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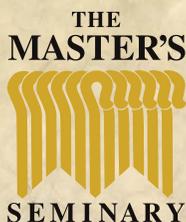
The Trinity in Creation
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Inspiration and the Trinity
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The Trinity and Eschatology
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**Did Constantine Invent the Trinity?: The Doctrine of the
Trinity in the Writings of the Early Church Fathers**
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Bibliography of Works on the Trinitarian Theology
Dennis Swanson



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EDITORIAL

ONE GOD—THREE PERSONS

God’s trinity (trinitarianism) stands unarguably as a *sine qua non*, i.e., an indispensable fact of Christianity. It has been, is, and forever will be an indisputable, foundational, bedrock belief of the Christian faith.

The Master’s Seminary doctrinal statement succinctly summarizes this precious truth thusly: “We teach that there is but one living and true God (Deut 6:4; Isa 45:5–7; 1 Cor 8:4), an infinite all-knowing Spirit (John 4:24), perfect in all His attributes, one in essence, eternally existing in three Persons—Father, Son, and Holy Spirit (Matt 28:19; 2 Cor 13:14)—each equally deserving worship and obedience.”

While God’s trinity appears implicitly and explicitly throughout the Bible, no one text declares or explains the fullness associated with the incomprehensible triune God (Isa 40:28). However, the plethora of evidence in both Old Testament (OT) and New Testament (NT), plus the writings of the early church, make this an overwhelmingly undeniable tenet of biblical orthodoxy.

Starting in the OT, one immediately encounters Gen 1:26 and 3:22 (cf. 11:5–7) using the plural pronoun “us” in reference to God.

Then God said, “Let Us make man in Our image, according to Our likeness; and let them rule over the fish of the sea and over the birds of the sky and over the cattle and over all the earth, and over every creeping thing that creeps on the earth” (Gen 1:26).

Then the Lord God said, “Behold, the man has become like one of Us, knowing good and evil; and now, he might stretch out his hand, and take also from the tree of life, and eat, and live forever” (Gen 3:22).

The same use of “us” also appears in Isa 6:8: “Then I heard the voice of the Lord, saying, ‘Whom shall I send, and who will go for Us?’ Then I said, ‘Here am I. Send me!’”

But, how can one be three? Deut 6:4 hints at the answer: “Hear, O Israel! The Lord is our God, the Lord is one!”

The Hebrew word (אֶחָד), translated “one” here, frequently communicates the idea of unity in diversity. For instance, Gen 1:5 (one day in two parts—evening and morning); Gen 2:24 (one couple in two partners—male and female); Exod 24:3 (one voice in many people); Exod 26:6 (one tabernacle in multiple parts); Num 13:23 (one

cluster in many grapes). So, it is no surprise to see one God in three persons being alluded to by Moses in his last book of the Pentateuch.

With even greater specificity, Isaiah speaks of three persons when referring to the one God of Israel—Lord God, Me, i.e., Christ, and Spirit (48:16). Also see Isa 61:1—Spirit, God, and Me, i.e., Christ, who interpreted this text in just such a manner (Luke 4:18–19).

In the progress of God's written revelation, the NT evidence becomes more direct and increasingly frequent:

After being baptized, Jesus came up immediately from the water; and behold, the heavens were opened, and he saw the Spirit of God descending as a dove and lighting on Him, and behold, a voice out of the heavens said, "This is My beloved Son, in whom I am well-pleased" (Matt 3:16–17).

Go therefore and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit (Matt 28:19).

The angel answered and said to her, "The Holy Spirit will come upon you, and the power of the Most High will overshadow you; and for that reason the holy Child shall be called the Son of God" (Luke 1:35).

When the Helper comes, whom I will send to you from the Father, that is the Spirit of truth who proceeds from the Father, He will testify about Me (John 15:26).

But if the Spirit of Him who raised Jesus 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 who dwells in you (Rom 8:11).

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).

The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, and the love of God, and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit, be with you all (2 Cor 13:14).

. . . how much more will the blood of Christ, who through the eternal Spirit offered Himself without blemish to God, cleanse your conscience from dead works to serve the living God? (Heb 9:14).

By this you know the Spirit of God: every spirit that confesses that Jesus Christ has come in the flesh is from God . . . (1 John 4:2).

But you, beloved, building yourselves up on your most holy faith, praying in the Holy Spirit, keep yourselves in the love of God, waiting anxiously for the mercy of our Lord Jesus Christ to eternal life (Jude 20–21).

The *magnum opus* of trinitarian Scriptures comes in Eph 1:3–14 which speaks of each Person’s involvement in the salvation of believers.

- 1:3–6 – God the Father
- 1:7–12 – God the Son
- 1:13–14 – God the Holy Spirit

Actually, and not unexpectedly, the three members of the single Godhead appear by allusion or direct mention at the beginning and end of both the Old and New Testaments, i.e., from Genesis to Malachi and Matthew to Revelation.

- Genesis 1:26 – “us”
- Malachi
 - 2:15 – Holy Spirit
 - 2:16 – Father
 - 3:1–2 – Christ
- Matthew
 - 1:18 – Christ
 - 1:18 – Holy Spirit
 - 1:22 – Father
- Revelation
 - 22:17 – Holy Spirit
 - 22:18–19 – Father
 - 22:20–21 – Christ

As time passed beyond the canon of Scripture and the apostles, the early church fathers began to write in more detail. Please note these three examples.

Irenaeus (ca. 120–202):

And this is the drawing-up of our faith, the foundation of the building, and the consolidation of a way of life. God, the Father, uncreated, beyond grasp, invisible, one God the maker of all; this is the *first and foremost article* of our faith. But the *second article* is the Word of God, the Son of God, Christ Jesus our Lord, who was shown forth by the prophets according to the design of their prophecy and according to the manner in which the Father disposed; and through Him were made all things whatsoever. He also, *in the end of times*, for the recapitulation of all things, is become a man among men, visible and tangible, in order to abolish death and bring to light life, and bring about the communion of God and man. And the *third article* is the Holy Spirit, through whom the prophets prophesied and the patriarchs were taught about God and the just

were led in the path of justice, and who *in the end of times* has been poured forth in a new manner upon humanity over all the earth renewing man to God.¹

Gregory of Nazianzus (ca. 330–389):

The Son is not Father; . . . yet he is whatever the Father is. The Spirit is not Son. . . . Yet whatever the Son is, he is. The three are a single whole in their Godhead and the single whole is three in personalities.²

Augustine (ca. 354–430):

Whatever . . . is spoken of God in respect to himself, is both spoken singly of each person, that is, of the Father, and the Son, and the Holy Spirit; and together of the Trinity itself, not plurally but in the singular.³

Not only were men writing as individuals, but groups began to compose creedal statements. Several of the more important included:

The Nicene-Constantinople Creed (ca. 381):

We believe in one God the Father Almighty; . . . And in one Lord Jesus Christ, . . . very God of very God, . . . And in the Holy Ghost, . . . who with the Father and the Son together is worshiped and glorified; . . .⁴

The (Pseudo) Athanasian Creed (ca. 875–925):

3. And the Catholic faith is this: That we worship one God in Trinity, and Trinity in Unity;
4. Neither confounding the Persons: nor dividing the Substance [Essence].
5. For there is one Person of the Father: another of the Son: and another of the Holy Ghost.
6. But the Godhead of the Father, of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost is all one: the Glory equal, the Majesty coeternal.⁵

Since the time of this creed, theologians have observed that at least seven lines of thought could be developed from the entire section (paragraphs 3–28).⁶

¹ Irenaeus, *Proof of the Apostolic Preaching*, trans. Joseph P. Smith (London: Longmans, Green, and Co., 1952), 50.

² St. Gregory of Nazianzus, *On God and Christ*, trans. Fredrick Williams and Lionel Wickham (Yonkers, NY: St. Vladimir's Seminary Press, 2002), 122–23.

³ Augustine, *On the Trinity*, *NPNF*, 3:92.

⁴ Philip Schaff, *The Creeds of Christendom* (New York: Harper & Brothers, 1889), 2:58–59.

⁵ *Ibid.*, 2:66.

⁶ John S. Feinberg, *No One Like Him: The Doctrine of God* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2001), 438.

1. The Father is God.
2. The Son is God.
3. The Holy Spirit is God.
4. The Father is not the Son.
5. The Father is not the Holy Spirit.
6. The Son is not the Holy Spirit.
7. There is exactly one God.

Now with this brief survey as background, the following articles in this fall issue of *MSJ* will take you where most works on the triunity of God do not:

1. Trinitarianism and Creation
2. Trinitarianism and the Inspiration of Scripture
3. Trinitarianism and Eschatology
4. Trinitarianism and Early Church Doctrine

These essays come forth as expressions of worship through paeans of praise to our triune God—Father, Son, and Holy Spirit.

Moving from prose to poetry, Elizabeth Rundle Charles (1828–1896) extolled the unmistakable centrality of triune theology with her classic hymn, “Praise Ye the Triune God” (ca. 1858).

1. Praise ye the Father for His lovingkindness,
Tenderly cares He for His erring children;
Praise Him, ye angels, praise Him in the heavens,
Praise ye Jehovah!

2. Praise ye the Savior—great is His compassion,
Graciously cares He for His chosen people;
Young men and maidens, ye old men and children,
Praise ye the Savior!

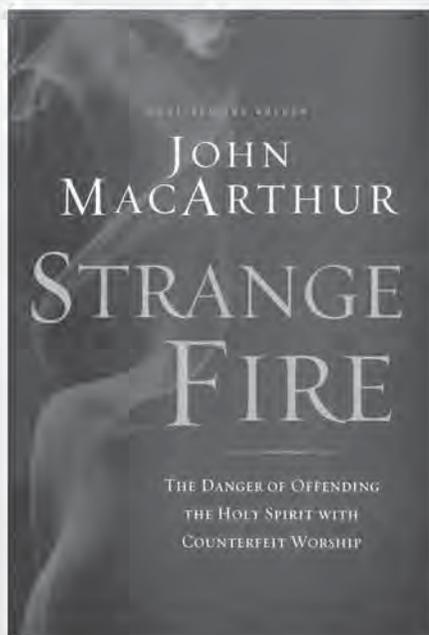
3. Praise ye the Spirit, Comforter of Israel,
Sent of the Father and the Son to bless us;
Praise ye the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit—
Praise ye the Triune God!

From the teaching of Scripture, the writings of the fathers, and the explanation of the creeds to the singing of truth concerning the triune God, every Christian’s response ought to be, “Amen!, Amen!, and Amen!”

Richard Mayhue
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Strange Fire

by John MacArthur



When Nadab and Abihu offered a “strange fire” to the Lord (Leviticus 10:1–3), when the Pharisees attributed the Spirit’s work to Satan (Matthew 12:22–37), and when Ananias and Sapphira lied to the Holy Spirit (Acts 5:1–6), there were severe consequences, even unto death. The Bible is clear that affronting the Holy Spirit is no laughing matter. Yet millions do it every day.

The Charismatic movement, with more than half a billion members worldwide, boldly plasters the Holy Spirit’s name on unbiblical “worship” that

includes things like uncontrollable laughing, trance-like states, extra-biblical revelation, incomprehensible speech, inaccurate prophecies, and ineffective healings. To the misguided, these are the works of the Holy Spirit—but they are not from God at all.

Strange Fire offers a biblical message to make right what is wrong, help believers discern true worship, and free those who have been swept up in false worship. With thorough exegesis, historical context of the Charismatic movement, and pastoral guidance, this book reclaims the true power and import of the Holy Spirit for evangelicals and rebuffs those who tempt God’s wrath with strange fire.

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THE TRINITY IN CREATION

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The New Testament makes it very clear that the God of the Bible is one God in three distinct persons. It also directly states that the pre-Incarnate Word (or second member of the Trinity) directly participated in every act of creation. Likewise, this doctrine can be supported from the text of Genesis 1. While the use of the plural noun Elohim used throughout the Old Testament is inadequate to demonstrate it, the plural pronoun and plural predication used in Gen 1:26 does strongly suggest it—indeed demand it on the basis of NT revelation.

Introduction

There is no denying that the doctrine of the Trinity is a fundamental tenet of the Christian faith. This is readily evidenced by the extensive development of this doctrine throughout church history. While the word “trinity” itself does not appear in Scripture, the sheer volume of work done to defend and articulate it in both councils and statements of faith affirm its importance to the Christian faith.¹

The chief reason this doctrine is so staunchly defended is due to the fact that it is an absolutely essential testimony of the NT revelation. The Trinitarian formulas present it (cf. Matt 28:18–20). The indirect Trinitarian references affirm it (cf. Rom 15:16, 30). The inter-Trinitarian conversations demand it. Jesus’ prayers are reduced to nonsensical musings apart from the doctrine of the Trinity (cf. John 17). The Father’s audible affirmations of the Son during Jesus’ earthly ministry collapse into

¹ For an excellent and succinct survey of the development of the doctrine historically, see Gordon R. Lewis and Bruce A. Demarest, *Integrative Theology: Three Volumes in One* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1996), 1:251–57. For a more extensive discussion of the historical formulation of the doctrine, see John S. Feinberg, *No One Like Him* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2001), 471–98. For a stellar defense of the historicity the doctrine of the Trinity, see Nathan Busenitz, “Did Constantine Invent the Doctrine of the Trinity?” *MSJ* 24, no. 2 (Fall 2013): 217–42.

statements of heresy or lunacy apart from the doctrine of the Trinity (cf. Matt 3:17; 17:5; 2 Pet 1:17). This does not even begin to address the implications and theological assertions related to the deity of Christ and how they necessitate seeing a plurality of persons within the Godhead. So, from a NT perspective, it is essential to affirm the doctrine of the Trinity, which can be readily proven from the biblical text.

A significant truth conveyed in the NT is the direct involvement of the second member of the Trinity in the original act of creation. John says the Word was not only present but also active as a member of the Godhead during every act of creation (cf. John 1:1–3). This is the same Word that became flesh (John 1:14). Furthermore, Paul presents the Son as the one through whom and for whom all things were created (cf. Col 1:15–17). These texts present the second member of the Trinity as directly involved in the original acts of creation recorded in the OT.

The question to be addressed in this article is simply this: Is there biblical evidence to support the doctrine of the Trinity in the actual Genesis 1 narrative? This article will examine two primary arguments: (1) the use of the plural noun for God (cf. Gen 1:1, and throughout), and (2) the use of the plural pronouns in Gen 1:26.

The Use of the Plural Noun in Genesis 1:1

The first potential indication in the creation narrative that there is a plurality of persons within the Godhead is the use of the plural form *Elohim* to refer to the Creator in Gen 1:1 and throughout the rest of the narrative. This noun is used repeatedly throughout the OT in a plural form to refer to both a plurality of gods (esp. in reference to pagan deities) as well as to the God of Israel. But, does this grammatical practice clearly convey a plurality of persons within the Godhead in a way consistent with NT theological conclusions?

The normal way to tell the difference in most OT contexts is that *Elohim* is used in conjunction with singular verbs and predicators when it refers to the God of Israel—e.g., in Gen 1:1, “In the beginning *Elohim* (pl. form) created (3rd singular verb) the heavens and the earth.” In comparison, one can see that when *Elohim* is used in reference to other gods conveying plurality, it is used with plural verbs and predicators—e.g., in 1 Kings 20:10, “May the gods (pl. form) do (3rd plural verb) so to me . . .” This practice is fairly consistent throughout the OT, though not without exceptions.² Nevertheless, the rule of thumb is that *Elohim* is used in its plural form consistently together with singular or plural predicators based upon whether it is being used to refer to the singular God of Israel or other gods (plural).³

² There are a few instances in which a singular form of *Elohim* (*Eloah*; אֱלֹהִים) is used to refer to Israel's God (cf. Deut 32:15, 17; Pss 18:32[Heb.]; 114:7; Hab 1:11; 3:3).

³ It is worth pointing out that Cooper makes a good case based upon an initial investigation of many of the unique occurrences—particularly those exception cases where *Elohim* is used with a plural predicator and is at the same time referring to the God of Israel. He concludes accordingly that the plural form is therefore intended to be an early trinitarian revelation. His work is incomplete since his evidences are based largely upon the exception cases as a rule. However, his argumentation bears further investigation by scholars in order to consider the full merits of his evidence—esp. as it may inform the standard rules of predication. Cf. David L. Cooper, *The God of Israel* (Los Angeles: Biblical Research Society, 1945), esp. 24–43.

Now, the fact that there is a singular form used at all could be grounds for concluding that the OT writers, starting with Moses himself, intended to convey the idea of plurality of persons within the Godhead from the beginning. The use of the plural form as a standard practice, coupled with singular verbs and predicators, was adopted under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit in order to coincide ultimately with progressive revelation that was to follow. Some writers have taken this as grounds for concluding that the plural form of *Elohim*, in reference to God, allows for the beginnings of Trinitarian conclusions in the OT. For example, one writer put it this way, “[*Elohim* is] a term conveying both unity of the one God and yet allowing for a plurality of persons.”⁴

The real question is, Does the use of the plural form of *Elohim* actually convey this sense of plurality within the Godhead doctrinally? Or, is this pressing the use of the plural form further than is grammatically and lexically defensible? To answer this, a brief examination of the various uses of the plural and singular forms will be conducted. The results of this exercise will greatly aid in forming a final conclusion.

Grammatical Considerations of the Plural Form

Plurality in BH⁵ is normally conveyed through the use of a plural ending.⁶ Most first-year seminarians know that these forms are the fairly standardized endings (םֻּ or הַּ). These patterns are consistently followed and applied to masculine or feminine forms—though there are, naturally, exceptions.⁷ Nevertheless, the standard practice in BH is to show plurality using these plural endings. Likewise, the absence of these endings typically conveys singularity.⁸

However, plurality can also be conveyed through the use of a singular form in BH in the case of certain words. These words are typically classified as collective singulars or singulars of species by Hebrew grammarians.⁹ Collective singulars are found in basically two contexts: (1) When a noun by definition refers to a group;¹⁰ (2) when a singular noun is used contextually to speak of a group or species.¹¹ Examples of the first case include words like “flock” (צֹאן) or “herd” (בָּקָר), which refer to a single entity that is made up of a plurality of individuals. Likewise, words like “bird” (עוֹף), “worm” (רֶמֶס), and “tear” (דְּמֵעָה) can either refer to a collective or a true

⁴ Jack B. Scott, “אֱלֹהִים,” in *TWOT*, 1:470.

⁵ Biblical Hebrew, hereafter written simply as BH.

⁶ Or, in the case of certain words like those referring to body parts that normally occur in pairs—e.g., hands or eyes—the dual form is used. It still refers typically to more than one—i.e., two hands.

⁷ E.g., the masculine noun for father (אָב) takes a feminine plural ending. The plurality of the term is still clearly distinguishable even with the seeming gender conflict with the choice of ending.

⁸ For more on the morphology for the singular, plural and dual forms, see Paul Joüon, *A Grammar of Biblical Hebrew*, trans. and rev. T. Muraoka, *Subsidia Biblica* 14/I–II (repr.; Rome: Pontifical Biblical Institute, 2005), 266–71 (§89–90); hereafter, JM.

⁹ Cf. JM 497–99 (§135); Bruce K. Waltke and M. O’Connor, *An Introduction to Biblical Hebrew Syntax* (Winona Lake, IN: Eisenbrauns, 1990), 113–16 (§7.2); hereafter, W&O.

¹⁰ Cf. JM, 497–98 (§135b).

¹¹ Cf. JM, 498–99 (§135c).

singular depending upon the context in which the term appears. In the second case, words like “Adam” (אָדָם) and “man” (אָדָם) are frequently used as a singular to refer contextually to a group or species even though a plural form exists. Linguistically, this is not an uncommon feature of certain words in a given language. In English, one might say, “I like fruit” or “Please give me a piece of fruit.” In both cases, the singular form of the word fruit is used. However, the sense of singularity or plurality is conveyed not by the form itself, but by the context. The same thing likewise occurs with words like “people” or “fish.” In fact, a plural ending is sometimes added to these normally collective singulars in certain contexts to convey the sense of a plurality of groups, types, or species.¹²

The key point to glean from all of this is that a singular or plural form of the word does not by itself always convey definitively a sense of plurality or singularity. In BH, there are a number of terms that occur in dual or plural forms that are essentially still individual entities or collectives. Grammarians identify several distinct classifications of these exceptions. The *plural of composition* is the classification applied to words that are conveyed in the plural when they refer to a collection of individuals, but in the singular when describing the species or natural state as a whole.¹³ For example, “wheat” (חֵטֶה) is used in the plural to refer to the collected kernels gathered up at harvest, but in the singular when it refers to the species. “Blood” (דָּם) is singular when it refers to it in its natural state still in the body. However, when it is spilled, it occurs as a plural (cf. Gen 4:10).¹⁴ It is important to note that no change took place in the blood itself. The switch from singular to plural is merely a means to convey the removal of the blood from its normal location within the body in an individual’s veins. There are other grammatical classifications worth noting as well. The *plural of extension* is used to describe terms that are always rendered in a plural form, seemingly due to the immense size or complexity of the referent of the noun itself. Examples include words like “heaven” (שָׁמַיִם) and “face” or “surface” (פָּנִים).

As has been shown, in many cases defining the intended meaning of plurality is not a simple matter of indicating a singularity or plurality of entities. At times, plural forms are used to convey anything from complexity to intensity. At other times, a change from the singular to the plural conveys anything from a change in context to the inclusion of a plurality of collectives. Some words are simply plural due to the nature of the word in BH.

¹² There are a number of uses of the collective singular in the creation narrative itself. In Gen 1:20, “Let the waters swarm with a swarm (sg.) of living creature(s) (sg.)” One can observe the use of the singular for swarm (and for bird in the second part of the verse) to refer to a collection of creatures, as well as the use of the singular form for “living creatures” used to coincide with the grammatical form of the collective. Then, in Gen 1:21–22, the details of the account confirm plurals were in fact being conveyed through the use of these singular terms. The plural is used to refer to the sea monsters, and the “after their (pl.) kind” summarizes the effects of the creative act. Throughout the creation narrative, there are multiple uses of a singular noun form which refers to a plural referent.

¹³ Cf. JM, 500 (§136b).

¹⁴ Cf. W&O, 119–20 (§7.4.1b).

Contextual Considerations of the Plural Form

Many times the sense of plurality or singularity must be based upon contextual factors beyond the mere grammatical form. The most relevant classification to this discussion (i.e., of a plural form that is used to refer to a singular entity with no direct plural connotations derived from the form itself) is the *plural of majesty* (a.k.a., the *plural of excellence* or *honorific plural*).¹⁵ This is best defined as an intensive use of the plural form in which a singular individual is “so thoroughly characterized by the qualities of the noun that a plural is used.”¹⁶ Or, put another way, writers use the plural form because it shows a heightened level of respect for the individual being referred to or addressed in the context. The key, as it relates to this article, is in how plurals of majesty are typically recognized. There are two primary ways grammarians identify a plural of majesty. First, is to note that the word, though it occurs in a plural form in a given context, is used in conjunction with singular syntax in the surrounding immediate context. Second, the word itself in this context speaks of or to an individual of significance or importance—or an individual that epitomizes a class.

The most common terms used as plurals of majesty are, in fact, *Elohim* and *Adonay*. Both are used in this way to show special reverence for the one addressed or referred to in the context. Many examples appear throughout the OT:

Psalm 7:10 reads (אֱלֹהִים צַדִּיקִים)—i.e., “a just (sg.) God (pl.)”

Genesis 1:1 has (בְּרָא אֱלֹהִים)—i.e., “God (pl.) created (3rdsg.)”

In each case, the plural noun is used with a singular predicator, identifying it as a plural of majesty. Two other examples are worth citing. In Deut 10:17, Moses writes, ‘Yahweh, He (sg.) is God (pl.) of gods (pl.) and Lord (pl.) of lords (pl.)’ Both lead plurals can be classified as majestic in this context. In 1 Kings 1:43, a majestic plural is used in reference to a human king, in many ways certifying the classification itself. In this passage, Jonathan addresses Adonijah saying, “Our Lord (pl.), David the king (sg.), he made (3ms) Solomon king.”¹⁷ This regular pattern used throughout the OT compels the interpreter to consider the use of the plural form *Elohim* in these kinds of conditions as a majestic plural unless there is overwhelming evidence to the contrary in a given context.

¹⁵ Cf. JM, 500–01 (§136d).

¹⁶ W&O, 122–24 (§7.4.3).

¹⁷ It is worth noting that Waltke and O’Connor include both the Behemoth from Job 40:15–16, and 19, as well as the generalization of the donkey as a species in Zech 9:9 in this broader classification on the basis of the latter rule (cf. W&O, 122 [§7.4.3a]). The Behemoth is classified this way because it epitomizes a creature beyond human control. The Zech 9:9 text literally says, “on a colt, the foal of a donkey (lit. donkeys).” See also JM, 502 (§136f)—they classify it as a plural of intensity, which is a classification distinct from the plural of majesty in their system. W&O put all intensives into the broad category of honorifics and the like. A case can be made for either system. Of primary importance is the recognition of the intensive plurals and their varying nuances and significances.

Conclusions Regarding the Plural Form

So, what answer can be given to the question posed earlier with regard to the use of the plural form of *Elohim* as it relates to the doctrine of the Trinity? A close examination of the use of *Elohim* in the context of Genesis 1 reveals the plural form is used in an honorific or majestic way to refer to the God of Israel and is therefore not proof of a plurality of persons within the Godhead. This conclusion is based upon the following evidences: (1) The plural form of *Elohim* is used throughout the Genesis 1 narrative to refer to the Creator God in conjunction with singular verbs.¹⁸ This coincides with the normal rules for identifying a majestic plural. (2) The God of the Bible is an individual uniquely worthy of reverence due to His power and person that most especially merits the majestic plural form.

On these grounds, the plural form of *Elohim* is not, in itself, a clear indication of plurality within the Godhead. The best and most consistent way to understand the plural form in these cases is to take it as a majestic plural.¹⁹ The plural form is used in Genesis 1 and throughout the OT to refer to the God of Israel (the Creator of Heaven and Earth) because it is an intensive way to acknowledge the absolute supremacy of the One True God. This does not mean that the plural form speaks against a plurality of persons within the Godhead.²⁰ It simply means that one cannot reason for the Trinity on the grammatical basis of this plural form alone.²¹

The Use of the Plural Pronoun in Genesis 1:26

While the plural form of *Elohim* has been shown to be an inadequate ground upon which to conclude that the Genesis 1 narrative gives an early indication of a plurality of persons within the Godhead, there is another grammatical issue worthy of consideration from a Trinitarian perspective. In Gen 1:26 there is a significant deviation from the syntactical pattern followed throughout the creation narrative. A statement of deliberation is made—seemingly within the Godhead itself.

There are several significant observations worth noting by way of introduction. For the first time, the pattern of divine fiat followed by divine evaluation is broken.

¹⁸ Cf. Gen 1:1, “God (pl.) created” (3ms); Gen 1:3, “then God (pl.) said” (3ms); Gen 1:4, “then God (pl.) saw . . . then God (pl.) separated” (3ms); Gen 1:5, “then God (pl.) called” (3ms); etc.

¹⁹ Or, plural of majesty.

²⁰ There are over 2,500 occurrences of *Elohim* in its various forms throughout the OT. Heiser points out that on average, 3 out of every 5 times this morphologically plural noun is used, it is the subject of a grammatically singular predicator—Cf. Michael S. Heiser, “Should אֱלֹהִים (‘ĒLŌHĪM) with Plural Predication Be Translated ‘Gods’?” *Bible Translator* 61, no. 3 (July 2010): 123–36, esp. 123. That means there are a significant number of other cases worth investigating. Perhaps an exhaustive look at every occurrence by a doctoral student at some point would yield a more definitive answer—esp. as it relates to Cooper’s argumentation.

²¹ One could potentially make a case for the plural form coinciding with trinitarian doctrine on the basis of God being the author of language—including the confusion of languages (Gen 11). The argument could be that He constructed the majestic plural into the framework of the Hebrew language in order to ultimately coincide with progressive revelation. However, this is still not a conclusion that would be naturally drawn either from the text itself or from an OT saint’s perspective—nor, for that matter, from a NT believer’s perspective. The common understanding of the term *Elohim* with singular predication is to take it as some kind of intensive plural referring to a singular entity.

Prior to verse 26, God speaks; His expressed will is enacted; then He evaluates His creation as good. At this point, prior to the creation of man, a statement of deliberation precedes the act of creation. Next, the deliberation reveals that this creative act will be special. The creation of man is to be truly unique because man is to be created in the image and likeness of God. No other part of creation is so specifically or uniquely described. Most significantly, as it relates to this study, the consistent pattern of the plural form of *Elohim* is used with a singular verb—“then God (sg.) said (3ms).” But it is followed by the use of plural verb and plural pronouns that have God as their clear antecedent—“Let us make (3cp) man in our (pl.) image and according to our (pl.) likeness.”²² What is the significance of the use of this plural verb and pronoun? Does it convey a plurality of persons within the Godhead—even if the use of the majestic plural does not?

Due to the doctrinal implications of this issue, a number of solutions have been presented through the ages. For the sake of this discussion, seven primary views will be introduced.

The Mythical View

One possible solution is that the use of the plural is derived from an ancient polytheistic myth narrative that was used by the editor of the Genesis text during the course of its development. The existence of the plural in this verse is merely evidence of an inadequate effort on the part of the redactor(s) to remove all the pagan elements from the story. Skinner, for example, suggests that the significant differences in phraseology between these verses and the preceding sections “are sufficient to prove literary discontinuity of some kind.”²³ In other words, this exegetical issue is actually a proof of literary dependence and redaction of some kind. Obviously, this view contradicts an evangelical view of inspiration and can thus be rejected.

The Majestic View

According to this view, God is addressing Himself in a way that is consistent with the plural of majesty—i.e., He is using the plural pronoun in order to maintain grammatical conformity with the majestic plural use of *Elohim*. Speiser holds to this view.²⁴ McKeown lists this as a possibility among several he poses as acceptable.²⁵

²² It is also worth mentioning that this is not the only occurrence of this type of deliberative statement in the Genesis narrative (cf. Gen 3:22; 11:7–8; see also, Isa 6:8).

²³ John Skinner, *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on Genesis*, ICC (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1930), 35.

²⁴ E. A. Speiser, *Genesis*, AB (Garden City, NY: Doubleday, 1964), 7.

²⁵ James McKeown, *Genesis*, THOTC (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2008), 26.

The chief and convincing objection to this is the fact that plural predication accompanies the plural pronoun here in contrast to the consistent use of singular predication throughout for *Elohim*.²⁶

The Deliberative View

This view is loosely referred to as the “royal we” view. God is addressing Himself by means of a plural of self-address or deliberation. Arnold describes it this way, “the verse does not refer to plural persons or beings involved in the act of human creation, but is a pregnant way of saying that God deliberated with himself about the creation of humankind.”²⁷ The significance of the plural is to show that God actually takes a personal interest in the creation of man, rather than merely creating by divine fiat. I.e., instead of the typical pattern of “let there be . . . and it comes to pass” there is a statement of deliberation indicating that God will personally perform this act of creation. This view can be supported on the basis of the more detailed descriptive statement given in Gen 2:7. As such, this deliberative statement conveys both the uniqueness and significance of the creation of mankind in comparison to all the rest of creation.²⁸

While the argumentation behind this view is stronger than most, there are still solid grounds for rejecting it. The chief objection to it is that there is no clear OT parallel that similarly used the plural form for this type of deliberation. Additionally, Joüon and Muraoka demonstrate that the plural of majesty or intensification is not used with verbs.²⁹ As such, this view is doubly suspect.³⁰

The Rhetorical View

This is something of a variant on the rhetorical view above. However, instead of merely addressing Himself, God is including the earth which will be involved in a passive sense in the creation of man. The plural then refers to God directly and the earth in a rhetorical sense as the raw material from which man will be fashioned. Keiser attests to encountering this view occasionally, but does not cite a specific proponent.³¹ This writer has yet to find one personally. In any case, the simple fact that creation itself is not actually involved in the act makes this suggestion dubious at

²⁶ Bryan Murphy, “Genesis 1:1–2:3: A Textual and Exegetical Examination as an Objective Foundation for Apologetical and Theological Studies” (Sun Valley, CA: The Master’s Seminary, Th.D. dissertation, 2008), 272–73.

²⁷ Bill T. Arnold, *Genesis*, NCBC (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2009), 44.

²⁸ See also Keil’s position in, C. F. Keil and F. Delitzsch, *Commentary on the Old Testament*, trans. by James Martin (repr.; Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 1996), 1:38–39.

²⁹ JM, 376 (§114e (1)). That is to say, the “Let us make” is all contained in the plural verb form itself in the Hebrew text. No appositional noun is supplied in a plural form in conjunction with a singular verb. This necessarily eliminates the conclusion that this is a kind of majestic plural.

³⁰ See also, Victor P. Hamilton, *The Book of Genesis: Chapters 1–17*, NICOT (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1990), 133.

³¹ Thomas A. Keiser, “The Divine Plural: A Literary-Contextual Argument for Plurality in the God-head,” *JSOT* 34, no. 2 (2009): 131–46, esp. 132.

best. Furthermore, the earth is “passively” involved in the majority of creation and no need for deliberation like this was required. This view is, therefore, highly suspect.

The Angelic View

This is a fairly popular view, and it boasts a small majority of contemporary writers. It sees God as addressing the heavenly host or court that were present during creation week. This address can include anything from God merely involving the angelic host in the discussion about the creation of man to an actual tie to the ANE world views that included a pantheon of gods of various levels. Of those that limit the scope to God deliberating with the angelic host, a number of prominent contemporary scholars can be cited.³² The most compelling argument to date is probably the one given by Walton.³³

The greatest strength of the position is that there is biblical evidence of God interacting with the heavenly host of angels, including even Satan (cf. Job 1–2). Additionally, Job 38:4–7 indicates that the angels were present at some point during the actual creation week (esp. v. 7).

Nevertheless, this view should be rejected on the basis of the following objections: (1) There is no reference here, or elsewhere, to man being made in the image of angels (contra Delitzsch).³⁴ This alone makes “our image” very unlikely as a reference to anyone other than God Himself. If the “our image” is singularly referring to God, the “Let us make” must be equally limited to God. (2) There are no direct references to angels or the angelic host in the creation narrative (i.e., Gen 1:1–2:3; or even in 2:4–25). The nearest reference is in Gen 3:24 and it is too remote to be readily associated with the plurality and the context of 1:26 with any level of certainty. (3) The return in 1:27 to the grammatical pattern of *Elohim* coupled with a singular verb form, further compels one to the conclusion that God alone both acts and is addressed in the creation of man. The restatement in 2:7 further affirms God’s singular involvement in man’s creation. (4) Even outside the immediate context of the creation narrative, the Bible makes it clear that God consulted no one and involved no one in the acts of creation (cf. Isa 40:12–14).³⁵

Based upon these considerations, it is necessary to reject the angelic view. A primary reason many seem compelled to look for a referent other than God in this case involves their lack of readiness to concede to it as an early reference to a plurality within the Godhead. However, the use of the plurals in this verse make it syntactically

³² E.g., Bruce K. Waltke with Cathi J. Fredricks, *Genesis: A Commentary* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2001), 64–65; Gordon J. Wenham, *Genesis 1–15*, WBC (Waco, TX: Word, 1987), 27–28; and Hamilton, *Genesis*, 132–34.

³³ John H. Walton, *Genesis*, NIVAC (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2001), 129–30.

³⁴ Franz Delitzsch, *A Commentary on Genesis*, trans. Sophia Taylor (repr.: Minneapolis, MN: Klock & Klock Christian Publishers, 1978), 97–101.

³⁵ As additional secondary considerations, one might point to Isa 44:24, though the reference contextually speaks of the nation of Israel itself; and to Neh 9:6, which may suggest there was no angelic participation in creation.

necessary to understand this as God consulting Himself, given the lack of any other clear contextual antecedent.

The Plurality View

The grammatical and contextual challenges discussed above led many to conclude that the reference is in some way an early evidence of a duality or plurality within the Godhead. Barth, for example, understood it as part of an I-Thou relationship within the Godhead.³⁶ Clines ties it back to the reference to the Spirit of God in Gen 1:2.³⁷ A prevailing view today seems to be that though the expression contains what Christian readers may view as the initial glimmerings of a Trinitarian revelation, it is unlikely that a writer as committed to monotheism as the author of Genesis would have “written something that was ambiguous enough to give any room for polytheistic interpretations. On the other hand, Genesis refers to God’s Spirit having a role in creation, and the idea of God addressing himself or his Spirit is not polytheistic, nor is it a fully developed doctrine of the Trinity . . . [and since none] of these explanations of the plural in Genesis 1:26 has gained overall approval . . . the matter must, for the moment, remain open.”³⁸ In other words, it is acceptable to discuss the fact that it does very much seem to convey plurality. However, one must not be dogmatic and assert a Trinitarian position because there is no consensus and it seems to contradict OT Jewish monotheistic beliefs.

There are two objections to this conclusion. First, a proper NT theological belief is monotheistic and yet affirms a plurality of persons within the Godhead. Second, the grammar does call for plurality—and this can be dogmatically affirmed. The real question is, How should this plurality be understood—especially given the additional revelation provided by the NT?

The Trinitarian View

On the basis of the argumentation given above, the best answer seems to this writer to be that the plural pronoun is in fact a clear reference to a plurality of persons within the Godhead that later revelation will both confirm and define as a Trinity. The grammar demands a plurality to be involved in the actual creation of man. The context necessarily limits this to God. The rest of Scripture reveals a Trinity of persons within the Godhead.

Passages like John 1 reveal the presence of the Word in the act of creation. This later revelation confirms that a conversation took place between the Father and the Word, with the Spirit present and active throughout as well (cf. Gen 1:2). While the fullness of this may not have been comprehended by either Moses, the human author, or the original readers (the nation of Israel immediately following the Exodus), through inspiration, God intended to convey Trinitarian involvement in creation

³⁶ Karl Barth, *The Doctrine of Creation*, trans. J. W. Edwards, O. Bussey, and Harold Knight, in *Church Dogmatics* (Edinburgh: T & T Clark, 1958), 60.

³⁷ David J. A. Clines, “The Image of God in Man,” *TynBul* 16 (1967): 53–103, esp. 63–69.

³⁸ McKeown, *Genesis*, 26.

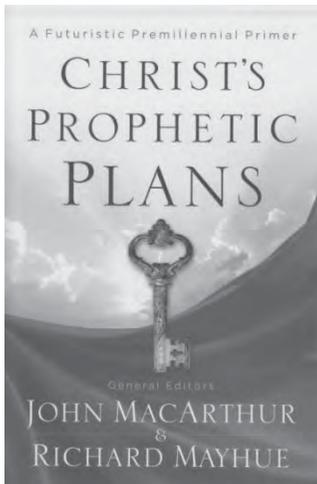
through the progress of revelation.³⁹ In point of fact, the Genesis 1 narrative conveys plurality. In progressive revelation, this is explained as three persons in one God. The clear emphasis throughout the OT on one God must be balanced from the beginning on the basis of this early “plurality of persons” revelation. Moses, in Genesis 1, wrote the first inspired revelatory expression conveying the truth about the plurality of persons within the Godhead. It is the rest of Scripture that confirms the reference to be Trinitarian.

Lest this cause undue concern on the basis that historically this was not fully understood or perceived from an OT perspective, let it be noted that even when coupled with countless miracles, signs and wonders, the disciples themselves were unable to comprehend the clear declarations of Jesus Himself regarding His crucifixion and resurrection until after He had opened their eyes (cf. Luke 24:44–47). But following this, they became ready proclaimers, not just of the truth of the resurrection, but also of the scriptural prophetic statements fulfilled by it. Genesis 1 reveals God as a single God with a plurality of persons within that Godhead. It calls for the rest of Scripture progressively to confirm that plurality as the Trinity.

Conclusion

So, is there biblical evidence to support the doctrine of the Trinity in the Genesis 1 narrative? As has been demonstrated, the plural form *Elohim* does not argue for an early Trinitarian revelation. The best way to understand this form in the Genesis narrative is to take it as a plural of majesty due to the consistent use of singular preachers. However, the plurals of Gen 1:26 coupled with the return to the consistent use of *Elohim* in conjunction with singular verbs does attest to a plurality of persons within the singular Godhead. Progressive revelation reveals this plurality as Trinitarian—namely, Father, Son, and Spirit.

³⁹ Murphy, “Genesis 1:1–2:3,” 275–77.



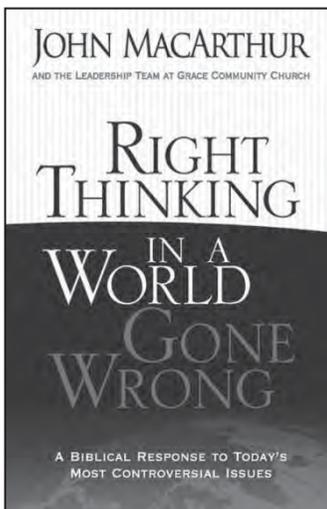
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INSPIRATION AND THE TRINITY

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The inspired Scriptures identify a plurality of divine Persons associated with Yahweh. The First Person (God the Father) gives revelation to His Messenger (the Second Person or Son of God), who is the main Revelator in the OT. According to both OT and NT, the Holy Spirit superintends the writing (inspiration) of inspired (God-given) Scripture.

Introduction

Being an enthusiastic fan of William G. T. Shedd's *Dogmatic Theology*, I delight in his occasional citations from old sermons which he has either read or heard. With regard to the Trinity, Shedd quotes from such a sermon by an otherwise unidentified Dr. South: "as he that denies this fundamental article of the Christian religion may lose his soul, so he that much strives to understand it may lose his wits."¹ With this witticism embedded firmly in our minds, we shall pursue the topic no matter the risks.

Definitions for Trinitarian Terms

First of all, we must define key trinitarian terms in order to provide continuity for our examination of the subject itself. *Person* refers to the individual members of the Godhead. However, the term does not mean that *personhood* consists of completely distinct beings like Ezekiel, Isaiah, and Daniel. Therefore, a *person* does not consist solely of individual interests, activities, or manifestations cohering in one *Person*, namely God. The writers of Scripture attribute the characteristics of *personality* or *personhood* to the different divine *Persons*. Each has emotions, intellect, and will.

¹ William G. T. Shedd, *Dogmatic Theology* (1888; repr., Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1971), 1:250.

With a little help from Shedd himself, we can also lay out two basic principles of Trinitarianism:

- (1) The great mystery of the Trinity is that “The one essence is simultaneously three persons, and the three persons are one essence.”²
- (2) Biblical Trinitarianism holds that “God is not a *unit*, but a *unity*.”³

This, in brief, defines what the Trinity is. Christian theology identifies the three Persons as God the Father, God the Son, and God the Holy Spirit.⁴

The Significance of the Doctrine of the Trinity

Does the doctrine of the Trinity matter? Can the church afford to neglect it or alter it? Millard Erickson issues a warning to his readers that, “The position we take on the Trinity will have profound bearing on our Christology.”⁵ Since Christ Himself comprises the very core of the Christian faith, this factor alone should impress us with the high significance of Trinitarianism.

Augustine identified a weakness in Trinitarian doctrine as the likely result of a weak spirituality and recommended a remedy for those who struggle with the Trinitarian implications of the incarnation of Christ (*De Trinitate* 4:21, 31).⁶ That early church father comprehended that a person of faith understands the Trinity as a result of the work of God Himself in his or her heart and mind. Therefore, at the outset of our exploration of the Trinity in the Old Testament (OT) we ought to exam our own spiritual condition to ensure our spiritual capacity for rightly understanding the Scriptures’ testimony.

The Meaning of Inspiration

My assigned topic in this article addresses the role of the three Persons of the triune God in the inspiration of Scripture. Just as important as it is to define terms describing the Trinity, so also we must define what we mean by inspiration.

Inspiration identifies the work of God in giving written revelation to mankind. The key biblical text regarding inspiration is 2 Tim 3:16—“All Scripture [πᾶσα γράφη] is inspired by God [θεόπνευστος] and profitable [καὶ ὠφέλιμος] . . .”⁷ Note

² Ibid., 1:253.

³ Ibid., 1:254.

⁴ Using the numeric titles (first, second, and third persons) provides greater accuracy and consistency for distinctions in the eternal godhead. As Shedd, *Dogmatic Theology*, 1:300 indicates, “The terms first, second, and third, applied to the persons, are terms of *order* and *relationship* only” (emphasis his).

⁵ Millard J. Erickson, *Christian Theology* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1985), 322.

⁶ Philip Schaff, ed., *The Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers, St. Augustine: On the Holy Trinity, Doctrinal Treatises, Moral Treatises* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1956), 3:86: “And if this is understood with difficulty, the mind must be purged by faith, by more and more abstaining from sins, and by doing good works, and by praying with the groaning of holy desires; that by profiting through the divine help, it may both understand and love.”

⁷ All Scripture references are from New American Standard Updated (NASU) unless noted.

that the phrase “inspired by God” is but one word in Greek and that word is an adjective modifying “Scripture.” In fact, please note that the next adjective (“profitable”) also modifies “Scripture.” Biblically, Scripture possesses the quality of being “inspired” or “God-breathed,” not the writers⁸—just as “profitable” is not a quality of the writers. The point of the word for “God-breathed” is that the Scriptures owe their “origin and contents to the divine breath, the Spirit of God.”⁹ Thus, Paul by the superintending work of the Spirit of God writes to Timothy that inspiration relates directly to incriptionation (the writing of Scripture). The apostle emphasizes written revelation rather than unwritten (merely spoken) revelation.¹⁰

In regard to the doctrine of the inspiration of the Scriptures, the involvement of the members of the Trinity may overlap and simultaneously be distinct for each Person. The Bible reveals that the Persons of the Godhead act as both the authors and the subjects of the Scriptures. Thus, this study first looks at the involvement of the Trinity in the production of the Scriptures. Afterwards, we will turn to the examination of what the inspired Scriptures reveal concerning the multiplicity of divine Persons in the Godhead.

Persons of the Godhead Involved in Inspiration

The Third Person of the Godhead guided, directed, and superintended the human authors of Scripture,¹¹ as the following biblical texts demonstrate (**bold print** highlights references to the Persons of the Godhead):

- **“The Spirit of Yahweh**¹² spoke by me, And His word was on my tongue” (2 Sam 23:2).
- **“However, You bore with them for many years, And admonished them by**

⁸ René Pache, *The Inspiration and Authority of Scripture*, trans. by Helen I. Needham (Chicago: Moody, 1969), 47: “*It is the Scripture, the text itself, which, according to Paul, is inspired*” (emphasis his).

⁹ William Hendriksen, *Exposition of the Pastoral Epistles*, NTC (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1957), 302.

¹⁰ For more about the nature and role of unwritten revelation, see my 2011 national ETS presentation, “Conscience, Oral Tradition, Natural Religion, or Later Insertion?: Unwritten Revelation in Genesis 1–11” (ETS Annual Meeting, San Francisco, 2011).

¹¹ Some theological studies concerning the Holy Spirit in the OT fail to give adequate attention to this aspect of His work. E.g., Wilf Hildebrandt, *An Old Testament Theology of the Spirit of God* (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 1995) spends much time on the relationship of the Spirit to prophecy in the OT, but neglects the topic of inspiration itself. Due to his charismatic theology Hildebrandt is more intent on dealing with the ecstatic nature of providing divine revelation than on explaining the Spirit’s role in superintending its incriptionation (ibid., 151–92).

¹² For the sake of accuracy, the writer has converted NASU’s “LORD” to “Yahweh,” which is the preferred transliteration of the Hebrew for this significant title of deity. In this fashion we can keep the two Hebrew titles, *Adonai* (= “Master” or “Lord”) and *Yahweh* (= the self-existent, eternal, covenant God) properly separate and distinct. For discussion of the meaning and form of *Yahweh*, see Terence Fretheim, “Yahweh,” in *NIDOTTE*, ed. by Willem A. VanGemeren (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1997), 4:1295–1300 and R. Laird Harris, “The Pronunciation of the Tetragram,” in *The Law and the Prophets: Old Testament Studies Prepared in Honor of Oswald Thompson Allis*, ed. by John H. Skilton (n.p.: Presbyterian and Reformed Publishing Co., 1974), 215–24.

Your Spirit through Your prophets” (Neh 9:30).

- “Then **the word of Yahweh**¹³ came to Jeremiah from **Yahweh**, saying, . . .” (Jer 34:12).
- “Then **the Spirit of Yahweh** fell upon me, and He said to me, ‘Say, “Thus says **Yahweh**, . . .”’” (Ezek 11:5).
- ““They made their hearts *like* flint so that they could not hear the law and the words which **Yahweh of hosts** had sent by **His Spirit** through the former prophets; therefore great wrath came from Yahweh of hosts” (Zech 7:12).

From these passages readers of the OT can deduce that the Holy Spirit took a key role in inspiration. He initiated and superintended the writing (i.e., the inscription) of divine revelation. Note that David’s statement follows the archived text of Psalm 18 in 2 Samuel 22; the prayer of Nehemiah 9 follows on the heels of the public reading of the law of Moses in Nehemiah 8; God instructed both Jeremiah and Ezekiel to write the revelations He gave to them (Jer 30:2; 36:2; Ezek 2:7–3:11); and, the text of Zech 7:12 specifically mentions the written law. R. C. Sproul concludes that “The Spirit is not divorced from the Word in such a way as to reduce revelation to an exercise in subjectivism. The Spirit works *with* the word (*cum verbo*) and *through* the Word (*per verbum*), not *without* or *apart* from the Word (*sine verbo*).”¹⁴ The Word consists of that which has been written.

Theophanies or Huiophanies/Christophanies?

The Second Person of the Godhead also fulfilled a vital role in the production of the Bible. OT writers speak often of the appearance of God in some manifestation to His people for the purpose of delivering them, leading them, or communicating with them. One of the primary examples of this phenomenon involves the presence of God at Mt. Sinai (Exod 19). Other instances of divine manifestation arise with the ministry of “the angel of Yahweh” in passages like the following:

- **Genesis 16:7–13.** In this passage the narrator (Moses) himself (not Hagar) identifies the Messenger of Yahweh as Yahweh (“Then she called the name of Yahweh who spoke to her, . . .”; v. 13).
- **Exodus 3:2.** Later in history, the Messenger of Yahweh appears to Moses in a burning bush at Mt. Horeb in the Sinai. The narrator (again, Moses) declares that “God called to him from the midst of the bush.”
- **Judges 6:11–23.** The writer of the Book of Judges (not Gideon, nor the

¹³ Some biblical scholars take this as a title for the Second Person of the Godhead; e.g., Michael S. Heiser, “Theophany in the Old Testament,” in *Faithlife Study Bible*, by John D. Barry et al. (Bellingham, WA: Logos Bible Software, 2012), s.v. “Yahweh as the Word”; R. Todd Stanton, “Numbers 12:6-8: Its Contribution to the Study of Revelation and Theophany in the Old Testament” (ThM thesis, The Master’s Seminary, 2000). Cp. John 1:1–3 and J. H. Bernard, *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the Gospel According to St. John*, 2 vols., ed. by Alan Hugh McNeile, ICC (Edinburgh: T & T Clark, 1929), 1:cxxxix.

¹⁴ R. C. Sproul, “The Internal Testimony of the Holy Spirit,” in *Inerrancy*, ed. by Norman L. Geisler, 335–54 (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1980), 338.

Messenger of Yahweh) reports that “Yahweh looked at him and said” (v. 14).

Such theophanies seem to possess one significant feature: all of them “reveal, at least in a partial manner, something about [God] Himself, or His will, to the recipient.”¹⁵ Should we identify the divine Person in such appearances as the pre-incarnate Son of God (i.e., a Christophany)? James Borland’s definition of “Christophany” runs as follows: “those unsought, intermittent and temporary, visible and audible manifestations of God the Son in human form, by which God communicated something to certain conscious human beings on earth prior to the birth of Jesus Christ.”¹⁶ When the biblical account associates “the Angel of Yahweh” with a theophany, “Messenger” is a better translation than “Angel,” because this title denotes the function or office of the individual, not His nature.¹⁷ In addition, He is spoken of as actually being God, He bears the name Yahweh, He speaks as God, He displays divine attributes and authority. Most significantly, however, He receives worship.¹⁸

The title “Son” appears to be a description of the temporary submission of the Second Person to the First Person (in His Fatherhood) for the purpose of the program of redemption, as determined within the counsel of the Godhead in eternity past. Shedd explains it this way: “It is a *trinitarian*, or *filial* subordination; that is, subordination in respect to order and relationship. As a relation, sonship is subordinate to fatherhood.”¹⁹ In actuality, the identification of the Second Person of the Godhead with the Angel (Messenger) of Yahweh²⁰ expresses the temporary submission of the Second Person to the First Person. It reflects the same concepts as Father and Son. The Messenger becomes the Servant of the One who sends Him. As Jesus explains, “No one has taken it away from Me, but I lay it down on My own initiative. I have authority to lay it down, and I have authority to take it up again. This commandment I received from My Father” (John 10:18). This temporary, functional subordination likewise accounts for the title “Servant of Yahweh” in the prophetic books of the OT. In other words, the OT already reveals the order of the Persons of the Godhead by such titles. The New Testament (NT), therefore, does not comprise the first revelation of the interrelationships between the Persons of the triune God.

¹⁵ James A. Borland, *Christ in the Old Testament*, rev. ed. (Fearn, UK: Mentor, 1999), 24.

¹⁶ *Ibid.*, 17.

¹⁷ *Ibid.*, 36.

¹⁸ *Ibid.*, 37–42.

¹⁹ Shedd, *Dogmatic Theology*, 1:301. Such a concept is not in any way related to the heresy of Arian subordinationism, in which some Persons of the Godhead are inferior to others. See, also, Erickson, *Christian Theology*, 338: “The function of one member of the Trinity may for a time be subordinate to one or both of the other members, but that does not mean he is in any way inferior in essence.”

²⁰ Surprisingly, Eugene H. Merrill, *Everlasting Dominion: A Theology of the Old Testament* (Nashville: B&H Publishing Group, 2006), 83–84 appears to deny deity to the Angel of Yahweh: “The angel of the Lord, while representing God almost to the point of identifying with him, is not God but only His agent, albeit one with supernatural power and a typological role that for Christians, at least, finds antitypical fulfillment in Jesus Christ.”

The Roles of the Divine Persons in Inspiration

This is just the point at which we may now understand the role of the First Person of the Godhead in the production of Scripture. He sends His Word by His Messenger. The Son Himself clarifies the Father's role in John 12:49, "For I did not speak on My own initiative, but the Father Himself who sent Me has given Me a commandment *as to* what to say and what to speak." In 14:10 Jesus yet again reveals that role when He says, "Do you not believe that I am in the Father, and the Father is in Me? The words that I say to you I do not speak on My own initiative, but the Father abiding in Me does His works." In His high priestly prayer (John 17), the Son of God declares the faithfulness with which He passed the words of His Father to His own disciples:

"I have manifested Your name to the men whom You gave Me out of the world; they were Yours and You gave them to Me, and **they have kept Your word**. Now they have come to know that everything You have given Me is from You; for **the words which You gave Me I have given to them**; and they received *them* and truly understood that I came forth from You, and they believed that You sent Me. . . . I have given them **Your word**; and the world has hated them, because they are not of the world, even as I am not of the world. . . . Sanctify them in the truth; **Your word** is truth."

As we consider the matter of the interrelationship between the Father and the Son, we also need to observe a degree of theological caution. Bruce Ware asks that we *beware* of reducing the immanent (or, essential) Trinity to the economic (or, functional) Trinity. The former must always be understood as logically, temporally, and theologically prior to the latter.²¹

The NT addresses the matter with clarity. The apostle John states that no human being had ever seen God the Father at any time in history (John 1:18, "No one has seen God at any time; the only begotten God who is in the bosom of the Father, He has explained *Him*"). "Explained" in the Greek (ἐξηγήσατο, from ἐξηγέομαι) is the word from which we derive the verb "exegete" and its noun, "exegesis." Literally, the Son of God "exegeted" the Father to mankind. That "exegesis" also occurs in the Christophanies of the OT. Jeffrey Niehaus stresses the fact that "God is not silent when he appears as Savior or as Judge."²² As another scholar, Millar Burrows, words it, "God appears in order to speak."²³ That divine Spokesman is the Son of God Himself, the very One whom the apostle John describes in the opening to his gospel: "In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God" (John 1:1). Yes, the God who speaks is the Second Person of the Godhead, the pre-

²¹ Bruce A. Ware, "How Shall We Think About the Trinity?" in *God Under Fire: Modern Scholarship Reinvents God*, ed. by Douglas S. Huffman and Eric L. Johnson, 253–77 (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2002), 256–59.

²² Jeffrey J. Niehaus, *God at Sinai: Covenant and Theophany in the Bible and Ancient Near East*, SOTBT (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1995), 29.

²³ Millar Burrows, *An Outline of Biblical Theology* (Philadelphia: Westminster, 1946), 28.

incarnate Messiah—the same who spoke the world into existence in Genesis 1 (cp. John 1:2–3, 10).

Thus, the Revelator in both testaments is the same Person of the Godhead—the Second Person. This consists of a personal presence (theophany) at the time of imparting revelation to a prophet. E. J. Young declares that the prophet was one who “believed that he had been the recipient of an objective revelation. . . . that he had received a message which God had given to him.”²⁴ Indeed, Young makes the point even more emphatically when he says, “they actually were the recipients of Divine revelation.”²⁵ In agreement with this view of prophetic revelation, Pieter Verhoef observes that a “classical definition of a prophecy was given by Micaiah . . . when he responded . . . : ‘As surely as the LORD lives, I can tell him only what the LORD tells me’ (1 Kgs 22:14; cf. 2 Chron 18:13).”²⁶ He even goes so far as to declare that in the schools of the prophets in Gilgal, Bethel, and Jericho “the subject matter could not have been to teach the prophets how to become a prophet, how to receive the revelation of God, because the content of their messages as prophets could not be learned, but could only be received.”²⁷ In most situations in the OT the pre-incarnate Son gives that revelation directly to the prophet. The Spirit normally plays a secondary role in the prophets’ recording of that revelation.²⁸ Therefore, we may summarize the divine Persons’ individual roles in inspiration as follows: the Father sends His Messenger (the pre-incarnate Son) to His people with the divine message and the Holy Spirit superintends the incription of that message. While this structure of trinitarian involvement in inspiration seems to faithfully represent core functions for each Person, there yet remain some areas in which their functions overlap. For example, David says, “The Spirit of Yahweh spoke by me, And His word was on my tongue” (2 Sam 23:2). There are times when the Spirit’s role is very near to that of the Son’s.

The Inspired Scriptures’ Testimony Concerning the Trinity

Since God gave (inspired) the Scriptures, they are profitable for doctrine or teaching (2 Tim 3:16). Therefore, we can depend upon the God-given Scriptures to teach us accurately concerning the nature of the Godhead and the identification of its Persons. Throughout the Scriptures of the OT and NT, the writers make reference to distinctions between the Persons in the Godhead. Father, Son, and Holy Spirit appear as separate Persons with their own individual operations. In addition, the biblical

²⁴ Edward J. Young, *My Servants the Prophets* (1952; repr., Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1971), 175. Hildebrandt, *An Old Testament Theology of the Spirit of God*, 155 makes the same observation.

²⁵ Young, *My Servants the Prophets*, 176.

²⁶ P. A. Verhoef, “Prophecy,” in *NIDOTTE*, ed. by Willem A. VanGemeren, 4:1067–78 (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1997), 1071–72.

²⁷ *Ibid.*, 1073.

²⁸ In his chapter on “The Trinity and Revelation,” Tim Chester, *Delighting in the Trinity: Why Father, Son and Spirit are Good News*, rev. 2nd ed. (2010; repr., Purcellville, VA: Good Book Company, 2013), 119–31 misses this distinction between revelation and incription. The triune God participates in revelation, inspiration, and incription, not in revelation alone.

writers ascribe divine attributes to those Persons, including the involvement of all three in the process of revelation and inscription.²⁹ Based upon such evidence, it is this writer's firm conviction that *the unprejudiced mind cannot doubt the existence of a plurality of Persons in the Godhead without impugning the clarity, the inerrancy, and the inspiration of the Scriptures*. Any discussion of the doctrine of the Trinity must begin and end with what the Bible declares. It must be the sole court of appeal.

Some theologians, however, express extreme skepticism regarding any concept of the Trinity in the OT and even question its existence in the gospel narratives.³⁰ A popular pamphlet on the Trinity only refers to OT texts to demonstrate the deity of Christ, but provides no indication at all that the OT itself testifies clearly to a plurality of Persons in the Godhead.³¹ Have they correctly understood the biblical witness? Scripture alone contains the revelation of the doctrine of the Trinity—natural revelation provides no key or clue to this major article of Christian faith. Perhaps Lewis Sperry Chafer's observation summarizes the reason why some theologians fail to see the Trinity in the OT: "No argument has been advanced against the Trinitarian conception other than that it does not conform to the limitations of the mind of man."³² In other words, rejection of the Trinity in the OT stems from the fact that some theologians have difficulty allowing the writers of the OT (within their supposedly very primitive ancient Near Eastern environment) the ability to write of sophisticated theological concepts supposedly originating with Christianity in the NT. Usually, these theologians buttress their line of reasoning with constant appeals to a history of religion and to a documentary view of multiple editors for individual books of the OT.³³

First of all, the reader of Scripture must face the reality that any denial of plurality of divine Persons impugns the integrity of Jesus Himself with regard to His knowledge and His words. John 17 records the high priestly prayer of Jesus in which He says to the First Person, "Father, glorify Me together with Yourself, with the glory which I had with You before the world was" (v. 5). By the phrase "with You," Jesus implies "life in the bosom of the Godhead" in contrast to His incarnation ("on the

²⁹ Cf. Lewis Sperry Chafer, *Systematic Theology* (1947; repr., Dallas: Dallas Seminary Press, 1969), 1:273.

³⁰ E.g., R. W. L. Moberly, *The Bible, Theology, and Faith: A Study of Abraham and Jesus*, CSIC (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 2000), 236, "a trinitarian theology must remember always to keep the Old Testament and gospel narratives in the foreground. Trinitarian theology always tends to locate in eternity that which was achieved in time." Although Broughton Knox, *The Everlasting God* (Kingsford, Australia: Matthias Media, 2009), 67 believes that the Gospels do reveal the Trinity, he is convinced that the doctrine of the Trinity "arose from the Christian experience of God in Jesus Christ and which was taught indeed by Christ himself." In other words, Knox seems to deny that the OT reveals the plurality of divine Persons.

³¹ Robert M. Bowman, Jr., et al., *The Trinity* (Torrance, CA: Rose Publishing, 1999).

³² Chafer, *Systematic Theology*, 1:274.

³³ Examples of this mode of thinking can be seen in extensive entries on רוּחַ (*rûah*, "S/spirit") in the less evangelical theological dictionaries: S. Tengström and H. J. Fabry, "רוּחַ *rûah*," in *TDOT*, ed. by G. Johannes Botterweck, Helmer Ringgren, and Heinz-Josef Fabry, trans. by David E. Green (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2004), 13:365–402; R. Albertz and C. Westermann, "רוּחַ *rûah* spirit," in *TLOT*, ed. by Ernst Jenni and Claus Westermann, trans. by Mark E. Biddle (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 1997), 3:1202–20.

earth,” v. 4).³⁴ Jesus openly claims to have been present before creation³⁵ and to have possessed a pre-incarnate glory equivalent to the Father’s glory. He asks that the Father restore His former state of being and position³⁶—that which He possessed prior to creation. If no plurality of Persons exists in the Godhead, then Jesus spoke falsely and could be accused of blasphemy. In verse 24 He says, “Father, I desire that they also, whom You have given Me, be with Me where I am, so that they may see My glory which You have given Me, for You loved Me before the foundation of the world.” With this statement Jesus once again refers to His existence before the creation of the world, to His glory, and to the love which the Father had for Him in their interpersonal relationship within the Godhead. An additional factor makes its appearance: the divine authority of the Second Person. “I desire” comprises a majestic expression of Jesus’ divine will.³⁷

Jesus’ prayer alone should settle the issue regarding multiple divine Persons in the Godhead. As Chafer points out, denial of the existence of the Trinity dishonors Christ, the Holy Spirit, and the Scriptures themselves.³⁸ Richard Watson declared that, “[T]he importance of the doctrine of the holy trinity may be finally argued from the manner in which the denial of it would affect *the credit of the Holy Scriptures* themselves; for if this doctrine be not contained in them, their tendency to mislead is obvious.”³⁹ A rejection of the Trinity must, of necessity, involve the denial of Christ’s deity. The same may be said regarding the deity of the Holy Spirit and His identification as a Person of the Godhead—not to mention impugning the Spirit’s superintending work in the production of the Scriptures.

NT Citation of OT Texts Regarding Plurality of Divine Persons

Both the OT and the NT are Scripture and, thus, the inspired Word of God. How does the inspired NT use the inspired OT? The NT frequently appeals to the OT in order to declare the identity of the Messiah as one of the Persons of the Godhead. Such passages reveal a plurality of Persons in the Godhead, as the following passages demonstrate (note the **bold font**):

³⁴ Thus observes Bernard, *Commentary on the Gospel According to St. John*, 2:563.

³⁵ Raymond E. Brown, *The Gospel According to John (XIII–XXI): Introduction, Translation, and Notes*, AYB 20A (1974; repr., New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2008), 742 takes the verse as a reference to “pre-creational glory in the fellowship of the Father and the Son.”

³⁶ Charles H. Talbert, *Reading John: A Literary and Theological Commentary on the Fourth Gospel and the Johannine Epistles*, rev. ed., Reading the New Testament Series (Macon, GA: Smyth & Helwys, 2005), 234 uses the phrase “former status.”

³⁷ Brown, *The Gospel According to John (XIII–XXI)*, 772. Cf. Arthur W. Pink, *Exposition of the Gospel of John*, 3 vols., 2nd ed. (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1958), 3:148–49 (emphasis is Pink’s), “Here for the first time in this prayer Christ says ‘I will.’ It was a word of authority, becoming Him who was God as well as man. He speaks of this as His right, on account of His *purchase* and of the *covenant* transaction between the Father and the Son concerning those given to Him. ‘I will’ comported with the *authority* (17:2) which the Father has given Him over all flesh and the *glory* into which He has entered (17:5, 22).”

³⁸ Chafer, *Systematic Theology*, 1:278–82.

³⁹ *Ibid.*, 1:281. Richard Watson, *Institutes*, 1:462–63.

- Mark 12:35–37 cites Ps 110:1.
And Jesus *began* to say, as He taught in the temple, “How *is it that* the scribes say that the Christ is the son of David? David himself said in **the Holy Spirit**, ‘**THE LORD SAID TO MY LORD**, “SIT AT MY RIGHT HAND, UNTIL I PUT YOUR ENEMIES BENEATH YOUR FEET.”’ David himself calls Him ‘Lord’; so in what sense is He his son?” And the large crowd enjoyed listening to Him.
- Luke 4:14–21 cites Isa 61:1–2.
And the book of the prophet Isaiah was handed to Him. And He opened the book and found the place where it was written, **THE SPIRIT OF THE LORD IS UPON ME**, BECAUSE HE ANOINTED ME TO PREACH THE GOSPEL TO THE POOR. HE HAS SENT ME TO PROCLAIM RELEASE TO THE CAPTIVES, AND RECOVERY OF SIGHT TO THE BLIND, TO SET FREE THOSE WHO ARE OPPRESSED, TO PROCLAIM THE FAVORABLE YEAR OF **THE LORD**.” And He closed the book, gave it back to the attendant and sat down; and the eyes of all in the synagogue were fixed on Him. And He began to say to them, “Today this Scripture has been fulfilled in your hearing.”
- Heb 1:8–9 cites Ps 45:6 and 8.
But of **the Son** *He says*, “YOUR THRONE, O **GOD**, IS FOREVER AND EVER, AND THE RIGHTEOUS SCEPTER IS THE SCEPTER OF HIS KINGDOM. YOU HAVE LOVED RIGHTEOUSNESS AND HATED LAWLESSNESS; THEREFORE **GOD, YOUR GOD**, HAS ANOINTED YOU WITH THE OIL OF GLADNESS ABOVE YOUR COMPANIONS.”
- Heb 5:5–6 cites Ps 2:7 and 110:4.
So also Christ did not glorify Himself so as to become a high priest, but He who said to Him, “YOU ARE **MY SON**, TODAY I HAVE BEGOTTEN YOU”; just as He says also in another *passage*, “YOU ARE A PRIEST FOREVER ACCORDING TO THE ORDER OF MELCHIZEDEK.”

If the NT writers skew the words of the OT to make them mean something else, their words are not to be trusted. If the NT is “God-breathed” Scripture, then that inspiration guarantees their accuracy and integrity. If there is no plurality of Persons in the Godhead, the NT writers have misinterpreted the OT and deceived its readers. But, God cannot lie and He is the ultimate Author of the Scriptures. He is trustworthy, so His Word is trustworthy. He is without error, so His Word must be without error.

Inspired Grammar: Plural Nouns and Pronouns

The Hebrew title *Elohim* (אֱלֹהִים) does not suffice as proof of the Trinity. Biblical writers make the case far more emphatically by the use of plural pronouns and by the multiple identifications of distinct Persons. Two first-person plurals punctuate the accounts of the creation and the fall of mankind in the Genesis account (1:26 and 3:22; see also 11:7). Whether these plurals are taken as plurals of majesty, plurals of

self-address (deliberation⁴⁰), trinitarian plurals, or references to a council of spirit beings, the references draw attention to the significance of the events with which the text associates them.⁴¹ The account indicates that the creation and fall of mankind comprise notable events pertinent to a proper theological understanding of who God is, what deeds God has performed (both in creation and in setting about to redeem fallen mankind), who man is, and what man has caused by his disobedience to his Creator. Such plural pronouns also occur outside Genesis (e.g., Isa 6:8, “Then I heard the voice of the Lord saying, ‘Whom shall I send, and who will go for Us?’ Then I said, ‘Here am I. Send me!’”). These OT occurrences might be more accurately compared with the use of the first person-plural in NT passages like John 14:23, “Jesus answered and said to him, ‘If anyone love Me, he will keep My word; and My Father will love him, and **We** will come to him and make Our abode with him.’”

Specific Texts in the OT

Having seen the involvement of a plurality of divine Persons in the inspiration of Scripture, we may now look at what that inspired Scripture reveals about the Trinity itself. Various texts within the OT teach a plurality of Persons in the Godhead. Some passages mention all three Persons;⁴² others merely attribute deity to the Persons individually. Since the NT is replete with examples of both types of texts, most theologians lean heavily on the NT for the biblical evidence. However, one should never neglect the clarity with which the OT speaks on this doctrinal issue.

⁴⁰ William David Reyburn and Euan McG. Fry, *A Handbook on Genesis*, UBS Handbook Series (New York: United Bible Societies, 1998), 50, explain that this involves a speaker “conferring or consulting with himself.”

⁴¹ S. R. Driver, *The Book of Genesis, with Introduction and Notes* (New York: Edwin S. Gorham, 1904), 14, remarks that God adopts “this unusual and significant mode of expression” in order to introduce the account of man’s creation with solemnity. Bill T. Arnold, *Genesis*, NCBC (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 2009), 44, agrees that the “lofty words of v. 26 make this event distinctive . . .” John Peter Lange, *Genesis or, the First Book of Moses*, trans. by Tayler Lewis and A. Gosman, Commentary on the Holy Scriptures, electronic ed. (1864; Bellingham, WA: Logos Bible Software, 2008), 173 lists five different ways to understand these first-person plurals, but concludes that the carrying of the plural into “our image” might more accurately point to “a distinction in the divine personality.” Hebraists point out that the so-called “plural of majesty” applies primarily to nouns and that it is uncertain whether that applies also to plural verbs or pronouns; cf. James McKeown, *Genesis*, THOTC (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 2008), 26; Paul Joüon, *A Grammar of Biblical Hebrew*, trans. and rev. by T. Muraoka, *Subsidia Biblica* 14/1–II (Rome: Pontifical Biblical Institute, 1993), 2:376 (§114e n. 1). See Bruce K. Waltke, *An Old Testament Theology: An Exegetical, Canonical, and Thematic Approach*, with Charles Yu (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2007), 212–13 for an example of a treatment of this issue by a theologian who rejects any association of “the Spirit of God” in the OT with a Person of the Godhead. Waltke takes references to “the spirit of God/Yahweh” as references to God’s power which He did not reveal as the Holy Spirit (as a divine Person) until the coming of Christ (*ibid.*, 619).

⁴² In the NT: Matt 3:16–17; 28:19; John 14:16; 15:26; 1 Cor 12:4–6; 2 Cor 13:14; Eph 2:18; 4:4–6; 1 Pet 1:2; Jude 20–21; Rev 1:4–5.

Passages that Identify Three Distinct Divine Persons by Name or by Deed

Interestingly, the OT never seems to speak of more than three distinct divine Persons. Most texts refer to two Persons when multiple Persons are present. A few, however, include all three:

Isaiah 42:1. “Behold, **My Servant**, whom **I** uphold; My chosen one *in whom* My soul delights. I have put **My Spirit** upon Him; He will bring forth justice to the nations.”

Three separate divine Persons (highlighted in **bold font**—my emphasis): the Servant of Yahweh (= Messiah, the incarnate Son of God), Yahweh Himself (the First Person, God the Father), and Yahweh’s Spirit (the Third Person).⁴³

Isaiah 63:7–10. “I shall make mention of the lovingkindnesses of **Yahweh**, the praises of **Yahweh**, According to all that **Yahweh** has granted us, And the great goodness toward the house of Israel, Which He has granted them according to His compassion And according to the abundance of His lovingkindnesses. For He said, ‘Surely, they are My people, Sons who will not deal falsely.’ So He became their Savior. In all their affliction He was afflicted, And **the angel of His presence** saved them; In His love and in His mercy He redeemed them, And He lifted them and carried them all the days of old. But they rebelled and grieved **His Holy Spirit**; Therefore He turned Himself to become their enemy, He fought against them.”

Note the presence of three separate divine Persons: Yahweh, the Angel (= Messenger) of His presence, and His Holy Spirit. These are the First, Second, and Third Persons of the Trinity respectively.⁴⁴

Inter-relationships between Divine Persons

Shedd identifies twelve actions and relations that serve as proof that there are three Persons of the trinitarian Godhead. These twelve demonstrate that one Person

⁴³ See the following for similar interpretations of this text as Trinitarian: Edward J. Young, *The Book of Isaiah*, 3 vols., NICOT (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1972), 3:108–11; Gary V. Smith, *Isaiah 40–66*, NAC 15B (Nashville: Broadman & Holman, 2009), 160–62; Geoffrey W. Grogan, “Isaiah,” in *EBC*, ed. by Frank E. Gaebelien, 6:3–354 (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1986), 254–55.

⁴⁴ See the following: Young, *The Book of Isaiah*, 3:483; Smith, *Isaiah 40–66*, 669–73; Grogan, “Isaiah,” 342. Herman Bavinck, *The Doctrine of God*, trans. and ed. by William Hendriksen (1977; repr., Edinburgh: Banner of Truth Trust, 1997), 258: “The clearest threefold distinction within the Divine Being is found in Ps. 33:6; Is. 61:1; 63:9–12; and Hag. 2:5–6.” Bavinck’s defense of the revealed plurality of divine Persons in the OT provides readers with his explanation of the progressive revelation of biblical teaching regarding the Trinity as well as a catalog of numerous OT passages that contribute to the discussion (*ibid.*, 255–63). Subsequent to this section, Bavinck also looks at the NT, a variety of aspects contributing to the biblical teaching, the history of the development of the doctrine of the Trinity, and a discussion of the distinction between the divine essence and divine Persons (*ibid.*, 263–334).

may do or experience something personally which is not personal to another Person of the Godhead:

One divine Person loves another, John 3:35; dwells in another, John 14:10, 11; suffers from another, Zach. 13:7; knows another, Matt. 11:27; addresses another, Heb. 1:8; is the way to another, John 14:6; speaks of another, Luke 3:22; glorifies another, John 17:5; confers with another, Gen. 1:26, 11:7; plans with another, Isa. 9:6; sends another, Gen. 16:7, John 14:26; rewards another, Phil. 2:5–11; Heb. 2:9.⁴⁵

In addition to Shedd’s examples, there are a number of OT texts which mention the same kinds of inter-relationships. Some of the texts cited in the following pages could be classified under more than one of the headings used to sort them.

Passages with One Person of the Godhead Acting in Regard to Another

Different distinct Persons within the Godhead display specific actions that make one Person the object of the action of another Person:

- “Then **Yahweh** came down in the cloud and spoke to him; and He took of **the Spirit** who was upon him and placed *Him* upon the seventy elders” (Num 11:25).
- “You are **Yahweh God**, Who chose Abraham. . . You gave **Your good Spirit** to instruct them, Your manna You did not withhold from their mouth” (Neh 9:7, 20).
- “O **God**, . . . do not take **Your Holy Spirit** from me” (Ps 51:10, 11 [Heb. 12, 13]).
- “O **Yahweh**, . . . You send forth **Your Spirit**, they are created . . .” (Ps 104:24, 30).
- “Then a shoot will spring from the stem of Jesse, And a branch from his roots will bear fruit. **The Spirit of Yahweh** will rest on **Him**” (Isa 11:1–2).
- “. . . for **I** will have poured out **My Spirit** on the house of Israel,’ declares **the Lord Yahweh**” (Ezek 39:29).
- “**I** will pour out **My Spirit** on all mankind; . . .” (Joel 2:28, 29 [Heb. 3:1, 2]).

Or, one Person uses another Person as the means or instrument for a divinely appointed action:

- “However, **You** bore with them for many years, And admonished them by **Your Spirit** through Your prophets” (Neh 9:30).
- “The hand of **Yahweh** was upon me, and **He** brought me out by **the Spirit of Yahweh**” (Ezek 37:1).

⁴⁵ Shedd, *Dogmatic Theology*, 1:279.

Passages in which One Person of the Godhead Speaks about Another

Divine Persons often speak about each other, especially when addressing the writers of Scripture or the recipients of divine revelation:

- “**Yahweh** said, ‘**My Spirit** shall not strive with man forever . . .’” (Gen 6:30).
- “**Yahweh** spoke unto Moses saying, ‘. . . And I have filled him with **the Spirit of God** in wisdom, understanding, in knowledge, and in all kinds of craftsmanship. . . .’” (Exod 31:1, 3; cf. 35:31).
- “**Yahweh** therefore said to Moses, ‘. . . and I will take of **the Spirit** who is upon you . . .’” (Num 11:16, 17).
- “So **Yahweh** said to Moses, ‘Take Joshua the son of Nun, a man in whom is **the Spirit**, . . .’” (Num 27:18).
- “I will surely tell of the decree of **Yahweh: He** said to **Me**, ‘**You are My Son**, Today I have begotten You’” (Ps 2:7). When does God ever provide a blessing for someone who “kisses” a human king and flees to him for refuge? Verse 12 makes it clear that the Son is the Son of God.
- “‘Woe to the rebellious children,’ declares **Yahweh**, ‘Who execute a plan, but not Mine, And make an alliance, but not of **My Spirit**, . . .’” (Isa 30:1).
- “Behold, **My Servant**, whom **I** uphold; My chosen one *in whom* My soul delights. I have put **My Spirit** upon Him; He will bring forth justice to the nations” (Isa 42:1).
- “Come near to **Me**, listen to this: From the first I have not spoken in secret, From the time it took place, I was there. And now the **Lord Yahweh** has sent **Me**, and **His Spirit**” (Isa 48:16).
- “And now says **Yahweh**, who formed **Me** from the womb to be **His Servant**, to bring Jacob back to Him, so that Israel might be gathered to Him (for I am honored in the sight of Yahweh, and **My God** is My strength)” (Isa 49:5; cp. v. 7).
- “As for Me, this is My covenant with them,” says **Yahweh**: “**My Spirit** which is upon you” (Isa 59:21).
- “Then **the Spirit of Yahweh** fell upon me, and He said to me, ‘Say, “Thus says **Yahweh**, . . .’”” (Ezek 11:5).
- “. . . declares **the Lord Yahweh**, ‘. . . I will put **My Spirit** within you . . .’” (Ezek 36:23, 27; cf. 37:14).
- “. . . for **I** will have poured out **My Spirit** on the house of Israel,’ declares **the Lord Yahweh**” (Ezek 39:29).
- “. . . says **Yahweh of hosts**. . . ‘. . . **My Spirit** is abiding in your midst . . .’” (Hag 2:4, 5).
- “Then he said to me, ‘This is the word of Yahweh to Zerubbabel saying, “Not by might nor by power, but by **My Spirit**,” says **Yahweh of hosts**’” (Zech 4:6).
- “I will pour out on the house of David and on the inhabitants of Jerusalem, **the Spirit of grace and of supplication**, so that they will look on **Me**

whom they have pierced . . .” (Zech 12:10).

Passages in which One Person of the Godhead Speaks to Another

Divine Persons carry on conversation with one another within the Godhead:

- “**Yahweh** says to **my Lord**: ‘Sit at My right hand, until I make Your enemies a footstool for Your feet’ (Ps 110:1).

Passages Identifying More than One Person of the Godhead

Some text units within the OT mention more than one divine Person in a single context:

- “In the beginning **God** created the heavens and the earth. The earth was formless and void, and darkness was over the surface of the deep, and **the Spirit of God** was moving over the surface of the waters” (Gen 1:1–2). The OT itself commences with a reference to “the Spirit of God” in Genesis 1:2 following immediately upon the heels of the declaration that “God created the heavens and the earth” (v. 1).
- “Then **Yahweh** rained on Sodom and Gomorrah brimstone and fire from **Yahweh** out of heaven” (Gen 19:24). Note where the first Yahweh is located—on the earth (cp. 18:22, 33; 19:27), not in heaven.⁴⁶ This text does not stand alone in distinguishing different Persons who both bear the title Yahweh—it is merely the only single verse to bring this out by itself. It is also the first such reference in the OT canon.⁴⁷
- “O **Yahweh**, . . . Where can I go from **Your Spirit**?” (Ps 139:4, 7).
- “You are my **God**; Let **Your good Spirit** lead me on level ground” (Ps 143:10).
- “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**. . . . The zeal of **Yahweh of hosts** will accomplish this” (Isa 9:6, 7). This “son” is a child who was born, but he also is called “Mighty God, Eternal Father.” The title “Son” appears to be a description of the temporary submission of the Second Person to the First Person (in His Fatherhood) for the purpose of the program of redemption, determined within the counsel of the Godhead

⁴⁶ See my article, “The Integration of OT Theology with Bible Translation,” *MSJ* 12, no. 1 (Spring 2001): 26–29 for a fuller treatment of this text.

⁴⁷ Bavinck, *The Doctrine of God*, 258 cites Gen 19:24 as important OT passages indicating “a distinction within the Divine Being.”

in eternity past. As Shedd explains, “It is a *trinitarian*, or *filial* subordination; that is, subordination in respect to order and relationship. As a relation, sonship is subordinate to fatherhood.”⁴⁸

- “For the mouth of **Yahweh** has commanded, and **His Spirit** has gathered them” (Isa 34:16).
- “Behold **the Lord Yahweh** will come with might, . . . Who has directed **the Spirit of Yahweh**, . . . ?” (Isa 40:10, 13).
- “**The Spirit of the Lord Yahweh** is upon me, Because **Yahweh** has anointed me” (Isa 61:1).
- “But they rebelled And grieved **His Holy Spirit**; Therefore **He** turned Himself to become their enemy, He fought against them” (Isa 63:10).
- “**The Spirit of Yahweh** gave them rest. So **You** led Your people, To make for Yourself a glorious name” (Isa 63:14).
- “Awake, O sword, against **My Shepherd**, And against the man, **My Associate**,” Declares **Yahweh of hosts**. ‘Strike **the Shepherd** that the sheep may be scattered; And **I** will turn My hand against the little ones” (Zech 13:7). “Associate” in this prophetic passage refers to one who is equal to the person with whom he is associated. In this case, the Messiah is equal to Yahweh of hosts!⁴⁹ That associate is His Shepherd as well as being a human being (“the man”).

Moberly, who has difficulty seeing the Trinity in the OT or even in the Gospels (see above), declares that “The tensions between time and eternity within trinitarian understanding are part of the mystery of God, where the theologian’s task is not to dissolve the tensions but to depict them faithfully.”⁵⁰ We agree and insist upon depicting what the Scriptures say that indicates a plurality of divine Persons and let the tensions stand which make it difficult for some professed evangelicals to see the Trinity in the OT. The passages that, on the surface, seem to give testimony of the plurality of divine Persons are too numerous to be an insignificant witness.

A Problem Text

A variety of biblical texts appear in discussions and debates about the Trinity. Some texts exhibit clarity, while others remain points of contention due to lack of adequate exegetical evidence. As James Montgomery Boice reminds us,

What we know about the Trinity we know only because of God’s revelation of it in the Bible, and even then we don’t know it well. In fact, so prone are we to

⁴⁸ Shedd, *Dogmatic Theology*, 1:301. Theologians also refer to this relationship as the economic Trinity. Such a concept is not in any way related to the heresy of Arian subordinationism, in which some Persons of the Godhead are inferior to others. See, also, footnote 19, above.

⁴⁹ Kenneth L. Barker, “Zechariah,” in *EBC*, rev. ed., ed. by Tremper Longman III and David E. Garland, 8:721–833 (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2008), 821.

⁵⁰ Moberly, *The Bible, Theology, and Faith*, 236.

make mistakes in dealing with this subject that we must be specially careful lest we go beyond or misrepresent what we find in Scripture.⁵¹

Illustrative of Boice’s observation is the fact that theologians hotly debate the intent and meaning of Deut 6:4, “Hear, O Israel, Yahweh our God is one Yahweh” (שמעו יהוה יהוה אחד: אֱלֹהֵינוּ יְהוָה | אֱלֹהֵינוּ יְהוָה, *šēma’ yisrā’ēl yhwḥ ’ēlōhênû yhwḥ ’ehād*). A variety of ways to translate this text compete for acceptance, but there are only two basic views regarding any trinitarian discussion: (1) the text speaks of the uniqueness of Yahweh, or (2) it describes the unity of Yahweh. Daniel Block offers the most cogent set of significant arguments for the former viewpoint.⁵² The range of translations can be confusing:

- “Hear, O Israel, Yahweh our God, Yahweh is one.” [Moberly, McConville]
- “Hear, O Israel, Yahweh our God is one Yahweh.” [ASV, RSV n., NIV n., Lohfink, Weinfeld, Craigie]
- “Hear, O Israel, Yahweh is our God; Yahweh is one.” [NASB, NIV, RSV, Janzen, Merrill]
- “Hear, O Israel, Yahweh is our God; Yahweh is One/Unique.” [Gordon, Dahood]
- “Hear, O Israel, Yahweh is our God; Yahweh alone.” [Ibn Ezra, NRSV, NJPS, Tigay]⁵³

Arguments for the second viewpoint focus on the meaning of the numerical adjective אֶחָד (*’ehād*) and the fact that יהוה אֱלֹהֵינוּ (*yhwḥ ’ēlōhênû*) should be kept as a single title. According to Boice, the word אֶחָד (*’ehād*) “is never used in the Hebrew Bible of a stark singular entity.”⁵⁴ However, other defenders of the meaning of *unity* (allowing for a plurality of divine Persons in Yahweh) rather than *singularity* (limiting the meaning to a statement about Yahweh *alone* being the God of Israel) are more cautious. Consider, for example, David L. Cooper’s statement:

⁵¹ James Montgomery Boice, *Foundations of the Christian Faith: A Comprehensive & Readable Theology*, rev. ed. (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1986), 110.

⁵² Daniel I. Block, “How Many Is God? An Investigation into the Meaning of Deuteronomy 6:4–5,” *JETS* 47, no. 2 (June 2004): 193–212.

⁵³ See Bruce K. Waltke and M. O’Connor, *An Introduction to Biblical Hebrew Syntax* (Winona Lake, IN: Eisenbrauns, 1990), 135 (§8.4.2g) for a listing of these views and identification of some of their adherents. The list above is not taken verbatim from their list.

⁵⁴ Boice, *Foundations of the Christian Faith*, 111. Boice commences his argumentation for a plurality of divine Persons in the OT by referring to and briefly discussing Deut 6:4—even in the light of his own warning about debatable texts.

While the fundamental idea is that of a compound unity or the oneness of different elements or integral parts, it came to be used to express one in the absolute sense as the numeral one, which fact is seen by numerous examples throughout the Tenach. This fact being true, it becomes necessary to study the context wherever it occurs in order to ascertain which idea is conveyed in each particular case. To fail to observe this precaution and to read the idea of oneness in the absolute sense of the word into every example where it occurs is to ignore logic, to smash grammar, and to outlaw ordinary intelligence and common sense.⁵⁵

It is true that the uniqueness of Yahweh would have been clearer had לַבְּדוֹד (lēbaddô) been employed or יְהִי (yāhîd).⁵⁶ One often neglected aspect of this debate deserves attention, however, and that is the Markan context itself. In the immediately following context of Mark 12:29 Jesus forcefully cites Ps 110:1 to demand that His hearers consider what it means for David to call the Messiah his “Lord” (Mark 12:36). Rikk E. Watts observes a significant relationship between Jesus’ use of Ps 110:1 and Deut 6:4 as follows,

What is striking is that Jesus has just responded to the good scribe by declaring the Lord our God, the Lord is one (12:29). What then might it mean for Mark’s Jesus himself immediately thereafter to draw attention to David’s calling the Messiah “Lord”?⁵⁷

It seems that one possible answer to Watts’ question involves the intent of Jesus to demonstrate that the “one” in Deut 6:4 includes two Lords.

It is not the purpose of this study to resolve the issues involved in the debate over Deut 6:4. Rather, let this brief discussion be the catalyst for further detailed examination. As we have seen with the near context of Mark 12:29, depths to this subject matter exist that have yet to be explored adequately. No matter where one comes out on this text, it is difficult to be dogmatic, so the better part of wisdom suggests that we not yet claim Deut 6:4 for one side or the other. In fact, there are other competing views besides those of either *unity* or *singularity*—others argue for a meaning of *uniqueness* (in the sense of incomparability) or even *exclusivity* (meaning that there is only one God for Israel to worship). Some scholars combine two or more of these four concepts in their interpretation of this text.⁵⁸ No matter how one

⁵⁵ David L. Cooper, *The God of Israel*, rev. ed., Messianic Series (Los Angeles: Biblical Research Society, 1945).

⁵⁶ Both the Septuagint (LXX) of Deut 6:4 and the NT (Mark 12:29) read, ἄκουε, Ἰσραηλ, κύριος ὁ θεὸς ἡμῶν κύριος εἷς ἐστίν. Unfortunately, the Greek translation itself does not help to advance the argument in either direction.

⁵⁷ Rikk E. Watts, “Mark,” in *Commentary on the New Testament Use of the Old Testament*, ed. by G. K. Beale and D. A. Carson, 111–249 (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2007), 222.

⁵⁸ E.g., Chester, *Delighting in the Trinity*, 26–28, 45; Michael A. Grisanti, “Deuteronomy,” in *EBC*, rev. ed., ed. by Tremper Longman III and David E. Garland, 2:457–814 (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2012), 555–56. Grisanti’s reflection upon Mark 12:29 makes no mention of its proximity to Jesus’ citation of Ps 110:1 or its potential implications regarding a plurality of Persons in the Godhead.

might handle the problem of Deut 6:4, however, the OT's witness to the plurality of the Persons of the Godhead remains firmly positive with exceptional detail.

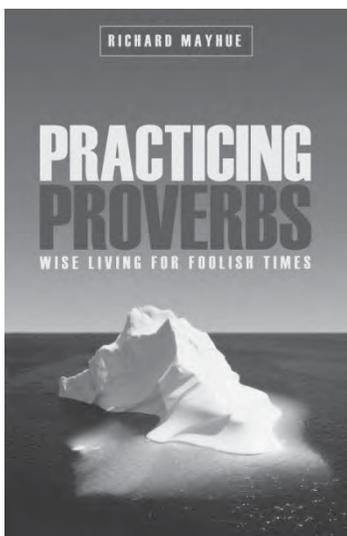
Conclusion

The First Person (God the Father) gives revelation to His Messenger (the Second Person or Son of God), who is the main Revelator in the OT. NT writers cite OT texts for the deity of Jesus Christ, who took the role of the Messenger of Yahweh before His incarnation. He is the pre-incarnate Word of God, the Spokesperson for the Godhead. According to both OT and NT, the Holy Spirit superintends the writing (inspiration) of inspired (God-given) Scripture.

The inspired Scriptures identify a plurality of divine Persons associated with Yahweh. The Scriptures depict the Persons of the Godhead acting with regard to one another, speaking about one another, speaking to one another, and jointly acting in a variety of historical and prophetic settings. Some of the clearest examples occur in the NT, but that does not mean that the OT is silent about a multiplicity of divine Persons. OT texts speak of multiple Persons of the Godhead, but never more than three. Just as in the NT, the term "Trinity" is never used in the OT. But, just as in the reading of the NT the identification of three Persons of the Godhead occurs, so also the OT reveals three divine Persons. The two testaments are in complete agreement.

At this point we shall conclude this study with a reminder of this doctrine's *practicality* to our everyday Christian walk.⁵⁹ The three Persons of the triune Godhead brought all things into existence in creation and are still involved in its preservation and the creation of the New Heavens and the New Earth. All three Persons carry vital roles in the work of salvation both past, present, and future. Even our prayer life reflects the three Persons of the Godhead and their role in the will of God revealed and applied to the believers' prayers. All three divine Persons carry out work with regard to the ongoing witness and service of the church—especially seen in their three-part involvement in the distribution and exercise of spiritual gifts. No study could be more practical than the study of the Trinity. Believers should study the Trinity in the Bible (both OT and NT) as an obligation of our obedience to the inspired Scriptures and of our worship of the triune God of the Scriptures.

⁵⁹ I am indebted to Chester, *Delighting in the Trinity*, 10–15 for many of the elements which I list here.



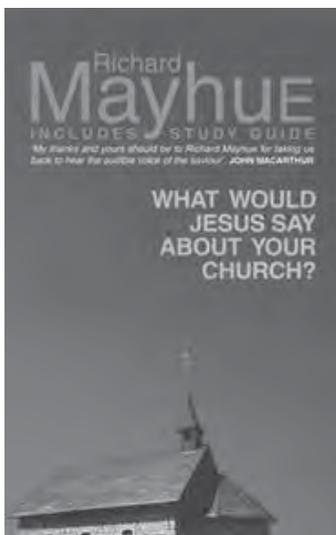
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THE TRINITY AND ESCHATOLOGY

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Just as the members of the Trinity were actively involved in the creation, so too they are actively engaged in matters pertaining to the end, or what is often referred to as eschatology. The purpose of this article is to highlight how the various members of the Trinity are active in events still to come.

Introduction

The relationship of the Trinity to eschatology has often been overlooked with few works directly addressing this topic.¹ In this work we will survey how the three Persons of the Trinity are involved with events still to come. In doing this we acknowledge that several areas of eschatology have come to fruition already because of Jesus' first coming. For example, Jesus the Son has appeared as the ultimate Son of David (see Matt 1:1). Jesus' atoning death as the Suffering Servant of the Lord has occurred. As Acts 3:18 tells us: "But the things which God announced beforehand by the mouth of all the prophets, that His Christ would suffer, He has thus fulfilled." Also, Jesus has been exalted as Messiah and is currently seated at the right hand of the Father waiting to rule over His enemies (see Ps 110:1 and Heb 10:12–13). His priestly ministry for His people is occurring. The New Covenant ministry of the Holy Spirit is already taking place as the Holy Spirit indwells believers today. Thus, there are several areas where Old Testament eschatology has occurred as a result of Jesus' first coming. Yet there are still major areas of eschatology that have not occurred yet. Our focus here will be on those eschatological events still to come and how the members of the Trinity relate to these events.

¹ By "eschatology" we mean the study of the last or end things with the focus being on events still to come from our current standpoint in history.

Three Ways to Look at the Trinity's Role in Eschatology

There are various ways to look at the Trinity's role in eschatology. We will highlight three of them. *First, we can examine Bible passages where the members of the Trinity are explicitly mentioned together in matters related to eschatology.* For example, we can look at passages where we see the following together:

Father-Son-Holy Spirit
Father-Son
Father-Holy Spirit
Son-Holy Spirit

Second, one can categorize areas where the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit have primary roles in regard to a specific eschatological function. By "primary" we mean areas where a member of the Trinity is stated to have a specific role in regard to an eschatological event or purpose. For example, the Father is singled out as the One who initiates and determines the timing of the fulfillment of eschatological events such as the Day of the Lord and the return of Jesus. The Son is singled out as having a primary role in regard to reigning on the earth and judging mankind. The Holy Spirit is the One who indwells believers so they can serve God as they should. This is not to say that the other members of the Trinity have no part whatsoever in these roles, but the areas mentioned appear to be specifically linked with one member in particular.

Third, one can examine how the Trinity relates to eschatology by era or event. For example how do the members of the Trinity relate specifically to the coming Tribulation Period? Or, what are their roles in the millennium and the eternal state?

Eschatological Passages Where Members of the Trinity are Explicitly Present Together

The Father, Son, and Holy Spirit

First, we will examine passages where the members of the Trinity are explicitly mentioned together. There is a passage in Revelation where we see the three members together in an eschatological context.

Revelation 4–5 (Heavenly Throne Scene)

The three persons of the Trinity are present together in the heavenly throne room scene of Revelation 4–5. This section presents the backdrop for the releasing of God's wrath upon the earth and the return of Jesus to earth to establish His kingdom. How fitting it is that the scene that leads to the defeat of the forces of evil and the coming of God's righteous kingdom involves all three members of the Trinity.

As Revelation 4 begins, John is invited to a heavenly scene where he is told "Come up here" and is shown things that will take place (Rev 4:1). The text mentions that John was "in the Spirit." Some take this as a reference to the Holy Spirit and if

this is the case, then this is an explicit reference to the presence of the Holy Spirit. On the other hand, some hold that “in the Spirit” refers to the fact that John is in a spiritual ecstatic state or trance.²

Immediately after this statement John states that he saw “a throne . . . standing in heaven, and One sitting on the throne” (4:2b). This “One” who is sitting on the throne must be the Father since He is the One who receives worship from those in heaven (Rev 4:9–11), and He is distinguished from the Son who will soon enter this throne room scene. Yet before the Son is introduced the Holy Spirit is present in 4:5: “And there were seven lamps of fire burning before the throne, which are the seven Spirits of God.” The concept of the “seven spirits” is also found in Rev 1:4 and most likely refers to the Holy Spirit.³ Thus, the Holy Spirit is present with this scene.

With Revelation 5 the Father is shown holding a book in His right hand. John weeps greatly because no one appears worthy to take the scroll from the hand of the Father. Yet this sorrow is ended by the presence of the Son who is described as “the Lion that is from the tribe of Judah” and “the root of David” (Rev 5:4–5). He is the One worthy to take the book from the hand of the One sitting on the throne (Rev 5:9). This book is linked with the title deed to the earth and the unleashing of divine wrath that culminates in the Son’s reign over the earth. The Son (Lamb) unleashes the seal judgments in Revelation 6. At the time of the sixth seal the inhabitants of the earth realize that these judgments of wrath are the result of both “Him who sits on the throne” and the “Lamb” (Rev 6:16–17).⁴ Thus, in the important throne room scene of Revelation 4–5, the scene that precedes the wrath of God, all three members of the Trinity are explicitly present.

The Father and the Son

There are a cluster of eschatological passages that show the Father and the Son together. Here we will focus on four—Psalm 2; Psalm 110; Dan 7:9–14; and 1 Cor 15:24–28. All three of these show that it is the Father’s will to establish the Son as the king and ruler of this world.

² This is the view of Thomas who states that “in the spirit” “is descriptive of the prophetic trance into which the prophet’s spirit entered.” Robert L. Thomas, *Revelation 1–7: An Exegetical Commentary* (Chicago: Moody Press, 1992), 338. Yet even this is connected with the Holy Spirit, when Thomas says that “This miraculous ecstatic state [was] wrought by the Spirit of God” (Ibid.).

³ The references to “seven spirits” found in Rev 1:4 and 4:5 probably goes back to Zech 4:1–10. Thomas points out “Zechariah 4:2, 10 speaks of the seven lamps (cf. Rev. 4:5) that are ‘the eyes of the Lord, which range throughout the whole earth.’” Thomas, 68.

⁴ Yarbrough observes, “Father and Son are shown in Revelation to mean (in addition to much else) ‘royal ruler’ or ‘king.’” Robert W. Yarbrough, “The Kingdom of God in the New Testament: Matthew and Revelation,” in *The Kingdom of God*, eds. Christopher W. Morgan and Robert A. Peterson (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2012), 96.

Psalm 2

Psalm 2 shows the sinful nations in their rebellion against the Father and His Messiah (the Son). We know that God's King is Jesus the Son since later portions of Scripture apply Psalm 2 to the Messiah and His reign (Rev 2:26–27). Also, Ps 2:12 speaks of the necessity of doing “homage to the Son,” an act of worship that is only true of a divine person and not a mere man. Thus the picture of Psalm 2 includes both God the Father and God the Son.

The nations of the earth do not want God to rule over them (2:1–3). But God the Father laughs and scoffs at these rebellious nations from heaven and lets them know that He will establish His “King” and His reign on the earth (4–5). The realm of their rebellion will be invaded with the reign of the righteous Messiah. It is the Father's desire to give the Son the nations as an inheritance and the Son will rule over them with authority (7–9). Thus, the nations should stop their foolishness and submit to the Son because His wrath is coming (10–12).

Psalm 2 reveals two important things. First, God the Father intends to establish His Son as King over all the earth and the nations. And second, the Son will come with wrath and reign over the nations with authority. We can know that the fulfillment of Psalm 2 is future since Jesus uses this passage as motivation for the church for faithful service now in Rev 2:26–27:

He who overcomes, and he who keeps My deeds until the end, TO HIM I WILL GIVE AUTHORITY OVER THE NATIONS; AND HE SHALL RULE THEM WITH A ROD OF IRON, AS THE VESSELS OF THE POTTER ARE BROKEN TO PIECES, as I also have received *authority* from My Father.

Psalm 110

Psalm 110 has much in common with Psalm 2, as it also discusses the Father's plan to establish the Son as King over the earth. It starts with David being privy to a conversation between the Father (*Yahweh*) and the Son (*Adonai*) who is also David's Lord (“The LORD says to my Lord”). The message from the Father to the Son is that the Son, who is David's Lord, the Messiah, is to have a session in heaven at the right of the Father.⁵ But this session is only for a limited period of time (“until”). When His session at the right hand of the Father is over, God the Father will give the Messiah (the Son) victory over His enemies from Zion in Jerusalem:

The LORD will stretch forth Your strong scepter from Zion, *saying*, “Rule in the midst of Your enemies” (Ps 110:2).

The Son will shatter kings in the day of His wrath and will judge the nations (5–6). So again, as was the case in Psalm 2, it is the Father's plan for the Son to reign over

⁵ This seems to indicate that the Messiah goes from earth to heaven for a time before returning to Jerusalem to reign (see Ps 110:2).

the nations of the earth. This will occur with Jesus' second coming to earth as described in Matthew 24–25 and Revelation 19–20.

Daniel 7:9–14

An important eschatological scene involving the Father and the Son is also found in Dan 7:9–14. Verses 9–10 describe a glorious scene of God the Father who is called “the Ancient of Days.” We are told His vesture “*was* like white snow, and the hair of His head like pure wool” (9). His throne is ablaze with flames and thousands were worshiping Him. Then verses 13–14 describe the Son, who is referred to as a “Son of Man,” coming before the Father:

“I kept looking in the night visions,
 And behold, with the clouds of heaven
 One like a Son of Man was coming,
 And He came up to the Ancient of Days
 And was presented before Him.
 “And to Him was given dominion,
 Glory and a kingdom,
 That all the peoples, nations and *men of every* language
 Might serve Him.
 His dominion is an everlasting dominion
 Which will not pass away;
 And His kingdom is one
 Which will not be destroyed.

Here we see the Son before the Father, for the purpose of a kingdom being given to the Son. This passage has many parallels with the throne room scene of Revelation 4–5 and again emphasizes the plan of the Father to have the Son rule the earth with “an everlasting dominion.”

1 Corinthians 15:24–28

Another passage that discusses the relationship of the Father and the Son to eschatology is 1 Cor 15:24–28. Here Paul discusses the Father and the Son in relation to the coming kingdom:

then *comes* the end, when He hands over the kingdom to the God and Father, when He has abolished all rule and all authority and power. For He must reign until He has put all His enemies under His feet. The last enemy that will be abolished is death. For HE HAS PUT ALL THINGS IN SUBJECTION UNDER HIS FEET. But when He says, “All things are put in subjection,” it is evident that He is excepted who put all things in subjection to Him.²⁸ When all things are subjected to Him, then the Son Himself also will be subjected to the One who subjected all things to Him, so that God may be all in all.

The immediate context of this passage is Paul's discussion of the order of God's resurrection program. After the third stage of the resurrection program at the time of "the end," Jesus will hand the kingdom over to God the Father (24). This shows that Jesus' messianic reign has a termination or transition point to it. When it is over He "hands over the kingdom" to the Father. But this will not occur until Jesus reigns over His enemies and abolishes death. Thus, Jesus' kingdom ends or transitions with a crushing, dominating reign of the Son. When "all things are subjected" to the Father, "then the Son Himself also will be subjected to" the Father ("the One who subjected all things to Him").

The picture here is beautiful and presents Jesus as God's trusted and chosen instrument to restore the fallen creation to the will of God. Verse 27a links the Son's reign with the creation mandate given to man—"For HE HAS PUT ALL THINGS IN SUBJECTION UNDER HIS FEET." Jesus as the ultimate Man fulfills the creation mandate. Man was created to rule and subdue the earth (see Gen 1:26–28), yet this mandate was scorned when Adam decided to do things his way and disobey God. Neither Adam nor any mere human being could fulfill this mandate, but the Father chose Jesus, the ultimate Man, to do this. It is as if the Father told the Son, "Bring this sinful world back into conformity with My perfect will," and the Son does it. And not only does the Son succeed splendidly, He presents this kingdom to the Father so that the Father may have the glory. The purpose of this reigning and restoring of the Son is that the Father "may be all in all." Every square inch of God's creation is brought into perfect submission to the Father. At this point the will of the Father will be done on earth perfectly as it is in Heaven (see Matt 6:10). And when the Son finishes His task of defeating all enemies and restoring the creation, He subjects himself to God the Father.

In sum, these four passages teach us that the purpose of the Father in eschatology is to make sure the rebellious creation is brought back into perfect conformity with His will. And the purpose of the Son is to make sure the Father's desire happens. He is sent as the Father's instrument with full authority and power to rule over and restore all of the created order. As we survey Psalm 2; Psalm 110; Dan 7:9–14; and 1 Cor 15:24–28 we see that it is God the Father's intent to establish a kingdom reign of the Son (Jesus) on the earth to bring this fallen planet back into conformity with the will of the Father.

The Father and the Holy Spirit

In addition to the Father-Son connection with eschatology, there are also passages that relate to the Father-Holy Spirit relationship. This often takes the form of the New Covenant, of which the Holy Spirit's role is central. God the Father will grant the New Covenant ministry of the Holy Spirit to His people.⁶ This will involve the indwelling ministry of the Holy Spirit. For example, Ezek 36:22–27 states:

⁶ We acknowledge that there is a present aspect of the Holy Spirit's New Covenant ministry with believers today (see Heb 8:8–13), yet there is a coming role for the Holy Spirit as He works in saving the nation of Israel (see Zech 12:10 and Rom 11:26–27).

“Therefore say to the house of Israel, ‘Thus says the Lord GOD, ‘It is not for your sake, O house of Israel, that I am about to act, but for My holy name, which you have profaned among the nations where you went. . . . For I will take you from the nations, gather you from all the lands and bring you into your own land. Then I will sprinkle clean water on you, and you will be clean; I will cleanse you from all your filthiness and from all your idols. Moreover, I will give you a new heart and put a new spirit within you; and I will remove the heart of stone from your flesh and give you a heart of flesh. *I will put My Spirit within you* and cause you to walk in My statutes, and you will be careful to observe My ordinances.’”⁷

There are many important truths found in this passage, but for our purposes we are noting that this section includes the promise of a coming day in which God the Father will put His Spirit within His people—“I will put My Spirit within you . . .” This is the promise of the New Covenant that would someday be given to and mediated through Israel. Isaiah 59:20–21a also promises the sending of the Spirit from the Father: “‘A Redeemer will come to Zion, And to those who turn from transgression in Jacob,’ declares the LORD. ‘As for Me, this is My covenant with them,’ says the LORD: ‘My Spirit which is upon you . . .’” Other passages that discuss the role of God the Father and the Holy Spirit in regard to the New Covenant include Zech 12:10 and Joel 2:28–32.

At the time these passage were written, the coming of the New Covenant ministry of the Holy Spirit was still future. The death of Jesus established the New Covenant with His blood (see Luke 22:20) and thus the promises of a new heart and the indwelling Spirit are being fulfilled in this present age. Yet the physical and national promises of the New Covenant await the second coming of Jesus. Zechariah 12:10 states that Israel will join the New Covenant in connection with the last days of the Tribulation and the return of Jesus. Paul connects the New Covenant passage of Isa 59:20–21 with the promise that “all Israel will be saved” (see Rom 11:26–27).

In sum, the relationship between the Father and the Holy Spirit in regard to eschatology seems to be this: The Father promised that He would give the Holy Spirit to His people via the New Covenant. The Holy Spirit comes and indwells the people of God. That ministry of the Holy Spirit is occurring for believers today, and will involve Israel at the time of the nation’s salvation and restoration. Also, as will be shown later, the presence of the Holy Spirit in the lives of believers is also a guarantee of future reward and resurrection.

The Son and the Holy Spirit

In addition to the passages that discuss the Father and the Holy Spirit, there are also sections of Scripture that mention the roles of Jesus the Messiah and the Holy Spirit together in regard to eschatology. Jesus the Messiah is the agent who baptizes His people with the Holy Spirit. With Matt 3:11–12, John the Baptist declares:

⁷ Emphases are mine.

“As for me, I baptize you with water for repentance, but He who is coming after me is mightier than I, and I am not fit to remove His sandals; He will baptize you with the Holy Spirit and fire. His winnowing fork is in His hand, and He will thoroughly clear His threshing floor; and He will gather His wheat into the barn, but He will burn up the chaff with unquenchable fire.”

When John speaks of “He who is coming after me,” he is referring to Jesus. The strategic statement here is that Jesus the Messiah “will baptize you with the Holy Spirit and fire.” As the Messiah comes, His role includes bringing both New Covenant blessings for His people (baptism with the Holy Spirit) and Day of the Lord wrath (baptism with fire) for His enemies. As salvation history plays out, a time gap will exist between the outworking of these two aspects of His ministry. His baptizing ministry with the Holy Spirit will begin with the events of Acts 2, but the Day of the Lord judgment awaits the future (see 2 Thessalonians 2 and 2 Peter 3).

The Son’s baptizing ministry intersects with the Holy Spirit in that the Son baptizes with the Holy Spirit. John 1:32–34 also speaks of this relationship:

John testified saying, “I have seen the Spirit descending as a dove out of heaven, and He remained upon Him. I did not recognize Him, but He who sent me to baptize in water said to me, ‘He upon whom you see the Spirit descending and remaining upon Him, this is the One who baptizes in the Holy Spirit.’ I myself have seen, and have testified that this is the Son of God.”

With the Matthew 3 account, the Father also appears, as Matt 3:16:17 indicates:

After being baptized, Jesus came up immediately from the water; and behold, the heavens were opened, and he saw the Spirit of God descending as a dove *and* lighting on Him, and behold, a voice out of the heavens said, “This is My beloved Son, in whom I am well-pleased.”

While our emphasis here has been on the relationship between the Son and the Holy Spirit, the affirming presence of the Father in this passage again shows all three members of the Trinity present as Jesus begins His official public ministry.

Primary Roles for Members of the Trinity in Regard to Eschatology

The last section emphasized passages where the members of the Trinity are explicitly mentioned together in eschatological texts. At this point, we now shift to examining the roles of the Trinity in eschatology from a different angle. Here we will highlight primary roles of each member of the Trinity in regard to events to come.

The Father's Role in Eschatology

Timing of Certain Eschatological Events

God the Father has a primary role in regard to the *timing* of coming eschatological events. On two occasions Jesus the Son stated that only God the Father knows the timing of events to come. In His Olivet Discourse Jesus gave detailed answers concerning the temple, His coming, and the end of the age. Then in Matt 24:36 He declared:

“But of that day and hour no one knows, not even the angels of heaven, nor the Son, but the Father alone.”

Here Jesus is referring to the events of the Day of the Lord that culminate in His personal return to earth. Thus, this is an explicit statement that the Son does not know the day or the hour concerning the Day of the Lord's arrival, but the Father alone does. This is significant, since Jesus indicates that the timing of future events belongs only to the Father.

Next, on the day of Jesus' ascension into heaven the apostles asked Jesus a question concerning the timing of the restoration of the kingdom to Israel: “So when they had come together, they were asking Him, saying, ‘Lord, is it at this time You are restoring the kingdom to Israel?’”(Acts 1:6). Again, Jesus answered that only the Father knows the timing of the kingdom's establishment:

He said to them, “It is not for you to know times or epochs which the Father has fixed by His own authority” (Acts 1:7).

Jesus indicates that knowledge of the timing of the kingdom belongs only to the Father. Significantly, Jesus did indicate that He knew the timing of the New Covenant ministry of the Holy Spirit. Acts 1:4–5 states: “Gathering them together, He commanded them not to leave Jerusalem, but to wait for what the Father had promised, ‘Which,’ *He said*, ‘you heard of from Me; for John baptized with water, but you will be baptized with the Holy Spirit not many days from now.’” So when it came to the coming of the Holy Spirit, Jesus did know the timing—in a few days. But when it came to the timing of the restoration of the kingdom to national Israel, this is known only to God the Father.

Establishment of the Messiah's Reign on the Earth

As discussed earlier, God the Father will not permanently tolerate a rebellious planet. He must restore His “very good” creation that has been marred with sin. Several passages indicate that He will install His King, His Son and Messiah, upon the earth. This will happen in accord to the truths of the passages we surveyed previously—Psalm 2; Psalm 110; Dan 7:9–14 and 1 Cor 15:24–28. The Father's goal is for His Son and King to rule over the realm in which the realm of the rebellion has

taken place. And when the Son has accomplished His righteous reign, this kingdom will be handed over to God the Father and the Eternal State will commence (see 1 Cor 15:28).

The Son's Role in Eschatology

The Son is identified as having several major roles in regard to eschatology.

Restoring the Creation to the Father

The Son's primary role in eschatology is to be One who restores the fallen creation to the Father (see Psalm 2; Psalm 110; Dan 7:9–14; and 1 Cor 15:24–28). This occurs in two main phases. First, the Son is the One who unleashes the divine wrath of God which starts with His direct opening of the seal judgments of Revelation 6. Revelation 4–5 revealed Jesus as the One worthy to take the book from the hand of the Father. And with Revelation 6, He is the one who opens it unleashing its contents upon the earth. At the time of the sixth seal with its cosmic signs and earthquake, the people on the earth realize that they are facing the wrath of the Lamb and the One who sits on the throne (see Rev 6:12–16). The second main aspect of the restoration involves the Son's rule as Davidic King over the earth. The angel Gabriel told Mary concerning her son: "the Lord God will give Him the throne of His father David; and He will reign over the house of Jacob forever, and His kingdom will have no end" (Luke 1:32–33).

Resurrection Program

The Son also has a significant role in the resurrection program. Since Jesus rose from the dead He is "the first fruits of those who are asleep" (1 Cor 15:20). Thus, His resurrection body is a prototype of the resurrection bodies believers will have some day when He returns again. According to Phil 3:20–21 Jesus will transform our bodies into conformity with His resurrected body:

For our citizenship is in heaven, from which also we eagerly wait for a Savior, the Lord Jesus Christ; who will transform the body of our humble state into conformity with the body of His glory, by the exertion of the power that He has even to subject all things to Himself.

Judgment

Another major eschatological role for the Son involves judgment. Jesus said the Father has given the Son authority to execute judgment:

For just as the Father has life in Himself, even so He gave to the Son also to have life in Himself; and He gave Him authority to execute judgment, because He is *the* Son of Man. Do not marvel at this; for an hour is coming, in which all who are in the tombs will hear His voice, and will come forth; those who did

the good *deeds* to a resurrection of life, those who committed the evil *deeds* to a resurrection of judgment (John 5:26–29).

As a result, all will have to stand before the Son for judgment. For those alive at the time of the Son's second coming this includes the judgment of the nations where He separates the sheep (believers) from the goats (unbelievers). The sheep will inherit the kingdom while the goats will enter eternal fire. For the Christian this means standing before the "judgment (*bema*) seat of Christ so that each one may be recompensed for his deeds in the body, according to what he has done, whether good or bad" (2 Cor 5:10). At the end of the millennial kingdom all of the unsaved dead will appear before the Great White Throne for sentencing to the lake of fire (Rev 20:11–15).

The Holy Spirit's Role in Eschatology

New Covenant Ministry

The Holy Spirit's main role in eschatology concerns His indwelling presence in believers who are participants in the New Covenant. That was the Father's promise in Ezek 36:27: "I will put My Spirit within you and cause you to walk in My statutes, and you will be careful to observe My ordinances." In the Old Covenant era, the Holy Spirit abided with believers but He did not indwell them. But Jesus promised His disciples that the Spirit's role would move to indwelling:

I will ask the Father, and He will give you another Helper, that He may be with you forever; *that is* the Spirit of truth, whom the world cannot receive, because it does not see Him or know Him, *but* you know Him because He abides with you and will be in you (John 14:16–17).

What is especially significant about the Holy Spirit's indwelling of New Covenant believers is the empowerment it brings. The previous Mosaic Covenant was good and holy, but it did not empower the saints to obey God as they should (see Rom 7:14–25). But the Holy Spirit frees the believer to obey God properly (see Rom 8:2–4).⁸

Resurrection

The Holy Spirit is also involved in raising people from the dead. Romans 8:11 indicates that the Spirit raised Jesus from the dead and will raise believers from the dead as well:

⁸ Gaffin states, "It is Paul, however, that the eschatological aspect of the Spirit's work is most pronounced and unmistakable," Richard B. Gaffin, Jr., "The Holy Spirit and Eschatology," *Kerux: The Journal of Northwest Theological Seminary* 4, no. 3 (Dec 1989): 15.

But if the Spirit of Him who raised Jesus 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 who dwells in you.⁹

So not only does the Holy Spirit indwell believers at the time of salvation, He is involved with the resurrection program. God gives life to our mortal bodies “through His Spirit.”

Pledge of Coming Inheritance and Glorification

While the indwelling ministry of the Holy Spirit is one aspect of eschatology that is being fulfilled now, the current sealing ministry of the Holy Spirit guarantees and looks forward to our eschatological inheritance to come. As Eph 1:13–14 declares:

In Him, you also, after listening to the message of truth, the gospel of your salvation—having also believed, you were sealed in Him with the Holy Spirit of promise, who is given as a pledge of our inheritance, with a view to the redemption of *God's own* possession, to the praise of His glory.

The believer's “inheritance” is a future reward. And for Christians, the Holy Spirit is given to us as “a pledge of our inheritance.” Thus, one role of the Holy Spirit is to act as a guarantee for future reward.

In a similar way, in 2 Cor 5:1–5 Paul discusses our coming glorified body in which “what is mortal will be swallowed up by life” (5:4). But he then appeals to the work of the Holy Spirit who guarantees our coming glorification: “Now He who prepared us for this very purpose is God, who gave to us the Spirit as a pledge” (5:5). Again, the presence of the Holy Spirit guarantees what God will do for believers in the future. Romans 8:23 also indicates that the present possession of the Holy Spirit is linked with the coming glorification of the body:

And not only this, but also we ourselves, having the first fruits of the Spirit, even we ourselves groan within ourselves, waiting eagerly for *our* adoption as sons, the redemption of our body.

The Trinity's Role in Eschatology by Era and Event

The purpose of this section is to highlight the roles of the Trinity members by era and events.

⁹ “For the Apostle Paul, the Holy Spirit is in fact God's agent in the resurrection of the dead,” 259. Scott Brodeur, *The Holy Spirit's Agency in the Resurrection of the Dead: An Exegetico-Theological Study of 1 Corinthians 15, 44b–49 and Romans 8, 9–13* (Rome, Italy: Gregorian University Press, 1994), 259.

The Rapture

In 1 Thessalonians Paul devotes a significant section to the topic of the Day of the Lord (see 1 Thess 5:1–11). The Day of the Lord is a time of wrath that will come unexpectedly, like a thief in the night, upon the world (see 1 Thess 5:2). Yet one of the Son's roles is that of delivering His church from this coming wrath of the Day of the Lord:

and to wait for His Son from heaven, whom He raised from the dead, *that is* Jesus, who rescues us from the wrath to come (1 Thess 1:10).

For God has not destined us for wrath, but for obtaining salvation through our Lord Jesus Christ (1 Thess 5:9).

Paul's message in 1 Thessalonians is consistent with what the apostle John told the church at Philadelphia:

Because you have kept the word of My perseverance, I also will keep you from the hour of testing, that *hour* which is about to come upon the whole world, to test those who dwell on the earth (Rev 3:10).

In His sovereign plan and purposes, God has deemed that His church will not experience the wrath of the coming Day of the Lord. The church will be rescued and kept from this time period. How will this occur? It will occur as the Son snatches His church to Heaven before the Day of the Lord occurs:

For this we say to you by the word of the Lord, that we who are alive and remain until the coming of the Lord, will not precede those who have fallen asleep. For the Lord Himself will descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of *the* archangel and with the trumpet of God, and the dead in Christ will rise first. Then we who are alive and remain will be caught up together with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air, and so we shall always be with the Lord (1 Thess 4:15–17).

Thus, one important role of the Son in regard to future events is to rescue His church from the coming Day of the Lord wrath that will come upon the whole world.

Tribulation Period and Second Coming

The Bible tells of a coming period of trial and tribulation both for Israel and the world. Jeremiah spoke of a coming "time of Jacob's distress" that would precede Israel's restoration (see Jer 30:2, 7). Paul told the Thessalonians of events that would take place when the Day of the Lord arrived (see 2 Thess 2:1–12). The apostle John had already experienced and heard of severe tribulations for the church when he

wrote Revelation in the 90s A.D., but in Rev 3:10 Jesus said there would be “an hour of testing” that would come upon the whole world.

The coming Tribulation Period involves all the members of the Trinity. Above we discussed that Jesus the Son will rescue His church from the coming Day of the Lord. With Revelation 6 we see that both the Father and the Son are involved with the divine wrath poured out during this period. The Son is the One who opens the first seal which is the opening salvo in the outpouring of God’s wrath: “Then I saw when the Lamb broke one of the seven seals” (Rev 6:1). At the time of the sixth seal the people on the earth realize that their experiences are the wrath of both the Father and the Son. They say, “Fall on us and hide us from the presence of Him who sits on the throne, and from the wrath of the Lamb; for the great day of their wrath has come, and who is able to stand?” (Rev 6:16–17). Thus, the Father and the Son are actively involved in the unleashing of wrath that judges the enemies of God and ushers in the kingdom of the Son.

In addition to His pouring out divine judgment on the earth, the Son will also destroy the evil powers that oppose God. For example, 2 Thess 2:8–10 reveals that the Son will destroy the man of lawlessness who has been revealed during this time period:

Then that lawless one will be revealed whom the Lord will slay with the breath of His mouth and bring to an end by the appearance of His coming; *that is*, the one whose coming is in accord with the activity of Satan, with all power and signs and false wonders, and with all the deception of wickedness for those who perish, because they did not receive the love of the truth so as to be saved.

Revelation 19–20 gives more detail concerning Jesus’ role in defeating the enemies of God at the end of the Tribulation Period. Revelation 19:19–21 tells of His defeat of the kings and armies of the earth who opposed God, and the beast and false prophet:

And I saw the beast and the kings of the earth and their armies assembled to make war against Him who sat on the horse and against His army. And the beast was seized, and with him the false prophet who performed the signs in his presence, by which he deceived those who had received the mark of the beast and those who worshiped his image; these two were thrown alive into the lake of fire which burns with brimstone. And the rest were killed with the sword which came from the mouth of Him who sat on the horse, and all the birds were filled with their flesh.

Then the ring leader of the false Trinity—Satan, is captured and thrown in the prison of the abyss:

Then I saw an angel coming down from heaven, holding the key of the abyss and a great chain in his hand. And he laid hold of the dragon, the serpent of old, who is the devil and Satan, and bound him for a thousand years; and he threw him into the abyss, and shut *it* and sealed *it* over him, so that he would not

deceive the nations any longer, until the thousand years were completed; after these things he must be released for a short time.

As for the Holy Spirit, 2 Thessalonians may indicate that the restraining ministry of the Holy Spirit is removed for the coming Tribulation Period:

Do you not remember that while I was still with you, I was telling you these things? And you know what restrains him now, so that in his time he will be revealed. For the mystery of lawlessness is already at work; only he who now restrains *will do so* until he is taken out of the way (2 Thess 2:6–7).

While this passage does not explicitly mention the Holy Spirit, there is a good chance He is the restrainer that Paul is referring to. During this current era we live in, the Holy Spirit restrains the depravity of man, yet with the coming Tribulation Period and the revealing of the man of lawlessness, the Holy Spirit's restraining ministry may be removed for a while. This again shows God's sovereignty over events to come. The man of lawlessness is coming but it is based on God's timetable. When the Holy Spirit removes His restraining influence then the era of the man of lawlessness can begin.

At the time of the second coming of Jesus, the Holy Spirit also will be involved with the salvation and restoration of the nation Israel. This takes place in the context of the Lord's rescue of Jerusalem while under siege from the nations. This also occurs in the context of Israel's repentance and belief in the Messiah:

"I will pour out on the house of David and on the inhabitants of Jerusalem, the Spirit of grace and of supplication, so that they will look on Me whom they have pierced; and they will mourn for Him, as one mourns for an only son, and they will weep bitterly over Him like the bitter weeping over a firstborn. In that day there will be great mourning in Jerusalem, like the mourning of Hadadrimmon in the plain of Megiddo" (Zech 12:10–11).

The Millennial Kingdom

The Scripture explicitly teaches a coming kingdom of one thousand years in duration that comes after the second coming of Jesus and before the Eternal State (see Rev 19:11–21:8). The emphasis on this period is on the reign of Jesus the Messiah. At the time of Jesus' second coming to earth, Rev 19:15 tells us:

From His mouth comes a sharp sword, so that with it He may strike down the nations, and *He will rule them with a rod of iron*.¹⁰

According to this verse, which is in the context of Jesus' second coming, Jesus is coming to "rule" the nations. The future tense —"He will rule them" indicates that

¹⁰ Emphases are mine.

the rule occurs as a result of the second coming. The Son must reign until all His enemies have been placed under His feet. In Matt 25:31 Jesus said that assumption of His throne would occur when He came in glory and all the angels with Him, and it is at this time that He begins His Davidic reign over Israel and the nations from Jerusalem (see Luke 1:32–33). The world that rejected Him at His first coming must now be subject to Him at His second coming. The Son will be settling disputes among nations (Isa 2:4). He will also grant kingdom authority to those who belong to Him (Rev 2:26–27).

The Holy Spirit is active as well during the millennium. He will indwell the people of Israel and empower Israel to obey God as the basis for enjoying spiritual and physical blessings in the land of promise (Ezek 36:25–30). The Holy Spirit also appears to be a dynamic and active presence for the kingdom. In Matt 12:28 Jesus stated, “But if I cast out demons by the Spirit of God, then the kingdom of God has come upon you.”¹¹ This shows a strong link between the work of the Messiah and the work of the Holy Spirit. In this case, as Jesus does an act of the kingdom—removing evil spiritual powers, this is attributed to the kingdom work of the Holy Spirit. Thus, it appears valid to believe that when the kingdom of God is established on earth at the time of Jesus’ second coming, the kingdom will be characterized by the active dynamic of the Holy Spirit. With Heb 6:4–5, the writer indicates that those who have been made “partakers of the Holy Spirit” have “tasted” “the powers of the age to come.” A miraculous demonstration of the Holy Spirit, even in this age, is a taste of what the Holy Spirit will do in the age to come after Jesus returns. So the Holy Spirit will be an active and dynamic element for kingdom conditions.

Eternal State

The Eternal State that follows the millennial kingdom is most discussed in Rev 21:1–22:5. At this point the Son has completed His successful reign over the earth, including His enemies. The Father and the Son are mentioned to be residing in the New Jerusalem, which is the capital city of the New Earth:

I saw no temple in it, for the Lord God the Almighty [Father] and the Lamb [Son] are its temple (Rev 21:22).

Then he showed me a river of the water of life, clear as crystal, coming from the throne of God and of the Lamb (Rev 22:1).

There will no longer be any curse; and the throne of God and of the Lamb will be in it (Rev 22:3a).

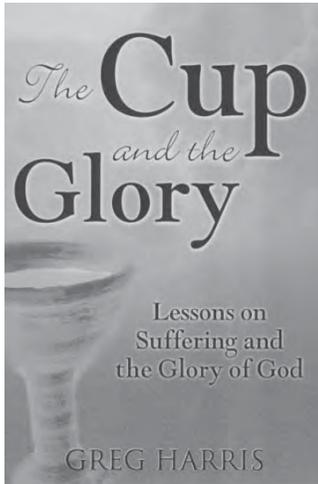
No explicit mention is made of the Holy Spirit in Revelation 21–22, although Rev 21:10 says that John was “carried . . . away in the Spirit” to the see the New Jerusalem coming from heaven. Some view the “Spirit” as a reference to the Holy

¹¹ See also Luke 11:20: “But if I cast out demons by the finger of God, then the kingdom of God has come upon you.”

Spirit while others do not. While the Holy Spirit's presence is not explicitly mentioned in Revelation 21–22, the third member of the Trinity most certainly is there and involved. Perhaps the Holy Spirit's main role continues to be His New Covenant ministry of indwelling God's people.

Conclusion

The three members of the Trinity are actively involved with bringing God's purposes to completion. By looking at the roles each member has, we gain a greater appreciation of how the Godhead is pursuing the restoration of all things. It also heightens the necessity of being ready for His coming and motivates us to share the Gospel with others so that they may flee the wrath to come and enjoy the coming kingdom blessings.



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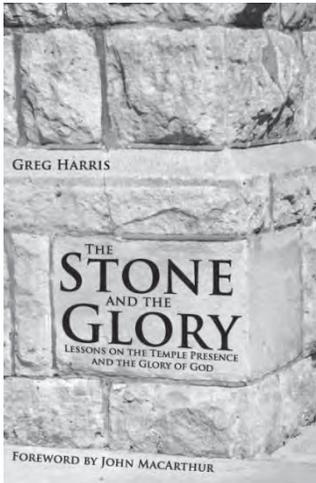
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Opponents of the doctrine of the Trinity often claim that it was an invention of Emperor Constantine at the Council of Nicaea. This goes against much evidence that the early church fathers affirmed the Trinity. The ante-Nicene church fathers acknowledged that there is only one God. Yet, they also taught that the Godhead consists of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit—three distinct Persons each of whom is God.

* * * * *

The doctrine of the Trinity is founded on two fundamental theological realities: (1) There is one true God. (2) The one God has eternally existed as three distinct Persons, each of whom is equally and fully God.¹ The word *Trinity* captures those dual truths in a single, theological term. As Wayne Grudem explains, “The word *trinity* is never found in the Bible, though the idea represented by the word is taught in many places. The word *trinity* means ‘tri-unity’ or ‘three-in-oneness.’ It is used to summarize the teaching of Scripture that God is three persons yet one God.”² Thus, the term expresses the truth that the one God exists as a Tri-Unity of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit. These three divine Members are equal to one another in essence, substance, and character, even though they are distinct Persons with functional differences.

¹ Authors John Ankerberg and John Weldon note that “the threeness and oneness of God constitute a paradox or an antinomy—merely an apparent contradiction, not a genuine one. . . . God’s oneness refers to the divine essence; His threeness to the plurality of persons.” (John Ankerberg and John Weldon, *Knowing the Truth about the Trinity* [Chattanooga, TN: ATRI Publishing, 2011], 8.)

² Wayne Grudem, *Systematic Theology* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1994), 226.

Because the word *Trinity* does not appear in Scripture, opponents of this doctrine allege it was the invention of church history. In making such claims, they often point to historical developments in the fourth century—contending that belief in the Trinity began under Emperor Constantine at the Council of Nicaea. Here are several examples of such assertions:

Dennis A. Beard: “The Doctrine of the Trinity did not exist until 325 A.D.”³

Dan Brown: “Jesus’ establishment as ‘the Son of God’ was officially proposed and voted on by the Council of Nicaea. . . . [It was] a relatively close vote at that. . . . By officially endorsing Jesus as the Son of God, Constantine turned Jesus into a deity who existed beyond the scope of the human world, an entity whose power was unchallengeable.”⁴

P. R. Lackey: “[At Nicaea] a whole new theology was formally canonized into the Church.”⁵

Robert Spears: “It is an unquestionable historical fact that the doctrine of the Trinity is a false doctrine foisted into the Church during the third and fourth centuries; which finally triumphed by the aid of persecuting emperors.”⁶

The Watchtower Society: “The testimony of the Bible and of history makes clear that the Trinity was unknown throughout Biblical times and for several centuries thereafter.”⁷

The Watchtower Society: “For many years, there had been much opposition on Biblical grounds to the developing idea that Jesus was God. To try to solve the dispute, Roman emperor Constantine summoned all bishops to Nicaea. . . . Constantine’s role was crucial. After two months of furious religious debate, this pagan politician intervened and decided in favor of those who said that Jesus was God. . . . After Nicaea, debates on the subject continued for decades. Those who believed that Jesus was not equal to God even came back into favor for a time. But later Emperor Theodosius decided against them. He established the creed of the Council of Nicaea as the standard for his realm and convened the Council of Constantinople in 381 C.E. to clarify the formula. That council

³ David A. Beard, *The Errors of the Trinity* (Bloomington, IN: Author House, 2003), 28.

⁴ Dan Brown, *The Da Vinci Code* (New York: Anchor Books, 2006), 253. This statement is made by one of Brown’s literary characters, Sir Leigh Teabing.

⁵ P. R. Lackey, *The Tyranny of the Trinity* (Bloomington, IN: Author House, 2011), 261.

⁶ Robert Spears, *The Unitarian Handbook of Scriptural Illustrations & Expositions* (London: British and Foreign Unitarian Association, 1883), 96.

⁷ *Should You Believe in the Trinity?* (Brooklyn: Watchtower Bible and Tract Society, 1989). A detailed response to this Watchtower booklet can be found in Robert M. Bowman, Jr., *Why You Should Believe in the Trinity* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1993).

agreed to place the holy spirit on the same level as God and Christ. For the first time, Christendom's Trinity began to come into focus.”⁸

Even some so-called evangelicals, while claiming to believe in the Trinity, seem to question its biblical legitimacy—treating it as if it were the product of later church history. In his book *Velvet Elvis*, Rob Bell describes the development of trinitarian doctrine this way:

This three-in-oneness understanding of God emerged in the several hundred years after Jesus’ resurrection. People began to call this concept the Trinity. The word *trinity* is not found anywhere in the Bible. . . . It is a spring, and people jumped for thousands of years without it. It was added later. We can take it out and examine it. Discuss it, probe it, question it. It flexes, and it stretches.”⁹

Later, Bell describes the doctrine of Christ’s deity with almost the same degree of theological nonchalance: “As [Jesus’] movement gathered steam, this Jewish man came to be talked about more and more as God, fully divine as well as fully human. As his followers talked about him and did what he said and told and retold his stories, the significance of his life began to take on all sorts of cosmic dimensions.”¹⁰ Such statements sound like intentional attempts to cast doubt on the truthfulness of both the Trinity and the deity of Jesus Christ.

As the above citations illustrate, many antagonists—from Muslims to Unitarians to popular skeptics—deny the doctrine of the Trinity, along with its corollary affirmation of the deity of Jesus Christ. And even some within broader evangelical circles question its legitimacy. Without fail, such allegations hinge largely on the claim that *Trinitarianism* was an invention of church history. The purpose of this article is to investigate those kinds of allegations. Was the doctrine of the Trinity invented by the Roman church of the fourth century? Or, to ask that question another way, Was Jesus “promoted” to divine status by Constantine and the Council of Nicaea? In order to answer such questions, it is necessary to consider the evidence for Trinitarian orthodoxy under the following three headings: biblical authority, patristic affirmation, and creedal articulation.

Biblical Authority

In keeping with the Reformation principle of *sola Scriptura*, evangelical Christians are rightly convinced that the truth of any doctrine must be established and grounded in the Scriptures. The authoritative basis for sound doctrine is the Bible, not church history. Consequently, evangelicals ultimately embrace the doctrine of the Trinity, not because it is affirmed throughout history, but because it is revealed in the Word of God.

⁸ Ibid.

⁹ Rob Bell, *Velvet Elvis* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2005), 22.

¹⁰ Ibid., 124.

It is outside the purview of this article to provide a full biblical case for the doctrine of the Trinity. Nonetheless, it is critical to state at the outset that the truthfulness of trinitarian doctrine rests, finally and fully, on the authority of biblical truth. The following chart provides a non-exhaustive sampling of the evidence from Scripture:

A Survey of Biblical Evidence for the Doctrine of the Trinity
<p><u>Reality 1: There Is One True God</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Isaiah 46:9—“Remember the former things long past, For I am God, and there is no other; I am God, and there is no one like Me.” ○ Related passages: Deut 4:35; 6:4; Isa 43:10–11; 45:5, 18, 21–22; Joel 2:27; Zech 14:9; Mal 2:10; Mark 12:29; James 2:19; 1 Tim 2:5.
<p><u>Reality 2: God Exists as Three Distinct Persons, Each of Whom Is Equally and Fully God</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ The Father Is God <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ 2 Corinthians 1:3—“Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of mercies and God of all comfort.” ▪ Related passages: Matt 6:9, 14; John 17:1–3; 1 Cor. 8:6; Phil 2:11; Col 1:3; 1 Pet 1:2; <i>et. al.</i> ○ The Son Is God <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Titus 2:13—“looking for the blessed hope and the appearing of the glory of our great God and Savior, Christ Jesus” ▪ Related passages: Isa 9:6; Matt 1:23; John 1:1, 14, 18; 20:28; Acts 20:28; Rom 9:5; 1 Cor 1:24; 2 Cor 4:4; Phil 2:6, 10–11; Col 1:15–16; 2:9; Heb 1:3, 8; 2 Pet 1:1; 1 John 5:20. ○ The Son Is not the Father <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ John 1:1–2—“In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word <u>was God</u>. He was in the beginning <u>with God</u>.” ▪ Related passages: Matt 11:27; John 3:35; 4:34; 5:30–32, 37; 6:38; 10:36; 12:49; 14:8–11; 17:20–24; Gal 4:41; John 2:1; Heb 7:25.

○ **The Holy Spirit Is God**

- Acts 5:3–4—“But Peter said, ‘Ananias, why has Satan filled your heart to lie to the Holy Spirit and to keep back some of the price of the land? While it remained unsold, did it not remain your own? And after it was sold, was it not under your control? Why is it that you have conceived this deed in your heart? You have not lied to men but to God.’”
- The Spirit possesses all of the attributes of deity (Gen 1:2; 6:3; Job 33:4; Ps 139:7–8; John 3:3–8; 14:23; 1 Cor 2:10–11; 6:16,19; 2 Cor 3:18; Heb 9:14; 10:15–16; 2 Thess 2:13; 1 Pet 1:10–11; 2 Pet 1:21).
- Moreover, He is a Person, possessing the attributes of personhood (Mark 3:29; John 14:26; 16:8; Acts 8:29; 13:2; 16:6; Rom 8:26; 15:30; 1 Cor 12:11; Eph 4:30; 1 Tim 4:1; Heb 10:29; Rev 2:7).

○ **The Spirit Is not the Father nor the Son**

- John 14:16–17—“I will ask the Father, and He will give you another Helper, that He may be with you forever; that is the Spirit of truth, whom the world cannot receive, because it does not see Him or know Him, but you know Him because He abides with you and will be in you.”
- Related passages: Isa 48:16; Matt 28:19; Luke 3:21; John 14:26; 16:13–14; Rom 8:27; Heb 9:8.

On this Basis, the Bible often Refers to God in Ways that Emphasize all Three Members of the Trinity

- 2 Corinthians 13:14—“The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, and the love of God, and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit, be with you all.”
- Related passages: Matt 28:19; Rom 14:17–18; 15:13–17; 15:30; 1 Cor 6:11, 17–19; 12:4–6; 2 Cor 1:21–22; 3:4–6; Gal 2:21–3:2; Eph 2:18; 21–22; 3:11–17; 4:4–6; 5:18–20; Phil 2:1, 6; Col 1:6–8; 1 Thess 1:1–5; 4:2, 8; 5:18–19; 2 Thess 2:13, 14; 3:5; Tit 3:4–6; Heb 9:14; 1 John 3:23–24; Jude 20–21.

Although the term *Trinity* does not occur in Scripture, the concept is inherently biblical. As the previous articles in this edition of the *Journal* have demonstrated, the trinitarian nature of God was revealed *implicitly* in the Old Testament and *explicitly* in the New. Thus, any discussion about the history of Trinitarianism must begin with the fact that this truth is established in the Word of God. It was not invented by those who lived centuries after the apostolic age.

Patristic Affirmation

In the generations following the apostles, the early church fathers looked to the Scriptures to define and defend orthodox doctrinal beliefs. Their writings, though not authoritative, provide vital insights into what the post-apostolic church was like, both in terms of faith and practice. But did these early Christian leaders affirm the doctrine of the Trinity?

Before answering that question directly, it is important to note that the church fathers understood the Scriptures alone to be their final authority. In contending for doctrinal truth, they consistently developed their arguments from the biblical text.¹¹ For example, in his conflict with the followers of Arius (who denied the Trinity), the fourth-century church leader Gregory of Nyssa explained that Scripture alone must be the determiner of such things. No council or church tradition would suffice. In Gregory's words:

What then is our reply [to the Arians]? We do not think that it is right to make their prevailing custom the law and rule of sound doctrine. For if custom [or tradition] is to avail for proof of soundness, we too, surely, may advance our prevailing custom; and if they reject this, we are surely not bound to follow theirs. Let the inspired Scripture, then, be our umpire, and the vote of truth will surely be given to those whose dogmas are found to agree with the Divine words.¹²

In the same way that evangelicals today look to God's Word as the *authoritative basis* for establishing doctrine, the church fathers of the first few centuries grounded their theological conclusions in the biblical text.

This article began by explaining that the doctrine of the Trinity is founded on two fundamental theological realities: (1) There is one true God. (2) The one God has eternally existed as three distinct Persons, each of whom is equally and fully God. With the Scriptures as their guide, the church fathers repeatedly affirmed those two truths. As Gregg Allison explains, "The early church was faced with both belief in monotheism and belief in the deity of the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit—what would

¹¹ For an extensive treatment of this topic, see William Webster, *Holy Scripture*, vol. II (Battle-ground, WA: Christian Resources, 2001).

¹² Gregory of Nyssa, *On the Holy Trinity, and of the Godhead of the Holy Spirit*. Translation from Philip Schaff and Henry Wace, *Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers*, Second Series (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 2012), V:327.

later be called Trinitarianism. And the early church affirmed both.”¹³ Though the term *Trinity* was not coined until the late second century,¹⁴ the affirmation of trinitarian doctrine is overwhelmingly supported in ante-Nicene patristic literature. The following survey of ante-Nicene writings demonstrates the widespread commitment of these early church leaders to these core doctrinal realities. In each patristic citation, key phrases have been underlined for the sake of emphasis.

Reality 1: There Is One True God

Early Christians were unwavering monotheists. Their bold denouncement of Greco-Roman polytheism was so ubiquitous that it earned them the label “atheists”—since they were those who denied the pantheon of pagan deities. Instead, Christians worshiped the one true God, a point they were quick to emphasize. Athenagorus of Athens (d. c. 190), a second-century Christian apologist, put it this way: “Our doctrine acknowledges one God, the Maker of this universe, who is Himself uncreated.”¹⁵ Athenagorus was certainly not alone in asserting his belief in the one true God. The chorus of ante-Nicene patristic literature reverberates with that same refrain:

Clement of Rome (d. c. 99): “[Moses] did it anyway, so that the name of the true and only God might be glorified, to whom be the glory for ever and ever. Amen.”¹⁶

Aristides (c. 125): “For they [Christians] know God, the Creator and Fashioner of all things through the only-begotten Son and the Holy Spirit; and beside Him they worship no other God.”¹⁷

Theophilus of Antioch (d. c. 185): “And I pray for favor from the only God, that I may accurately speak the whole truth according to His will, that you and everyone who reads this work may be guided by His truth and favor.”¹⁸

Irenaeus of Lyons (d. c. 202): “It is proper, then, that I should begin with the first and most important head, that is, God the Creator, who made the heaven and the earth, and all things that are therein . . . , and to demonstrate that there is nothing either above Him or after Him; nor that, influenced by any one, but

¹³ Gregg Allison, *Historical Theology* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2011), 232.

¹⁴ Theophilus of Antioch is considered the first to use the term “Trinity” or “Triad”; though Tertullian later popularized its usage. Cf. Theophilus, *Epistle to Autolycus*, 2.15.

¹⁵ Athenagorus, *A Plea for the Christians*, 4. Translation from Alexander Roberts and James Donaldson, *Ante-Nicene Fathers* (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 2013), II:131. *Ante-Nicene Fathers* is hereafter abbreviated as *ANF*.

¹⁶ Clement, *First Epistle to the Corinthians*, 43. Translation from Michael Holmes, *The Apostolic Fathers* (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2007), 103. *Apostolic Fathers* is hereafter *AF*.

¹⁷ Aristides, *Apology*, Greek version, 15.

¹⁸ Theophilus, *Epistle to Autolycus*, 3.23. *ANF*, II:118.

of His own free will, He created all things, since He is the only God, the only Lord, the only Creator, the only Father, alone containing all things, and Himself commanding all things into existence.”¹⁹

Irenaeus (again) [in response to the polytheistic teachings of Gnosticism]: “Impious indeed, beyond all impiety, are these men, who assert that the Maker of heaven and earth, the only God Almighty, besides whom there is no God, was produced by means of a defect, which itself sprang from another defect, so that, according to them, He was the product of the third defect.”²⁰

Irenaeus (again): “Now, that this God is the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, Paul the apostle also has declared, [saying,] “There is one God, the Father, who is above all, and through all things, and in us all.” I have indeed proved already that there is only one God; but I shall further demonstrate this from the apostles themselves, and from the discourses of the Lord. For what sort of conduct would it be, were we to forsake the utterances of the prophets, of the Lord, and of the apostles, that we might give heed to these persons, who speak not a word of sense?”²¹

Irenaeus (again): “We have learned from none others the plan of our salvation, than from those through whom the Gospel has come down to us, which they did at one time proclaim in public, and, at a later period, by the will of God, handed down to us in the Scriptures, to be the ground and pillar of our faith. . . . These [the Apostles] have all declared to us that there is one God, Creator of heaven and earth, announced by the law and the prophets; and one Christ the Son of God. If anyone do not agree to these truths, he despises the companions of the Lord; nay more, he despises Christ Himself the Lord; yea, he despises the Father also, and stands self-condemned, resisting and opposing his own salvation, as is the case with all heretics.”²²

Tertullian (c. 160–225) [in response to the false teachings of Hermogenes who taught that matter was eternal]: “This rule is required by the nature of the One-only God, who is One-only in no other way than as the sole God; and in no other way sole, than as having nothing else with Him. So also He will be first, because all things are after Him; and all things are after Him, because all things are by Him; and all things are by Him, because they are of nothing: so that reason coincides with the Scripture, which says: ‘Who hath known the mind of the Lord? or who hath been His counselor? or with whom took He counsel? or who hath shown to Him the way of wisdom and knowledge? Who hath first given to Him, and it shall be recompensed to him again?’ Surely none! Because there

¹⁹ Irenaeus, *Against Heresies*, 2.1.1. *ANF*, I:359.

²⁰ *Ibid.*, 1.16.3. *ANF*, I:342.

²¹ *Ibid.*, 2.2.5. *ANF*, I:362.

²² *Ibid.*, 3.1.1–2. *ANF*, I:414–15.

was present with Him no power, no material, no nature which belonged to any other than Himself.”²³

Tertullian (again) [after defending his belief in the Trinity notes:] “That there are, however, two Gods or two Lords, is a statement which at no time proceeds out of our mouth.”²⁴

Origen (185–254) [in response to the attacks of the skeptical Celsus]: “We Christians, however, who are devoted to the worship of the only God, who created these things, feel grateful for them to Him who made them.”²⁵

Reality 2: God Exists as Three Distinct Persons, Each of Whom Is Equally and Fully God

Though they unanimously maintained monotheistic convictions, the early church fathers also bore testimony to the fact that the one God exists as three distinct Persons. They affirmed the deity of God the Father, the deity of His Son Jesus Christ, and the deity of the Holy Spirit. Moreover, they viewed each of these divine Persons as being distinct from one another.

By looking at the fundamental truths that comprise the doctrine of the Trinity through the lens of ante-Nicene literature, it becomes readily apparent that the early church fathers embraced trinitarian theology. At least five fundamental truths must be examined: 1) The Father is God. 2) The Son is God. 3) The Son is not the Father. 4) The Holy Spirit is God. 5) The Holy Spirit is not the Father or the Son.

The Father is God

Hundreds of examples could be given in this regard, demonstrating that early believers often referred to God using the title “Father.” As a case in point, Irenaeus spoke of “the preaching of the apostles, the authoritative teaching of the Lord, the announcements of the prophets, the dictated utterances of the apostles, and the ministration of the law—all of which praise one and the same Being, the God and Father of all.”²⁶ Because this fundamental truth is rarely (if ever) questioned by anti-Trinitarians, it is sufficient to simply mention it before moving on to consider a second fundamental truth.

The Son is God

Abundant evidence from the ante-Nicene period confirms the early church’s belief in the deity of Jesus Christ. Around 106, the Roman governor Pliny the

²³ Tertullian, *Against Hermogenes*, 17. ANF, III:486–87.

²⁴ Tertullian, *Against Praxeas*, 13. ANF, III:608.

²⁵ Origen, *Against Celsus*, 4.75. ANF, IV:531.

²⁶ Irenaeus, *Against Heresies*, 2.35.4. ANF, I:413.

Younger wrote a letter in which he explained that the Christians in his region sang hymns “to Christ as to a god.”²⁷ That commitment to the deity of Christ is affirmed repeatedly throughout ante-Nicene literature:

Ignatius of Antioch (c. 50–117): “For our God, Jesus the Christ, was conceived by Mary according to God’s plan, both from the seed of David and of the Holy Spirit.”²⁸

Ignatius (again): “Consequently all magic and every kind of spell were dissolved, the ignorance so characteristic of wickedness vanished, and the ancient kingdom was abolished when God appeared in human form to bring the newness of eternal life.”²⁹

Ignatius (again): “For our God Jesus Christ is more visible now that he is in the Father.”³⁰

Ignatius (again): “I glorify Jesus Christ, the God who made you so wise, for I observed that you are established in an unshakable faith, having been nailed, as it were, to the cross of the Lord Jesus Christ.”³¹

Ignatius (again): “Wait expectantly for the one who is above time: the Eternal, the Invisible, who for our sake became visible; the Intangible, the Unsuffering, who for our sake suffered, who for our sake endured in every way.”³²

Polycarp of Smyrna (69–155): “Now may the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, and the eternal high priest himself, the Son of God Jesus Christ, build you up in faith and truth . . . , and to us with you, and to all those under heaven who will yet believe in our Lord and God Jesus Christ and in his Father who raised him from the dead.”³³

Epistle of Barnabas (c. 70–130): “If the Lord submitted to suffer for our souls, even though he is Lord of the whole world, to whom God said at the foundation of the world, ‘Let us make humankind according to our image and likeness,’ how is it, then, that he submitted to suffer at the hands of humans?”³⁴

Justin Martyr (100–165): “And that Christ being Lord, and God the Son of God, and appearing formerly in power as Man, and Angel, and in the glory of

²⁷ Pliny, *Letters*, 10.96–97. Letter to the Emperor Trajan.

²⁸ Ignatius, *Letter to the Ephesians*, 18.2. Holmes, *AF*, 197.

²⁹ *Ibid.*, 19.3. Holmes, *AF*, 199.

³⁰ Ignatius, *Letter to the Romans*, 3.3. Holmes, *AF*, 229.

³¹ Ignatius, *Letter to the Smyrnaeans*, 1.1. Holmes, *AF*, 249.

³² Ignatius, *Letter to Polycarp*, 3.2. Holmes, *AF*, 265.

³³ Polycarp, *Philippians 12:2*. Holmes, *AF*, 295.

³⁴ *Epistle of Barnabas*, 5.5. Holmes, *AF*, 393.

fire as at the bush, so also was manifested at the judgment executed on Sodom, has been demonstrated fully by what has been said.”³⁵

Justin (again): “Permit me first to recount the prophecies, which I wish to do in order to prove that Christ is called both God and Lord of hosts.”³⁶

Justin (again): “Therefore these words testify explicitly that He [Jesus] is witnessed to by Him [the Father] who established these things, as deserving to be worshipped, as God and as Christ.”³⁷

Justin (again): “The Father of the universe has a Son; who also, being the first-begotten Word of God, is even God. And of old He appeared in the shape of fire and in the likeness of an angel to Moses and to the other prophets; but now in the times of your reign, having, as we before said, become Man by a virgin . . .”³⁸

Justin (again): For if you had understood what has been written by the prophets, you would not have denied that He was God, Son of the only, unbegotten, unutterable God.³⁹

Tatian (110–172): “We do not act as fools, O Greeks, nor utter idle tales when we announce that God was born in the form of man.”⁴⁰

Melito of Sardis (d. c. 180): “He that hung up the earth in space was Himself hanged up; He that fixed the heavens was fixed with nails; He that bore up the earth was born up on a tree; the Lord of all was subjected to ignominy in a naked body – God put to death! . . . [I]n order that He might not be seen, the luminaries turned away, and the day became darkened—because they slew God, who hung naked on the tree. . . . This is He who made the heaven and the earth, and in the beginning, together with the Father, fashioned man; who was announced by means of the law and the prophets; who put on a bodily form in the Virgin; who was hanged upon the tree; who was buried in the earth; who rose from the place of the dead, and ascended to the height of heaven, and sitteth on the right hand of the Father.”⁴¹

Irenaeus of Lyons (120–202): “For I have shown from the Scriptures, that no one of the sons of Adam is as to everything, and absolutely, called God, or

³⁵ Justin Martyr, *Dialogue with Trypho*, 128. ANF, I:264.

³⁶ *Ibid.*, 36. ANF, 212.

³⁷ *Ibid.*, 63. ANF, 229.

³⁸ Justin Martyr, *First Apology*, 63. ANF, I:184.

³⁹ Martyr, *Dialogue with Trypho*, 126. ANF, I:263.

⁴⁰ Tatian, *Address to the Greeks*, 21. ANF, II:74.

⁴¹ Melito, 5. ANF, VIII:757.

named Lord. But that He is Himself in His own right, beyond all men who ever lived, God, and Lord, and King Eternal, and the Incarnate Word, proclaimed by all the prophets, the apostles, and by the Spirit Himself, may be seen by all who have attained to even a small portion of the truth. Now, the Scriptures would not have testified these things of Him, if, like others, He had been a mere man. . . . He is the holy Lord, the Wonderful, the Counselor, the Beautiful in appearance, and the Mighty God, coming on the clouds as the Judge of all men;—all these things did the Scriptures prophesy of Him.”⁴²

Irenaeus (again): “Christ Jesus [is] our Lord, and God, and Savior, and King, according to the will of the invisible Father.”⁴³

Irenaeus (again): “Christ Himself, therefore, together with the Father, is the God of the living, who spoke to Moses, and who was also manifested to the fathers.”⁴⁴

Irenaeus (again): “He received testimony from all that He was very man, and that He was very God, from the Father, from the Spirit, from angels, from the creation itself, from men, from apostate spirits and demons.”⁴⁵

Clement of Alexandria (c. 150–215): “This Word, then, the Christ, the cause of both our being at first (for He was in God) and of our well-being, this very Word has now appeared as man, He alone being both, both God and man—the Author of all blessings to us; by whom we, being taught to live well, are sent on our way to life eternal. . . . The Word, who in the beginning bestowed on us life as Creator when He formed us, taught us to live well when He appeared as our Teacher; that as God He might afterwards conduct us to the life which never ends.”⁴⁶

Tertullian (c. 160–225): “For God alone is without sin; and the only man without sin is Christ, since Christ is also God.”⁴⁷

Tertullian (again): “Thus Christ is Spirit of Spirit, and God of God, as light of light is kindled. . . . That which has come forth out of God is at once God and the Son of God, and the two are one. In this way also, as He is Spirit of Spirit and God of God, He is made a second in manner of existence—in position, not in nature; and He did not withdraw from the original source, but went forth. This ray of God, then, as it was always foretold in ancient times, descending

⁴² Irenaeus, *Against Heresies*, 3.19.2. *ANF*, I:449.

⁴³ *Ibid.*, 1.10.1. *ANF*, I:330.

⁴⁴ *Ibid.*, 4.5.2. *ANF*, I:467.

⁴⁵ *Ibid.*, 4.6.7. *ANF*, I:469.

⁴⁶ Clement of Alexandria, *Exhortation to the Heathen*, 1. *ANF*, II:173.

⁴⁷ Tertullian, *Treatise on the Soul*, 41. *ANF*, III:221.

into a certain virgin, and made flesh in her womb, is in His birth God and man united."⁴⁸

Hippolytus (170–235): "The Logos alone of this God is from God himself; wherefore also the Logos is God, being the substance of God."⁴⁹

Caius (180–217) [in response to those who would question the deity of Christ]: "Perhaps what they allege might be credible, did not the Holy Scriptures, in the first place, contradict them. And then, besides, there are writings of certain brethren older than the times of Victor, which they wrote against the heathen in defense of the truth, and against the heresies of their time: I mean Justin and Miltiades, and Tatian and Clement, and many others, in all which divinity is ascribed to Christ. For who is ignorant of the books of Irenaeus and Melito, and the rest, which declare Christ to be God and man? All the psalms, too, and hymns of brethren, which have been written from the beginning by the faithful, celebrate Christ the Word of God, ascribing divinity to Him."⁵⁰

Origen (c. 185–254): "Jesus Christ . . . in the last times, divesting Himself (of His glory), became a man, and was incarnate although God, and while made a man remained the God which He was."⁵¹

Novatian of Rome (210–280): "For Scripture as much announces Christ as also God, as it announces God Himself as man. It has as much described Jesus Christ to be man, as moreover it has also described Christ the Lord to be God. Because it does not set forth Him to be the Son of God only, but also the Son of man; nor does it only say, the Son of man, but it has also been accustomed to speak of Him as the Son of God. So that being of both, He is both, lest if He should be one only, He could not be the other. For as nature itself has prescribed that he must be believed to be a man who is of man, so the same nature prescribes also that He must be believed to be God who is of God. . . . Let them, therefore, who read that Jesus Christ the Son of man is man, read also that this same Jesus is called also God and the Son of God."⁵²

The Son is not the Father

This point can be repeatedly demonstrated by the way the church fathers distinguish the Son from the Father. Irenaeus provides a case in point:

⁴⁸ Tertullian, *Apology*, 21. *ANF*, III:34–35.

⁴⁹ Hippolytus, *Refutation of All Heresies*, 10.29. *ANF*, V:151.

⁵⁰ Caius, *Fragments*, 2.1. *ANF*, V:601.

⁵¹ Origen, *De Principiis*, Preface, 4. *ANF*, IV:240.

⁵² Novatian, *On the Trinity*, 11. *ANF*, V:620. Cf. Novatian, *Treatise Concerning the Trinity*, 15, 16, 26, 31.

Irenaeus (d. c. 202): “Therefore neither would the Lord, nor the Holy Spirit, nor the apostles, have ever named as God, definitely and absolutely, him who was not God, unless he were truly God; nor would they have named any one in his own person Lord, except God the Father ruling over all, and His Son who has received dominion from His Father over all creation, as this passage has it: ‘The LORD said unto my Lord, Sit Thou at my right hand, until I make Thine enemies Thy footstool.’ Here the [Scripture] represents to us the Father addressing the Son; He who gave Him the inheritance of the heathen, and subjected to Him all His enemies. Since, therefore, the Father is truly Lord, and the Son truly Lord, the Holy Spirit has fitly designated them by the title of Lord.”⁵³

As early church leaders began to consider these dual truths—namely that the Son is fully God yet distinct from the Father—they began to speak of *essential unity* and *numeric* or *economic distinction* between the Father and the Son.

Justin Martyr (100–165): “Reverting to the Scriptures, I shall endeavor to persuade you, that He who is said to have appeared to Abraham, and to Jacob, and to Moses, and who is called God, is distinct from Him who made all things,— numerically, I mean, not in will. For I affirm that He has never at any time done anything which He who made the world — above whom there is no other God — has not wished Him both to do and to engage Himself with.”⁵⁴

Justin Martyr (again): “We can indisputably learn that [God] conversed with someone who was numerically distinct from Himself and also a rational Being.”⁵⁵

Irenaeus (d. c. 202) articulated the different roles within the Trinity in this way: “the Father planning everything well and giving His commands, the Son carrying these into execution and performing the work of creating, and the Spirit nourishing and increasing [what is made].”⁵⁶

Irenaeus elsewhere explained the Triune way in which “was God revealed; for God the Father is shown forth through all these [operations], the Spirit indeed working, and the Son ministering, while the Father was approving, and man’s salvation was being accomplished.”⁵⁷

Tertullian (c. 160–225): “Thus the connection of the Father in the Son, and of the Son in the Paraclete, produces three coherent Persons, who are yet distinct One from Another. These Three are one essence, not one Person, as it is said, ‘I

⁵³ Irenaeus, *Against Heresies*, 3.6.1. *ANF*, I:418.

⁵⁴ Justin Martyr, *Dialogue with Trypho*, 56. *ANF*, I:223–24.

⁵⁵ *Ibid.*, 62. *ANF*, I:228.

⁵⁶ Irenaeus, *Against Heresies*, 4.38.3. *ANF*, I:521–22.

⁵⁷ *Ibid.*, 4.20.6. *ANF*, I:489.

and my Father are One,' in respect of unity of substance, not singularity of number."⁵⁸

Tertullian (again): “We, however, as we indeed always have done and more especially since we have been better instructed by the Paraclete, who leads men indeed into all truth, believe that there is one only God, but under the following dispensation, or οἰκονομία [economy], as it is called, that this one only God has also a Son, His Word, who proceeded from Himself, by whom all things were made, and without whom nothing was made. Him we believe to have been sent by the Father into the Virgin, and to have been born of her – being both Man and God, the Son of Man and the Son of God, and to have been called by the name of Jesus Christ; we believe Him to have suffered, died, and been buried, according to the Scriptures, and, after He had been raised again by the Father and taken back to heaven, to be sitting at the right hand of the Father, and that He will come to judge the quick and the dead; who sent also from heaven from the Father, according to His own promise, the Holy Ghost, the Paraclete, the sanctifier of the faith of those who believe in the Father, and in the Son, and in the Holy Ghost. That this rule of faith has come down to us from the beginning of the gospel.”⁵⁹

Tertullian (c. 160–225): “The Father is God, and the Son is God, and the Holy Ghost is God, and each is God; . . . when Christ should come He might be both acknowledged as God and designated as Lord, being the Son of Him who is both God and Lord. . . . As soon, however, as Christ came, and was recognized by us as the very Being who had from the beginning caused plurality (in the Divine Economy), being the second from the Father, and with the Spirit the third, and Himself declaring and manifesting the Father more fully (than He had ever been before), the title of Him who is God and Lord was at once restored to the Unity (of the Divine Nature).”⁶⁰

Admittedly, these early Christians sometimes found it difficult to articulate what they understood to be eternal mysteries. Athenagoras and Origen, for example, provide examples of early theologians who struggled to know how to express trinitarian truth. Because they lived before the time of Nicaea, they did not have the advantage of being able to use the precise wording articulated in the Nicene Creed.

Athenagoras (d. c. 190): “The Son of God is the Logos of the Father, in idea and in operation; for after the pattern of Him and by Him were all things made, the Father and the Son being one. And, the Son being in the Father and the Father in the Son, in oneness and power of spirit, the understanding and reason

⁵⁸ Tertullian, *Against Praxeas*, 25. ANF, III:621.

⁵⁹ *Ibid.*, 2. ANF, III:598.

⁶⁰ *Ibid.*, 13. ANF, III:608.

(νοῦς καὶ λόγος) of the Father is the Son of God. But if, in your surpassing intelligence, it occurs to you to inquire what is meant by the Son, I will state briefly that He is the first product of the Father, not as having been brought into existence (for from the beginning, God, who is the eternal mind [νοῦς], had the Logos in Himself, being from eternity instinct with Logos [λογικός]); but inasmuch as He came forth to be the idea and energizing power of all material things.⁶¹

Origen (185–254): in trying to describe the inner workings of the Trinity in eternity past is forced to acknowledge: “When we use, indeed, such terms as ‘always’ or ‘was,’ or any other designation of time, they are not to be taken absolutely, but with due allowance; for while the significations of these words relate to time, and those subjects of which we speak are spoken of by a stretch of language as existing in time, they nevertheless surpass in their real nature all conception of the finite understanding.”⁶²

As Christians searched for suitable language to express the ineffable, that the word *Trinity* began to be used as a way to articulate that which was ultimately recognized as a mystery. Tertullian was one of the earliest theologians to use the term to describe the three-in-oneness of God:

Tertullian (c. 160–225): “The mystery of the dispensation [economy] is still guarded, which distributes the Unity into a Trinity, placing in their order the three Persons—the Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost: three, however, not in condition, but in degree; not in substance, but in form; not in power, but in aspect; yet of one substance, and of one condition, and of one power, inasmuch as He is one God, from whom these degrees and forms and aspects are reckoned, under the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost.”⁶³

It was also in this context that the heresy of modalistic monarchianism (also known as Sabellianism) developed. Modalism denied that God simultaneously exists as three distinct Persons—arguing instead that the one God sometimes manifests Himself as Father, sometimes as Son, and sometimes as Spirit, but never all three at the same time. Modalists accused Trinitarians of belief in multiple gods. But orthodox church leaders responded by condemning Modalism as a heresy—using the biblical text to prove that, although there is only one God, each Member of the Trinity is distinct.

Tertullian (c. 160–225): “We have, moreover, in that other Gospel a clear revelation, i.e. of the Son’s distinction from the Father, ‘My God, why hast Thou forsaken me?’ and again, (in the third Gospel,) ‘Father, into Thy hands I com-

⁶¹ Athenagoras, *A Plea for the Christians*, 10. ANF, II:133.

⁶² Origen, *De Principiis*, 1.3.4. ANF, IV:253.

⁶³ Tertullian, *Against Praxeas*, 2. ANF, III:598.

mend my spirit.’ But even if (we had not these passages, we meet with satisfactory evidence) after His resurrection and glorious victory over death. Now that all the restraint of His humiliation is taken away, He might, if possible, have shown Himself as the Father to so faithful a woman (as Mary Magdalene) when she approached to touch Him, out of love, not from curiosity, nor with Thomas’ incredulity. But not so; Jesus saith unto her, “Touch me not, for I am not yet ascended to my Father; but go to my brethren” (and even in this He proves Himself to be the Son; for if He had been the Father, He would have called them His children, (instead of His brethren), “and say unto them, I ascend unto my Father and your Father, and to my God and your God.” Now, does this mean, I ascend as the Father to the Father, and as God to God? Or as the Son to the Father, and as the Word to God? Wherefore also does this Gospel, at its very termination, intimate that these things were ever written, if it be not, to use its own words, “that ye might believe that Jesus Christ is the Son of God?” Whenever, therefore, you take any of the statements of this Gospel, and apply them to demonstrate the identity of the Father and the Son, supposing that they serve your views therein, you are contending against the definite purpose of the Gospel. For these things certainly are not written that you may believe that Jesus Christ is the Father, but the Son.”⁶⁴

Hippolytus (170–235): “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, viz., the grace of the Holy Spirit. 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. The Father decrees, the Word executes, and the Son is manifested, through whom the Father is believed on. The economy of harmony is led back to one God; for God is one. It is the Father who commands, and the Son who obeys, and the Holy Spirit who gives understanding: The Father who is *above all*, and the Son who is through all, and the Holy Spirit who is in all.”⁶⁵

Novatian (210–280): [in response to the Sabellian heretics who accused Trinitarians of teaching multiple gods] “Let us therefore believe this, since it is most faithful that Jesus Christ the Son of God is our Lord and God; because ‘in the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and God was the Word. The same was in the beginning with God.’ And, ‘The Word was made flesh, and dwelt in us.’ And, ‘My Lord and my God.’ And, ‘Whose are the fathers, and of whom according to the flesh Christ came, who is over all, God blessed for evermore.’ What, then, shall we say? Does Scripture set before us two Gods? How, then, does it say that ‘God is one?’ Or is not Christ God also? How, then, is it said to Christ, ‘My Lord and my God?’ Unless, therefore, we hold all this with fitting veneration and lawful argument, we shall reasonably be thought to

⁶⁴ Tertullian, *Against Praxeas*, 25. ANF, III:621.

⁶⁵ Hippolytus, *Against the Heresy of One Noetus*, 14. ANF, V:228.

have furnished a scandal to the heretics, not assuredly by the fault of the heavenly Scriptures, which never deceive; but by the presumption of human error, whereby they have chosen to be heretics.”⁶⁶

Ignatius (Longer Text) (c. 250): “For there are some vain talkers and deceivers, not Christians, but Christ-betrayers, bearing about the name of Christ in deceit, and “corrupting the word” of the Gospel; while they intermix the poison of their deceit with their persuasive talk. . . . Some of them say that the Son is a mere man, and that the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit are but the same person, and that the creation is the work of God, not by Christ, but by some other strange power.”⁶⁷

Thus, early Christians affirmed both the reality that there is only one God (in contrast to pagan polytheism); while also affirming a distinction between the Members of the Trinity—each of whom is fully God. As Gregg Allison explains, “The early church rejected both dynamic monarchianism and modalism as being far removed from its traditional understanding of the oneness of God and the threeness of the Father, Son (who is fully divine), and Spirit. Dynamic monarchianism considered Jesus Christ to be a mere man, while modalistic monarchianism emphasized the oneness of the Godhead to such an extent that the three were lost in the one. The church found neither of these views acceptable.”⁶⁸

The Holy Spirit is God

The ante-Nicene fathers not only affirmed the deity of the Father and the Son, but also of the Holy Spirit. After surveying the patristic evidence, John Ankerberg and John Weldon explain, “Although the doctrine of the Holy Spirit was theologically less refined in the early Church than the doctrine of Jesus Christ, there was still recognition that the Holy Spirit was both personal and God.”⁶⁹ Here is a small sampling of patristic citations to support that assertion:

Athenagoras (d. c. 190): [in response to the pagan accusation that Christians were atheists] “The Holy Spirit Himself also, which operates in the prophets, we assert to be an effluence of God, flowing from Him, and returning back again like a beam of the sun. Who, then, would not be astonished to hear men who 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, called atheists?”⁷⁰

⁶⁶ Novatian, *A Treatise on the Trinity*, 30. ANF, V:642.

⁶⁷ Ignatius, *To the Trallians*, Longer, 6. ANF, I:68.

⁶⁸ Gregg Allison, *Historical Theology* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2011), 236.

⁶⁹ John Ankerberg and John Weldon, *Knowing the Truth about the Trinity*, chap. 6.

⁷⁰ Athenagoras, *A Plea for the Christians*, 10. ANF, II:133.

Origen (185–254): “We must understand, therefore, that as the Son, who alone knows the Father, reveals Him to whom He will, so the Holy Spirit, who alone searches the deep things of God, reveals God to whom He will: ‘For the Spirit bloweth where He listeth.’”⁷¹

Origen [refuting the notion that the Holy Spirit is not the eternal Third Member of the Trinity]: “For if this were the case, the Holy Spirit would never be reckoned in the Unity of the Trinity, i.e., along with the unchangeable Father and His Son, unless He had always been the Holy Spirit.”⁷²

Origen (again): “From all which we learn that the person of the Holy Spirit was of such authority and dignity, that [the formula for] baptism was not complete except by the authority of the most excellent Trinity of them all, i.e., by the naming of Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, and by joining to the unbegotten God the Father, and to His only-begotten Son, the name also of the Holy Spirit. Who, then, is not amazed at the exceeding majesty of the Holy Spirit, when he hears that he who speaks a word against the Son of man may hope for forgiveness; but that he who is guilty of blasphemy against the Holy Spirit has not forgiveness, either in the present world or in that which is to come!”⁷³

The Holy Spirit is not the Father or the Son

In addition to affirming the deity of the Holy Spirit, the church fathers were careful to distinguish Him from both the Father and the Son. They did this both by describing His unique function, and by depicting Him as a distinct Person.

The Martyrdom of Polycarp (2nd century): “We wish you, brethren, all happiness, while you walk according to the doctrine of the Gospel of Jesus Christ; with whom be glory to God the Father and the Holy Spirit, for the salvation of His holy elect, after whose example the blessed Polycarp suffered, following in whose steps may we too be found in the kingdom of Jesus Christ!”⁷⁴

Irenaeus (d. c. 202): “The Church, though dispersed throughout the whole world, even to the ends of the earth, has received from the apostles and their disciples this faith: [She 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, and the advents, and the birth from a virgin, and the passion, and the resurrection from

⁷¹ Origen, *De Principiis*, 1.3.4. ANF, IV:253.

⁷² Ibid. ANF, IV:253.

⁷³ Ibid. ANF, IV:252.

⁷⁴ *Martyrdom of Polycarp*, 22. ANF, I:43.

the dead, and the ascension into heaven in the flesh of the beloved Christ Jesus, our Lord.”⁷⁵

Tertullian (c. 160–225): “Thus the connection of the Father in the Son, and of the Son in the Paraclete, produces three coherent Persons, who are yet distinct One from Another. These Three are one essence, not one Person, as it is said, ‘I and my Father are One,’ in respect of unity of substance not singularity of number.”⁷⁶

Tertullian (again): “I confess that I call God and His Word—the Father and His Son—two. For the root and the tree are distinctly two things, but correlatively joined; the fountain and the river are also two forms, but indivisible; so likewise the sun and the ray are two forms, but coherent ones. Everything which proceeds from something else must needs be second to that from which it proceeds, without being on that account separated: Where, however, there is a second, there must be two; and where there is a third, there must be three. Now the Spirit indeed is third from God and the Son; just as the fruit of the tree is third from the root, or as the stream out of the river is third from the fountain, or as the apex of the ray is third from the sun. Nothing, however, is alien from that original source whence it derives its own properties. In like manner the Trinity, flowing down from the Father through intertwined and connected steps, does not at all disturb the Monarchy, whilst it at the same time guards the state of the Economy.”⁷⁷

Origen (185–254): “As, then, after those first discussions which, according to the requirements of the case, we held at the beginning regarding the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, it seemed right that we should retrace our steps, and show that the same God was the creator and founder of the world, and the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, i.e., that the God of the law and of the prophets and of the Gospel was one and the same; and that, in the next place, it ought to be shown, with respect to Christ, in what manner He who had formerly been demonstrated to be the Word and Wisdom of God became man; it remains that we now return with all possible brevity to the subject of the Holy Spirit. It is time, then, that we say a few words to the best of our ability regarding the Holy Spirit, whom our Lord and Savior in the Gospel according to John has named the Paraclete. For as it is the same God Himself, and the same Christ, so also is it the same Holy Spirit who was in the prophets and apostles, i.e., either in those who believed in God before the advent of Christ, or in those who by means of Christ have sought refuge in God.”⁷⁸

⁷⁵ Irenaeus, *Against Heresies*, 1.10.1. ANF, I:330.

⁷⁶ Tertullian, *Against Praxeas*, 25. ANF, 3:621.

⁷⁷ *Ibid.*, 8. ANF, III:603.

⁷⁸ Origen, *De Principiis*, 2.7.1. ANF, IV:284.

**On this Basis, the Ante-Nicene Fathers often Referred to God
in Ways that Emphasize All Three Members of the Trinity**

Often, the writings of the ante-Nicene fathers assume a trinitarian posture—reflecting the language of the New Testament in its discussion of the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. Early Christians sometimes spoke of the Son as the *Word of the Father* and of the Spirit as the *Wisdom of the Father*—using these titles to designate each Member of the Trinity. As Gregg Allison explains:

An early description of the relationship between the three referred to the Son as the Word of the Father and to the Spirit as the Wisdom of the Father; these two were the two “hands” of the Father as he created. In an interesting reference to the creation of the sun and moon on the fourth day of creation, Theophilus noted: “The three days which were before the lights are types of the Trinity—of God, his Word, and his Wisdom” [*To Autolytus*, 2.15]. Appealing to Proverbs 3:19–20 and 8:22–31, Irenaeus “demonstrated that the Word, namely the Son, was always with the Father; and that Wisdom also, which is the Spirit, was present with him, anterior [prior] to all creation. . . . There is therefore one God, who by the Word and Wisdom created and arranged all things” [*Irenaeus, Against Heresies*, 4.20.3–4].⁷⁹

Additionally, the ante-Nicene fathers frequently spoke of the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit—using Trinitarian language to describe the Godhead. The following patristic selections provide a representative sampling of the way early Christian leaders regularly spoke of the Godhead:

Clement of Rome (c. 30–95): “Do we not have one God and one Christ and one Spirit of grace that was poured out upon us?”⁸⁰

Clement (again): “For as God lives, and the Lord Jesus Christ lives, and the Holy Spirit (who are the faith and the hope of the elect), so surely the one who with humility and constant gentleness has kept without regret the ordinances and commandments given by God will be enrolled and included among the number of those who are saved through Jesus Christ, through whom is the glory to God for ever and ever. Amen.”⁸¹

Ignatius (d. c. 117): “You are 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; your faith is what lifts you up, and love is the way that leads up to God.”⁸²

⁷⁹ Allison, *Historical Theology*, 233.

⁸⁰ Clement of Rome, *First Epistle to the Corinthians*, 46. Holmes, *AF*, 107.

⁸¹ *Ibid.*, 58. Holmes, *AF*, 123.

⁸² Ignatius, *Epistle to the Ephesians*, Middle Recension, 9. Holmes, *AF*, 191.

Polycarp (c. 69–160): “Lord God Almighty, the Father of thy beloved and blessed Son Jesus Christ . . . wherefore also I praise Thee for all things, I bless Thee, I glorify Thee, along with the everlasting and heavenly Jesus Christ, Thy beloved Son, with whom, to Thee, and the Holy Ghost, be glory both now and to all coming ages. Amen.”⁸³

Martyrdom of Polycarp (second century): “I have collected these things, when they had almost faded away through the lapse of time, that the Lord Jesus Christ may also gather me along with His elect into His heavenly kingdom to whom, with the Father and the Holy Spirit, be glory forever and ever. Amen.”⁸⁴

Justin Martyr (c. 100–165): “For, in the name of God, the Father and Lord of the universe, and of our Savior Jesus Christ, and of the Holy Spirit, they then receive the washing with water.”⁸⁵

Justin Martyr (again): “. . . the most true God, the Father of righteousness and temperance and other virtues, who is free from all impurity. But both Him, and the Son (who came forth from Him and taught us these things . . .), and the prophetic Spirit, we worship and adore, knowing them in reason and truth.”⁸⁶

Irenaeus (d. c. 202): “The Church, though dispersed throughout the whole world, even to the ends of the earth, has received from the apostles and their disciples this faith: . . . 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, and the advents, and the birth from a virgin, and the passion, and the resurrection from the dead, and the ascension into heaven in the flesh of the beloved Christ Jesus, our Lord, and His manifestation from heaven in the glory of the Father ‘to gather all things in one,’ and to raise up anew all flesh of the whole human race, in order that to Christ Jesus, our Lord, and God, and Savior, and King, according to the will of the invisible Father, ‘every knee should bow, of things in heaven, and things in earth, and things under the earth, and that every tongue should confess; to him, and that He should execute just judgment towards all.’”⁸⁷

Tertullian (c. 160–225): “We define that there are two, the Father and the Son, and three with the Holy Spirit, and this number is made by the pattern of salvation . . . [which] brings about unity in trinity, interrelating the three, the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit. They are three, not in dignity, but in degree, not in substance but in form, not in power but in kind. They are of one substance and

⁸³ *Martyrdom of Polycarp*, 14. ANF, I:42.

⁸⁴ *Ibid.* ANF, I:44.

⁸⁵ Justin, *First Apology*, 61. ANF, I:183.

⁸⁶ *Ibid.*, 6. ANF, I:164.

⁸⁷ Irenaeus, *Against Heresies* 1.10.1. ANF, I:330.

power, because there is one God from whom these degrees, forms and kinds devolve in the name of Father, Son and Holy Spirit.”⁸⁸

Tertullian (again): “Now, with regard to this rule of faith—that we may from this point acknowledge what it is which we defend—it is, you must know, that which prescribes the belief that there is one only God, and that He is none other than the Creator of the world, who produced all things out of nothing through His own Word, first of all sent forth; that this Word is called His Son, and, under the name of God, was seen ‘in diverse manners’ by the patriarchs, heard at all times in the prophets, at last brought down by the Spirit and Power of the Father into the Virgin Mary, was made flesh in her womb, and, being born of her, went forth as Jesus Christ; thenceforth He preached the new law and the new promise of the kingdom of heaven, worked miracles; having been crucified, He rose again the third day; (then) having ascended into the heavens, He sat at the right hand of the Father; sent instead of Himself the Power of the Holy Ghost to lead such as believe; will come with glory to take the saints to the enjoyment of everlasting life and of the heavenly promises, and to condemn the wicked to everlasting fire, after the resurrection of both these classes shall have happened, together with the restoration of their flesh. This rule, as it will be proved, was taught by Christ, and raises amongst ourselves no other questions than those which heresies introduce, and which make men heretics.”⁸⁹

Tertullian [in response to the modalistic monarchianism of Praxeas]: “But as for me, who derive the Son from no other source but from the substance of the Father, and (represent Him) as doing nothing without the Father’s will, and as having received all power from the Father, how can I be possibly destroying the Monarchy from the faith, when I preserve it in the Son just as it was committed to Him by the Father? The same remark (I wish also to be formally) made by me with respect to the third degree in the Godhead, because I believe the Spirit to proceed from no other source than from the Father through the Son.”⁹⁰

Hippolytus (170–235): “[It is] the Father who is above all, the Son who is through all, and the Holy Spirit who is in all. And we cannot otherwise think of one God, but by believing in truth in Father and Son and Holy Spirit. . . . For it is through this Trinity that the Father is glorified. . . . The whole Scriptures, then, proclaim this truth.”⁹¹

Origen (185–254): “Moreover, nothing in the Trinity can be called greater or less, since the fountain of divinity alone contains all things by His word and

⁸⁸ Tertullian, *Against Praxeas*, 2. PL 2.156–57.

⁸⁹ Tertullian, *On Prescription Against Heretics*, 13. ANF, III:249.

⁹⁰ Tertullian, *Against Praxeas*, 4. ANF, III:599.

⁹¹ Hippolytus, *Against Noetus*, 14. ANF, V:228.

reason, and by the Spirit of His mouth sanctifies all things which are worthy of sanctification.”⁹²

Origen (again): “But in our desire to show the divine benefits bestowed upon us by Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, which Trinity is the fountain of all holiness.”⁹³

Gregory Thaumaturgus of Neo-Caesarea (205–270): “All [the persons] are one nature, one essence, one will, and are called the Holy Trinity; and these also are names subsistent, one nature in three persons, and one genus [kind].”⁹⁴

As these selections demonstrate, the ante-Nicene fathers frequently employed trinitarian language to describe the nature and work of God. On the one hand, they declared themselves to be monotheists, who believed in the one and only God. On the other hand, they clearly affirmed that the one God has eternally existed as three distinct Persons, each of whom is equally and fully God.

Creedal Articulation

It is important to stress that the patristic evidence considered above is from the ante-Nicene period of church history—long *before* Constantine and the Council of Nicaea. It thus becomes obvious that the councils and creeds of the fourth century did not invent Trinitarian doctrine. They simply *affirmed* and *articulated* that which had been established in Scripture and taught by those Christian leaders in the generations before them.

But this raises an important question: If belief in the Trinity was well-attested before the fourth century, why did it take so long for the church to develop an official creed in which the doctrine of the Trinity was clearly articulated? The answer is due, at least in part, to the imperial persecution Christians faced during the ante-Nicene period. With the ushering in of religious freedom, beginning under Constantine in AD 313, church leaders were finally given the opportunity to convene in empire-wide councils. That freedom allowed them to articulate a creedal formulation regarding the doctrine of the Trinity, a necessary response to the attack leveled against the deity of Christ by Arius and his followers.⁹⁵

At the Council of Nicaea in AD 325, Christian theologians from across the Roman Empire (and even a few from outside its boundaries) came together to address the teachings of Arius, which had been denounced as heretical at an earlier synod of Egyptian bishops in AD 318. The bishops who attended the council overwhelmingly

⁹² Origen, *De Principiis*, 1.3.7. *ANF*, IV:255.

⁹³ *Ibid.*, 1.4.2. *ANF*, IV:256.

⁹⁴ Gregory Thaumaturgus, *On the Trinity*. *ANF*, VI:48.

⁹⁵ James R. White, *The Forgotten Trinity* (Minneapolis: Bethany House, 1998), 178. White notes that, “The end of persecution brought an almost immediate refocusing of the church’s attention upon the issues of the Trinity and the deity of Christ. Indeed, the first major council of the church, called by Emperor Constantine in Nicaea in A. D. 325, addressed the issue of the nature of Christ a scant dozen years after the persecutions ended.”

denounced Arianism and affirmed the Nicene Creed. It is important to again emphasize that the Council of Nicaea did not *determine* or *establish* the doctrine of Christ's deity. It simply affirmed and defended a doctrine that had always been taught by the church going back to the time of the apostles.

Antagonists and skeptics may claim that the deity of Christ was invented at the Council of Nicaea, but those allegations fall flat. For example, *The Da Vinci Code* asserts that Christ's deity was determined by "a relatively close vote" at Nicaea. But that is simply not true. As has been demonstrated, the doctrine of the deity of Christ is established in Scripture. Moreover, the affirmation of His deity was overwhelmingly recognized by those who participated in the Council of Nicaea. Of the 318 bishops who attended, 316 ultimately signed the Nicene Creed.

The trinitarian language of the Nicene Creed could not be more clear: "We believe in one God, the Father Almighty, Maker of all things visible and invisible; and in one Lord Jesus Christ, the Son of God, begotten of the Father, the only-begotten, that is, from the essence of the Father, God of God, light of light, very God of very God, begotten not made, being of one essence with the Father, through whom all things came into being, things in heaven and things on earth, who for us men and for our salvation came down and became incarnate, becoming man, He suffered and rose again on the third day, ascended to the heavens, and will come again to judge the living and the dead; and in the Holy Spirit."

Though the victory at Nicaea had been overwhelming, the controversy with Arianism still raged in the Roman Empire over the next 50 years. During this time, church leaders like Athanasius and the Cappadocian Fathers (Basil of Caesarea, Gregory of Nyssa, Gregory of Nazianzus), stood firm in their defense of biblical truth. In addition to emphasizing the deity of Christ (the doctrine that had been the focus of Nicaea), they also emphasized the deity and personhood of the Holy Spirit. In 381, at the Council of Constantinople, Arianism was fully and finally defeated within the Roman Empire. A modified version of the Nicene Creed was also adopted, one in which more detail was given regarding the Person and work of the Holy Spirit. Later creeds, such as the Athanasian Creed exhibited this same Trinitarian emphasis.

Conclusion

Properly framed, a study of the doctrine of the Trinity in early church history begins with the recognition that both the oneness and threeness of God are theological realities which are established in Scripture. Thus, the Bible alone provides the authoritative basis for belief in the Trinity, and in the closely-related doctrine of Christ's deity.

The witness of church history clearly affirms that biblical truth. The ante-Nicene church fathers acknowledged that there is only one God. Yet, they also taught that the Godhead consists of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit—three distinct Persons each of whom is God. Though these Christian leaders lived before the time of Nicaea, and thus sometimes used terminology that may sound slightly different than that found in the Nicene Creed, they affirmed the fundamental truths on which

Trinitarianism rests. When trinitarian doctrine came under attack in the fourth century, the church rose to defend the truth against Arian error. Political factors at that time made it possible for an ecumenical council to be convened—the result of which was a clear articulation, in creedal form, of the trinitarian doctrine that the church had always held going back to the time of the apostles.

Though some critics and skeptics may claim that the Trinity was invented in the fourth century, nothing could be further from the truth.⁹⁶ Even a brief survey of the ante-Nicene patristic literature (like that included in this article) demonstrates that trinitarian beliefs were held by Christians long before the Council of Nicaea.⁹⁷ As church historian Roger Olson rightly observes, “A few groups flatly deny the doctrine of the Trinity as false and perhaps an invention of certain church fathers unduly influenced by the Roman emperor Constantine. But church history proves these groups wrong. The very earliest church fathers believed in the Trinity, and the Trinity is strongly implied in Scripture. In fact, there’s no way to make sense of Scripture without it!”⁹⁸

⁹⁶ Fred von Kamecke, *Busted: Exposing Popular Myths about Christianity* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2009), 161. Kamecke writes, “Was the Trinity invented? No. Rather, it was the inevitable response of the church’s experience with God. He’s the One who revealed himself to us in this mysterious manner, a fact borne out by the Scriptures. The word ‘Trinity’ never appears, but the reality to which the term points is everywhere evident. Since it is a concept so deeply imbedded in the Scriptures, it is God himself who is responsible for it. This is the eternal, unchanging nature of this incredible God.”

⁹⁷ J. Ed Komoszewski, M. James Sawyer, Daniel B. Wallace, *Reinventing Jesus* (Grand Rapids: Kregel, 2006), 116: “It is impossible for Constantine to have invented the deity of Christ when that doctrine is already found in manuscripts that predate him by a century or more.”

⁹⁸ Roger E. Olson, *Finding God in the Shack* (Downers Grove, IL: IVP, 2009), 144–45.

BIBLIOGRAPHY OF WORKS ON THE TRINITARIAN THEOLOGY

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The Master's Seminary Faculty Lecture Series for 2013 dealt with the subject of the Trinity or Triunity of God. The lectures delved into specialized aspects of trinitarian theology not the major biblical and theological arguments related to trinitarianism. Part One of this bibliography fills that void with a listing of the key systematic theologies. Millard Erickson is, in our opinion, the most readable and thorough dealing with the main theological positions. Charles Hodge is a classic work; however, if one does not have facility in ecclesiastical Latin its value diminishes. Chafer is also thorough and detailed, being strong in his inductive method.

This bibliography is certainly not exhaustive but designed rather to stimulate the reader to further study and serve as a starting point in research.

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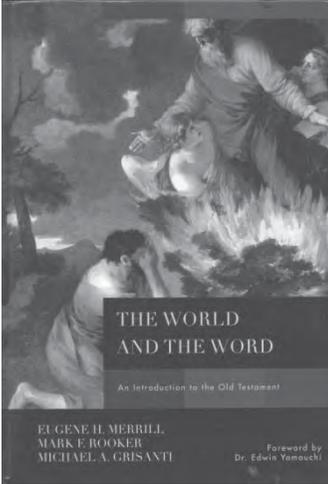
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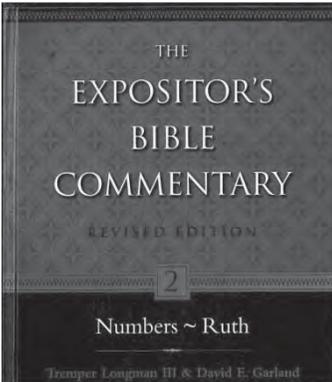
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REVIEWS

Richard C. Barcellos. *Better Than the Beginning: Creation in Biblical Perspective*. Palmdale, CA: Reformed Baptist Academic Press, 2013. 173 pp. (paper) \$16.00.

Reviewed by William D. Barrick, Professor of Old Testament.

Barcellos serves as pastor of Grace Reformed Baptist Church in Palmdale, CA. His published writings include *The Family Tree of Reformed Biblical Theology: Geerhardus Vos and John Owen, Their Methods of and Contributions to the Articulation of Redemptive History* (Reformed Baptist Academic Press, 2010), *The Lord's Supper as a Means of Grace: More Than a Memory* (Christian Focus, forthcoming), and *In Defense of the Decalogue: A Critique of New Covenant Theology* (Winepress Publishing, 2001). In his critique he itemizes some of the positive characteristics of New Covenant Theology: a high view of Scripture, respect for divine sovereignty, diligence to comprehend biblical covenants, engaging the issues of continuity and discontinuity between OT and NT, an insistence that theology be grounded in exegesis, and an endeavor to fathom the implications of “the redemptive-historical effects of Christ’s death” (*Defense*, 13) for NT theology. *Better Than the Beginning* exhibits these same characteristics.

Barcellos delves into the theological necessity for and implications of God’s instant creation of all things in accord with the Genesis 1 account. Many theologians, including some young earth creationists, miss or neglect these theological matters. This volume focuses the reader’s attention on such concepts as a “Son-tilted” (31) creation as part of the trinitarian implications of biblical creationism (Chapters 2–3; 15–39). These two chapters comprise some of the best that this volume has to offer its readers. Next, the author turns to the revelatory function of creation (Chapters 4–5; 41–67). Readers will be left wondering why Barcellos has not developed the Trinitarian implications more fully and asking why he did not seek to interact with other evangelical statements of the nature and purpose of natural revelation. For the latter topic, he could have entered into an examination of Richard L. Mayhue’s essay in *Coming to Grips with Genesis: Biblical Authority and the Age of the Earth* (“Is Nature the 67th Book of the Bible?” Master Books, 2008. 105–29).

In his treatment of both the image of God in man and the supposed existence of a covenant of works with Adam, Barcellos gives no indication of being aware of the views of a fellow Reformed theologian, Anthony A. Hoekema. Hoekema has much to offer with regard to the definition and the implications of the image of God. He also argues against a covenant of works (*Created in God's Image*. Eerdmans, 1986. 118–21). Failing to exegete the context, Barcellos appeals to Isa 24:5–6 as biblical support for a covenant of works (115–16). Isaiah speaks of the same covenant and the same element of curse as that found in Deuteronomy 27–29 (as well as Lev 26), not the curse of Genesis 3. Notably, the Hebrew word for “curse” in Isaiah 24:6 (קָלָה, *qālā*) occurs in Deuteronomy 29–30 six times, but not once in Genesis 1–11. Gary V. Smith (*Isaiah 1–39*, NAC. B&H, 2007:416–18) lays out strong arguments for the covenant being the Mosaic. Other commentators identify the covenant as the Noahic, not an Adamic, covenant. Barcellos neither exegetes the text nor does he respond to the commentators. Inadequate exegesis also leads Barcellos to adhere to replacement theology in which the church is the “fulfillment of the eschatological Israel” (154). With a strong set of arguments against replacement theology available in Michael J. Vlach’s *Has the Church Replaced Israel?: A Theological Evaluation* (B&H, 2010), Barcellos should have at least supported his view with substantial argumentation or given an answer to the detailed arguments and exegetical analysis offered by Vlach.

Unfortunately, this volume fails to represent very much that might be categorized as personal research, either academically or exegetically. At times it is nothing more than an exposition of the works of other scholars and much that appears to be borrowing from those works. For example, Chapters 5–6 (55–78) depend heavily upon Phillip E. Johnson’s *Defeating Darwinism by Opening Minds* (IVP, 1997). Chapter 7 (79–88) leans upon Robert L. Reymond’s *A New Systematic Theology of the Christian Faith* (Thomas Nelson, 1998), and Chapter 9 (105–21) refers repeatedly to G. K. Beale’s *The Temple and the Church’s Mission* (IVP, 2004). To be fair, we all would do well to give proper attribution for our fruitful concepts when we have plucked them from another author’s orchard. However, we must also show diligence to advance the concept on our own and to demonstrate principles of sound exegetical research—viz., a detailed analysis of the biblical text itself.

Despite any shortcomings in this volume, this reviewer still found *Better Than the Beginning* a good read. Barcellos writes about much with which we agree (e.g., young earth creationism and trinitarian participation in creation). Readers who desire a simplified approach without much depth will benefit from this book. Some readers will find it more profitable to go directly to the major sources upon which Barcellos leans so heavily.

Daniel I. Block. *Deuteronomy*. New International Application Commentary. Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2012. 890 pp. (cloth) \$39.99.

Reviewed by Michael A. Grisanti, Professor of Old Testament.

Daniel Block is Gunther E. Knoedler Professor of Old Testament at Wheaton College. Having taught at various institutions, Dr. Block has influenced numerous

students through his teaching and writing ministry. This volume is part of a well-known series, the NIV Application Commentary. Each volume in this series seeks to intentionally connect the interpretation of the original meaning of Scripture with its contemporary application. Every section or passage is treated according to three headings. First, “Original Meaning” considers the meaning of the passage in its original context. Second, “Bridging Contexts” seeks to build a bridge between the ancient setting and the contemporary context, focusing on *timely* as well as *timeless* aspects of the passage. Finally, “Contemporary Significance” focuses on how the passage clearly applies to the modern audience.

Block sets forth three purposes that guided his writing of this commentary (15):

- Understanding the text
- Integrate the theological message of Deuteronomy with the rest of the OT
- Provide preliminary guidance on the relevance of the message of biblical texts for today

He reminds his readers that he writes as one under and not above the inerrant Scriptures:

While the Word of God is authoritative and reliable, our comments on the Scriptures are always in soft lead pencil, subject to correction, modification, and even erasure (16).

Block arranges the majority of the book according to Moses’ three addresses/sermons: 1:1–4:43; 4:44–29:1; and 29:2–30:20. The last section (31:1–34:12) focuses on issues relating to the death of Moses and transition of national leadership to Joshua. Although he provides an outline for the entire book of Deuteronomy (43–48), the commentary is not arranged according to that outline, but is divided up into numerous pericopes or sections. Each section is arranged according to the three headings mentioned above.

Although Block regards Moses as the “author” of Deuteronomy (or the bulk of the book), the “present narrative stitching” (30) was added later. The book reached its present form by the time of King David (31–33).

Out of numerous helpful observations that Block makes in his commentary, here are just a few highlights. Block refers to the covenant customarily called the Mosaic Covenant as the “Israelite Covenant” (59n2). This correctly affirms that the nation of Israel, and not Moses, was the covenant partner for this covenant.

One of the strongly debated theological points in Deuteronomy and Joshua deals with the issue of the genocide of the Canaanites demanded by Yahweh as part of Israel’s taking possession of the land of promise. Block provides several truths that seek to explain the divinely mandated dispossession and/or extermination of the Canaanites (98–99). When discussing the genocide of the Canaanites presented in Deut 7 (*herem*), Block asserts that the primary focus of this divinely mandated conduct is “not ethnic elimination, but ethical scrupulosity” (206). The character of God serves as the important issue. In his discussion of Deuteronomy 20, he offers ten

points that together explain the justification for God's demand of the eviction or extermination of all Canaanites from the land of promise (482–86). He emphasizes that the genocide requirement by Yahweh was not an act of malice, but is in full accord with his righteous character. He also explains the theology behind the warfare against the Canaanites as well as God's demand for Israel's loyalty—the Promised Land is a stewardship from God that is part of His relationship with them as a people (making use of a triangle image) (218):



Also, in his introduction to the specific stipulations section (12:1–26:15), Block compares the structure of that section to Exod 20:22–23:19, suggesting that both have an ABA structure (Principles of worship, casuistic and apodictic laws, principles of worship, 301–2). Unlike several scholars, Block does not arrange these specific stipulations according to the Ten Commandments.

In addition to Block's numerous helpful observations, there are several inconsistencies and interpretive concerns. His outline for the book (43) is not followed consistently, failing to match the outline for chapter 5 (152–57). In his book outline 4:44–5:1a is the first section of Moses' second address and 5:1b begins a large section (5:1b–26:19). He merges these two sections into one pericope for his commentary. Notably he rejects the distinction between the Abrahamic and Israelite covenants as unconditional and conditional respectively (134). He mistakenly refers to 5:22 as the reference for the 9th and 10th commandments; while, according to his view, it is 5:21 (160). Block also follows the traditional Catholic arrangement of the Ten Commandments—regard in verses 7–10 as one commandment and divides verse 21 into two commandments—based on discourse linguistic grounds (161). He does not justify it in the commentary but points to an essay he wrote (“Reading the Decalogue Right to Left,” in *How I Love Your Torah, O Lord: Studies in the Book of Deuteronomy* [Eugene, OR: Wipf and Stock, 2011], 56–60).

Block seems to regard the Ten Commandments as normative for today, including the Sabbath (172–74). In his discussion of the “Bridging Contexts” section for Deuteronomy 12, Block explains the normative significance of the slaughtering regulations. He connects the ban on eating blood back to Gen 9:4, suggesting that the decision at the Jerusalem Council in Acts 15:20 shows that the early church leaders “recognized the permanence and supra-Israelite validity of the ban on blood, binding Gentile Christians to this ordinance” (320). Based on that, he correctly concludes that the sanctity of all life transcends the Torah of Deuteronomy and ethnic Israel. In light

of that, Block infers that the ban on blood continues into the current time. However, he never spells out how this is to be practiced in a church setting. Also, several scholars (e.g., John Polhill, *Acts*, NAC [Nashville: Broadman & Holman Publishers, 1995], 331, and several others) don't view Acts 15:20 as establishing a permanent ban on blood. These scholars view the statement by the Jerusalem Council on meat with blood as one of four recommendations that would guide Gentile Christians who associate with Jewish Christians in order to avoid unnecessary offense.

Also, in relationship to animals, Block makes the statement that "Christians need to be in the forefront of efforts to ensure the ethical treatment of animals from birth to death" (322). Though it seems evident from Deuteronomy that animals are to be treated ethically, it does not follow that Christians need to be promoting and pursuing ethical treatment for animals as a concentrated goal. Block's recommendation in this regard is unclear at best.

Finally, Block identifies the church as the "eschatological new Israel of God" (41, 397, 588, 620, 640). Based on other writings by Block, he does not embrace covenant theology, but he does see the church as somehow functioning as Israel in the current time frame.

Regardless of these concerns, Block's commentary provides many great insights in the meaning and theology of the book of Deuteronomy. His high view of God and understanding of the Mosaic Law as God's grace gift to Israel contributes to his understanding of Deuteronomy. Block writes his commentary with clarity and humility. His commentary should occupy the shelves in libraries of all biblical scholars.

Dave Brunn. *One Bible, Many Versions: Are All Translations Created Equal?* Downers Grove, IL: IVP Academic, 2013. 205 pp. (paper) \$16.00.

Reviewed by William D. Barrick, Professor of Old Testament.

Dave Brunn spent twenty years as a missionary among the Lamogai people of Papua New Guinea. He worked in Bible translation, literacy training, and church planting with New Tribes Mission. In 1996 he and his translation team completed the Lamogai New Testament. Now he serves as Dean of Academics for the Missionary Training Center (New Tribes Mission USA) in Missouri. *One Bible, Many Versions* arose out of his involvement in Bible translation ministries and disunity in the Christian church over translation methodologies. He offers this volume as a means to begin a more civil dialogue regarding Bible translation. With that in mind, Brunn focuses on the similarities between Bible versions. As he puts it, "Rather than describing dissimilar Bible versions as mutually contradictory, I aim to demonstrate that they are often mutually complementary—even mutually dependent" (17).

In the opening chapter of *One Bible, Many Versions* ("Unity and Division: Two Opposite Byproducts of God's Word," 19–36) Brunn utilizes ten different tables of comparisons to demonstrate that the *New American Standard Bible* (NASB) contains many examples of thought-for-thought translation as opposed to word-for-word translation. The most extensive of these tables runs for six pages (24–29) with over

ninety specific examples from both the Old Testament (OT) and New Testament (NT). The word-for-word (or, essentially literal) comparisons appear in the *King James Version* (KJV), *New King James Version* (NKJV), *English Standard Version* (ESV), *New International Version* (NIV), and *Holman Christian Standard Bible* (HCSB). Readers might be surprised that the NASB, which has long been considered one of the leading literal or word-for-word English versions would exhibit so many examples of thought-for-thought translation. In reality, the same type of table can be produced showing thought-for-thought translation in the KJV, NKJV, ESV, NIV, and HCSB versions. (The author does not limit this volume's analyses to these six English versions, although this chapter focuses on them alone.) Shorter tables prove that literal versions other than NASB also display instances of thought-for-thought translation (30–33). Brunn reminds readers that his tables are nowhere near exhaustive and represent only a fraction of the evidence (24, 30). The results of such studies reveal, “that not only are literal versions not always literal, but sometimes the notably nonliteral versions are more literal than the so-called literal ones” (31).

Chapter Two (“Form and Meaning: Innocent Bystanders at the Center of the Debate,” 37–60) takes a closer look at the process of translation. Brunn describes the difficulties involved in dealing with biblical language idioms and figures of speech and the fact that there can rarely be a direct transfer of wording from one language to another. Figures and tables help the readers to understand the translation process and how the various English versions (both literal and non-literal) have handled specific examples. Brunn's analysis shows, among other things, that “the NIV translators found creative ways to communicate the meaning while including some aspects of the literal figure of speech” (55). This result is of interest because of the common perception that the NIV tends to be more dynamic than literal overall.

Next, Brunn turns to the issue of translation philosophies in Chapter Three (“Ideal and Real: Where Theory Meets Practice,” 61–70). Regardless of the intent and purpose of individual Bible translation projects, translators fluctuate in their treatments of specific words and phrases and intentionally vary the degree of literalness they seek. Brunn describes how the most literal of Bible translations possesses two ranges: “The ideal range represents the stated objectives of the translators. The real range represents the translation choices that the translators have made in each context” (66).

Since the tension between competing translation philosophies tends to rest on the treatment of individual words, Brunn takes a closer look at words in their meaning in Chapter Four (“What Is a Word?: More, and Less, Than Meets the Eye,” 71–84). The question comes down to whether it is possible to have word-for-word correspondence between a Greek or Hebrew word and an English word. One of the most revered of literal translations, the KJV, for example, translates the Greek noun *charis* with eight different English words: “benefit,” “favour,” “gift,” “grace,” “joy,” “liberality,” “pleasure,” and “thanks” (73). The KJV translators found that even the word for “word” (*logos*) needed twenty-four different English nouns to translate it accurately (74). Context is the big gorilla in the room—context determines the meaning of any word's meaning and results in multiple translations even within a single literal version. In addition to potential word-for-word correspondence, translators must take into account the inflections represented by Greek and Hebrew forms whereby one

word represents multiple concepts due to prefixes and suffixes. Therefore, counting the words in the Greek or Hebrew and trying to match the count in the English (or any language) can never result in a faithfully accurate rendering. Unfortunately, Brunn does not mention the matter of inflection itself in his discussion (81–83). Inflection is such a major part of all three biblical languages (Hebrew, Aramaic, and Greek), that it plays a major role in determining meaning and the necessity of additional words to express the meaning of a single form in the biblical text.

The subsequent chapters of *One Bible, Many Versions* pursue aspects of Bible translation that continue to make a case for a more eclectic approach to the process. Chapter Five (“Criteria for Adjustment: Intentionality Safeguards the Message,” 85–98) examines four key constraints that require translators to “reflect less of the original form” (85).

Chapter Six (“Divine Inspiration: Do Not Judge the ‘Logos’ by Its Cover,” 99–132) takes a closer look at whether the doctrine of the inspiration of Scriptures determines translational philosophy or methodology. One of the most often overlooked evidences in this discussion involves how the Scripture writers themselves translated the Scriptures—especially, how NT writers translated texts from the Hebrew OT into Greek. The questions that Brunn directs toward English translators (101) might equally be addressed to the NT writers. He takes up this very matter in Chapter Eight.

Since Brunn is an experienced overseas Bible translator, he reminds his readers that these issues are not just about which English version they might be using in their American churches or in their private reading. “The Babel Factor: God Speaks in Languages Other Than English” (Chapter 7; 133–46) reveals the significance of the issue to missionary and national Bible translators. Other languages can present challenges far beyond anything posed by English. Thus, Bible translators cannot develop a translation philosophy based solely upon their familiarity with English versions and their handling of the original languages of the Bible.

The history of Bible translation provides additional information to help modern day Christians understand both the difficulties of Bible translation and the necessity for Bible translation. Chapter 8 (“First-Century Translators: Setting Precedents for Future Translators,” 147–58), in this reviewer’s mind, sits as one of the most significant contributions that Brunn offers in this volume. It deals with how the Scripture writers themselves translated from Aramaic and Hebrew into Greek. The topic is deserving of a much longer, book-length examination.

In Chapter Nine (“The Pursuit of Faithfulness: In the Eye of the Beholder,” 159–86) Brunn looks at the controversy concerning Bible translation philosophy that swirled around *Young’s Literal Translation* in the latter part of the nineteenth century. He uses the controversy as a springboard to move the discussion on to areas of methodological balance, injection of interpretation, gender forms, and naturalness of expression. The final chapter (“The Heart of Unity: Embracing God’s Principle of Interdependence,” 187–93) reviews the significant points made by previous chapters and brings the volume to a close.

Without a doubt, *One Bible, Many Versions* places the conversation regarding Bible translation at a new and higher level of sanity and balance. Too often the debate has consisted of one philosophy posturing against another as though the practitioners in each have produced translations that consistently reflect their philosophy. While

demonizing the opposite viewpoint, both continue to turn to their opponents' practices whenever it suits them—or, perhaps more accurately, the context of Scripture compels them. It is time for the posturing and hypocrisy to stop and for a sensibly eclectic process to be recognized as that which most accurately represents the original biblical text.

Also, we need to recognize that the English version wars do not accurately represent the settings and challenges of non-English Bible translation work around the world. There are still too many languages into which the Word of God must be translated for the church to get bogged down in battling over English versions. As the apostle Paul reminds us, “faith *comes* from hearing, and hearing by the word of Christ” (NASB). Evangelism depends upon God’s Word in a language the recipients can understand, so the church must make Bible translation ministries a priority.

Mark S. Gignilliat. *A Brief History of Old Testament Criticism: From Benedict Spinoza to Brevard Childs*. Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2012. 186 pp. (paper) \$16.99.

Reviewed by Kyle C. Dunham, Associate Professor of Old Testament, Virginia Beach Theological Seminary.

Occasionally one discovers a book that fills a genuine gap in Old Testament studies. *A Brief History of Old Testament Criticism* is just such a book. Written primarily for students, yet not overly technical in its presentation, the book targets those interested in the history of biblical scholarship, especially in the challenges and approaches to OT interpretation in the modern era. The author cites his own unfamiliarity during his postgraduate studies with the leading lights of OT scholarship as an impetus behind the book. While both author and title concede brevity of scope (12–13, 169), the book offers an accessible and useful guide to noteworthy post-Enlightenment figures in the field while addressing the factors influencing their intellectual environments. Seminary students and graduates in particular should welcome its arrival.

Mark S. Gignilliat is the Associate Professor of Divinity in Old Testament at the Beeson Divinity School in Birmingham, Alabama. Gignilliat pursued his doctoral studies under Christopher Seitz at the University of St. Andrews, Scotland, writing his dissertation on Paul’s theological interpretation of Isaiah in 2 Corinthians (2005; published as *Paul and Isaiah’s Servants: Paul’s Theological Reading of Isaiah 40–66 in 2 Corinthians 5:14–6:10* [London: T & T Clark, 2007]). The author has written also on Barth’s theological usage of Isaiah (*Karl Barth and the Fifth Gospel: Barth’s Theological Exegesis of Isaiah* [Burlington, VT: Ashgate, 2009]). In addition, he has authored several journal articles on topics related to the theological interpretation of Scripture. The shadow of Brevard Childs, as refracted through Christopher Seitz, looms large in Gignilliat’s work.

Following a short introduction, the book comprises seven chapters, each treating a prominent scholar in the history of modern OT interpretation: (1) Benedict Spinoza (1632–1677); (2) Wilhelm M. L. de Wette (1780–1849); (3) Julius Wellhausen

(1844–1918); (4) Hermann Gunkel (1862–1932); (5) Gerhard von Rad (1901–1971); (6) William F. Albright (1891–1971); and (7) Brevard Childs (1923–2007). Each chapter ends with a brief bibliography for further reading. Gignilliat concludes the book with a postscript addressing some ancillary yet significant matters not discussed in his treatment, such as the work of prominent theological conservatives to counter-vail the tide of historical criticism and the role of creedal commitments vis-à-vis higher criticism, particularly in assessing the nature of Scripture.

Chapter One, entitled “Modernity’s Changing Tide and the Dislocation of Scripture from Revelation” (15–36), surveys the life and intellectual framework of Benedict Spinoza, the Dutch philosopher and precursor to critical methodologies. Although the reader might question Gignilliat’s selection of Spinoza as his starting point (e.g., both the *Dictionary of Biblical Criticism and Interpretation* [ed. Stanley E. Porter (Routledge, 2007)] and *Historical Handbook of Major Biblical Interpreters* [ed. Donald K. McKim (InterVarsity, 1998)] omit separate treatment of Spinoza), the author justifies his commencement here by underscoring Spinoza’s open and relentless efforts to undermine the integrity and authenticity of the Pentateuch, efforts which proved highly influential to succeeding generations. Gignilliat traces how Spinoza rigorously applies Cartesian epistemology to the study of Scripture by appropriation of the “natural light of reason” as the decisive rule or guide to biblical interpretation (27). For Spinoza, reason becomes the ultimate arbiter over what he posits as the dubious claims of the Bible (29).

Chapter Two (“History Becomes Religion”) (37–56) focuses on Wilhelm M. L. de Wette, higher critic and founder of modern biblical criticism. Gignilliat recounts de Wette’s publication of *Beiträge zur Einleitung in das Alte Testament (Contributions to the Introduction of the Old Testament)* as a watershed event in the history of OT interpretation, with its argument that the Pentateuch is late in origin and that the biblical text offers no reliable data on the formation of the nation of Israel. De Wette thus created a rift between approaches to the canonical history of Israel as compared with the empirical history of the nation. Proper engagement of the OT, according to de Wette, must involve critical retrieval of Israel’s history of religion (55).

Chapter Three (“Israel’s History and Literary Sources”) (57–77) treats well-known higher critic Julius Wellhausen (who remains simultaneously, as Smend elsewhere notes, “the most venerated and the most attacked H[ebrew] B[ible] scholar of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries” [*Dictionary of Biblical Interpretation*, 2:630]). As Gignilliat attests, Wellhausen was a man of contrasts: a disciplined, unpretentious, and practical scholar of Scripture on the one hand, and, as rumor has it, something of a sardonic gadfly on the other, fond of swimming on Sunday mornings so as to meet the pious worshipers of Göttingen on their way to church (58). Gignilliat outlines Wellhausen’s thought primarily through interaction with the latter’s *Prolegomena to the History of Israel*. Wellhausen breaks new critical ground here in positing the alleged P source as postexilic in origin, using source criticism as a means of reconstructing the history of Israel. With the exacting application of his source-critical approach, Wellhausen left a permanent stamp on subsequent OT studies; his name became synonymous with his thoroughgoing literary-critical method (76).

Chapter Four (“The Search for Israel’s Religious Experience”) (79–100) surveys German form critic and history-of-religions scholar Hermann Gunkel. Gignilliat argues that “Gunkel’s significance in twentieth-century Old Testament studies cannot

be overstated" (79). Through his form critical work in the Psalms and his ANE comparative work in Genesis, Gunkel set a new trajectory for OT studies. He sought to move scholarship beyond the canonical shape of the Psalms, for example, to focus on the oral, pre-literary stage so as to reconstruct the moods and experiences of Israel's worship patterns. Furthermore, by means of his religious-comparative approach in Genesis, Gunkel sought to collocate Israel's religion within the broader religious movements of her day with a view to reconstructing the religious sentiments that permeate her outlook. Scripture thus becomes, for Gunkel, not only a source for religious reconstruction but a window to shared religious experiences with ancient Israel (98–99).

Chapter Five ("The Old Testament's Living Traditions") (101–22) analyzes the life and work of Gerhard von Rad. Of all the scholars presented, von Rad has perhaps the most interesting personal history, with his experiences in Germany countering the rise of National Socialism, serving the Confessing Church through extensive lecturing and preaching, and, ultimately, fighting as a conscripted German soldier and being captured by the Allies during World War II. Gignilliat outlines von Rad's tradition-historical approach by which he applies form criticism comprehensively to the text of the OT as a means of recovering Israel's religious history (111). Gignilliat notes von Rad's *Old Testament Theology* as a "high-water mark" for the discipline in the twentieth century, with its attention to Israel's own assertions about Yahweh (retrieved by von Rad through tradition-historical criticism) as the locus of OT theology (117–18).

Chapter Six ("Digging Deeply into Israel's History") (123–43) surveys American archaeologist and philologist, William F. Albright. Albright, a meteoric scholar, established a legacy of students and scholarship which sought more or less to confirm the historicity of the Bible externally through archaeology and an investigation of ANE contexts in opposition to the Alt-Noth school, which focused instead on critical analysis of the biblical text (131). Albright sought, in fact, to render biblical history a scientific discipline through the appropriation of historical-positivist methods in archaeology (135). Although, as Gignilliat notes, much of the thinking behind Albright's approach has fallen out of academic favor, his legacy continues through the work of the many students whom he trained.

Chapter 7 ("Confessional and Critical") (145–68) presents Brevard Childs, OT theologian and leading pioneer of the canonical approach. Gignilliat explains the nature of Childs's privileging of the final form of the text as the locus for theological formulation while seeking to remain at the same time appreciative of the findings of historical criticism—a tension frequently noted in assessing Childs. As Gignilliat summarizes: "Childs is critically appreciative of critical approaches to Old Testament interpretation, while in the final analysis he finds critical approaches anemic when attending to the theological character of the Old Testament as Scripture" (157). Still, Gignilliat values Childs's contribution to the field and hails his approach as nothing short of a paradigm shift in OT studies (145).

In his concluding chapter Gignilliat touches briefly upon the contribution of conservative OT scholars in counteracting the claims of historical criticism (169–76). He highlights, for example, the work of Hengstenberg, F. Delitzsch, W. H. Green, and Vos, as well as of evangelicals Archer, Harrison, and Sailhamer, as notable

voices of dissent to the prevailing tide of higher criticism. He notes, too, the question over the role of faith in one's epistemology as a matter of continuing and crucial import in biblical studies. This is worked out particularly for Gignilliat in how one assesses the nature of Scripture as the product of divine and human authorship.

In conclusion, I'll note a few strengths and weaknesses of the work. The principal strength is that Gignilliat has accomplished a feat not often realized in books on higher criticism, namely, to humanize these scholars by sketching their lives and ideas in a way that makes them appear real-to-life. Meanwhile, Gignilliat introduces the reader to major intellectual movements in biblical studies over recent centuries in a comprehensible way that beginning students will appreciate.

The book has a few weaknesses, however. Occasional misspellings (e.g., "Chili" rather than "Chile," 124) and infelicities of style might distract some readers. In addition, some might question the omission of many other significant OT scholars from Astruc to Eichrodt (although the author seeks to forestall this criticism). Along these lines, the book may perhaps be pardoned, given its brevity, for tending to oversimplify the very complex history of OT criticism. As to its larger significance, I would recommend the book to anyone seeking a useful introduction to the historical progression of modern OT criticism. I will, in fact, be using the book in future OT Introduction courses.

Andreas J. Köstenberger and David A. Croteau, eds. *Which Bible Translation Should I Choose?: A Comparison of 4 Major Recent Versions*. Nashville: B&H Academic, 2012. x + 204 pp. (paper) \$14.99.

Reviewed by William D. Barrick, Professor of Old Testament.

Publishers have prepared a number of books over the past twelve to fifteen years detailing the differences between modern English versions. In this issue of *MSJ* readers will also find a review for one of the most recent titles on the topic of Bible translation (see pp. 255-58): Dave Brunn, *One Bible, Many Versions: Are All Translations Created Equal?* (IVP Academic, 2013). Others include Leland Ryken, *Understanding English Bible Translation: The Case for an Essentially Literal Approach* (Crossway, 2009); Robert L. Thomas, *How to Choose a Bible Version*, rev. ed. (Mentor, 2004); Leland Ryken, *The Word of God in English: Criteria for Excellence in Bible Translation* (Crossway, 2002); Roy E. Beacham and Kevin T. Bauder, eds., *One Bible Only?: Examining Exclusive Claims for the King James Bible* (Kregel, 2001); Bruce M. Metzger, *The Bible in Translation: Ancient and English Versions* (Baker Academic, 2001); Paul D. Wegner, *The Journey from Texts to Translations: The Origin and Development of the Bible* (Baker Academic, 1999, 2005); and many more.

In this volume Köstenberger and Croteau first offer "A Short History of Bible Translation" (4-23) in order to provide an informed perspective for dealing with differences between versions. They summarize the early translations of the OT and the entire Bible in non-English languages (4-6) prior to tackling the history of Bible translation in the English language (6-21). Volumes by Metzger and Wegner (see above) cover this history in greater detail, since that is their primary purpose. The

first proper chapter of the volume (“Translation Comparison,” 24–39) consists of a parallel presentation of sixteen biblical passages giving the text for the ESV, NIV, HCSB, and NLT for each (Exod 2:5–6; Ps 1:1; Ezek 18:5–9, 21–24; Matt 5:1–3; Mark 1:40–45; 16:9–20; Luke 17:3; John 1:3–4, 14, 18; 2:25–3:1; 1 Cor 2:1, 13; Gal 5:2–6; Col 2:8–15; 1 Thess 1:3; 1 Tim 2:12; Jude 4–5; and, Rev 3:20). The editors display these passages in parallel paragraphs one after the other, rather than horizontally in parallel vertical columns across two pages as in *The Parallel Four Translation New Testament* (Back to the Bible, 1975) and other such parallel editions. In this reviewer’s opinion, the latter format offers a more conducive arrangement for comparative reading of the texts. The typesetting gymnastics required to accomplish it for publication probably made it less so in the eyes of the editors and/or publisher. Sometimes the parameters for a text seem awkward. For example, why not include at least verse 2 along with Psalm 1:1?

The following chapters consist of key translation personnel presenting their defense of one of the four versions: Wayne Grudem for the ESV (40–77), Douglas Moo for the NIV (78–116), Ray Clendenen for the HCSB (117–56), and Philip Comfort for the NLT (157–85). The original presentations by Grudem, Moo, and Clendenen took place as part of the Fall 2011 *Liberty University Biblical Studies Symposium on Bible Translation* (3). Each contributor explains the principles and philosophy of his particular version and discusses each of the sixteen texts presented in the “Translation Comparison” chapter. In addition, the editors allowed each contributor to select a seventeenth “wild card” text by which they might each offer yet another example of their own individual choice. Grudem selected Rom 3:25 (65–66), Moo chose not to present a wild card, Clendenen opted for 1 John 3:3 (149–51), and Comfort picked John 1:34 (175–76). All readers will find these four contributions very informative and helpful for gaining greater insight into the way translation committees make their decisions.

From time to time in the four contributors’ chapters, the editors provide readers with QR (Quick Response) codes to scan with a mobile device in order to access video clips of the contributor’s presentation addressing the biblical text under discussion (e.g., 51, 89, 147). The editors also identify the URLs where these video clips are available online and where the full-length video of the symposium has been made available (3). Such media-sensitive elements make this volume all the more valuable to readers who take advantage of the benefits.

Grudem, in his defense of the ESV reading in 1 Kings 2:10, champions preservation of cultural integrity in the biblical text (46–47). During my involvement in a number of translation projects in Bangladesh, our team applied the same principle time and time again. One of our national translators pointed out that no one would ever dream of rewriting the classical works of laureate poet Rabindranath Tagore in order to remove the text from its cultural and geographical setting—its setting is integral to its meaning. So, he reasoned, we must preserve the cultural and geographical setting of Scripture, since its ancient Near Eastern setting is also integral to its meaning. To do otherwise would be like converting Jack London’s *The Call of the Wild* into a novel of the Sahara in order to share the story with the Bedouin—it would lose much of its message (including its meaning) in the conversion. We might make the same observation regarding any dynamic equivalent of John Steinbeck’s *The Grapes*

of *Wrath*, if one were to attempt taking it out of its historical setting in the American dust bowl years of the Depression and sharecroppers. If these two literary classics cannot be understood apart from their cultural, historical, and geographical settings, why would anyone want to attempt to divorce the Bible from its backgrounds?

When Moo argues for change in a version's language to maintain accuracy and readability (79), he also strikes a chord. However, we must keep in mind that significant language changes are what truly matter to one's understanding of the biblical text. An oft-used example occurs in the KJV's "gay clothing" in James 2:3. The NIV has done a very good job of making regular revisions—something the other translations would do well to imitate. Consider how the NASB failed for nearly fifty years to correct Ps 14:4 ("Lord" should have been "LORD"—a confusion of divine names). In this age of computer databases, such long-standing errors test the reader's tolerance.

In the HCSB essay, Clendenen explains what that translation's team means by "optimal equivalence" (117–21). Whether or not one agrees with individual decisions within the text of HCSB, their philosophical approach offers a more realistic and balanced approach to Bible translation than the standard explanations of formal equivalence and dynamic equivalence.

The fourth and final essay does not offer a defense of the NLT's translation principles to the same extent as the previous three essays provide for their respective versions. Instead, Comfort focuses on the textual critical issues (157–58), reminding readers that translations can only be as accurate as their original language base. The task of determining which textual critical reading to follow arises in text after text to challenge even the most scholarly translators. Each translation committee should establish standards by which to make such decisions. Unfortunately, individual translators involved in a project sometimes ignore the standards set by the guiding committee and their supervising editors sometimes miss those inconsistencies in the mass of details with which they must deal. Differences in textual critical choices occur because scholars hold to different philosophies or methods of textual criticism (see chart in Wegner's *A Student's Guide to Textual Criticism of the Bible*, IVP Academic, 2006, p. 31, Table 1.1). In an age when even evangelical scholars sometimes feel free to alter the original text just because they find a particular text incomprehensible, Bible translators need to beware of basing textual decisions on their ignorance rather than preserving the text until more clarifying evidence can be discovered.

Köstenberger established Biblical Foundations (www.biblicalfoundations.org) and functions as Senior Research Professor of New Testament and Biblical Theology at Southeastern Baptist Theological Seminary in Wake Forest, NC. He has authored numerous books on a variety of biblical and theological topics that include the following: *Excellence: The Character of God and the Pursuit of Scholarly Virtue* (Crossway, 2011) and *John* (BECNT; Baker Academic, 2004). He and Richard Patterson wrote *Invitation to Biblical Interpretation: Exploring the Hermeneutical Triad of History, Literature, and Theology* (Invitation to Theological Studies; Kregel Academic, 2011) and he joined with L. Scott Kellum and Charles L. Quarles in writing *The Cradle, the Cross, and the Crown: An Introduction to the New Testament* (B&H Academic, 2009). Köstenberger also serves as the editor of *JETS* and as Director of Acquisitions for B&H Academic.

Croteau serves as Professor of New Testament and Greek at Columbia International University Seminary and School of Ministry in Columbia, SC. He has published *You Mean I Don't Have to Tithe?: A Deconstruction of Tithing and a Reconstruction of Post-Tithe Giving* (McMaster Theological Studies; Wipf & Stock, 2010) and co-authored *Perspectives on Tithing: Four Views* with Scott Preissler, Ken Hemphill, Bobby Eklund, Reggie Kidd, and Gary North (Perspectives; B&H Academic, 2011) and *Learn to Read New Testament Greek—Workbook: Supplemental Exercises for Greek Grammar Students* with Ben Gutierrez and Cara L. Murphy (B&H Academic, 2009).

Everyone who desires to make a good choice of an English version for pulpit, pew, and/or personal use needs to read *Which Bible Translation Should I Use?* and digest its contents. This volume might cause some of its readers to select a version outside these four, based upon the knowledge they gain within its pages, so it serves a broader selection than just these four versions.

John MacArthur. *One Perfect Life: The Complete Story of Jesus*. Nashville: Thomas Nelson, 2012. 516 pp. (cloth) \$29.99.

Reviewed by Gregory H. Harris, Professor of Bible Exposition.

In *One Perfect Life*, John MacArthur offers this as part of the rationale for his new book:

Through twenty-five years of preaching these four [gospel] accounts, I have always started with the text being preached, paragraph by paragraph, and blended in parallel accounts from the other gospels. My aim was to pull together the full story known and show how each part of Matthew's gospel, for example, fit perfectly with the record in Mark or Luke; or, in the case of John, to demonstrate where his history fits and how it perfectly supplements the synoptic gospels. These four separate records can be reasonably harmonized, and any alleged discrepancies exist only in the minds of unbelieving critics, and not in the actual texts themselves. When all the details from the accounts are known, the full story is clear and divine authorship affirmed (14).

Using Matthew's gospel as the base text, making "the details from the accounts known" is one of the major driving forces behind this work:

When *The MacArthur Study Bible* was first published in 1997, we included "A Harmony of the Gospels" in outline form set in separate column, side by side, as harmonies have generally been arranged in the past. This volume, on the other hand, takes those separate accounts and blends them into one continuous narrative. All the details from the four gospels have been included without repeating exact parallel statements (14).

One Perfect Life can be read almost in the way one would read a book or a novel. However, what differs here is that all the text is blended Scripture verses from the holy Word of God. Each section develops some aspect of the life of Jesus and its eternal importance and does so in a very readable format. Footnotes from *The MacArthur Study Bible* are placed at appropriate places that may require a little more explanation than the text gives.

The book divides into eleven major sections with each section having subsequent subheadings whose total number is 215. The first sections contain passages that lead up to Jesus' first advent and early ministry: Part I: "Anticipating the Lord Jesus Christ" (subheadings 1–7), Part II: "The Beginning of the Gospel of Jesus Christ" (subheadings 8–21), and Part III: "The Beginning of Jesus' Ministry" (subheadings 22–27).

The Passover becomes the dividing point in much of the book for the life of Jesus: Part IV: "From Passover AD 27 to Passover AD 28" (subheadings 28–43), Part V: "From Passover AD 28 to Passover AD 29" (subheadings 44–76), and Part VI: "From Passover AD 29 to Passover AD 30" (subheadings 77–135). As would be expected, the final Passover where Jesus will die has its own major divisions: Part VII: "The Final Journey to Jerusalem for Passover AD 30" (subheadings 136–43), Part VIII: "The Passion Week of Messiah AD 30" (subheadings 144–65), and Part IX: "The Upper Room on the Night Before His Death" (subheadings 166–80). *One Perfect Life* concludes with Part X: "The Crucifixion, Resurrection and Ascension" (subheadings 181–209), and Part XI: "New Testament Reflections on the Gospel of Jesus Christ" (subheadings 210–15).

Just a couple of side notes to be aware of: first, due to the nature and size of the study, the footnotes are in a very small font. For some elderly people or others with vision impairments, a magnifying glass may prove helpful. Second, the book is only available in the *New King James Version*.

One Perfect Life has multiple uses. First, this could be used as a daily devotional for those wanting a greater knowledge and deeper appreciation of the life and work of Jesus the Messiah. Each subheading is of the appropriate size to cover in one reading if so desired, or multiple sections can be read. Secondly, this book could be used as a Sunday School class or group Bible study. Using the format from the book, with a subheading covered every week; this would be a three to four year study—but well worth it.

Finally, I think one of the greatest uses of *One Perfect Life* is that of an extended gospel tract for someone who is unsaved. This would be a good book to hand to someone you know who is not saved but curious about Jesus, or to give to someone who may even have no outer showing of any interest in Jesus. Many people have been saved over the centuries by reading the Word of God, and this presents Jesus in a high and exalted manner and very readable manner. MacArthur, in his Introduction, acknowledges this intentional evangelistic use:

For unbelievers, the full vision of the Lord Jesus is the supreme means by which they are saved. John said this about His gospel and the three that came before: "These things are written that you may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and that believing you may have life in His name." (John 20:31). May God use it to that end (15).

Appropriately, the final subheading of *One Perfect Life* (#215) is entitled, "Today Is the Day of Salvation." May this wonderfully helpful book be so used by the Lord, and may those already saved who read it "grow in the grace and knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ" (2 Pet 3:18).

Eugene H. Merrill, Mark F. Rooker, Michael A. Grisanti. *The World and the Word: An Introduction to the Old Testament*. Nashville, TN: B & H Academic, 2011. xv + 606 pp. (cloth) \$44.99.

Reviewed by Irvin A. Busenitz, Vice President for Academic Administration, Professor of Bible and Old Testament.

The volume is a collaborative effort, written by men who have distinguished themselves in the study of the Hebrew Scriptures. Dr. Merrill teaches at both Dallas Theological Seminary and Southern Baptist Theological Seminary, while Dr. Rooker serves at Southeastern Baptist Theological Seminary and Dr. Grisanti at The Master's Seminary. The goal of these authors is to fill a "unique and necessary" niche for graduate-level theological education (561) and make an extensive contribution to this most important area of OT studies.

The book is divided into seven parts. The opening section focuses on the world of the OT, providing "the geographical, historical, and cultural context in which they originated" (7). Part 2 deals with the text of the OT: its canonicity, transmission, and textual criticism, while Part 3 provides an overview of the various approaches to OT study and the issues that dominate contemporary OT scholarship. Parts 4–7 fall under the category of "special introduction," the study of matters relative to each OT book such as authorship, date, genre, etc.

Prior to the opening chapter, the book introduces a timeline of biblical and world history. Within the biblical timeline, they provide two options: an "earlier dating system," highlighting a fifteenth century BC Exodus and a "later dating system" that embraces a thirteenth century BC Exodus. Later, the writers make it clear that they embrace the early date (194–207).

The authors begin by laying a foundation for understanding the OT (13–52). After providing an in-depth overview of the OT world (13–16), Merrill gives an excellent glimpse into its historical milieu (17–40). Grisanti's treatment of ANE literature (53–71) is most helpful in understanding their cultural and religious practices such as myths, legends, the Gilgamesh Epic, and the Hammurabi Code, highlighting their relationship to the biblical record.

The writers give considerable attention to the composition of the OT (77–92), and in doing so openly tackle some difficult issues. One of those matters is the apparent evidence of later textual "Scribal or Editorial Updating" (83–89). Two texts discussed: the account of Moses' death (Deut 34:5–12) and the place name "Dan" (Gen 14:14; Judg 18:29). Grisanti concludes that "within the canonical process, and subsequent to the initial writing of a biblical book or books, a God-chosen individual under superintendence of the Holy Spirit could adjust, revise, or update pre-existing

biblical material in order to make a given Scripture passage understandable to succeeding generations. Those revisions, which occurred within the compositional history of the OT, are also inspired and inerrant” (85). To arrive at this conclusion, he places a distinction between “autograph,”—that which comes directly from an author’s hand or mouth, and “autographa,”—that which “refers to the final form of the OT” (85). While Grisanti does mention opposing viewpoints, such as Leon Wood, H. C. Leupold, and Gleason Archer (87), he does not detail their position; rather, the discussion is given almost exclusively to defending his position. He concludes that God “saw fit to employ inspired redactors to integrate into the sacred text necessary linguistic, geographic, and other alterations to guarantee ongoing understanding of His Word by the generations of His people throughout the thousand years of OT transmission” (91).

Merrill’s discussion on canonicity is also helpful and complete. He reviews the historical debates in church history and surveys the various canons that emerged, including the Jewish, LXX, Greek Orthodox, Roman Catholic and Protestant canons. He concludes that “it is impossible for the modern vantage point to discern the currents at work in the ancient world to achieve canonical consensus. But it is theologically imperative that the modern church recognize that the consensus was God-driven and that the OT Scriptures that we hold in our hands is the very Word of God fully and in all its parts” (107). Rooker follows with a helpful overview of the transmission and textual criticism of the OT (108–21), focusing on the early versions of the text together with the development, practice and process of textual criticism.

Chapters Eight and Nine give a survey of how scholars have approached OT study from the eighteenth century to the present. Various methods, such as form, canonical, historical, literary and narrative criticism, ignited by the Enlightenment mentality, are noted. Though somewhat brief, Merrill provides a good review and analysis of the well-known Documentary Hypothesis, showing how it led to form criticism and redaction criticism (among others). Grisanti then follows with an overview of diachronic and synchronic methodologies, concluding that “observations made by proponents of these methodologies as well as the methodologies themselves offer little assistance to the evangelical interpreter” (162).

The bulk of this volume (parts 4–7) is given to Special Introduction—a treatment of the OT books individually. Attention is focused on specifics such as title, canonicity, composition, genres, structure, and key interpretive issues. Grisanti discusses the authorship of Genesis and the nature of creation (theistic evolution, old-earth creationism, young-earth creationism), capped by a helpful overview of its theological message. He has an excellent treatment of the date of the Exodus, concluding that the interpretations of 1 Kings 6:1, Judges 11:26, and archaeological evidence point to an early date (194–207). Discussion of Joseph’s arrival in Egypt is treated earlier by Merrill, who contends that Joseph arrived in Egypt before the Hyksos (1720–1570 BC): “If anything is clear, it is that the Israelite patriarchs lived and labored in a native Egyptian environment” (24).

In Numbers 1 and 26, four different options are discussed regarding the large census numbers. Grisanti concludes that “until there arises a solution that has fewer problems than it creates, it is best to maintain a face-value understanding of large numbers in the OT and, at the same time, make sure that students understand the problems that face this view” (246). Regarding Moses’ farewell sermon, Merrill

notes briefly the correspondences between Deuteronomy and the Hittite Suzerain-Vassal Treaty form (258–59).

Rooker contends for the unity of Isaiah and Jeremiah, with Isaiah being authored between 739–700 BC by the prophet himself (367–71) and Jeremiah between 627–582 BC (380). His excursus on Isaiah 7:14 concludes that the verse is either a prophecy of Jesus' birth to Mary, without any fulfillment in Isaiah's day or a prophecy that sees an immediate fulfillment as well as a later fulfillment in time of Christ (377–78). He points to the "language strata" employed throughout the book and the "occurrence of 14 historical dates attached to the beginning of many of the oracles and prophecies" as important unifying factors (395–96). On the interpretation of Ezekiel 40–48, Rooker outlines three possible explanations. He asserts that "when the nation of Israel returned to Palestine following Cyrus's decree (539 BC) the transformation described in Ezekiel 40–48 did not take place" (403), but fails to provide any conclusion.

Merrill strongly defends the sixth century BC date of Daniel (405–7). After reviewing the arguments for a second century date, he concludes that the issue is "fundamentally not one about the languages, Weltanschauung, or historical reliability of Daniel but its extensive incorporation of predictive prophecy" (407).

Turning to the Minor Prophets, Rooker contends that Hosea "is essentially the work of a single person" (416) living in the 8th century BC and that the account of his marriage to Gomer is not an allegory but actually occurred as written (417). Grisanti deals with a number of issues in Joel. He suggests that "no one can be sure of the date when Joel was written" (424), and argues that "several features support the idea that Joel ... had literal locusts in mind" (425). On Joel 2:28–32 and the Day of Pentecost, Grisanti highlights the various views and concludes that Peter's words in Acts 2:16 present "an initial fulfillment of the Joel passage without precluding or minimizing a yet future and more exhaustive fulfillment in events associated with the return of Christ" (426). Though brief, Rooker has a helpful excursus on the presence of Israel's legal prescriptions in Amos (437–38) centuries before the end of the OT period (contra the position argued by source critical scholars). He suggests that evidence for the date of Obadiah "seems to be more heavily weighted toward the position that the book was written in response to and shortly after the Babylonian exile of 586 BC" (440). Merrill dates Malachi around 475 BC (490–91).

Following Rooker's overview of the nature of Hebrew poetry and wisdom literature (495–99), Grisanti suggests the book of Job is of unknown authorship (500–502) and depicts "a patriarchal setting (and perhaps pre-Abrahamic)" (500). He enumerates the various types of Psalms (515–18), pausing to give an expanded treatment of the Imprecatory Psalms—their nature, purpose, and whether believers can pray them today (518–21). Rooker delves into the authorship of Proverbs and concludes that "it is fair to claim that Solomon was the author of Proverbs 1–29. Perhaps later, contributions of other wisdom teachers such as Agur and Lemuel were added to the Solomonic collection..., thus giving the book its final form" (529). Ecclesiastes is attributed to Solomonic authorship (540) too, as is the Song of Songs (547–48).

Authoring a volume of this magnitude is a significant undertaking. Its breadth and depth is noteworthy, often delving into issues that others often leave untouched. In the Epilogue, Merrill observes:

While matters like text criticism, canonicity, and historical and cultural backgrounds receive scattered attention in some works of this nature, few if any devote entire chapters to comprehensive and cohesive explorations of these very important introductory issues (561).

That is what makes this volume so remarkable and so valuable. Because of its breadth, however, it left this reviewer occasionally wishing for greater depth. There were sections that seemed a bit too brief, such as the relationship of the Hammurabi Code to the Decalogue or the various interpretations of Daniel. The authors, I'm certain, were aware of this and thus conclude each chapter with study questions and recommended resources for further study. While intended for graduate-level inquiry, it is written in a manner the studious pastor and layperson will find useful as well. As such, this evangelical work is certain to become a standard for both pastor and seminary student.

Candida Moss. *Ancient Christian Martyrdom: Diverse Practices, Theologies, and Traditions*. Anchor Yale Bible Reference Library. New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2012. xiv + 256 pp. (cloth) \$40.00.

Candida Moss. *The Myth of Persecution: How Early Christians Invented a Story of Martyrdom*. San Francisco: HarperOne, 2013. 308 pp. (cloth) \$25.99.

Reviewed by Dennis M. Swanson, Vice President for Libraries and Educational Assessment.

Often, one of the first “apologetic” arguments Christians are exposed to are the martyrdom narratives in the early church, that is, the death of early Christians for their faith. Perhaps the most readily recognized in anecdotal apologetics is Christianity must be true (especially details regarding the resurrection and the life of Christ) since people assuredly would not die for what they knew to be false or for a false cause. As Candida Moss states,

For much of the Christian era, martyrdom was viewed as particular to Christianity and as an indication of Christianity's unique possession of religious truth. If Christians alone were prepared to die for their beliefs, it was thought, then there must be something special about Christianity (*Ancient Christian Martyrdom*, 23).

Moss, a graduate from Oxford and doctorate from Yale University, is Professor of New Testament and Early Christianity at Notre Dame. She is also the author of another book on the subject of martyrdom, *The Other Christs: Imitating Jesus in Ancient Christian Ideologies of Martyrdom* (Oxford, 2010).

The two titles reviewed here cover the same material. *Ancient Christian Martyrdom* (ACM) is the more detailed and “scholarly” contribution and is part of the

Anchor Yale Bible Reference Library. Moss has extensive notations and is painstakingly detailed in *ACM*, while *The Myth of Persecution (MP)* is the same material presented in a more popular writing style. *ACM* contains a near-exhaustive bibliography (205–30); however, the bibliographic support for *MP*, while present, must be culled from the notes (263–95) and not in a separate listing, which even in this more “popular” format must be counted as a negative. Both works have very helpful indexes.

As Moss demonstrates, the study of the subject of martyrdom is complex, even in terms of definition. “Originally, *martyrs* referred to the testimony or witness presented by an individual in a trial setting” (*ACM*, 2). However, by the time of Polycarp (AD 69–155), “the meaning of this term had been transformed from a material witness to an executed Christian” (*ACM*, 3). Moss states,

As a history of ideologies of martyrdom, this book will utilize a functional definition of martyrdom that incorporates texts whose protagonists are memorialized as martyrs, even if the texts do not use *martyrs* in a technical sense (*ACM*, 5).

Moss presents her study of martyrdom geographically more for convenience and organization, although she notes the variation of accounts and ideology in the differing regions. “The arrangement of this book [*ACM*] into discrete geographically and sociohistorically grounded ideologies is an attempt to do justice to regional variations of Christianity and should not be taken too literally” (20).

Moss notes, correctly in our view, that while martyrdom accounts were stories that served both an inspirational and apologetic purpose, “Martyrs were ordinary people—slaves, women, and children—as well as bishops and soldiers who had risen above the constraints of their circumstances to display exceptional courage” (*MP*, 19). However, the downside, especially in modern history, is that those same stories in some circles produce an “us vs. them” mentality.

It is this idea, the idea that Christians are always persecuted, that authenticates modern Christian appropriations of martyrdom. It provides the interpretative lens through which to view all kinds of Christian experiences in the world as a struggle between “us” and “them” (*MP*, 13).

Moss begins *MP* by arguing that the “Age of Martyrs” (Christianity before Constantine) is largely an exaggeration. She also makes the important distinction between “prosecution” and “persecution” (*MP*, 14; *ACM*, 9–12) “although prejudice against Christianity was fairly widespread, the prosecution of Christians was rare, and the persecution of Christians was limited to no more than a handful of years” (*MP*, 14). She notes that,

Before Decius, the prosecution of Christians was occasional and prompted by local officials, petty jealousies, and regional concerns. That Christians saw themselves as persecuted and interpreted prosecution in this way is understandable, but it does not mean that the Romans were persecuting them. This interpretation does not match up with the political and social realities: Christians

were ridiculed and viewed with contempt, and they were even sometimes executed, but there weren't the subjects of continual persecution (*ibid.*).

Part of the problem that Moss notes is that modern sensibilities are offended by the harshness of governmental penalties in the ancient world (*MP*, 164–79). For example, Nero accused Christians of causing the great fire of Rome in AD 64, and subsequently burned many Christians alive. “The fact that Nero would have had Christians burned alive, however, was perfectly in keeping not just with Nero’s own penchant for cruelty, but also with the general principles of Roman punishment” (*MP*, 165; see also *ACM*, 77–79). As a comparison, during the American Revolutionary War, George Washington ordered 25 to 50 lashes for soldiers failing to use the proper latrine and execution of soldiers, often with a level of cruelty, for non-treasonous, lesser offenses, was not uncommon.

Moss’ discussion of the “Cultural Contexts: The Good Death and the Self-Conscious Sufferer” (*ACM*, 23–48) is important. “Martyrdom was viewed as particular to Christianity and as an indication of Christianity’s unique possession of religious truth” (*ACM*, 23). She particularly discusses the death of Socrates (*ACM*, 33–37). She notes, “Socrates’s dying on principle in many ways stands [according to his biographers] as guarantor of the truth of his message. His nonchalant and at times joyful approach to death earned him admiration from many quarters, not least from the early Christians” (*ACM*, 35).

In short, unlike some misguided believers in the Ante-Nicene era (*ACM*, 149–55), martyrdom is neither desirable nor to be sought after. More important, while martyrs serve as examples of faithful steadfastness they should not be viewed, biblically speaking, as a category of believers who are somehow spiritually superior (cf. *MP*, 19). Because he avoided a martyr’s death, Myles Coverdale (c. 1488–1569), even though he assisted William Tyndale (c. 1494–1536), produced the first complete English translation of the Bible and worked on two others (The Matthews and Great Bibles), is often viewed in a disparaging manner in comparison to Tyndale. Moss’ discussion of the “Avoidance of Martyrdom” (*ACM*, 155–59) is singularly helpful on this point. In terms of a Biblical example, the apostle Paul is a model in this regard. In Acts 22:24, when faced with a punishment that nearly always resulted in death he exerted his rights to avoid that possibility (compare μάστιξιν ἀνετάζεσθαι “examine by scourging” in Acts 22:24 and ἐκέλευον ῥαβδίξειν “beaten with rods” in Acts 16:22, the latter, while painful, rarely resulted in death or disabling injury, while the former almost always did); but at the end of his life when his death was inevitable he was confident that the Lord would “bring me safely into His heavenly kingdom” (2 Tim 4:18).

These two works are important contributions to the study of martyrdom and the apologetics of the early church. Her observations and conclusions regarding the *non-inspired* texts of the church fathers on this subject will run counter at an emotive level to the popular evangelical understanding of martyrdom; but they are recommended as significant studies and a corrective. The entire concept of martyrdom is difficult, as Moss notes, “it is, perhaps, a cultural script that glorifies comfort and the pursuit of long life at any costs that reads martyrdom as unintelligible” (*MP*, 166).

Her questioning of the historiography of the Biblical accounts and, by implication, the uniqueness of Christ's vicarious and propitious death, should not distract from her underlying arguments and observations. Her thorough examination of the history and realities of martyrdom in the early church requires thoughtful consideration. An evangelical, biblically-based examination of martyrdom is clearly a need in the modern church, which is seeing persecution and killing of Christians (in the broadest sense of that term) rising in many regions and perhaps Moss' work will inspire such an undertaking.

James H. Moorhead. *Princeton Seminary in American Culture and Religion*. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans Publishing, 2012. xxii + 548 pp (cloth) \$60.00.

Reviewed by Dennis M. Swanson, Vice President for Libraries and Educational Assessment.

Begun in 1812, Princeton Theological Seminary is the second oldest seminary in America. Its two libraries (the Speer Library and the Henry Luce III Library) represent the largest theological library collection in the United States, and the second largest in the world (only the Vatican Library has more extensive holdings). Under the leadership of four successive "principals;" Archibald Alexander (1772–1851); Charles Hodge (1797–1878); Archibald Alexander Hodge (1823–86); and Benjamin B. Warfield (1851–1921), the "Princeton Theology" was developed and taught to successive generations of (mainly) Presbyterian and evangelical pastors and educators. While that theology ceased to be the driving force at Princeton after 1929, Princeton, to this day, remains a key institution for theological education and discussion.

To commemorate the bicentennial of Princeton, the author, himself the Mary McIntosh Bridge Professor of Church History at Princeton Theological Seminary, has produced a history that is detailed without being pedantic and immensely readable without falling into a shallow press piece.

This volume has an excellent person/subject index (510–48) and the notations are exceptionally thorough. However, one could wish that a separate bibliography had been included. In such a well-researched work, that David C. Calhoun's two volumes: *Princeton Seminary: Faith and Learning, 1812–1868* (Banner of Truth, 1994) and *Princeton Seminary: The Majestic Testimony, 1869–1929* (Banner of Truth, 1996) should go unreferenced and unmentioned is rather inexplicable, especially given the fact that Moorhead spends about three-fourths of his work covering the period of 1812 to 1936.

Moorhead details the creation of Princeton and the various dynamics that led to the creation of the school with a board and faculty "separate from the college [The College of New Jersey, later Princeton University]" (26) and with an educational model that would not "follow the divinity school route that Harvard and Yale later pursued" (ibid). The creation of Princeton Seminary under Archibald Alexander and Samuel Miller also coincided with major changes at the College of New Jersey (which had experienced both a suspicious fire, student riots, and general unrest from

1802–1807), where Samuel Smith was ousted as president and replaced by Ashbel Green.

The establishment of Princeton sought to provide “learned men” to fill an expanding number of churches as the United States was beginning a major westward expansion (27). The Presbyterian Church established a plan for the seminary that sought to balance the often-competing interests of revivalism, piety, theological fidelity, and scholarship. Moorhead states,

Whatever else the Princetonians were, they first and foremost saw themselves as expositors of God’s Word. But there were never simply men of one book, even a sacred book. Scholars of many books and subjects, they hoped to train their students broadly and believed, as [Archibald] Alexander put it, “there is scarcely any branch of knowledge which may not be made subservient to theology” (xix–xx).

Moorhead arranges the chronological history around the key personalities, mainly the seminary principals. After the chapter on Alexander and Miller (28–62), his chapter “Learning and Piety” (63–98) examines the initial growth and success of the seminary “plan.” Some issues in seminary education seemingly do not change from century to century. Moorhead notes the complaint of Samuel Miller, who in the 1830s lamented that students often came to seminary and discovered,

“the miserable scantiness of their literary and scientific acquisitions” and had the sinking realization that they were not prepared to “enter with intelligence on several departments of theological study” (89).

Those students, instead of applying themselves to “more and deeper studies” (*ibid*) simply went back to their public ministries without completing their studies; there were then, as there are today, many churches all too willing to take on under-prepared preachers and pastors.

One of the most informative sections of this work are the chapters dealing with the events that would eventually lead to the events of 1929, the so-called “re-organization of Princeton Seminary.” In “Hints of Change and Missionary Visions” (282–310), “Curriculum, Conflict, and the Seminary’s Mission” (311–39), and “The Fundamentalist Controversy and Reorganization” (340–69), Moorhead deftly presents and explains the multiple issues that were converging in the decades prior to the re-organization. The three streams of leadership at the seminary: faculty governance, organizational leadership by the board, and the Presbyterian Church’s denominational direction; which had been, by and large, in confluence for the first 100 years began to diverge. Additionally, advancing pedagogical philosophy in higher education began to impact Princeton (312–20).

The first significant change was made in 1902. That year, a “president” appointed by the board (322) replaced the seminary “principal” (a senior faculty member chosen by the faculty). This bifurcated the operations, transferring operational and leadership duties away from the faculty to a separate administration (although in the immediate years after the change the president still regularly taught courses). The

first president, Frances L. Patton, had been maneuvered out as president of Princeton University in a “palace coup” (321) engineered by Woodrow Wilson, who would be named the new university president, then would be elected governor of New Jersey, and later, President of the United States. With Warfield’s death in 1921, faculty dominance in seminary policy and practice quickly began to erode.

“Student petitions” made directly to the board of directors also served to alter the academic landscape in the new century. In 1903 students successfully petitioned for the addition of “English Bible” courses (323) into the curriculum. In 1909 a rather pointed petition complained about professors, “slovenly, dull, and uninspiring” classroom teaching (327). This second petition coincided with a drop in enrollment and led the board to recommend to the faculty several changes. However, Warfield’s power and influence was such that, “the board backed off, adopting rather modest recommendations” (328). Warfield advocated, defending to the end of his life, a rigidly proscribed curriculum with essentially no electives. If one wanted to study specialized subjects in the elective offerings, a student could only do so, “through a four year of education after the required work was completed” (321).

The details of the final reorganization of Princeton in 1929 are largely bound up in the lives of Charles R. Erdman (1866–1960) and J. Gresham Machen (1881–1937). Erdman’s appointment to the faculty in 1905 was not welcome. Moorhead states in particular, “Warfield acted as if the courses of the new professor affronted the integrity of the seminary program” (326). Until his death in 1921 Warfield refused to approve any student majoring in his department of Systematic Theology to pursue a minor in Erdman’s courses. Machen, and particularly his seminal book, *Christianity and Liberalism* (1923), and his ecclesiological views are thoroughly discussed (350–69). In 1923 Machen was called to preach at the First Presbyterian Church in Princeton in a “supply” or interim role when the church was without a pastor (362) and after that he was then followed by Erdman, who ultimately was called to be regular pastor, serving for the next ten years. The personal animosity between the two would carry on beyond the Westminster-Princeton split to the issue of missionary work (395–97), where Erdman was the chairman of the board of foreign missions and Machen was finalizing creation of a new missions board (which siphoned off scarce money from existing denominational work). It was this action, not theology, which led to Machen’s defrocking and ultimately to the formation of a new Presbyterian denomination (396).

The reorganization of Princeton in 1929 led to Machen and several others leaving (although they were all invited to remain) Princeton and forming Westminster Theological Seminary. It was really not a “conservative” vs. “liberal” split, as Moorhead notes, “to a man, they were conservative” (309), although he perhaps is viewing that 1929 spectrum through a 2012 lens. Not all who theologically agreed with Machen joined him in departing. Geerhardus Vos, Caspar Wistar Hodge Jr., and William Park Armstrong, all remained at Princeton.

Given the detail Moorhead dedicates to the years of 1812–1935, the remainder of this work, covering 1935 to 2004 seems a bit skimpy in comparison. However, the final chapters are informative and a fascinating read. As he noted earlier, “at its

founding the seminary's leaders perceived themselves as standing between the extremes of radical Enlightenment and unlettered piety" (281). Moorhead's narrative shows that the fulcrum of that balance perhaps shifted to the left in the last 50 years.

The work is highly recommended at several levels. Evangelicals and conservatives who lament the "loss" of Princeton with the reorganization will be enlightened and perhaps warned about the dynamics of that era. The issues in seminary education that Princeton has dealt with throughout its history are largely unchanged today and anyone interested in seminary or theological education will benefit from this work. Moorhead writes history with a panache that is both interesting and even-handed, undergirded with a model of scholarly research.

James Carleton Paget and Joachim Schaper (eds). *The New Cambridge History of the Bible From the Beginnings to 600*. New York: Cambridge University Press, 2013. xxvi + 979 pp. (cloth) \$190.00.

Richard Marsden and E. Ann Matter (eds). *The New Cambridge History of the Bible From 600 to 1450*. New York: Cambridge University Press, 2012. xxii + 1045 pp. (cloth) \$190.00.

Reviewed by Dennis M. Swanson, Vice President for Libraries and Educational Assessment.

The original *Cambridge History of the Bible* (CHB, three volumes, 1963–70) has long been the standard reference work on the history of the Bible from the initial writing and collection of individual manuscript pieces, through the 1960s, when the great explosion of Bible translations that has marked the last 50 years was igniting. The creation of this new edition was driven by the "considerable advances in scholarship made in almost all biblical disciplines during the previous forty years and respond to the new scholarly concerns of the twenty-first century" (2:xv). A broader and more inclusive editorial policy is also noted,

The volumes respond to shifts in scholarly methods of study of the Old and New Testaments, look closely at specialized forms of interpretation and address the new concerns of the twenty-first century. Attention is paid to biblical studies in eastern Christian, Jewish and Islamic contexts, rendering the series of interest to students of all Abrahamic faiths (1:ii).

As planned, the series will expand the original three volumes to four:

- *From the Beginnings to 600* (edited by James Carleton Paget and Joachim Schaper)
- *From 600 to 1450* (edited by Richard Marsden and E. Ann Matter)
- *From 1450 to 1750* (edited by Euan Cameron)
- *From 1750 to the Present* (edited by John Riches)

The volumes under consideration in this review (Volumes 1 & 2) are the first offering in the series. Volumes 3 & 4 are due for release in 2014–15. As one would

expect from any Cambridge series work, the research is extensive. Each volume has a near-exhaustive bibliography (1:871–912; 2:874–983) and are thoroughly indexed (1:913–79; 2:984–1045).

The Volume One editors, James Carelton Paget, Senior Lecturer in New Testament Studies at the University of Cambridge and Joachim Schaper, Professor of Hebrew and Semitic Studies at the University of Aberdeen, note that since the original *CHB* the field of Biblical studies “has witnessed a considerable number of discoveries of texts and artifacts relevant to the study of the Old and New Testaments and an often remarkable shift in scholarly methodology and opinion” (1:xii). Volume One is divided into five parts: “Languages, Writing Systems and Book Production” (3–82); “The Hebrew Bible and Old Testaments” (83–388); “The New Testament” (389–504); “Biblical Versions Other Than the Hebrew and The Greek” (505–48); and “The Reception of the Bible in the Post-New Testament Period” (549–870). The book contains a total of 37 chapters bringing together a notable collection of scholars specializing diverse fields of Old and New Testament background, introduction, and development.

Happily, the editors also retained chapters on several key individuals, “a decision was made, perhaps rather unfashionably, to retain the policy of *CHB* of devoting some chapters to individual exegetes of significance” (xiv). Along with chapters on Origin (605–28), Jerome (653–75), and Augustine (676–96); a chapter on Eusebius of Caesarea (629–62) was added. However, the individual chapter on Theodore of Mopsusetia was not retained and the discussion on his contribution was subsumed into the chapters on exegesis. This new edition also enlarges the discussion of the Septuagint beyond the “fragmentary way” (xiii), which the original edition presented the material, “reflecting, in particular, the fact that since 1970 the study of the Septuagint for its own sake, and not simply as a text-critical tool for the original Hebrew, has become much more the standard” (ibid).

The writing quality amongst the chapters is more uneven than one might expect. The opening sentence of the first chapter, “The languages of the Old Testament are Hebrew and Aramaic,” (Kahn, 3) is clearly not going to remind anyone of Charles Dickens or Herman Melville. Fortunately though, aside from this tediously pedantic first chapter, there are many well-written and stimulating contributions. Paget’s “The Interpretation of the Bible in the Second Century” (549–83) is a valuable overview. In particular, his discussion of development of biblical interpretation in the second century (562–72) is especially helpful.

There are some other particularly notable chapters. Bogaret’s discussion of the Latin Bible (505–26), although perhaps a bit brief, is a helpful contribution and a good reminder that the Latin is an important field of study, especially in the context of New Testament translation. Of particular interest is Graumann’s chapter, “The Bible in doctrinal development and Christian Councils” (798–821). Of interest is his discussion of the debate between Origen and Heracleides (ca. AD 244). Graumann concludes that,

The debate is almost entirely concerned with scriptural interpretation. The Bible is the unquestionable norm against which any teaching is measured and from which the answers to any disputed question are expected (800).

He notes that the dialogue between Origen and Heracleides, “may illustrate the kind of reasoning we can expect at other, formal, synods” (ibid). His overview of the Christological controversies (800ff) and the interpretative methodology of Athanasius is informative. His discussion on how the Nicene Creed slowly began to supersede Scripture as the theological standard is fascinating (812ff). In discussing the machinations of Cyril against Nestorius, he notes, “for his [Nestorius’] theology was measured against the Nicene Creed as the norm of orthodoxy—not scripture” (814). One other notable section is Edwards’ “Figurative readings: their scope and justification” (714–33), especially his discussion of allegory (720–22) and “Origen’s hermeneutic” (723–26).

The Volume Two editors are noted biblical and medieval scholars. Marsden is Emeritus Professor of Old English at the University of Nottingham and Matter is the William R. Kenan Jr. Professor of Religious Studies at the University of Pennsylvania. The work is arranged in five parts: “Texts and Versions” (19–308); “Format and Transmission” (309–484); “The Bible Interpreted” (485–658); “The Bible in Use” (659–754); and “The Bible Transformed” (755–873). A total of 44 chapters by individual scholars within those parts present a depth of material on the Bible in the medieval era, a period the editors call a “diverse and complex period of history” (xv). Marsden’s Introduction (1–16), where he notes that when the era begins, “Christendom still enjoyed a broad measure of political and spiritual unity, and Islam had yet to appear. Byzantium was leading the Christian society in the East, while the evangelization of the West continued apace, which much of northern and western Europe still in the process of conversion” (1). By the end of this era, every aspect of the entire world, politically, theologically, culturally, and socially had changed. In terms of technology, the revolution enabled by Johannes Gutenberg (1395–1468) was about to change the world even further.

The strength of the second volume is also the source of its weakness. While there are new and more detailed discussions of the Bible in the several languages (Ethiopic, Armenian, Georgian, along with the Scandinavian and Slavonic languages), it seems to come at the expense of the discussion of the Latin texts and particularly the English. Marsden notes, “large parts of the Bible have been available in the English language continuously for more than 1100 years, a record unparalleled by any of the other language communities of western Christianity” (217). While this “unparalleled” record has its foundation established in this period, his chapter on “The Bible in English” (217–38) is one of the shortest, and in many ways, least satisfying parts of this volume. Hopefully the forthcoming volume edited by Cameron will backtrack and enlarge the discussion of the English versions.

One chapter of particular note is “The Use of the Bible in Preaching” (2:680–92) by Siegfried Wenzel. He notes that both preaching styles and format of the sermon (*sermo*) and homily (*homilia*) “underwent some significant changes and developments” in this period (682). The homily was often a more discernable and perhaps more formidable “biblical exegesis” than the sermon, which was often only “loosely built upon a scriptural verse” (ibid). Wenzel’s entire chapter and particularly his discussion of Wycliffe, or more familiarly to American readers, Wyclif (688ff), is stimulating reading.

These volumes represent the best modern research on the history of the Bible, some of the most varied and stimulating essays on the subject, and open avenues of

future research into areas not covered in the original edition. It will be interesting to see if Volume Four gives any attention to the rise and impact of "Study Bibles" which have now witnessed enormous range and influence.

This set is a must-have for any seminary or research library, training school, or scholar; although the sheer cost of the entire set (nearly \$800) may be prohibitive for the individual. These volumes are most highly recommended, and we are eagerly anticipating the release of the last two volumes.

Carl R. Trueman, *The Creedal Imperative*. Wheaton: Crossway, 2012. 197 pp. \$16.99 (paper).

Reviewed by Eric J. Lehner, Academic Dean and Professor of Theology, Virginia Beach Theological Seminary, Virginia Beach, VA.

Those familiar with the writings of Carl Trueman have come to expect work that is concise, bold, relevant, and compelling. *The Creedal Imperative* does not disappoint. Trueman, who serves as Professor of Church History at Westminster Theological Seminary, ranks among the best of those who engage critical issues in terms accessible to a larger audience. With a special eye directed toward church leadership, the book seeks to deliver a straightforward challenge to those who claim to have "no creed but the Bible."

The thesis of the book is clearly articulated from the outset: the use of creeds by the church is demonstrably biblical, logical, practical, necessary, and ultimately inevitable. The argument is advanced in six chapters that are paired to advance three basic sub-arguments: an ideological argument (chapters 1 and 2), an argument from history (chapters 3 and 4), and an argument from practice (chapters 5 and 6). The structure is sensible and facilitates a natural flow to the overall argument. Trueman takes pains to keep his readers focused, frequently reviewing the main points of previous discussions, and establishing the relevance of tangential discussions to the point being made. The style is clear and accessible, appropriate to the broad audience he is targeting. Also appropriate is the tenor of the book: Trueman shelves much of his characteristic wit in favor of driving home the seriousness of the issue at hand.

Chapter One, "The Cultural Case against Creeds and Confessions," maintains that cultural forces are largely responsible for the current decline in the stature of creeds. Trueman's take on culture is much in the same stream as D. A. Carson (e.g. *The Gagging of God; The Intolerance of Tolerance*) and David Wells (e.g. *No Place for Truth; The Courage to Be Protestant*): society has little regard for the past, places great confidence in technology, and cherishes its addiction to consumerism. Furthermore, and with no small assistance from the secular academy, the culture has learned to distrust language, dismiss the universality of human nature, question every manifestation of authority, find refuge in mysticism and/or pragmatism, and avoid exclusivism at all costs. In these terms, Trueman effectively demonstrates that the use of confessions and creeds is not well suited to churches preoccupied with cultural relevance. Not a new critique, but devastating nonetheless.

Chapter Two is the watershed of the argument. Whereas Chapter One explains the forces arrayed against creedalism, Chapter Two, “The Foundations of Creedalism,” outlines the *Imperative* proper. Trueman reasons from Scripture that verbal language is reliable and necessary, that human nature is a universal, and that “sound doctrine” is at the center of the church’s identity and mission. Together with Chapter One, this chapter offers a robust justification, not only for creedalism, but for the discipline of systematic theology in general. Although the argument is directed primarily to the church, the case is relevant for those in the academy who have more intellectual reasons for “no creed but the Bible.” If Trueman’s case is sound, those who assume the unity of Scripture should view biblical exegesis and systematic theology as natural companions. Notions of one discipline being an imposition upon the other are foreign to the message of the Pastoral Epistles. Recognizing, maintaining, and perpetuating “the form of sound doctrine” is the biblical mandate for those who handle the text.

Chapters Three and Four make an historical argument for the thesis of the book. These chapters, which engage the ecumenical creeds of the early church and several of the great Protestant confessions respectively, support the ideological argument of Chapters One and Two. This historical survey highlights the church’s instinct to clarify, summarize, and organize those teachings of the Bible essential to the existence, unity, and purity of the church. From these we can see that confessions—at least in the classical sense—are not only statements of consensus that unite, but also statements of conviction that divide. Trueman’s historical treatment in some respects a model for demonstrating the relevance of church history for theology and ministry. Yet in one respect—his selection of Protestant creeds—is less than satisfying. To be fair, Trueman anticipates this critique.

In the introduction, he recognizes the limitation of his selection, explains the choice to remain within his domain of expertise, and acknowledges other Protestant traditions. Additionally, he is careful to select hallmark confessions representing Anglicans, Lutherans, Presbyterians, and Baptists. Furthermore, he explains that this selection of creeds is sufficient to validate the principle of the argument, and that this fact should render the book sufficiently applicable to other traditions. This caveat, though carefully stated at the outset, still admits an unfortunate gap between the argument and a substantial portion of the American audience, for the selection only draws immediate ties to European Protestant traditions. To be sure, the denominational counterparts of these traditions in America have been well served by their respective creeds. Nevertheless, it is probably not too daring to suppose that the readers who stand to benefit the most from Trueman’s book are Americans from other traditions—traditions energized by 19th century American populism, the Second Great Awakening, Keswick theology, the bible conference movement of the late nineteenth century, and much of twentieth-century fundamentalism. Traditions from this stream have frequently embraced a “no creed but the Bible” outlook, only to fill the subsequent vacuum with “fundamentals” or doctrinal statements. A brief sub-section addressed to this segment of American evangelicalism would have made the historical argument as equally direct as the one presented to traditions rooted in the European creeds.

The final two chapters close out the book with an appeal to the practical. Chapter Five, "Confession as Praise," establishes the propriety of creeds for public worship while refuting the complaint that creeds encourage dead formalism and supplant the priority of Scripture. The final chapter, "On the Usefulness of Creeds and Confessions," lists the many ways in which creeds assist the church in its duty to hold sound doctrine. Truman's concluding remarks are compelling: creedalism is really unavoidable at the end of the day. Those holding to "no creed but the Bible" inevitably form and summarize beliefs about what the Bible teaches. The only difference is that these beliefs are undisclosed, and thus made immune to scrutiny.

In short, *The Creedal Imperative* is an excellent book, and highly recommended on several counts. First, the book clearly communicates an important subject with substantial content. Second, the work has significant value for the ministerial student. The book is not intended as an academic project, as is evident in its style, its direct appeal to church leadership, and its minimal documentation and back matter. Nevertheless, it serves as a model for clear and cogent argumentation that is seamlessly conversant in biblical and systematic theology, church history, and ministerial practice. Third, the book squarely addresses relevant cultural, philosophical, and hermeneutical issues, periodically challenging accepted norms when found to be in contradiction to Scriptural principle. Finally, and most important, Trueman clearly succeeds in executing the objective of the book: to show that creeds uphold rather than diminish the principle of *sola Scriptura*, and that they are both biblically and practically necessary for the health of the church.

C. Richard Wells and Ray Van Neste, eds. *Forgotten Songs: Reclaiming the Psalms for Christian Worship*. Nashville: B&H Publishing Group, 2012. xiv + 242 pp (paper) \$19.99.

Reviewed by William D. Barrick, Professor of Old Testament.

Recently, scholars have turned again to the Book of Psalms in pursuit of producing more commentaries, general studies, and topical studies for the benefit of individual believers and congregations. *Forgotten Songs* seeks to reclaim the Psalms primarily for the church's public worship. C. Richard Wells and Ray Van Neste edited this particular volume, working together with the following contributors: John D. Witvliet, C. John Collins, Craig A. Blaising, Douglas Bond, Ray Ortlund Jr., James H. Grant Jr., Leland Ryken, Calvin Seerveld, James Richard Joiner, Randall Bush, Chad Davis, Justin Wainscott, and J. Michael Garrett. Both editors also contributed essays to the volume. Wells is the founding president of John Witherspoon College, Rapid City, SD where he also serves as Professor of Humanities. Van Neste is Professor of Biblical Studies and Director of the R. C. Ryan Center for Biblical Studies at Union University, Jackson, TN. Both men are experienced pastors and writers, which elevates this volume above the purely academic.

Forgotten Songs includes essays on a variety of topics having a bearing on the Psalms. It deals with topics such as formative speech, praise, apostolic/NT preaching, prayer, poetry, congregational and private worship, psalm singing, and pastoral care.

The editors divide the work into two collections of essays: “Biblical and Historical Foundations” (7–89) and “Practice” (91–201). Van Neste provides the “Preface” (xiii–xiv) and “Introduction” (1–5), and Wells the “Conclusion” (203–6). End materials include three appendices (“A Modern-Day Psalmist Looks at the Psalms: An Interview with Marty Goetz,” 207–12; “Songs to Be Sung: Examples of New Metered Psalms for Singing by Randall Bush, Chad Davis, and Justin Wainscott,” 213–21; and, an annotated “Resources for the Recovery of the Psalms in the Life of the Church,” 223–35). Name and Scripture indexes conclude the volume (236–42).

Witvliet’s essay “Words to Grow Into: The Psalms as Formative Speech,” 7–16), stresses the way that constant oral repetition of the psalms in public and private worship forms speech habits. He adopts Ambrose’s characterization of the biblical psalms as a “gymnasium of the soul” (10). Repetition of even the imprecatory psalms can train believers to turn vengeance over to God, where it belongs (13). Witvliet insightfully asks, “Are you allowing the psalms—and other words that echo the psalms—to train people to say to God what they would never say on their own?” (14). Although his essays do not fall into the “Practice” section of the volume, the reader can immediately see the practicality of Witvliet’s instruction.

In “Always Alleluia: Reclaiming the True Purpose of the Psalms in the Old Testament Context” (17–34), Collins argues that current devotionals and sermons too often look at the Psalter as a collection of private prayers, rather than as a hymnbook for corporate worship (18). In addition to being songs of worship, the psalms function as Scripture because they “instill in the people of God a proper grasp of the world’s true story” (27). He insists that the Psalter serves contemporary Christians in much the same way as it served the people of ancient Israel—by shaping our “inner life to love God and to treasure what He treasures” (33).

In his essay (“Ancient Songs and Apostolic Preaching: How the New Testament Laid Claim to the Psalms,” 35–50), Van Neste provides a brief but superb survey of the way Jesus and the apostles used the psalms. He suggests that the psalms’ prominence at Pentecost in Peter’s sermon might indicate that early Christians were “working back through the Scriptures in the light of their new Christocentric understanding, even in the upper room” (44). What Van Neste does not make clear is whether he sees Jesus’ teaching on the Emmaus road (Luke 24:44–49) as the actual content of their understanding or as illustrations of a new methodology of interpreting the psalms. This reviewer would argue that the NT writers and speakers conveyed Jesus’ own commentary, rather than applying His method to psalm texts about which He had not spoken.

Blaising (“Prepared for Prayer: The Psalms in Early Christian Worship,” 51–63) presents a survey of the manner in which early church fathers (John Chrysostom, Basil, Augustine, Didymus, Justin Martyr, Origen, and Athanasius) taught Christians how to pray the psalms. “The psalms provided the format in which they would learn the language of prayer” (53). This is but the first of several essays covering the topic of prayer and praying the psalms.

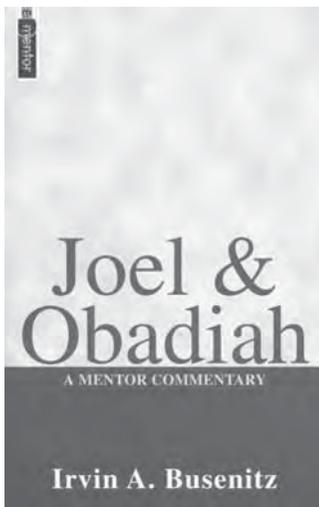
“Biblical Poetry in a Postbiblical, Postpoetry World” (65–79) by Bond, proposes that our modern American society has cast off poetry as either expression or art (66). However, the depth and gravity of a postpoetry world such as he describes does not compute with the continued popularity of music and the widespread use of iTunes and other such media. Later, Bond does admit, “a groundswell of new interest

in psalmody and hymnody has arisen" (77). Readers will learn much from his description of the timeless nature of the poetic psalms and the development of versified psalters over the past five hundred years.

Several of the essays illustrate their methodology by applying it to a specific psalm: Ortlund's "Delighting in Doctrine: Word and Worship in Psalm 1" (81–89), Ryken's "Reclaiming the Psalms for Private Worship" (125–38; Ps 23), Seerveld's "Why We Need to Learn to Cry in Church" (139–57; Ps 130), and two essays by Wells, "The Cry of the Heart and the Cure of the Soul: Interpreting the Psalms for Pastoral Care" (167–87; Ps 137) and "The Psalm of the Cross as the Psalm of Christ" (189–201; Ps 22).

Two of the essays in the practical section handle psalm singing and psalm praying: Grant's "How I Introduced Psalm Singing to My Church . . . without Getting Fired!" (91–107) and Wells' "Reclaiming the Psalms in Pastoral Prayer: A True Story" (109–23). Both men allow the readers to glimpse their personal challenges, mistakes, and successes in accomplishing these two practices in their churches. Their step-by-step guidance will prove invaluable to those desiring to implement psalm singing or psalm praying in the services of their own congregations.

Ministers and lay people alike are finding themselves drawn back into the Psalms in the midst of the trials and challenges of the modern secular societies within which we live. Publishers offer a number of new books looking at the Book of Psalms, studying individual psalms, and practicing the psalms in private and public worship. *Forgotten Psalms* presents a series of essays worthy of our attention.



Joel & Obadiah

by Irvin A. Busenitz

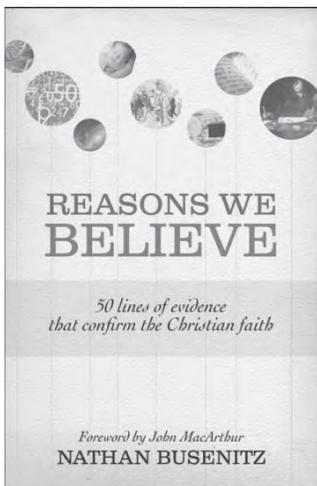
The author (a premillennial dispensationalist) offers solid insights on every word and phrase with exacting skill in the Hebrew and vivid English expression. A good outline joins detailed, verse-by-verse comments and copious, substantive footnotes drawn from wide-ranging sources. Busenitz sees Joel 2–3 using literal locust depiction as vivid analogy for a literal human military invasion God will use in the eschatological drama. He copiously explains each detail of both in the prophet's wording. This has to rate as one of the most explanatory, carefully researched, and seasoned works on Joel and Obadiah.

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