Christian communities and networks of all sorts. In *A Definitive Look at Oneness Theology*, Edward Dalcour plainly and biblically shows the fundamental differences between the unipersonal God of Oneness theology and the triune God of historic biblical Christianity. Finally, a clear-cut presentation of Oneness theology, which examines the issues carefully and objectively, has arrived. This book is a must read for all Christians!”

—**Tom Sirotnak**, President, SEND Ministries, International and Regional Director, Christian Men’s Network



