

Shema

"The Creed of Moses"

By Allon Maxwell

***"Hear O Israel: The Lord our God is One Lord.
and you shall love the LORD your God
with all your heart,
and with all your soul,
and with all your might."
(Deut 6:4-5)***

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*" You shall love the LORD your God with all your heart,
and with all your soul, and with all your might."*

(Deut 6:4-5)

*" This is eternal life that they know thee the only true God,
and Jesus Christ whom thou hast sent."*

(John 17:3)

*" For us there is one God, the Father,
and one Lord, Jesus Christ."*

(1 Cor 8:6)

Introduction

Shema is a Hebrew word which means "hear". It is the first word of Deuteronomy 6:4.

This verse has become a prayer called the SHEMA, which is an essential part of the daily life of Jews who practise Torah. (The laws of God described in the first five books of the OT)

The Shema is actually a creed. We may call it the "Creed of Moses". It defines God as one, and only one, and is central to Old Testament Jewish understanding of who God is. It stands in direct opposition to the Trinitarian creeds of the mainstream Churches.

It is one of the major factors in Jewish rejection of Trinitarian Christianity.

In His Good News, Jesus made it a commandment! He called it the first and greatest of all commandments! He linked it to a second commandment which enjoined the

same love for neighbours as we have for ourselves. (Lev 19:17) And He said that all else in "the law and the prophets/" depends on getting those two right! (Matt 22:36-40) Jesus did NOT come to establish a new religion. He came to restore the old one -- to turn men back to the faith of their Jewish fathers -- Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, AND

Moses! His teaching has its foundation in promises made by His Father, to those men.

His aim is to show us how to become heirs of those same promises, through turning away from our sins, (repentance), and learning the quality of FAITH in God which will motivate us to obey those two great Old Testament commandments.

It didn't take long for men to forget the emphasis Jesus placed on that first and greatest commandment of all. Controversy arose amongst leaders who wanted to redefine the meaning of ONE God to make it THREE Gods! In the fourth century, a conference of the Church wrote a creed which imposed the doctrine of the Trinity on all members.

The creed was enforced under threat of excommunication for any who dissented.

In the 6th century the Roman Emperor Justinian, took things a step further, by introducing a law which decreed capital punishment for those who rejected the doctrine of the Trinity.

Although execution of Unitarian believers is no longer permitted by law, the mainstream Church still insists that Jesus must be recognised as "God-the-Son", and that no one can be saved without believing this.

That isn't the only thing that has been changed! The Church which has changed the identity of God, has also changed His laws. This becomes obvious when we compare the Sermon On

The Mount with what has been taught and practised by the majority of the Church, for most of its history.

The Sermon On The Mount lies at the very heart of the teaching of Jesus. It is His interpretation of what it means to keep God's laws perfectly -- as He did. It sets the standard of obedience and Holiness which He says MUST be pursued by men of faith, who want to live and walk close to God. (Matt 5:8)

How has this been changed you ask? Read it for yourself. Men make war instead of loving enemies; Men divorce and remarry for all the reasons forbidden by Jesus; Men

go to law instead of suffering themselves to be defrauded; Men defend themselves and their possessions, instead of turning the other cheek, and giving cloak as well as coat; Men lightly swear oaths, or sign contracts, and then look for loopholes to break their word, instead of swearing to their own hurt and not changing. See Matthew 5:17-48.

None of this is the religion of Jesus!

If we are to become real disciples we will need to get back to that first and greatest commandment as our non-negotiable starting point. How can we ever come to grips with His other life changing commandments, if we lack the one on which all others are founded?

The lessons presented here were written to help readers find their way back to the ONE LORD of the Shema. They reject the Trinitarian doctrine. That is not found

anywhere in the Bible. Read on, prayerfully, to discover for yourself, the true Biblical relationship between God and Jesus.

The Bible reveals Jesus as the human Son of God -- the Jewish Messiah, prophesied in the Old Testament, and revealed in the New Testament. The only true God is the one whom Jesus called Father. (John 17:3) And Jesus is for ever subordinate to His Father. (1 Cor 15:28)

This Jesus is LORD OF ALL. Bowing the knee to Him glorifies God. (Philipp 2:9-12) He is appointed by God as the Ruler of the Age to Come -- The Saviour of all who truly love and obey Him -- and the Master Teacher who can reveal to us the holiness, which will eventually enable us to see God, and live for ever. (Heb 12:14; Luke 20:36; John 3:15)

Chapter 1: THE SHEMA - "HEAR O ISRAEL" (Mark 12:29)

The Greatest Commandment of ALL!

"Hear, O Israel: The Lord our God, the Lord is one; and you shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your mind, and with all your strength."
(Mark 12:29 and Deut 6:4-5)

Jesus quoted this commandment from Deut 6:4-5. When he did so, it had already been, for 1500 years, the non-negotiable starting point for recognition of the identity of the God of Israel. And no Jew familiar with the Old Testament would ever have thought that ONE meant MORE than the simple cardinal number - "ONE".

Especially, there was no recognition at all in the Jewish Faith into which Jesus was born, of later human inventions such as "trinity" or "compound unity", or "uni-plurality"! Indeed, it is difficult to avoid the conclusion that, since these concepts are NOT BIBLICAL, they must result from some fundamental failure to properly obey the commandment to "HEAR"!

If Jesus says that this commandment is THE MOST IMPORTANT OF ALL, it deserves our full attention! We must study it prayerfully, until we get it right! It is important enough to memorise it. It is important enough to KNOW without prompting, where to find it in the Scriptures. And it is important enough to teach it to our children diligently until it is fixed in their hearts as firmly as it is in our own! (Deut 6:7) Note carefully that this greatest Commandment of all, has THREE parts.

PART 1 - THE FIRST PART OF THE COMMANDMENT

SAYS "HEAR".

HEAR WHAT? Hear the commandment to "HEAR", of course!

There is a lot in that single word "hear". It implies in the strongest possible way that we must listen carefully, diligently, intelligently fearless of any personal

"consequences" of hearing properly. (such as persecution or rejection!) And it follows of course, that APATHY about listening properly to this commandment from God, or refusal to

listen at all, or deliberate and dishonest distortion of what we hear, in order to make what we say more "acceptable" to others will be an absolute barrier to our obedience to the rest of it!

By saying that it is the greatest of all commandments, Jesus has made it so fundamental to FAITH in the ONE TRUE God of the Bible, that we MUST make certain that we hear correctly. We cannot afford to be wrong about this greatest commandment of all!

JESUS HAS MADE IT ESSENTIAL TO THE GOSPEL!

And when we have heard properly ourselves, we must not be reluctant to tell others what we have heard about this greatest commandment of all! If it is so important to Jesus, we should never be guilty of hiding this God given light under a bushel (Matt 5:15) for the unworthy motive of making an "easier road" for ourselves.

PART 2 - HEAR THE COMMANDMENT WHICH SAYS

THAT GOD IS ONE (ONLY)

There is no other God apart from the one defined by Moses. This God (YAHWEH) says of himself, "I am the first and the last; besides me there is no God." (Isaiah 44:6) And Jesus repeats that in different words, when he says that HIS FATHER is the ONLY true God. (John 17:3)

So when people don't listen properly to this second part, and instead re-invent God from ONE to make him THREE-IN-ONE, or "compound unity", or some other illogical impossibility which requires us to throw our MINDS away, the inevitable conclusion is that, for whatever reason (either through ignorance, delusion, or willful rebellion? -- see more about this below) they are in fundamental DISOBEDIENCE to the greatest commandment of all.

If WE want to obey this commandment to know and believe with ALL our mind and heart, that God is ONE, we will have to HEAR carefully and prayerfully until we KNOW what that means. Otherwise we will never be able to "graduate" to Part 3, and truly love God as we should.

PART 3 - HEAR THE COMMANDMENT WHICH SAYS

TO LOVE GOD WITH ALL OUR BEING.

This is the ultimate goal of this greatest commandment of all. The first two parts are

"stepping stones" -- absolute pre-requisites -- to keeping the third part! Without that foundation, we will never be able to know enough ABOUT Him, to KNOW HIM

PERSONALLY for who and what he is. And if we can't do that, we shall never be able to LOVE HIM enough to devote ourselves to keeping the rest of his "lesser" commandments -- with ALL our heart, mind, and soul and strength.

Jesus tells us this in John 17:3 -- but with one added dimension. He says that receiving ETERNAL life is conditional on KNOWING his Father as the ONLY TRUE GOD,

and knowing himself as someone else -- who is NOT the only true God, but the Messiah sent by God.

In this verse, "knowing" is a far stronger word than merely "knowing about". Jesus also means "knowing personally" -- in the personal relationship which exists between a Father and his children, or between two brothers who are also "best friends".

Of course we must know something ABOUT God before we can love him. You can't love someone you know nothing about. Nor can you love someone properly, if your love is based on LIES about who they are, and what they are.

This greatest COMMANDMENT to know that the ONE LORD of Israel - who is also the Father of Jesus - is the only true God, is given for good reason. It is THE foundation on which TRUE love and obedience, can grow to its fullness. (Eph 3:14-21)

Caution here! Even if we do have it right, it doesn't guarantee that we WILL DO THAT! It is OUR responsibility to use our FREE WILL CHOICE to exercise our heart, and soul, and mind, and strength, to love God.

Notably, exercising the mind to love God, DOES NOT MEAN throwing our mind away to blindly accept illogical lies!

IGNORANCE - is dispelled by knowledge. We get that by reading the Bible!

DELUSION - can only be cured by removing the cause of delusion! We must learn both to love the truth and to hate our sins, so that God will not send delusion! (2 Thess 2:11-12)

WILFUL DISOBEDIENCE is cured by repentance! In this context in particular, that means repenting from the **wrong motives** that lead to suppression of truth, and it means acceptance of the consequences of proclaiming truth. Some of the most

common of these false motivations are:

- Desire to continue in sin, which is stronger than fear of judgement. (Romans 1:18-20,32)
- Avoidance of persecution. "Acceptance" by the majority, to "swim in their bigger pool." (Matt 13:20-21)
- Coveting a "ministry" not available to those who reject the confusion of Trinitarian creeds.
(*"All these I will give you, if you will fall down and worship me."* (Matt 4:9))

Chapter 2: GOD THE FATHER AND HIS SON

1. THE ONLY TRUE GOD

There is only one person in the Bible who is called "the only true God". That person is the one Jesus calls his Father.

John 17,3

Jesus calls his Father "the only true God".

1 Cor. 8,6

Paul says there is one God, the Father.

Eph. 4,6

There is one God and Father of us all.

The same person in the Old Testament is called "Yahweh" (translated LORD).

Deut. 5,6-7

I am the LORD your God ... you shall have no other
gods besides me.

Deut. 6,4

Hear, O Israel: The LORD our God is one LORD.

2. JESUS IS NOT THE ONE CALLED LORD

IN THE OLD TESTAMENT.

The clear distinction between the LORD and Jesus and the relationship between them is prophesied in such verses as :-

2 Sam. 7,14

(the LORD says) I will be his father and he shall be
my son.

Psalms 110,1

The LORD (the Father) says to my lord (Jesus), sit at
My right hand.

The first prophecy is fulfilled in Jesus who is both Son of God and son of David.

(Luke 1,32-35).

The fulfilment of the second prophecy is found in :-

Mark 16,19

Jesus ... was taken into heaven and sat down at God's
right
hand.

Acts 7,55-56

Stephen saw Jesus in heaven at the right hand of God.

Eph. 1,20

The Father has made Jesus sit at his right hand.

**3. THE FATHER (WHO IS THE ONLY TRUE GOD) AND JESUS
(THE SON OF THAT GOD) ARE TWO -. NOT ONE.**

John 10,15

The Father knows me and I know the Father.

John 5,30

I seek not my own will but the will of him who sent
me.

John 8,16-18

It is not I alone who judge, but I and he who sent me ...

I bear witness to myself and the Father who sent me
bears witness to me.

Luke 22,42

Father ... not my will, but thine, be done.

John 14,24

The word which you hear is not mine but the Father's.

4. JESUS IS NOT EQUAL TO HIS FATHER.

John 14,28

The Father is greater than I.

1 Cor. 11,3

The head of Christ is God.

1 Cor 3,23

You are Christ's and Christ is God's.

1 Cor. 15,24-28

Jesus will always be subject to the Father.

John 5,19

The Son can do nothing of himself.

John 5,30

I can do nothing on my own authority.

John 8,28

I do nothing on my own authority.

5. JESUS IS GOD'S REPRESENTATIVE NOT GOD HIMSELF.

John 5,43

I have come in my Father's name

I Tim 2,5

There is one God and one mediator between God and

men, the *man* Christ Jesus

Heb 1,2

God has spoken to us by his Son.

6. JESUS IS GOD'S SON NOT GOD HIMSELF.

John 3,16

God so loved the world that he gave his only Son.

Rom. 8,32

God did not spare his own son but gave him up for
us all.

1 John 4,10

God loved us and sent his son to be the expiation of

our sins.

7. JESUS IS THE IMAGE OF GOD NOT GOD HIMSELF.

John 1,18

No man has ever seen God.

John 5,37

You have never seen his form.

1 Tim 6,16

Whom no man has ever seen or can see.

But Jesus is an exact likeness of his Father. Consequently, even though no one has ever seen God himself, to see Jesus is to see exactly what God is like.

Col 1,15

Jesus is the image of the invisible God.

2 Cor. 4,4

Christ is the likeness of God.

Heb 1,3

Jesus is the express image of God

(an exact representation - NASB).

John 8,19

If you knew me you would know my Father also.

John 12,44-45

He who believes in me believes in him who sent me.

He who sees me sees him who sent me.

./;l,John 14,9

He who has seen me has seen the Father.

8. WHEN JESUS SAYS "I AND MY FATHER ARE ONE".

he does NOT mean that they are one person or one God. Rather, they are united in a common purpose. The Bible uses similar language of a marriage in which two become one in God's sight. In the same way, believers are one with Jesus and one with each other. John 14,20 and 17,21-23.

9. JESUS WORSHIPS AND PRAYS TO HIS FATHER.

(showing that He is lower in status than the God he worships.)

John 20,17

To my God and your God.

Matt. 27,46

My God why have you forsaken me.

2 Cor.11,31

God and Father of the Lord Jesus.

Eph. 1,3

The God and Father of our Lord Jesus.

Heb. 5,7

Jesus offered up prayers.

Luke 6,12

All night in prayer to God.

Matt.11,25

I thank you Father, Lord of heaven and earth.

John 11,41

Father I thank you that you have heard me.

10. WHY IS JESUS GIVEN THE TITLE "GOD"?

There are a few verses where Jesus is called "God", e.g.

John 20,28

Isaiah 9,6

Titus 2,13

Heb 1,8

However, we have already seen that the Father is the only true God. It is also clear that Jesus is a second person. He is not his own Father, neither is he "the only true God". In the verses where Jesus is called God, the word must therefore mean something different to what it means when it is used about the Father.

It is used of Jesus in a secondary sense :-

(a) because he is the Son of God

(b) because he is the image and likeness of God

(c) because he is God's representative

(d) because, as Son of God, we worship him to the glory of his Father

(Phil. 2,9-11).

The word "elohim" or "god" is sometimes used of:

- angels

Ps. 97,7 and Heb. 1,6

Ps. 8,5 and Heb. 2,7

- human judges

Ex. 21,6 and 22,8 & 9

1

Sam.

2,25

- Moses

Ex. 4,16 and 7,1

- The Children

Ps 82,6 and John 10,34-36

of Israel

In these cases the word "God" is used of these people because they were God's representatives through whom God was speaking and through whom men dealt with

God.

In the same way God now speaks to us through his Son. To deal with Jesus is to deal with the God in whose name he speaks (Heb. 1,2, John 14,6).

11. JESUS IS "THE SON OF GOD" - NOT "GOD THE SON"

The first title is used many times in the Bible. The second is never used anywhere in the Bible.

Luke 1,32

Son of the Most High

Luke 1,35

Son of God

Matt. 16,16

You are the Christ, the Son of the Living God.

Luke 3,22

and Matt. 3,17

You are my beloved Son in whom I am well pleased.

Luke 9,35

This is my Son, my Chosen, listen to him.

12. JESUS IS GOD'S SERVANT

Matt. 12,18

Behold my servant whom I have chosen.

Phil. 2,7 & 8

The form of a servant.

John 4,34

My food is to do the will of him who sent me, and to

do

his

work.

Heb. 10,7 & 9

I come to do your will, O God.

13. JESUS IS INFERIOR TO GOD

(a) In authority - John 5,19, John 5,30, John 8,28, John 14,10,

1 Cor. 15,24-28, Matt. 20,23.

(b) In knowledge -

Matt. 24,36, Mark 13,23, Acts, 1,7.

**14. THE AUTHORITY WHICH JESUS HAS IS NOT INHERENT.
IT IS GIVEN TO HIM BY HIS FATHER.**

John 5,23

All are to honour the Son, even as they honour the Father.

Phil. 2,9

God has exalted him and bestowed on him the name
above every other name.

Matt. 28,18

All authority in heaven and on earth is given to me.

Eph. 1,20-21

The Father made Jesus sit at his right hand far above

all rule and authority and power and dominion and
above every name.

15. JESUS IS THE TEMPLE OF GOD

There are a number of references which speak about God being in Jesus. These do not mean that Jesus is God, but rather that the man, Jesus, has become a temple in which God lives.

John 14,10

The Father who dwells in me does the works.

John 2,21

The temple of his body.

John 10,38

The Father is in me and I am in the Father.

Col. 1,19

In him all the fullness of God was pleased to dwell.

Col. 2,9

In him all the fullness of deity dwells bodily.

These references mean simply that the body of Jesus is the temple of God, in exactly the same way that our bodies also are the temple of God.

John 17,21

Even as you, Father, are in me, and I in you,
that they also may be in us.

John 17,23

I in them and you in me.

John 14,23

We will come to him and make our home with him.

2 Cor. 6,16

We are the temple of the living God.

Eph. 3,19

That you may be filled with all the fullness of God.

Eph. 2,22

A dwelling place of God in the Spirit.

1 Cor. 3,16

You are God's temple and God's Spirit dwells in you.

16. JESUS DOES NOT HAVE INHERENT IMMORTALITY.

1 Tim. 6,16

God alone (the Father) has immortality

Jesus was mortal. He died

Phil. 2,7-8, Heb. 2,14-18

His Father raised him from the dead Acts 3,15

His resurrection resulted in a change from mortality to immortality.

Acts

13,34,

Rom. 6,9,

Rev. 1,18

His immortality is a gift from his Father

John 5,26

17. THE FATHER AND THE SON ARE DIFFERENT IN NATURE.

Num. 23,19

God is not a man ... nor a son of man

(Also 1 Sam 15,29, Hos. 11,9)

John 4,24

God is spirit.

James 1,13

God cannot be tempted with evil.

Although Jesus is the Son of God, in those four things he is different to his Father.

Jesus was born a man

Phil. 2,7, Heb. 2,14

Jesus is the son of man

Luke 19,10, John 8,28

Jesus is still a man

Acts 17,31, 1 Tim. 2,5

Jesus is NOT a spirit

Luke 24,39

Jesus was tempted

Heb. 2,18, Heb. 4,15, Luke 4,1-13

All of these differences show clearly that there is a difference in nature between "the only true God" and His Son.

18. JESUS IS THE WAY TO GOD NOT GOD HIMSELF

John 14,6

No one comes to the Father but by me.

Heb. 7,25

We draw near to God through Jesus.

19. JESUS IS OUR INTERCESSOR WITH GOD

NOT GOD HIMSELF

Heb. 7,25

Jesus makes intercession for us.

Heb. 8,24

Jesus has entered heaven to appear in the presence
of God on our behalf.

Heb. 9,14

Christ offered himself to God to purify
our consciences from sin.

Chapter 3: IN THE BEGINNING WAS THE WORD

*"In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God; He was in the beginning with God; all things were made through **him, and without***

***him was not anything made that was made. In him was life, and the life was the light of men. The light shines in the darkness, and the darkness has not overcome it".** (John 1,1-5)*

What does this mean?

Theologians have managed to complicate it beyond all logic, to say something like:-

Jesus is called the Word. We may substitute the name "Jesus" in place of "Word" so that the passage now reads:-

"Jesus already existed in the beginning. Jesus was with God in the beginning, and Jesus actually was God!"

This totally illogical foundation has been used by the theologians to build a number of complicated and confusing dogmas concerning the nature of Jesus and His relationship to his Father. The Church has fought and divided amongst its opposing factions for most of its history about these theories (in many cases proving by their behavior towards one another, that they were not really disciples!).

There are too many variations of these theories, and too much confusion in them, to attempt to explain the subtleties of them all adequately within the compass of one short paper. However the following attempts to set down the heart of the main theories which still exist to some significant degree in the 20th century church.

1. THE TRINITY

This is THE MAJOR THEORY found in most of the creeds of the mainstream of today's church, e.g.:-

- the Athanasian Creed
- the Nicene Creed

In these creeds Jesus is said to be one of three divine persons (the Father and the Holy Spirit are the other two) who together constitute one God.

However the theologians also tell us that these three persons are not three **separate** persons! "Person", THEY say, is not an adequate word!

The theologically correct word is the Greek "*hypostasis*", for which they say the English "person" does not convey the real sense. In fact, they say, there is no direct translation into English! In language which I find quite confusing, the text books say that God is personal or "supra personal" (whatever that means!) without being a person as we understand the word.

(Nowhere in the New Testament is "*hypostasis*" used in any way which would even remotely justify this "clever" theological use of the word to describe the "**mystery**" of these three "**not really persons**" of the doctrine of the Trinity.)

We are told that these three persons (who are not really persons, but untranslatable

"*hypostases*" !) are each equally:-

- God
- glorious
- eternal
- uncreated
- incomprehensible
- almighty
- Lord

Each person (who is not really a person!) must be acknowledged in his own right to be Lord and God, but at the same time it is **heresy** to say that there are three Lords or three Gods.

They also say that, although Jesus is co-eternal with His Father, he is at the same time begotten (but not made or created).

They insist that all three are to be worshipped as Unity in Trinity and Trinity in Unity (whatever that means!).

They say that Jesus has two natures, being both God and man at the same time; equal to his Father because He is God, and yet inferior because He is man.

Finally, they say we must all believe this contradictory gobbledygook to be saved!

To be honest enough to say that one does not understand it all, and therefore cannot rationally believe it, is (according to the Athanasian Creed) to be eternally lost.

It is all, say the theologians, a mystery to be taken in a blind leap of "FAITH".

It is significant that this confusing dogma, now required as essential to salvation, was not really put into words in its present form, until the 4th century. It is not found at all in the Old Testament, or in the teaching of the Apostles in the New Testament. Nor, in its present form was it known to any of the Church Fathers of the first three centuries.

The story of how it came to be adopted by the Church is one of politics, intrigue and bitter and murderous warfare amongst 4th century leaders. It is blot in the history of the Church. (This history is briefly described in Bible Discovery No 12 - "How the Doctrine of the Trinity Came to the Church".)

2. ARIANISM

This is the "other side" of that 4th century controversy which led to the mainstream adoption of the doctrine of the Trinity. It takes its name from Arius who was the loser in the fight with Athanasius, the leader of the Trinitarian faction.

Arius taught that if Jesus really was the Son of God, then there must have been a time when there was a Father but no Son. Jesus, he said was therefore created at some time prior to the creation of the world existing as a separate person (a spirit being) prior to His birth as the son of Mary.

Although finally outlawed by the Council of Constantinople in AD381 and made

punishable by death by the Emperor Justinian in the 6th century, Arianism persisted for several centuries as a significant doctrine in a section of the Church, especially in

northern Europe. It was finally almost extinguished by warfare and politics, but has continued to surface in small pockets, from time to time.

Today, the only significant group to support it is the Jehovah's Witnesses, although one does occasionally find individuals in mainline churches who are (usually secretly) Arian rather than Trinitarian.

3. MONARCHIANISM

(Sometimes also called Sabellianism, or "Jesus only")

This variation asserts that if Jesus is God and the Holy Spirit is God and the Father is God, then there are not three persons but **one person**, who plays **three different roles**, from time to time, as the occasion warrants!

This is, of course, even more incomprehensible and illogical than the dogma of the Trinity.

It leads to the following totally impossible conflicts:-

- God, when he plays the role of Father, is not a man, yet when He plays the role of Jesus, is a man.

- God, as Jesus, prays to and worships Himself as Father
(the ultimate schizophrenic ego trip!)

- God, as Jesus, sits at His own right hand as Father.
(In two places at once! That is real role playing!)

- Jesus, as a finite man, is somehow still everywhere present as an infinite Spirit.

- Jesus, with His two natures, could be tempted in His human nature, but could not sin at all because of His second Divine nature!
(making his temptation and victory over sin into a total farce).

- On the cross, only His human nature died, since His second Divine Nature could not die.

(meaning in effect, that He has not paid the price for our sins after all!)

The theory is not widely held, but does exist in several Pentecostal denominations of which the largest is the United Pentecostal Church. It is also found occasionally in individuals in mainline churches and in the complicated writings of some theologians who in trying to explain the Trinity, actually seem to come down on the side of Monarchianism. (But then perhaps I didn't understand what they wrote, any more than they seemed to. It really was as incomprehensible as what they were trying to explain.) **THE PROBLEM WITH ALL THREE OF THE ABOVE THEORIES**

There is one major problem with all three of these theories.

The scriptures are quite clear that Jesus is a **real man** and that God **is not a man**.

Although all three pay lip service in so many words, to the manhood of Jesus, they very effectively deny the reality.

- No other man has ever been born with two natures.

- No other man has ever had an eternal or infinite mind.
- No other man ever existed before his birth as an infinite uncreated spirit being.

Simple logic says that if Jesus did have any of those advantages, then He **was not really a man!**

In fact, the three theories quoted above which do give Jesus those advantages, are nothing more or less than a modern form of the **old Gnostic heresy** described in John's first epistle. The Gnostics held that Jesus was a sort of lesser God or spirit being who came down from heaven and assumed the appearance of a man, without the reality.

It was because of this (they say) that he was able to live a sinless life, unaffected by the limitations of real humanity.

Further, they then went on to say that since Jesus was not really man, God did not really expect other men to be like Him, and therefore obedience was not really

necessary. God, they said, was not concerned with what men did with their flesh. It was what they were in their spirits that counted for salvation!

Along with the dogma of the "God Man", this last point makes its cleverly disguised appearance in many of the false Gospels encountered in the modern Church. One

regularly encounters such statements as "What you are is more important than what you do", or, "Insistence on obedience to what God says is mere legalism", or "it is impossible for these fleshly bodies to obey or overcome sin".

THE FACT IS THAT JESUS WAS AND IS A REAL MAN

There are four essential differences which show that Jesus is different in nature to His Father (who is called the only true God in John 17,3). Those four things are:-

1. God is NOT a man (Num 23,19 Hos 11,9 and 1 Sam 15,29)

Jesus IS a man (Phil 2,7 and Heb 2,14)

2. God is a spirit (John 4,24)

Jesus is NOT a spirit (Luke 24,37-39)

3. God is NOT a son of man (Num 23,19)

Jesus IS a son of man (Luke 19,10 and John 8,28)

4. God CANNOT be tempted (James 1,13)

Jesus WAS tempted (Heb 2,18 & 4,15 and Luke 4,1-13)

HOW THEN DO WE UNDERSTAND WHAT JOHN WROTE?

We must start with the reality of the manhood of Jesus. If we keep that firmly in mind, the rest falls into place.

1. As Son, he cannot be co-eternal with His Father.

That would completely negate the meaning
of Fatherhood and begetting and sonship.

2. If he pre-existed His birth, he is not really a man.

That would effectively make Him different to all other men.

3. As a man, He cannot be God in the same sense
that His father is God, since God is not a man.

4. He is certainly NOT the same person as His
Father. That would defy all reason and logic.

No man has ever been His own Father!

JESUS IS NOT ONLY "THE WORD", BUT ALSO

"THE WORD MADE FLESH"

The Greek word "*logos*" which is translated "Word" in this passage, simply means "a spoken word", "a saying", "a communication", etc. According to Liddell and Scott Greek Lexicon it also means the inward thought which is expressed in the spoken word.

There are many other shades of meaning, but all derive in some sense from these primary definitions. By far the most common use of "*logos*" is in connection with the preaching of the Word of God. This spoken and written word communicates God's

thoughts to us and reveals the plan by which Jesus has become Lord of all creation
and our Savior.

"*Logos*" does not have the capital first letter given to "Word" in the English translation. It should properly be translated "word" (with a small "w").

Further, although in Greek "*logos*" is a masculine noun, this is no proof of personality.

Many words which are neuter in English, are either masculine or feminine in Greek.

For example, the word translated "beginning" is feminine.

No one would seriously claim that this means that "beginning" should be regarded as having a feminine personality!

In the same way it is quite improper to give "*logos*" a masculine personality, or make it into a proper name, as the theologians have done. If we paraphrase "*logos*" honestly in John 1, it ought to say something like this:-

1. *"In the beginning was the word"*.

In the beginning God spoke to reveal and bring into effect His inward thought or plan for the creation of the universe. God said and it was so.

2. *"The word was with God"*

It was God who spoke, not someone else. The source of the inward thought or intention was with God (in the same sense that we would say, "the next move is with you").

3. *"The word was God"*

The inward thought or intention revealed by what God said was about God and His plan to multiply Himself, by creating man in the image and likeness of God.

Of course the man made in the image and likeness of God is the **man** Jesus. It is this man who is the main subject and fulfillment of every other PROPHETIC word spoken by God, to reveal His inward thought or intention about the birth of His Son "in the fullness of time". (Gal 4,4).

4. *"The word became flesh"*.

This simply means that God's inward thought or intention about the man who would be made in His image and likeness came to fulfillment when Jesus was born.

Before Jesus was born, there was only God's inward thought or plan for that to happen. It was prophesied. It was certain to happen. (Isaiah 44,6-8 and 55,11)

After Jesus was born, the Word spoken about Him became a reality. The MAN was here at last, no longer just a plan on the drawing board, but the completed object of that plan.

WITHOUT HIM WAS NOT ANYTHING MADE (John 1,3)

Jesus was the starting point of God's plan - the beginning of it.

Jesus was the goal of God's plan - the end of it.

Everything else that God said or did was directed to that central purpose, which was to create a human son in the image and likeness of the Father.

If Jesus was to exist and have dominion over all creation, then God first had to create the universe and the world on which He would exist and have that dominion.

If Jesus was to be The Son Of Man then there had first to be a human race from which He could trace His descent. God began this work by creating Adam and Eve.

If the birth of Jesus was to take place in "the fullness of time", then there had first to be a history of other men preceding that time.

If Jesus was to be the Savior of all other men, there first had to be a failure of all other men to create a situation from which they needed to be saved.

If Jesus was to be both Son of God and Son of Man, there had first to be a willing and suitable Virgin Mother.

If there was to be a resurrection from the dead for all men, in which Jesus was the first, then there had to be first a death for Jesus, in circumstances in which He could clearly be the first to conquer the grave.

These thoughts could be multiplied and expanded to demonstrate that Jesus is central to all history, the final expression of the Word that God spoke in the beginning which ultimately reveals to us what God himself is. The "Word that was God" is no longer just a word in God's mind, or spoken by God's mouth, but a real living person

JESUS.

HOW COULD THE WORLD BE MADE BY THE WORD (JESUS)

IF JESUS WAS NOT LITERALLY THERE?

GOD (the Father) spoke the world into existence (Ps 33,6 and 148,5-6).

The Word which was spoken to create the world was all a part of what God spoke to reveal His inward thought or intention to create Jesus. It was the same Word through which even Jesus Himself came into existence.

WHY THEN DID GOD SAY "LET US MAKE MAN"?

Of course the the Hebrew word for "God" in Genesis ch. 1 is plural. However this does not mean that the plurality includes JESUS.

Other parts of the Bible tell us that there were other beings present with God at creation. These were the ANGELS.

Job 38,7 speaks of "*all the sons of God*" who shouted for joy when God laid the foundation of the earth.

Psalms 8,5 speaks of "*the son of man made a little less than GOD*".

This verse uses the same plural Hebrew name for God as in Genesis 1. (Elohim).

A comparison with Heb 2,7 shows clearly that the plural "God", and the "us", spoken of here and in Genesis, includes the angels. It is not inclusive of Jesus at all. He is a DESCENDANT of the subject of the discussion between God and the angels.

DOESN'T THE BIBLE SAY ELSEWHERE THAT JESUS EXISTED BEFORE

HE WAS BORN?

In the Old Testament there is not one reference that speaks of Jesus as a person then presently existing.

What we do have is many prophecies which speak of the future existence of the MAN

who was to be born as Son of God. This happened when Jesus was born of His virgin mother. That was when His existence began.

References like Isaiah 42,1 show how God sometimes speaks of future events in the present tense to express the certainty of their fulfillment (See also Romans 4,17 A.V.

which shows how God speaks of things which do not exist, as though they already did exist.

In the New Testament there are several references, which when approached with the pre-conception that Jesus did pre-exist, have been misconstrued to support this.

However, if they are approached from the correct premise that Jesus is a man, and that men simply do not pre-exist, (for then they are not men!), a vastly different picture emerges. A few of these references are listed below.

1. John 1,15, - "*After me comes a man who ranks before me, for he was before me*".

This does not mean that Jesus existed before John. He was, in fact, conceived six months after John.

It does mean that Jesus ranks above John, not in time but by right of birth. The Greek verb translated "was" literally means "came into existence". The Greek word translated "before", can mean either "before in time" or "superior in rank".

Clearly, it is the second of these meanings which is intended here. The verse is saying that Jesus holds His superior rank, not by right of prior existence, but because He was born to it as Son of God.

2. John 8,58 - *"Before Abraham was, I am."*

Jesus is usually said to be claiming the divine name "I am" for Himself. This is supposed to show that He is God and therefore pre-existed.

However a careful study of other uses of the words "I am" in John's Gospel, shows that they are used repeatedly by Jesus, without any suggestion at all that the divine name is meant.

In fact, the Greek grammar requires that in this verse, another word should be

understood as implied after "am". In other places, where Jesus uses the words the translators have recognised this by inserting the word "he". **e.g John 8,24,28, "I am He"**.

If this is also done in verse 58, as it ought to be, then we are left with the simple statement by Jesus that He is the one spoken of in the the prophetic writings, long before Abraham's time.

3. John 8,56 - *"Abraham rejoiced to see my day."*

This statement by Jesus refers to the story (in Gen 17,15-17) where God promised 99

year old Abraham that his 89 year old wife would conceive and bear a son. Abraham fell on his face before God, rejoicing in faith.

God's long standing promise that the savior of the world would be his descendant (Gen 12,3) was about to begin its fulfillment, with the birth of Isaac.

4. John 17,5 - *"Glorify me with the glory which I had with thee before the world was made"*.

God spoke in a similar way about Jeremiah (Jer 1,4)

The words spoken of Jesus do not imply pre-existence for Him any more than they do for Jeremiah. It is simply a statement that even before the foundation of the world, it was God's plan to glorify Jesus.

It does not mean that Jesus was present when the plan was made.

5. John 8,42 - *"I proceeded and came forth from God"*.

This is simply a statement in Jewish idiom, of the biological origin of Jesus. Every Jew "came forth" from his father's body. (see Gen 15,4 and 2 Sam 7,12).

In using this language, Jesus is expressing his claim for His divine origin and begetting.

The one essential difference in his case, of course, was that Jesus came forth from his Father's mouth as a spoken word which accomplished God's purpose through the miracle of the Virgin Birth.

6. John 8,42 - *"I came not of my own accord, but he sent me".*

Jesus is not the only one who was sent by God.

Almost identical words are used about John the Baptist. *"There was a man sent from God".* (John 1,6).

The same words are used of disciples to say that they are sent in exactly the same way that Jesus was. *"As the Father has sent me, even so I send you".* (John 20,21).

These words when used about Jesus do not imply that He pre-existed in Heaven any more than they do for John the Baptist, or for us.

7. John 6,38 - *"I have come down from Heaven".*

Again, the words are simply a statement of divine origin - not of personal pre-existence in heaven.

All Jesus is saying is that He is like the manna which God miraculously provided for Israel. (see verses 31, 32, 51, and 58 of the same chapter).

8. John 8,38 - *"I speak of what I have seen with my Father".*

Any man who knows what it is to spend time with God in the secret place, ought to know what this means. In the place of prayer, deep within our hearts and minds,

heaven comes down to earth and a man communes with God until he is able to speak, not on his own authority, but as he is taught by God. (John 8,28).

9. Colossians 1, 15 - *"The firstborn of all creation."*

In the Hebrew language, the word "firstborn" means more than simply "born first in time". It also means to be born as the first son of a father, the first of a family, who is by right of that birth, the legal heir to his father's estate.

The word when used about Jesus, describes Him as God's first and only begotten Son, the first born of God's family, taking rank and precedence over all others, as the heir of all creation. He is first born in rank because of His divine begetting.

He is also in a special sense, first born in time, not because He pre-existed His human birth, but because He is the first to be raised from the dead. (Acts 13,33 "This day have I begotten thee.)

He was raised (or begotten) from the dead, both as the firstborn in time, and the firstborn in rank, of all God's "new creation". (Col 1,17-18).

CONCLUSION

Starting with an impossible theory about a "God-man" who existed eternally before he was born, the theologians went on to compound their mistake, using the techniques and language of Greek philosophy to produce the doctrine of the Trinity.

Along the way there have been many others (usually classed as "heretics") who, whilst rejecting the Trinitarian theology, have nevertheless started from the same impossible assumption that Jesus pre-existed his human birth. This has led to great confusion in the minds of those who, as a result of this illogical foundation, find it virtually impossible to regard Jesus as really a man.

If, instead, we begin with the scriptural premise that Jesus really is a man, just like all other men, (with the sole exception of His virgin birth), there is no longer any

"mystery" requiring us to abandon all logic.

In spite of His supernatural origin, and the miracle of His virgin birth, Jesus is not himself a supernatural being. He is just like us in every way. He is a man who makes God real to other men. He reveals what it will be like for us when God lives in us as He does in Jesus.

That IS Good News. If it is possible for one man to please God, then other men are left without excuse for their failure. Other men also, can become what God wants them to be. Under the Lordship of Jesus, the grace of God not only forgives the past, but also guarantees that our sinful carnal nature can be transformed, until we have become just like the man Jesus.

Chapter 4: HOW THE DOCTRINE OF THE TRINITY CAME TO THE

CHURCH

The subject of the nature of Jesus has been a matter of controversy almost since the beginning of the church. This should be no surprise. One of the falsehoods of that first century "Spirit of Antichrist", described in John's epistles, centred around the question of whether or not Jesus is really a man.

All too often, the question of who was right or wrong, (if any one was right at all), was far less a problem than the spirit in which the various opponents dealt with each other.

Many of them managed to prove that they did not love one another at all. Jesus and John both say clearly that those who do not love one another are not disciples at all.

(John 13:34; 1 John 1:9)

The most notable of these controversies began in the early years of the 4th century.

The leading opponents on this occasion were Arius and Athanasius. The theological warfare centred around the question of whether Jesus was a created being, subject to his Father, (Arius), or uncreated, co-equal, co-eternal and consubstantial with his Father, (Athanasius).

The hostility between the two parties was so great that it was considered by the Emperor Constantine to be a major threat to the political stability of the Roman empire. He began to exert pressure on the church for a speedy resolution of the conflict. This led to the calling of a council of the whole church at Nicea in AD325.

The council was attended by 318 bishops, but was not truly representative of the whole church since these were only about one sixth of all bishops in the empire at that time. Further, only about 10 of these were from the Western half of the Empire. Those who did attend, soon found that Constantine assumed a dominant role to force the adoption of the decision which he favoured.

Although Constantine is claimed by the church, to this present time, as the first

"Christian" emperor, his personal Christianity was clearly more political than real.

The historian, Gibbon, describes him as a "cruel but dissolute monarch" combining

"the vices of rapaciousness and prodigality". He became emperor by making war to destroy his opponents. He murdered one of his sons, his brother-in-law, his nephew and possibly his second wife.

Although favouring Christianity, he retained the title and role of high priest of the pagan religion. At the time of the council, he was unbaptised and, in fact, refused to be baptised until on his deathbed, on the theory that he could thereby continue to sin and be finally cleansed of all at the last moment.

Those bishops who allowed Constantine any role at all in the decision of the council and the affairs of the church, bring the credibility of their own Christianity into question. The events which led to the final vote, and the subsequent behaviour of the victors, are convincing evidence that the council itself and any decisions reached, completely lack the seal of the Spirit of God. (By their fruits you shall know them.)

To resolve the dispute, a creed was proposed which favoured Athanasius and condemned Arius. Although most of the bishops present were not Arian, many of

them were equally opposed to the wording of the part of the creed which defined the nature of Jesus as of "one substance" with the Father. Over sixteen centuries later, the theologians of the Eastern Orthodox churches and the Western Churches, of Roman origin, are still divided over this issue.

After a prolonged and inconclusive debate, the impatient Constantine intervened to force an end to the conflict by demanding the adoption of the creed. The vote was taken under threat of exile for any who did not support the decision favoured by Constantine. To avoid the consequences, a number of bishops found excuses to leave the council and return home before the vote was taken.

The majority voted in favour, although many were motivated by fear or politics, rather than conscience. Two stood firm to their conviction and voted against the proposed creed. They were subsequently exiled, along with Arius. The writings of Arius were condemned to be burnt and a death sentence decreed for any found in possession of them.

It is worth noting, in passing, that the council of AD325 and the creed which it produced, did not attempt to resolve the question of the personality of the Holy Spirit.

In that respect, the original version of the Nicene Creed is not truly Trinitarian. The nature of the Holy Spirit was, at that time, still open to differing views. There were some who did affirm the personality and deity of the Spirit, but there were also those (including Arius) who taught that the Spirit was a created being. Others held that the Spirit was an influence and not a person at all. The wording of the creed did not clearly address this issue.

The scandalous "majority" vote of the Nicene Council did not really settle anything and controversy continued unabated. Within a few years the Arians had regained so much ground that Constantine found it politically expedient to change sides and Arianism was restored to favour. (This writer suspects that this sudden reversal also made for peace at home, between Constantine and his Arian wife!)

Arius was recalled from exile and declared innocent of heresy. The exiled bishops were reinstated and the Arian party conspired to have Athanasius banished!

Constantine's reversal was so complete that, nearing the end of his life, he received his baptism from the Arian bishop of Nicodemia. After Constantine's death, his Arian son deposed the Trinitarian bishops and replaced them with Arians.

Over the next few decades the balance of political power changed several times, backwards and forwards, from one party to the other. As opportunity presented itself, the Arians and their foes both misused their temporary periods of favour with the secular power, to persecute and exile the opposition.

The Arians, when they were in power, proved to be no more Christian than their foes.

They were, if anything, even more vicious, intolerant and violent. It is open to speculation that an Arian dominant orthodoxy would have produced a history of

persecution even more terrible than it has been under Catholicism.

The controversy produced vicious politics in both church and state and much bloodshed. Finally, in AD381, under the Trinitarian emperor Theodosius, a further council was held in Constantinople, to which only Trinitarians were invited. Not surprisingly, the 150 Trinitarian bishops who attended managed to carry a vote which altered the Nicene Creed to its present form.

The deity of Jesus was confirmed (with minor amendments) and a statement was

added which affirmed both the personality and deity of the Holy Spirit. The doctrine of the Trinity became law for both church and state.

The destiny of the church was now in the hands of men whose dogmatic intolerance still shapes the attitudes of their successors.

Bishops who disagreed, were expelled from their pulpits and excommunicated from the church. The "victors" combined with the secular authorities to suppress the Arians by force of arms and exile. Enforced assent to abstract propositions about the nature of Jesus, rather than obedience to his teaching, became the test of Orthodoxy.

The church, which in former times had been so terribly persecuted for its faith, was now unashamedly using persecution as a weapon for the protection of the "faith"!

This majority "victory" is one of the great tragedies of the history of the church. Those who really know the Jesus of the Gospels, will never be able to believe that he would impose his will on the church by threats, force of arms, or political and religious pressures. Even a democratic vote which requires the minority to abandon their

conscience, must be suspect.

How can we really believe that these men were followers of the real Christ, or that they were led by the Spirit of God in their decisions? How can we trust their confused theology?

The "victory" at Constantinople was far from complete. Controversy continued until, 70 years later, at the council of Chalcedon, the church found it necessary to further

"explain" the Nicene Creed.

This new definition is known as the "Chalcedon Creed". However this Trinitarian statement undermines its own credibility since it also defines the virgin Mary as the

"Mother of God", threatening excommunication for those who dare to differ.

Somewhere around the same time, the "Athanasian Creed" made its appearance.

Although it bears the name of Athanasius, it is actually of unknown origin, possibly first appearing in South Gaul, in the middle of the 5th century. (Some authorities place it much later than this).

The wickedness of the servants of the False Christ of the Nicene, Chalcedonian and Athanasian creeds, eventually produced a decree by the Emperor Justinian, in the 6th century, which imposed the death sentence for all who did not accept the doctrine of the Trinity.

For more than a thousand years this evil law was used by evil men, in an evil church, to justify the murder of "heretics". They actually claimed to serve God in what they did, fulfilling the prophecy by Jesus which warned his disciples to expect the

appearance of such men! (John 16:2)

The Athanasian Creed is, without doubt, one of the most illogical, contradictory and confusing documents ever written. In addition it denies salvation to those who refuse to believe its confusion, and decrees that they "shall perish everlastingly".

The problem with all three of these creeds is that they use confusing language, to describe abstract concepts, far beyond the understanding of the ordinary men and women who comprise the majority of the church. They pay lip service to the humanity of Jesus, while at the same time effectively denying it by making him much, much, more than any other man who has ever existed.

No other man has ever been of one substance with God. No other man has ever existed eternally before his birth. No other man has ever possessed an infinite mind in a human body. No other man has ever combined two natures in one body. No other man has ever faced temptation as a "GOD MAN", possessed of these attributes.

The implication of this theology, especially in relation to the temptation of Jesus, is totally destructive. No matter how we rationalise it, it is beyond all reason and logic to say that the Jesus of these creeds is really a man.

This awful contradiction is presented as a "mystery". This clouds the issue in confusion, and is supposed to silence awkward questions for which there is no logical answer.

The real truth is that these creeds are a cleverly contrived variation of that first century

"Spirit of Antichrist", which denied that Jesus had come in the flesh as a real man.

The consequences of this for the church have been disastrous. Even though

theologians, still, can neither agree totally among themselves about the meaning of these creeds, nor explain them in simpler words suited to the understanding of

ordinary men, verbal assent to this "incomprehensible mystery" is a major test of orthodoxy. Salvation, the church says, requires that men profess faith in a form of words, without understanding their meaning.

The subtle dishonesty by which men come to terms with this sort of religion, reaches into many other areas of the lives of those who surrender themselves to it.

Theology which pays only lip service to the real humanity of Jesus, is universally associated with a religion which also pays only lip service to much of His teaching about the way of life which pleases God. The same confused logic which accepts the doctrine of the Trinity, explains away the need for radical obedience to the Sermon on the Mount.

Chapter 5: THE ONENESS CHRIST; ANOTHER CHRIST, ANOTHER GOSPEL

Early in the 20th century, during the infancy of the growth of Pentecostalism, there was a major division between the "orthodox" Trinitarian mainstream and others who adopted the "Oneness" theology. This division persists to the present time.

Both streams claim the "gift" of speaking in tongues as the sign which validates their other claim to have received the same "Baptism with the Holy Spirit" as those first century disciples in the upper room on the day of Pentecost. Both claim miracles and other signs and wonders in support of their mutually exclusive and unique positions.

To an observer, there is no visible difference between their "gifts", except that in one case they come from the Trinitarian Christ, and in the other, from the Oneness Christ.

The "Oneness" theology about the person of Christ represents a re-emergence of a stream with diverse origins, which can be traced back to the early centuries of the church. It carries various theological labels such as, "Modalism", "Monarchianism", or

"Sabellianism". It was, in fact, a source of contention at the same time as the Arian debate, in the fourth century. However, at that time, under the pressures of political expediency, the opponents temporarily submerged their differences to join forces against the common Arian foe.

The "Oneness" teaching rejects the Trinitarian concept of three separate and distinct persons in the Godhead and claims instead that Jesus alone is the one God of the Bible. It is this Jesus who reveals himself in different forms, or "modes", at different times, as Father, Son, or Holy Spirit. All three are simply the same person, Jesus, appearing in the "mode" appropriate to the occasion.

This counterfeit Christ is both Father and Son at the same time. Although He is spoken of as a "man", He is in truth, unlike any other man who has ever lived, in that He has two separate natures, one human, one divine. He was confined to earth as a man, and yet at the same time, in Heaven and omnipresent as God.

As the "human" Jesus He worships and prays to the divinity within Himself.

On the cross only His human nature "died", since in His second divine nature, as God, He could not die.

The temptation of Jesus in the wilderness is made into a total farce. They say that although His human nature was tempted, He could not sin at all because of His second divine nature.

Because of their belief in only one person as God, these churches usually also insist that baptism "in the name of the Father, Son and Holy Spirit", (Matt 28,19), is not valid. To be acceptable to their "oneness" God (and to these men) it must be "in the name of Jesus" (only). Anyone baptised in the threefold name of "Father, Son and Holy Spirit", must renounce that baptism and be rebaptised with the right words said over them, before they can be regarded as really baptised.

However, even then, salvation is not complete and the new birth is not regarded as accomplished until the person concerned has spoken in tongues, as evidence of their

"Baptism with the Holy Spirit".

For honest hearts, this "Oneness" doctrine is sadly lacking in logic.

For eyes and ears open to simple Bible truth, this Jesus simply cannot be a REAL

MAN. The Oneness churches do pay lip service to the word "man" in relation to Jesus, but no matter how we attempt to rationalise this, their two natured Jesus is actually a God, very different to other men. Their Jesus is in reality, a modern version of that first century spirit of Antichrist, which is the subject of John's first and second epistles.

John uses hard words about this. So must we. But let us be careful to use those words from John's epistle reluctantly, cautiously, and in love, without hatred or bitterness.

To put it simply, using John's words, the Oneness teaching about the person of Jesus, IS A LIE which denies both the real meaning of the relationship between Father and Son, and the true identity of the Christ. (1 John 2,22)

John says very bluntly that no such lie is of the Truth, (1 John 2,21), and that any spirit which insists that Jesus is not really a man, is NOT the Spirit of Truth, but is instead, the Spirit of Error. (1 John 4,6)

John labels all such as DECEIVERS, (2 John 7), and FALSE PROPHETS, (1 John 4,1).

All who follow these teachers are still OF THE WORLD. (1 John 4,5)

If we accept John's warning, all of this raises many serious questions.

Can we regard any baptism, administered in the name of the Oneness Christ, and received on the basis of acceptance of that false Christ, as a valid baptism?

Can we regard any belief in the false Gospel which insists that no one is really saved or born again, until they have spoken in tongues, as a saving faith? Is it not much more likely that these people who have received "a different Jesus" and "a different Gospel", have also been "led astray from pure devotion to (the real) Christ". (2 Cor 11,3-4) Where does this fit in relation to what Paul says about false Gospels?

How do we apply TO OURSELVES, Paul's warning about those who pervert the Gospel of Christ? (Gal 1,6-10)

Perhaps the most serious implication is this. Any "spirit" and any "gift" received in the name of that false Oneness Christ, accompanied by the false Gospel of salvation, must surely be identified as that Spirit of Error to which John refers.

If that is the case, then why should I believe that it can possibly be true that the real Jesus is confirming their dangerous errors, through any sign or wonder offered in support of their claims? Is it not much more likely that such signs and wonders are amongst those described in Deut 13,1-2?

When we are faced with such "signs", we will do well to remember that what is really happening is that the Lord our God is testing us, to know whether we love Him with

all our heart and with all our soul, and so that we may learn better to obey His voice, serve Him and cleave to Him alone. (Deut 13,3-4)

WE MUST NOT LISTEN TO THE WORDS OF SUCH PROPHETS.

Chapter 6: "THE WORD" IN John 1

"In the beginning was the Word and the Word was with God, and the Word was God."

(John 1:1)

This opening of John's gospel is widely (and I believe, incorrectly) assumed to teach the deity of Jesus Christ.

"The Word" in this verse is a translation of the Greek word "*logos*". In the original Greek text, "*logos*" does not have the capital first letter given to "Word", in the English translation. It should properly be translated "word" (with a small "w").

Further, although in Greek "*logos*" is a masculine noun, this is no proof of personality.

Many words which are neuter in English, are either masculine or feminine in Greek.

For example, the word translated "beginning" is feminine. No one would seriously claim that this means that "beginning" should be regarded as having a feminine personality! In the same way it is quite improper to give "*logos*" a masculine personality, or make it into a proper name, as the translators have done. This, unfortunately, reflects more of their theological bias than it does strict accuracy.

The Greek "*logos*" simply means "a spoken word", "a saying", "a communication", etc.

According to Liddell and Scott Greek Lexicon, it also means the inward thought which is expressed in the spoken word.

John tells us five things about this "word":-

- It was there in the beginning.
- It was with God.
- It was God.
- All things were made through it.
- This spoken "word" became flesh when Jesus was born.

It helps in understanding these sayings, to know that John wrote his Gospel and his epistles, to expose the falsehood of the Gnostic teaching that God was too remote and too aloof from creation to have done the actual work Himself and instead, did it through an agent.

John is also refuting the parallel false teaching, that Jesus was not really a man.

Jesus was claimed by these teachers, to be a pre-existent spirit who had come down from Heaven, merely assuming the appearance of a man, but without flesh and blood substance, and without the limitations of humanity. As a spirit He was said to be unable to experience temptation and was therefore also unable to sin.

What John says firstly, about God as the creator who spoke the world into existence, and later, about Jesus as the man who came into being by means of that same word spoken by God, is to be understood against this background.

"In the beginning", of course, draws our attention back to the creation story and the

spoken word in Genesis, where the world is said to have been formed in response to God's word of command.

Nothing was created in the beginning, until God SPOKE the WORD.

When John says that the word was with God, he means simply that the word spoken, had its ORIGIN ***with God***. What God said, expressed the thoughts and intentions of

God's heart.

When John says that the spoken word ***was*** God, he means that:-

* ***It was*** God speaking -- not someone else.

* ***It was*** God -- not aloof from creation, but directly involved.

* ***It was*** God *personally* doing the work of creating the world -- not an agent.

Thus, in John 1:3, when John says that all things were made through the word, he is describing HOW God made the world. **"God SAID.....and it was so."**

The translation "made through ***him***" reflects again, the theological bias of the translators.

We have already briefly explained the peculiarities of Greek gender. The pronoun translated "him", refers back to "*logos*".

A proper translation into English should recognise the ***impersonality*** of the Greek masculine noun and render this phrase as, "came into existence ***by means of it***".

Without IT, (God's spoken word), nothing came into existence. GOD commanded and all was created. (Psalm 33:6 & 148:1-5)

Finally, John says "*the (spoken) word became flesh*".

All the Old Testament words all the things that God had spoken of old to the fathers, in many and various ways, by the prophets, (Heb 11:1), were fulfilled when Jesus came into being. The same spoken word which foretold all the marvellous

details of His person and ministry, caused the virgin conception and birth which brought God's flesh and blood Son into existence, as the pinnacle of creation.

In this chapter, John is not saying that Jesus is God, but that He is THE SON of God.

(John 1:34) He is not saying that Jesus existed in the beginning, but that, like all the rest of creation, He came into existence by means of the same spoken word which caused the things which are seen, to be made out of things which are not seen. (Heb 11:3)

Jesus is a REAL man. However He is more, not in His nature or substance, but in the STATUS conveyed by His unique origin as the only BEGOTTEN Son of God. (John

1:14,18 & 3:16 NKJV)

He is THE MAN who God had in mind as the final goal, when He spoke the word,

"Let us make man in our image, after our likeness".

He is THE MAN destined by God's *spoken word*, (LOGOS) for dominion over all the earth. (Genesis 1:26 & Hebrews 1:5-10)

His is the name above every name, at which every knee shall bow and every tongue confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father. (Phil 1:9-11)

Chapter 7: JESUS AND THE GOD OF THE OLD TESTAMENT

THE ONE TRUE GOD

Biblical Unitarian faith in the Father of Jesus as the One who alone is truly God, is not new.

The whole of the Old Testament speaks of this one God in unequivocal terms.

THERE IS NO OTHER. (Deut 4,35 & Isaiah 45,5).

This one true God is revealed as the eternally self existent being who planned the whole of creation for inheritance by His HUMAN Son.

This human Son is Jesus. He is mentioned often, never as already existing, but always as one who is yet to be BORN. Significantly, He is THE MAN who will be the

fulfillment of promises made by God to specific people, (Eve, Abraham, and David), about the future work of a direct descendant in their blood line.

Nowhere in the Old Testament is Jesus spoken of as a then existing personality.

Nor is there any mention of Jesus as part of a "tri-une God". The concept of the Trinity is totally foreign to the Old Testament.

God is ONE, and God is self existent. God is NOT A MAN. Nor is He the Son of Man. (Numbers 23,19).

Jesus, however, is not self existent. His existence is derived from God in fulfillment of promises made by God, that He would be both Son of God and Son of Man and since God is neither of those things, Jesus therefore cannot be God.

The distinct separate personalities of God and Jesus, the **future** existence and work of Jesus, and the subordinate nature of the relationship of Jesus to God, are all prophesied by David in Psalm 110 " *The LORD (Yahweh) said unto my lord (adoni), sit at my right hand until I make your enemies your footstool*".

In this Psalm Jesus is NOT Yahweh. He is someone else.

Yahweh, who alone is God, would speak to this other lord at some time in the future, issuing an invitation to assume the important, but definitely subordinate, role as God's chief deputy the "right hand man".

JESUS AND THE GOD OF MOSES

Moses was not a Trinitarian!

The faith of Moses in one God only, (not three, or three-in-one) is expressed, clearly and unmistakably, in the Shema

" *Hear O Israel: the LORD our God is one LORD; and you shall worship the LORD your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your might.*" Deut 6,4.

Although Moses has much to say about Jesus, it is NEVER that Jesus is YAHWEH, the one LORD.

JESUS AND THE GOD OF CREATION

The faith of Moses in One God is older than Moses. It dates back to creation.

It is this One God who Moses wrote about as the the Creator of the heavens and the earth. (Genesis 1,1).

He is the one who said " *Let us make man in our image, after our likeness, and let them have dominion over all the earth*" (Genesis 1,26).

It is sometimes claimed here, by Trinitarians, that the word, "us", reveals God as **more than one**. However this is not logical at all. Nor does it make any statement at all, about Jesus as a person then existing as part of a tri-une God. What it does tell us, is that God was speaking **to others** who were present.

That there were others present when God laid the foundation of the earth, and the identity of those others, is revealed in Job 38,7. They are the "sons of God" the angels. The God who speaks in Genesis to those others, is the ONE who Moses

declared to be God alone. In other writings of Moses it becomes clear that Jesus cannot have been present at the creation, either as the speaker or a hearer. He is at the centre of the creation plan to make man, but not then personally in existence.

In this WORD, spoken at the beginning, the One True God declared his purpose to BECOME the Father of Jesus.

Adam was only the starting point. It is Jesus who was the primary goal of God's plan in creation. It is the MAN, Jesus, for whom all creation was made **by His Father**.

It is the MAN, Jesus, who bears the full image and likeness of the One God who is His Father.

It is the MAN Jesus, who is the one through whom all other men will receive from God, the promised dominion over all the earth.

JESUS AND THE GOD OF ADAM AND EVE

Moses wrote about The One True God as the God of Adam and Eve.

He is the God who created them and placed them under law to learn His likeness through obedience.

When they tried to steal that impossible short cut to the likeness of God, and through disobedience, incurred the death penalty, the One True God became a Divine Saviour, by promising a **future human** saviour.

God's provision for their salvation would be a descendant of Eve, who would win the ultimate victory over sin. (Genesis 3,15).

It is the MAN, Jesus, who became this descendant.

JESUS AND THE GOD OF ABRAHAM

Moses wrote that the One True God, who appeared to him at the burning bush, revealed Himself as the God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob. (Ex 3,6).

By this, He is identified as the God who made promises to Abraham which are the foundation of our own New Testament faith in Jesus.

The central theme of God's promises to Abraham, is the FUTURE "seed of Abraham", the Messiah, through whom they would be fulfilled.

The God of Abraham is the one who promised that a descendant of Abraham would bless all families of the earth. It is the MAN, Jesus, who is that descendant, through whom all who share the faith of Abraham are blessed by being turned from their sins. (Acts 3,25-26).

The God of Abraham is the one who promised that Abraham and his descendant would inherit the earth as an everlasting possession. It is the MAN, Jesus, who is this promised descendant. It is through Jesus that all others who share the faith of Abraham also become his true ***spiritual heirs***, and with Jesus, inherit that everlasting dominion over the earth.

JESUS AND THE GOD OF DAVID

This same One True God is the one who promised David that one of his descendants would sit on the throne of David for ever.

To David, God also revealed that this FUTURE king, not yet born, (for how else could he be David's descendant) would also be GOD'S OWN SON ("*I will be his father and he shall be my son.*" (2 Samuel 7,14).

In recognition of the promise that this future king would also be Son of God, David prophesied about him, calling him lord, (but NOT Yahweh). Thus he declared that his descendant would be subordinate to God, but superior to David.

It is Jesus, who is both Son of David and Son of God.

JESUS AND THE GOD OF ISAIAH

Isaiah speaks clearly of the distinction between the MAN, Jesus, and the God who stands alone.

For Isaiah, God is the LORD, the one who Moses declared to be the One True God.

There is no other. (ch. 43,10-14 & 44,8 & 45,5-7).

He is the God who speaks the word which will stand for ever. (ch. 40,8).

He is the LORD, (the Yahweh of Moses), who is the everlasting God, the creator of the ends of the earth. (ch. 41,28).

He is the God who promises the coming of the man who will be the future Saviour, Priest and King. (The Messiah).

Isaiah speaks often of Jesus. The word of God which stands for ever, is spoken about Jesus.

In Isaiah 9,6-7, Jesus is described as a future son of the Jewish race. This Jewish son is the one who will sit on David's throne, (and will therefore be the one promised as Son of David and also Son of God.) Because he will be the Son of God, he will bear the names and titles of God, which rightly also belong to a Son.

In Isaiah 53, Jesus is revealed as the MAN who would become the suffering Saviour, dying to bear the penalty for the sins of all who accept His sacrifice.

In this role He reveals the arm of the LORD, but is not himself the LORD. (v1).

As the sin bearer, upon whom the LORD has laid our iniquities, he is the LORD'S agent in our salvation, but is not himself the LORD. (v6).

As the man in whose hand the will of the LORD is to prosper, He is distinct and separate from God. (v10).

He is not God, but the servant of God. (v11).

And because of His victorious sacrificial role as the human AGENT of the Divine Saviour, he is to be highly exalted. (v11-12).

MESSIAH is a Hebrew word meaning "anointed". It is the direct equivalent of the Greek and English "Christ".

In Isaiah 61, Jesus is prophesied as the future Messiah, the LORD'S anointed one. The Lord GOD, (Yahweh, who is alone is God) will anoint Jesus for the work of salvation.

It is the anointing by the Spirit of God, which declares him to be God's MESSIAH. He is the promised human King and Priest after the order of Melchizedec, anointed for His role by the Spirit of God. As Messiah he is sent by God (v1). Since he is sent by God, he cannot himself be the One True God.

CONCLUSION

We have touched only a few of the major references, from a few writers of the Old Testament.

The other writers are uniformly agreed.

The LORD is God. The LORD **alone** is God.

Nowhere in the Old testament, is Jesus ever anything other than a FUTURE man, whose relationship to God will be that of a Son who is also a servant. The Son will be God's agent, but cannot himself be God, for God, though He may be a Father, is neither a man, nor the son of Man.

In all of these promises, God remains alone as the ONE TRUE GOD.

Jesus is promised but not yet in existence. He is the FUTURE plan, THE WORD spoken by God, which is certain to come to pass.

But nowhere in the Old Testament is there the slightest hint that Jesus already exists as a person who is part of a tri-une God, or as a pre-existent spirit being.

How, if he was either, could he ever be truly a man? It was a MAN who was promised, and if God is true to His word, then a REAL MAN Jesus must be.

Men who believe in the pre-existence of Jesus as God, may pay LIP SERVICE to His manhood. In that, without question, they may even be sincere.

However, truth is the issue in question, not sincerity.

And that lip service to manhood is an abuse of language, a confusion, a lie, which says one thing, but in the same breath effectively denies it, by making of Jesus something that could never be really a man.

The God of the Old Testament will not share His glory with another. (Isaiah 42,8 & 48,11).

In the New Testament, He has not laid that glory aside, nor has he given it to another.

However, He does now receive that glory which is His alone, from all who bow the knee to His glorified, but subservient, Son. (Phil 4,9-12 & 1 Cor 15,27-28).

This God is revealed to us by His Son, the man Christ Jesus, who is the Mediator between God and men. (1 Tim 2,5).

It is Jesus who acknowledges the One God of the Old Testament, as both His God and our God. (John 20,17).

And it is Jesus who repeats the words of Moses, commanding us to love this God as the LORD **our** God, with all our heart, and with all our soul, and with all our mind, and with all our strength. (Mark 12,29-30).

Chapter 8: JESUS AND THE GOD OF THE NEW TESTAMENT

JESUS AND THE GOD OF MOSES

The New Testament God is the same ONE LORD who is the God of Moses.

Jesus says so.

In defining the supreme priority of obedience to God, He repeats the words of Moses.

"Hear, O Israel the LORD our God, the LORD is one; And you shall love the LORD

your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your mind, and with all your strength". (Mark 12,29-30)

Thus Jesus draws our attention to the same ONE TRUE GOD, who is the God of the

Old Testament. This God is THE LORD. There is no other.

JESUS AND THE GOD WHO IS HIS FATHER

It should come as no surprise, therefore, to discover that the New Testament

relationship between Jesus and His father, is exactly that promised and prophesied in the Old Testament.

For the New Testament writers, Jesus is certainly not God. He is someone else. He is God's Son.

The God to whom Jesus directs our worship and obedience, is the ONE GOD who

Jesus calls both **His** God and **our** God. (John 20,17) It is this ONE GOD who Jesus prays to as THE ONLY TRUE GOD, calling upon Him

as Father. (John 17,3).

Thus He makes it clear, without any possibility of misunderstanding, that He himself is not the ONLY TRUE GOD.

JESUS AND THE GOD OF PAUL

Paul draws us a very clear distinction between God and Jesus.

There is, Paul says, but ONE GOD, the Father. (1 Cor 8,6)

There is, Paul also says, another who is NOT God, but Lord. (1 Cor 8,6). This Lord, of course, is Jesus .

Paul repeats this with a slightly different emphasis, in 1 Tim 2,5. There he again refers to the One who he calls the ONLY GOD.

Jesus, Paul says, is not this ONE God, but the **human** mediator between the ONLY God and all other men. (1 Tim 2,5)

JESUS AND THE NEW TESTAMENT GOD

WHO KEEPS HIS PROMISES

The God of the New Testament is revealed as the keeper of ancient promises, made to Eve, to Abraham, and to David.

He is revealed as the God who confirms the words of His servants the prophets. (Isaiah 44,26).

Jesus is not this God. He is someone else. The New Testament declares Him to be the human descendant of Eve, Abraham and David. He is the MAN who was born in

fulfillment of all those promises and prophecies.

Jesus is not God. He is the servant of God, upon whom the Anointing of the Spirit of God rests. He is the Messiah, anointed to bear the Good Tidings, the Gospel of

Salvation. (Cf. Isaiah 61,1-3 & Luke 4,18)

Jesus is not God. He is the "Lord" of whom David spoke, the human descendant of David, who has been exalted to the position of chief deputy to the LORD the

"right hand man" of God. (Cf Psalm 110,1 with Matt 22,44-45 & Heb 1,13) Jesus is not God. He was not yet in existence when God spoke in the present tense to guarantee a future certainty, *"You are my Son, today I have begotten you"*. (Compare Psalm 2,2,7 with Heb 1,5. See also Rom 4,17)

JESUS AND THE GOD WHO IS THE SOURCE OF HIS AUTHORITY

Jesus is not God. He claimed no authority of His own, for the words that He spoke. He was sent by another **higher** authority. That higher authority is God. What He says is by commandment from His Father. (John 12,44-50)

JESUS AND THE GOD WHO IS THE SOURCE OF HIS MIRACLES

Jesus is not God. He claimed no power of His own to perform miracles. (John 5,19). It was, He said, God who did the works. (John 14,10)

The works were His Father's confirmation of the authority granted to Jesus to speak for God, as God's agent. (John 5,30-43).

One of the clearest indications that Jesus exercised no power of His own, is seen in the miracle of the raising of Lazarus.

It was God who raised Lazarus. It was Jesus who prayed, but it was God who performed the work, in answer to the prayer of His Son. (John 11,40-43)

That miracle was God's declaration that He had indeed sent Jesus to speak for Him; and it was God's response to Martha's belief in Jesus, not as God, but as the Son of God and the Messiah. (John 11,27)

Jesus now has ALL power and all authority in Heaven and Earth. However, even now, that authority and power is not inherent, but derived. It has been given to Him.

(Matthew 28,19)

And Jesus remains eternally **subject** to the God who is His Father. (1 Cor 15,27-28) **JESUS AND THE IMMORTAL GOD**

Jesus is not God. God alone has inherent immortality (1 Tim 6,16) and

therefore God cannot die. But Jesus was born mortal and Jesus did die; and it is not Jesus Himself, but the immortal living God who raised Him from the dead. (Acts 2,24

& 3,15 & 4,10). The immortality which Jesus now has, is a gift from God, just as it will be for all others who inherit eternity.

JESUS AND THE GOD OF THE CHURCH

In Matthew 16,13-17, Jesus makes the claim for Himself that He is :-

- The Son of Man. (The human descendant of those other men to whom God made promises).
- The Christ (The Messiah of the Old Testament, anointed to rule over His people as a king, and intercede for them as a priest).
- The Son of the living God. (The human Son of the self-existent creator).

In declaring this doctrine to be the foundation stone on which His church is built, He very clearly separates His identity and His status from that of the God who is His Father.

THESE FACTS are the foundation stone of true Christian faith.

BUILDING ON THE RIGHT FOUNDATION

In thus identifying Himself, Jesus has made it clear that He is not a Trinitarian!

And the foundation on which the Church is being built, is NOT the doctrine of the Trinity!

Jesus is no pre-existent being now merely pretending to be a man, nor is he a part of a triune God. The New Testament simply DOES NOT use such language about Him.

This is important. It was Jesus who said that knowing the Father as the ONLY TRUE

GOD, and Jesus as the SON sent by God, was the source of Eternal Life. ((John 17,1-3).

However we must be careful about all this. Salvation is NOT by correct theology alone! When Jesus said this about knowing the FATHER as the only true God, He did not mean merely knowing **about** God! It is, after all, certainly possible to know **who**

God is without loving Him for **what** He is!

What Jesus has in mind, is knowing God as Jesus has revealed Him knowing God

personally, as Jesus does loving all that God is, as Jesus does loving God and Jesus, both, enough to **obey**, as Jesus does. (John 14,15)

The real issue is not simply that some do not love Jesus, just because they are wrong about who He is. (Although that is certainly important in its own right).

I am convinced that the real problem is that most are wrong about who Jesus is

because they do not love either Him or His Father enough, either to want to know who He really is, or to be willing to obey God when they do know.

However, the confused "Greek philosophical logic" of Trinitarian teaching, does cloud the essential issues of true faith in Jesus. To make Him an infinite pre-existent being, with an eternal mind, and with two natures, divine and human, combined somehow in one body, is to elevate His obedience to God far beyond all hope of human emulation.

If victory over sin requires a two natured "God-man" to achieve it, then it lies beyond human reach, and continued failure is all that we can expect.

The **real** Good News tells us that a REAL man, made exactly like all other men, has demonstrated that men CAN live in a way that pleases God. When men choose to

love God as the man Jesus does, they will be able to believe that victory is possible, and they will obey. (John 14,15)

Chapter 9: THE IMPORTANCE OF THE HUMANITY OF JESUS

THE HUMAN SON OF GOD

The writers of the New Testament are unanimous in their declaration that the MAN they know as Jesus, is also The Son of God. They do NOT write to say that Jesus is God. No one familiar with the Old Testament could ever accept that. Instead, over and over again, they speak of God and His Son in language which indicates, beyond question, that God is NOT Jesus, and Jesus is NOT God.

Their Old Testament faith is in the ONE LORD who declared that God is ***not a man***.

(Num 23,19). Their eye witness is that Jesus really is a man with a real human body.

Moreover they have heard Jesus say in His own words, that He is a man. Therefore Jesus is NOT God.

They know that the Old Testament says that no man can look on God and live,

(Exodus 33,20) They agree. No man has ever seen, nor can see God, (John 1,18 & 1

Tim 6,16). But they are men, and they have seen Jesus. Again, therefore, Jesus ***cannot*** be God.

They offer compelling eye witness evidence for their claim that the ONE LORD of the Old Testament, has become the Father of a MAN, and that this man is now risen from the dead, immortal, and exalted to the right hand of God.

The New Testament writers use the word "father", in exactly the same sense that we use it to describe our own relationship with our children. By the use of the word they mean that the birth of Jesus was first planned by His Father; that He was then begotten by God; that He owes His origin to God; that His existence as a living person began when His mother gave birth; and that He has no prior existence, ***except as a plan in***

the mind of His Father.

The one almost unthinkable difference is that they know that Jesus has no human father! And they KNOW that this staggering claim is NOT impossible. His birth IS the direct result of the miracle of the virgin conception. " *For with God nothing will be impossible.*" (Luke 1,37).

This difference in origin does not result in any difference in nature. The New

Testament writers know nothing of the Trinitarian theology which insists that Jesus possesses **two natures**, which somehow merged to give him "impersonal human nature", without actually making Him a human person! The Jesus they know is NOT

the two natured "God-man" of the Trinitarian creeds. He is no **partly divine** "hybrid", with a little "extra" that is not possible for other men. He is a real man, of the same human nature and therefore exactly like all other men, in every respect. (Heb 2,14,17) The Jesus they know has experienced real human temptation, exactly like all other men, in every respect. (Heb 4,15). They describe His temptations in detail. On the other hand, they know that God cannot be tempted by evil things, (James 1,13) Yet Jesus has both experienced temptation, and overcome, indicating that it was certainly possible for Him to sin.

If it was not really possible for Jesus to sin, then His temptations were not real, and His claim to have overcome the world, (John 16,33), was no more than a cruel

deception.

It follows therefore that since the temptations of Jesus were real, and since His rejection of temptation was a real triumph over a real possibility of sin, Jesus is NOT

God. He is a separate and dependent being. He is a MAN.

A UNIQUE MAN

*However, although Jesus is a **real** man, it would be wrong to describe Him as a mere man. He is not. He is unique.*

But we must not make the mistake of ascribing His uniqueness to any imaginary divinity or other difference in nature, resulting from His origin.

Jesus is unique because He is the ONLY **begotten** Son, not **adopted** like other sons. (Gal 4,5)

Jesus is unique because of the status conveyed by His unparalleled origin as only begotten Son.

Jesus is unique because as God's only begotten Son, He is the Messiah. (Matt 16,13-16)

Jesus is unique because as God's only begotten Son, He is THE MAN for whom all else was created. It is his by right of birth.

Jesus is unique because He has overcome in temptation, where all other men failed.

Jesus is unique because of the reason for His death and the manner of His resurrection.

He is unique because He is the first immortal man.

He is unique because He now sits at God's right hand with supreme, (but delegated), authority.

Jesus is unique, because He alone, amongst all other men, is THE WAY to God. (John 14,6 & Acts 4,12).

Jesus is unique because He is the MAN who is the sole mediator between God and all other men. (1 Tim 2,5)

He is unique because He is the MAN appointed by God, to raise other men from the dead, and judge them, (Acts 17,30-31), and confer immortality on those who have done good. (John 5,29)

Such incredible claims about a virgin birth, a human Son of God, and a resurrected man, need irrefutable evidence to verify them.

The four Gospels are written for this purpose.

Backed by the evidence drawn from the Old Testament prophets; the miracles they have seen; the teaching they have heard; and most important of all, the resurrection which they have personally witnessed; the writers establish, beyond question, that Jesus really is the **human** Son of the ONE LORD of the Old Testament.

THE IMPORTANCE OF IT ALL

We repeat that the Gospel writers do NOT say they have seen God. They do say that they have seen this MAN, Jesus, who though He is a man, has made God known.

(John 1,18)

They tell us that to see this MAN, is to see God. (John 14,9). By this they do not mean that Jesus himself is God, but that He is an exact likeness of God, (Hebrews 1,3 & 2

Cor 4,4) the fulfilment of what God meant when He said, " *let us make man in our image, after our **likeness***". (Genesis 1,26)

The complete and real humanity of Jesus lies at the very heart of the GOSPEL. For all other men who share the same human nature, the GOOD NEWS declares that, not

only can our sins be forgiven, but that our human nature can be changed to be like the human nature of the MAN, Jesus.

Even victory over temptation and sin is possible, if we will believe that Jesus is the Messiah, the Son of God; and if we will choose to love God as this MAN does. (1

John 5,1-5)

Through His own human experience, Jesus has ***learned obedience***. (Heb 5,8). He is therefore able to understand completely the weaknesses of men, because He is one Himself.

At the same time, because He is a man, He offers hope to all other men who

experience the same temptations. If they will submit to Him, He is both willing and able to teach them how to grow into the mature obedience of a true Son of God,

experience temptation, and overcome, as He did, without sin.

The Holy Spirit is given to those who love Jesus and obey Jesus. (John 14,15-16). If our bodies can become a temple for the living God, as His is, through the indwelling Spirit of God, (1 Cor 3,16), then we have a guarantee from God that we too can share in all the inheritance which belongs to His Son. (Eph 6,13-14)

CONCLUSION

The New Testament writers are silent about any supposed Divinity for Jesus, but insistent on His humanity.

They prove again and again, by the miracles they report, that God has vested authority in a MAN, to speak for God. When Jesus speaks, He does not claim to be God. But He does claim to be a MAN who is an ***agent*** for the ONE LORD, who alone is God.

The miracles are not His own work, but the Father's confirmation of the source of the authority granted to His human Son. (John 14,10)

This is their united testimony.

To believe that the MAN, Jesus, is both Messiah and SON of God, is to have life in His name. (John 20,31)

Chapter 10: THE DEVELOPMENT OF BIBLICAL UNITARIANISM

In Europe, England and America

RECOGNISING UNITARIANS TODAY

We use the term "Unitarians" to describe those who reject the doctrine of the Trinity, in favor of belief in God as one person only. However, to avoid confusion we also need to define the difference between two sorts of Unitarianism.

In this paper we are mainly concerned with Biblical Unitarianism, and we use that term to avoid confusion with the other stream, which we will call Rationalist

Unitarianism.

Historically, they both began as virtually almost identical in theology and practice.

In past times all Unitarians appealed to the Scriptures, interpreted by reason. However, in the 19th century, the Rationalist Unitarians began to lay rather more emphasis on human "reason" and personal experience, than on belief based on an inspired Bible.

Most contemporary Rationalist Unitarians now follow this line. They can usually be identified by the use of the word "Unitarian", in naming their churches.

Today, amongst the Rationalists it is no longer essential to believe in a personal God, the Virgin Birth, miracles, or the inspiration of the Bible. For some, absolute standards of morality are rejected and left to individual "conscience". Many are

"Universalist" in their expectation of salvation. What began as a Christian movement, is no longer entitled to that description.

Biblical Unitarians, on the other hand, have survived as Bible centred groups,

maintaining a determined stand for faith in the One True God, His Virgin born Son, and the truth of the Bible.

The Biblical Unitarians do not reject reason, but they do accept the authority of the Scriptures as the sole source of revelation about God.

Although their theology is Unitarian, in the older sense of the word, many are careful about using the word at all, lest they be confused with the Rationalists and

Universalists.

In this article we shall concentrate our attention on the Biblical Unitarians.

DEFINING BIBLICAL UNITARIAN THEOLOGY

Biblical Unitarian belief can be briefly summarised as follows:-

- That the Father alone is the One True God;
- That Jesus Christ is the human son of The One True God, (but NOT God the Son);

- That Jesus was miraculously begotten of a virgin mother by the power of the One True God;

- That before His begetting Jesus did not exist in personal form, either as part of the Trinitarian God, or as the Arian spirit being.

Rather, He was planned by God from the beginning and spoken of by the prophetic Word of God, as the future MAN who would become the saviour of sinners and inherit the world.

- That Jesus began his existence, (as all other men do), at his birth, when the Word spoken by God was fulfilled.

- That Jesus was not the two natured "God-Man" of the Trinitarian creeds, but was born with only one nature, (human).

- That as a man, Jesus was made (created) exactly like all other men, mortal, subject to temptation, capable of sin, and needing to learn obedience.

- That the source of His perfect obedience was not in some inherent "hybrid divinity", but in His perfect love for the one true God, His Father.

- That the Holy Spirit is not the third person of the Trinitarian Creeds, but the divine presence and power of God, through which He works to achieve His purpose in His creation.

This theology is almost always accompanied by the doctrine of "Conditional Immortality". A proper understanding of human mortality is highly relevant to our appreciation of the complete humanity of Jesus and the meaning of salvation. This doctrine is also stated briefly below :-

- That God (the Father) alone has immortality.

- That mankind does not possess inherent immortality, or an "immortal soul".

- That the human race is mortal and that death is a sleep in which no part of the human personality survives the death of the body.

- That for all men, (including Jesus), immortality is a conditional gift, imparted at the resurrection of the body, and reserved only for those who believe and obey God.

All reject infant baptism and most, (but not all), practise Believer's Baptism.

ORIGIN

Unitarian theology is not new. It dates back to the beginning of time.

The God who created the world is defined by Moses as ONE. There is no other. (Deut 6:4)

The writers of the New Testament were also Unitarians. Jesus Himself confirmed the Unitarian theology of Moses, when he directed attention to the worship of the same ONE LORD (Mark 12:29-30).

Belief in Jesus as a subordinate being, distinct from God, continued to be the majority opinion until well into the third century. The doctrine of the Trinity, as we know it, did not exist.

SUPPRESSION

Belief in a Jesus who had no real humanity, but was a pre-existent spirit who merely assumed the appearance of a man, surfaced towards the end of the first century. It was this heresy which motivated the Apostle John to write his Gospel and his three

epistles, repudiating the teachers as "antichrists" and labelling the doctrine itself as

"the spirit of antichrist". (1 John 2:18 & 4:3)

However, despite John's rejection, the doctrine of a pre-existent Jesus continued to invade the Church, gradually changing its form, until eventually, in the 4th century, Jesus was elevated to a place in a "Tri-une" Godhead. In the theological jargon of the

"scholars", this new Jesus is said to have "impersonal human nature", without actually being a human person!

Attended by political intrigue and much bloodshed, the doctrine of the Trinity became the compulsory majority opinion. By Imperial decree it was enforced under threat of death.

Although the initial suppression was primarily directed against Arians, other

"heretics", including Unitarians, also found themselves under threat. For more than a thousand years, evil men in the Trinitarian mainstream used this evil law to justify the murder of "heretics". Both Arianism and Unitarianism were effectively suppressed.

It is doubtful whether Unitarian teaching was ever quenched totally, for the true light is never overcome by darkness, (John 1:5). And darkness is certainly the proper Biblical label for the murderous hatred in which the majority sought to destroy all opposition, (1 John 2:8-11 & 3:13), thinking that they did God service! (John 16:2) (20th century "Cult Busters" beware!)

However Unitarianism does not surface again to any major degree in the visible

history of the church, until the 16th century. This is perhaps understandable. In the face of potential martyrdom, most Unitarian believers would have kept a fairly low profile!

Possibly also, the relatively few who might have existed, were lost sight of in the broader general persecutions by the mainstream church against other "heretics". It was the custom to burn the writings of "heretics" and to erase their memory from the record, as far as

possible. Whatever the facts, this writer does not have access to enough of the history to do more than speculate, (perhaps a little wishfully), about this period.

MODERN DEVELOPMENT - THE ROOTS

Modern Unitarianism has its roots amongst the some of the early Anabaptists, in Holland, Poland and Transylvania, in the 16th century.

Michael Servetus. (1511?-1553)

The Spaniard, Michael Servetus appears to have been the first well documented

Unitarian of the 16th century. After attending the coronation of Emperor Charles V at Bologna in 1530, he became distressed by Papal ostentation and the Emperor's

deference to the worldly Pope. Contact with reformation leaders in France and

Switzerland, led him further away from Catholicism. Following personal study of the Scriptures, he rejected the doctrine of the Trinity and published his book, "Errors of the Trinity", in 1531, attracting the condemnation of Catholics and Protestants alike.

After about 1546 he fell out with Calvin, incurring the latter's determined and open animosity.

In 1553, in Lyon, he published another major work against the Trinity. He was taken by the Inquisition, but escaped to Geneva, where he was arrested by the Reformers. At Calvin's instigation he was burnt, a martyred victim of the darkness of spirit in which Calvin and his followers walked. (1 John 4:20)

Adam Pastor (born c.1511)

Rudolph Martens was a former Flemish Catholic priest who changed his name to

Adam Pastor when he became an Anabaptist in 1533.

A contemporary with Menno Simmons, he was ordained by Simmons and Dirk

Phillips, as an evangelist, in 1542. He worked closely with Simmons until 1547, when they fell out over Pastor's teaching that Jesus did not exist in any personal form before his conception, and was to be considered divine only in the sense that God dwelt in Him. In 1548, after a couple of unsuccessful attempts at reconciliation, he was finally excommunicated by Simmons, for his Unitarian belief.

Pastor is thought by some reputable historians to be the Flemish Anabaptist visitor to Poland, who went by the name Spiritus.

Whether or not this identification is accurate, Spiritus is the one who is credited with the introduction of Unitarian theology to Poland, in 1546.

Lalius Socinus (1525-1562)

Socinus was an Italian. He was studying Greek and Hebrew in Zurich, when Servetus was burnt. The circumstances attracted his attention to the doctrine of the Trinity, which, after study, he came to reject.

He was disinherited by his father for his views, and following his father's death, his share of his father's estate was seized by the Inquisition. He spent the rest of his life in exile, in Zurich.

After his death, his theological views survived and his papers were inherited by his nephew, Faustus Socinus, who became perhaps the most famous of the Unitarian pioneers.

Faustus Socinus (1539-1604)

Faustus Socinus was the nephew of Lalius Socinus. By 1559 he had been denounced by the Inquisition and forced to flee into exile. In Zurich, in 1562, he acquired his uncle's papers.

Shortly afterwards, in Lyon, he wrote his first work, in which Christ is described as "divine by office rather than by nature".

In 1563, by giving outward submission to the Catholic Church, he managed to return to Italy, where he remained for 12 years.

Forced to leave Italy again, he eventually settled in Cracow, Poland, in 1579, where he became a leading figure amongst the already established Polish Brethren. There he commenced the work of revising the Racovian Catechism, but died before it was completed.

The Polish Brethren

In the 16th and 17th centuries, Unitarian Theology flourished in Poland, where for a time it gained some degree of political ascendancy. A university was established, from which graduates carried the Unitarian teaching throughout Europe, (though not with highly visible success).

However, in a resurgence of Catholicism, fierce persecution resulted in virtual extinction of the Polish Unitarian movement. Somewhere around 1638, the university was destroyed. By

1660 a decree was passed by which Unitarians were required to dispose of all property and leave the Kingdom within three years. Many capitulated to the Roman Church. However many thousands left their homes and sought asylum in

exile. They were scattered far and wide throughout Europe, taking their radical theology with them.

Many travelled to Hungary, Transylvania, Prussia, Silesia and Moravia. In Prussia especially, they were received and permitted to establish churches for Unitarian worship.

Others found refuge in Holland where, prevented by the authorities from obtaining separate places of worship, they were eventually absorbed amongst the officially tolerated Trinitarian Anabaptist groups.

Others fled to England, where the seeds of Unitarianism had been growing, at times, quietly, and at others, under fierce persecution, for a century or more. Here they found a haven, though less than secure. They were helped by the congregations formed

through the influence of John Biddle. (see below).

The Transylvanian Church

The parallel development of Unitarianism in Poland's close neighbour, Transylvania, did not experience anything like the same persecutions. It was protected by the State, by legislation enacted in 1571. In Romania and Hungary this Church has survived to the present time, without succumbing to the rationalist influences experienced in other lands.

The Influence of the Racovian Catechism

The Racovian Catechism is the Confession of Faith of the Polish Brethren. It was first published in Poland, around 1575, and is one of their best known writings.

A revision was published in the Polish language, in 1605. This enlarged and annotated edition was begun by Faustus Socinus and Peter Statorius Junior, who both died before finishing the work. It was completed by others after their deaths.

Over the following couple of centuries, the 1609 Latin version and other subsequent Latin editions were widely circulated and read by scholars in other countries. It was also translated into many other languages, including Dutch, German and English, making it available to the common people of those countries.

Without doubt, this document has been, either directly, or indirectly, one of the major influences in the re-emergence of Unitarian theology as a significant movement.

DEVELOPMENT IN ENGLAND

The 16th Century

In England there are vague, but less than certain, references to denial of the Trinity, as far back as 1327, and 1401, when two were burned under this accusation. There are other pointers in the 15th century, which are also less than certain.

However, it was in the 16th century England, that Anti-Trinitarian teaching made a definite appearance, in parallel with developments on the Continent.

Amongst the Dutch Anabaptists who fled to England in 1535, many came under suspicion, Some were found who denied the Trinity, and forced to recant.

An English priest, John Assheton, was tried before the king in 1548, admitting denial of the Trinity. However he also recanted, for fear of the stake.

Around the same time a number of others were also tried and forced to recant under threat of death.

Other Anti-Trinitarians who refused to renounce their faith were burnt or imprisoned.

It is not easy to be certain just how much of this Anti-Trinitarian sentiment was Arian, and how much was Unitarian.

The Authorities who persecuted them were not always aware of the differences, and tended to be indiscriminate in grouping all "heretics" who denied the Trinity, as either Arian or Anabaptist.

The 17th Century

It was in the 17th century, that Unitarianism made a clearly identifiable appearance in England. The Racovian Catechism and the writings of Faustus Socinus penetrated the religious world of England to such an extent that "Socinianism" began to be used as an epithet to label those "heretics" who agreed with them. Socinianism came to a painful birth in England in the face of determined animosity.

In 1648, official opposition reached its worst expression when the Presbyterian majority in Parliament passed the notorious "Ordinance for Punishing Heresies and Blasphemies".

This evil law was directed principally against Anti-Trinitarians, practitioners of Believer's Baptism, (and rejectors of Infant Baptism), Pacifists, and Arminians. Seven specific "heresies" were punishable by death, "without benefit of Clergy". Sixteen less serious "errors" were to be punished by imprisonment.

However the law was not popular with the Parliamentary minority. It caused much controversy, and in the midst of other political unrest of the Cromwellian era, it became dormant. In 1651-2 Cromwell, who favoured religious tolerance, secured the passage of his "Act of Oblivion", which set free many accused of various crimes, including heresy. In 1653, when Cromwell became Protector, he pledged himself to guarantee religious freedom to all. However, Cromwell was not really either diligent or successful in fulfilling this pledge, and the "defenders of the Faith" still managed to prosecute "heretics" for some time afterwards.

In 1662, the bigoted anti-Puritan Parliament passed the "Act of Uniformity", which was aimed against non-conformists of all kinds.

However public opinion gradually forced change. Eventually, in 1689, the "Religious Toleration Act" gave relief to dissenters of all kinds, and the worst religious persecutions began to abate.

(It should be noted here, in fairness, that not all religious persecution in England, was directed solely against Anti-Trinitarians. Other non-conformists of all kinds suffered in parallel.

It was the same 17th century religious intolerance which drove the Pilgrim Fathers to seek freedom from persecution in a new land.

In the 25 year period before the Religious Toleration Act, some 8000 non-conformists are said to have died in prison and 60,000 suffered in other ways through fines and loss of property.

Such was the "love" inspired by the "Christ" of the Established Church!) The Unitarians quickly took advantage of any increasing freedom. By 1672 a member of Parliament was complaining that Socinian books were selling as openly as the Bible.

However, it is one thing to pass laws about toleration. It is quite a different thing to change men's hearts to practise it.

In 1693 the author of a small anti-Trinitarian tract was fined £500 by Parliament and the pamphlet burned by the hangman.

In 1697 an eighteen year old medical student at Edinburgh University was tried for blasphemy and heresy under a long dormant Scottish law, after making some

unguarded remarks about the Trinity, in the hearing of fellow students. At the trial he was denied the right to legal representation. He admitted the offence, professed a deep and sincere repentance, and pleaded for mercy. They hanged him anyway.

This case was the last execution for heresy in Great Britain.

Around this time the name "Unitarian" began to be used by its adherents, in an endeavour to escape the stigma associated with "Socinianism".

John Biddle (1615-1662)

John Biddle is not the only name deserving of mention. There were many others who stood with him in the struggle against the opposition of the established Church, who cannot be mentioned in the space of this article.

However, Biddle is probably the best known amongst the pioneers, as the one who laboured long and hard and patiently, in the face of severe persecution from the bigots who would tolerate no divergence from the Trinitarian position, and who sought by all possible means to destroy him.

Biddle was a scholar of no mean ability. At the age of 26 he became Headmaster of Crypt Grammar School which was attached to the Cathedral at Gloucester. In

pursuance of his duties of teaching his students the Catechism of the Church of England, he immersed himself in study of the Bible.

A few years later he knew the whole English New Testament by heart, and most of it in Greek. (although he did confess to being a little shaky in the Greek after the early chapters of the Revelation!)

He also came to reject the doctrine of the Trinity. However it would seem that Biddle never managed to become completely Biblical Unitarian in the terms defined on page

1 of this article.

Note

In the preface to his "Twelve Arguments Drawn out of Scripture Wherein the Commonly Received Opinion Touching the Deity of the Holy Spirit is clearly and

Fully Refuted" Biddle wrote a letter to a member of Parliament, from whom he hoped to win support. It reads as follows:

"As for my opinion touching the Holy Spirit, it is thus: I believe the holy Spirit to be the chief of all ministering spirits, peculiarly sent out from heaven to minister on their behalf that shall inherit salvation; and I do place him, both according to the Scripture, and the Primitive Christians, and by name Justin Martyr in his Apologie, in the third rank after God and Christ, giving him a pre-eminence above all the rest of the heavenly host. So that as there is one principal spirit amongst the evil angels, known in the Scripture by the name of Satan, or the (a) Adversary, or (b) the unclean spirit, or (c) the evil spirit of God, or (d) the Spirit of God, or (e) the Spirit by way of eminence: even so is there one principal Spirit...there is, I say, one principal spirit amongst the good Angels, called by the name of the (a) Advocate [sic], or (b) the holy Spirit, or (c) the good Spirit of God, or (d) the Spirit of God, or (e) the Spirit, by way of eminence.

This opinion of mine is attested by the whole tenour of the Scripture

By his own testimony he reached this conclusion without having read any of the

literature of the Socinians. He did however become well acquainted with it in later years. By 1644 he was sharing his new faith with others, and was promptly called before the magistrates to answer charges of heresy. He escaped on this occasion by writing a confession of faith under pressure, which at the second attempt, was allowed to pass, (and left him with an uneasy conscience).

He subsequently wrote a much more explicit article in which there could be no

mistake about his beliefs. This article was intended for use by friends, but one of them betrayed him to the Magistrate. He was again briefly imprisoned, but was released on the security of a friend pending a hearing before Parliament.

Six months later in 1646, he was called to London where the Parliament referred his case to an Assembly of Divines for consideration. The case dragged on without

resolution and he spent the next 5 years confined to the Gatehouse at Westminster. He continued to write in prison. While there he actually put into print, for public consumption, the private article which had brought him before the Parliament!

Naturally this caused an uproar, and the pamphlet was seized and burnt by the

hangman. However demand for it was so great that it was reprinted before the end of the year.

These events led to a call for Biddle's death, and this was one of the major factors which led to the hurried enactment of the 1648 "Ordinance for Punishing Heresies and Blasphemies" mentioned above. However Cromwell's "Act of Oblivion", (also mentioned above), worked to his advantage, and in 1652 he was released from prison.

That same year an English translation of the Racovian Catechism appeared, which has been ascribed by some, to Biddle.

Over the next two years Biddle wrote prolifically, as well as translating several works by Polish Socinian authors.

In 1654 he produced his own "Twofold Catechism". When this book was drawn to the attention of Parliament, he was again imprisoned, this time in Newgate, and his book was burnt by the hangman. However Parliament was dissolved before his case was

resolved.

Note- Only two copies of the catechism are known to have survived. A retype made from a photocopy of one of the two surviving copies, is available on the Internet at::

<http://home.pacific.net.au/~amaxwell/biddle/00start.htm>

Six months after his arrest the charges were abandoned and he was again released.

Freedom was short lived. Less than a month later he was again arrested on the capital charge of Blasphemy and Heresy. The 1648 Ordinance against Heresies, which had

been thought to be dormant and replaced by Cromwell's pledge of religious freedom, was used against him.

This time he again escaped the death sentence, but was banished to St Mary's Castle in the Scilly Isles, where he remained in prison until 1658.

After his release he returned to London, where he remained free for a further four years, though in ill health for much of the time.

In 1662, he and several friends were arrested while holding a Bible Class at his home, and imprisoned without bail. At first no suitable charges could be found, but

eventually a way was found to impose a fine which Biddle could not pay. Five weeks later he fell ill with "prison fever", and was released, but died two days later at the age of 47.

Biddle left no denomination to bear his name. The small band of immediate followers disappears from history shortly after his death.

However there can be little doubt that all of us today, who hold Abrahamic faith in the One God, owe this man a great debt. The influence of his teachings has long survived his death.

Biddle did not aim to be merely a reformer of Christian doctrine. For Biddle, religion without a moral dimension was no religion at all. He was not concerned with doctrine as an end in itself, but as a foundation for the holiness of character to which it should lead.

Unlike many others engaged in controversy, he was not by nature quarrelsome or

opinionated, but modest and self effacing. He was tolerant of others who differed. His personal character was beyond reproach. His reputation indicates that he lived what he preached.

In the 20th century also, this remains the principal goal of true Biblical Unitarianism, for all who follow Jesus in worshipping His Father as the ONLY TRUE GOD.

The 18th Century

The early part of the 18th century is notable as a time when Arian teaching invaded the English Churches, leading to much debate and upheaval. Leading Quakers also argued against the Trinity as unscriptural and confusing.

These controversies probably gave helpful cover for the rise of Unitarianism. Indeed for many Unitarians, Arian doctrine was an initial stepping stone by which they arrived at their final belief.

By the end of the century many Unitarians had seceded from the Church of England and established independent congregations.

In the 17th century, Baptists had gradually increased in numbers. By the later years of the 18th century they included a significant number of congregations who adopted Unitarian theology, but retained the Baptist name. In 1770 the orthodox Trinitarian Baptists withdrew from the Unitarians and formed a separate association. The Baptist Unitarians continued to retain their Baptist identity, retaining both the name and other Baptist distinctives.

The 19th Century

The Baptist Unitarians mentioned in the previous paragraph, persisted well into the 19th century, maintaining an identity separate from the Unitarians.

The Unitarian historian, Wilbur, mentions some fifty congregations who existed in 1826.

Gradually, however, many of them began to merge with the other Unitarians, forsaking their Baptist identity.

The final step in releasing Anti-Trinitarians from all threat of legal consequences came in 1813 when the "Trinity Act" was passed. This Act officially repealed long dormant laws and their associated severe penalties, aimed against Anti-Trinitarians.

However, although persecution was now reduced to the social level rather than the physical, Unitarians continued to face vilification and decidedly unfriendly opposition.

(Familiar story! Even in the 1990s this can still be the case.)

The publicity afforded by those who attacked them openly, the liberty to engage in public debate and the freedom to publish and distribute their writings, all worked to advance their cause. A vast body of supporting literature developed. Thus the

Unitarians continued to grow in numbers, at first as independent churches

During the course of the century the many different independent streams in the movement gradually coalesced and formed a Unitarian association.

The secession of Unitarians and the formation of independent congregations brought other problems with it, of a less worthy kind.

When churches divide or secede, there are inevitable questions about who owns the real estate and the money in the bank! Covetousness rears its head.

There were, at times protracted bitter legal battles to resolve these disputes, in which neither party was distinguished for willingness to suffer themselves to be defrauded.

(1 Cor 6:7)

For both parties doctrinal correctness about God was certainly on the agenda. Sadly, it seems that radical obedience to the Sermon on the Mount was another matter, when put to the test! Coveteousness won the day.

In the 19th century there were also other regrettable developments. For many, increasing freedom of religion was accompanied by an increasing tendency to wander from their Racovian heritage. The results have not always been Biblical Christianity.

The Rationalist Unitarians began to adopt liberal and humanist views, rejecting the Bible where it did not fit with their own human "reason" and human "experience".

For Biblical Unitarians the differences are irreconcilable and cooperation impossible.

Biblical Unitarians began to emerge in new ways, under different names, and walking a separate road.

However, much of this new growth of Biblical Unitarianism in England, just mentioned, actually has its origin in America.

After the following short discussion of the influence of the Racovian Catechism on the developments in England, just described above, the scene must now shift from

England, across the ocean to America.

THE RACOVIAN CATECHISM IN ENGLAND

The Racovian Catechism edition of 1609 was dedicated to the English King, James the First. The 1651 edition was actually printed in London.

Both of these Latin editions must have been widely distributed in England, since they aroused concern and fierce opposition from the authorities of their respective times.

Both were ordered collected and burnt, the first by the King, and the second by Parliament.

The English translation of 1652, (which has been attributed by some historians to John Biddle), made it available to a much wider audience amongst those who could not read

Latin. There was clearly much interest by the English public of the time, in Racovian anti-Trinitarian teaching about the nature of God.

The 1818 English Translation, by Thomas Rees, was well known in its day, both in England and America.

Its doctrines are reflected in an abundance of Unitarian writings of the 18th and 19th centuries, in England and America.

It would scarcely seem possible in the religious climate of the time, for serious students of religion not to hear about Unitarians and their radical theology. Whether directly through the Racovian Catechism itself, or indirectly through other related influences, many, on both sides of the Atlantic, did come to hear about the One True God, re-evaluate their faith and as a result, reject the Doctrine of the Trinity.

UNITARIANISM IN AMERICA

In America, the development of Unitarian theology does not seem to have experienced the same degree of direct Socinian influence from Europe, as that found in England.

Nevertheless developments in England were closely followed in America.

Communication flowed both ways between serious students of religion. It was inevitable that what was happening in England would also find its way across the Atlantic.

Thus the Arian controversy which began in England at the beginning of the 18th

century, also found its way to America at around the same time. And, just as in England, many found their way to Unitarian theology after beginning with Arianism.

There were complaints from Orthodox Trinitarian ministers of Arian influences at work, as early as 1654.

By 1750 sermons were being preached and articles written against Arian teaching. By the last decade of the century, independent Unitarian congregations were coming into existence.

Early in the 19th century, between 40 and 50 Presbyterian ministers were dismissed for denying the Trinity. In 1815, the first Unitarian theological college was

established. In 1840, a survey established that 135 out of 544 Congregational churches in Massachusetts were Unitarian.

There is no doubt, from some of their writings, that much of this Unitarian stream began with complete dependence on the Bible as the source of their anti-Trinitarian theology.

However, just as in England, 19th century Unitarians began to follow the same Rationalist path to humanism and liberalism. Thus they earned for themselves the distinction drawn at the start of this article, between themselves and the BIBLICAL Unitarians.

Now we must turn the clock back a little, to consider another interesting development at the end of the 18th century.

OUTSIDE THE UNITARIAN MAINSTREAM

The few incidents recorded above, have been selected from a much wider historical record, to illustrate the steady infiltration of Unitarian teaching in the American religious scene.

Eventually this movement began to organise and assume the status of a denomination with the name, "Unitarian". However, Unitarianism was only one of a number of the highly visible elements in the general religious ferment of the times.

In parallel with the development of Unitarianism, others also were becoming dissatisfied with the strict Calvinism imported from England by the Pilgrim Fathers.

In 18th century America, amongst those who had fled to America to escape religious persecution, it was still possible to be publicly whipped to death for opposing Calvinistic orthodoxy.

So much for "freedom"!

The general religious upheaval of the times was not confined to Arians and Unitarians.

The awful Calvinistic doctrine of unconditional election and predestination, was being challenged by Arminian teaching of freewill. Infant baptism was being rejected in favour of believer's baptism. Events in Europe triggered wide interest in end-time prophecy and the coming Kingdom of God on earth. Sabbath keepers were making

their mark, rejecting conventional Sunday worship. "Weird" and extreme heretical fringe groups were appearing.

In some areas the Revival fires were burning, causing deep concern amongst others who could not accept the accompanying emotional excesses.

There were also many who were simply searching for a religious freedom denied them by conventional orthodoxy.

In their search for a faith more suited to the needs of the common people, these were rejecting the creeds and the divided state of organised religion, in favour of a simpler Biblical, non-creedal, New Testament faith and practice.

Out of this melting pot came a number of new groups who although their theology was Unitarian, went by other names and remained apart from the main Unitarian movement.

James O'Kelly

In 1793 James O'Kelly, of North Carolina, and some other ministers withdrew from the "Wesleyite" Episcopal Methodist Church. At first they called themselves Republican Methodists. In the following year, (1794), they dropped the

denominational name and began to call themselves "Christians only, with no head but Christ and no creed but the Bible".

This movement was especially strong in Virginia and North Carolina, but also spread to other Southern and Western States.

I have not found much direct information about the beliefs of this group. They are mentioned here because of their later loose association with the other Unitarian groups mentioned below. Presumably, at the very least, they saw no problems about such association. More likely, they probably agreed in some measure.

Elias Smith (1769-1849)

Elias Smith was originally a Particular Baptist, but at the beginning of the 19th century, he became upset with the rigid Calvinism of that group. This led ultimately to rejection of the entire system, and a resolution to follow the Bible only.

Together with Abner Jones, a Particular Baptist physician from Hartland, Vermont, he began to establish independent "Christian" Churches, mainly in New England.

Although Smith himself was an Arian, the movement came to be largely Unitarian, also adopting the doctrine of Conditional Immortality.

Barton W. Stone (1772-1844)

Stone was originally a Kentucky Presbyterian Preacher. In 1803, affected by the Kentucky Revival, he and five other ministers left the Kentucky Synod. At first they formed an association under the name of "The Springfield Presbytery". In 1804 they abandoned that denominational name and became simply "Christians".

Under the leadership of Stone and the "success" of his Revivalist methods the movement grew rapidly, mainly in Kentucky, Ohio, Indiana, and Tennessee.

As well as turning away from Calvinism, the churches under Stone's leadership had also rejected the doctrine of the Trinity and were largely Unitarian. Their communion table was "open". After a short time they also adopted the practice of believer's baptism.

The Christian Connection

In 1815, representatives of the Stone movement travelled East, where they met with leaders of the O'Kelly and Smith groups.

There, after discussions, they joined hands and agreed to work together in a loose relationship. Although not an official body, this informal alliance of the three groups came to be known as the "Christian Connection".

Alexander Campbell and the Disciples.

In 1807 Thomas Campbell, a Presbyterian minister, migrated to America, where he began to initiate a program for Christian unity.

In 1809 his son Alexander and the rest of the family followed him from England.

Alexander was soon the undisputed leader of the movement.

In 1812 the movement accepted Believer's Baptism as a key doctrine and shortly afterwards joined temporarily with the Baptist association. However this was apparently a fairly precarious union and eventually, following a number of disagreements, the connection was severed in 1830.

Shortly afterwards they began to call themselves Disciples.

It seems unlikely that there was any significant Unitarian presence amongst the Disciples at first. However that was soon to change.

The Campbellites and the Christian Connection

Barton Stone and Alexander Campbell first met in 1824, but it was not until 1832 that the two groups formally agreed to unite. It was, on the face of it, an unlikely development!

Stone was a Revivalist, given to use of the emotional techniques that characterised Revivalism. Campbell rejected emotionalism, favouring a much more disciplined and rational approach.

Stone rejected the Trinity. Campbell, although at times given to the use of

"unorthodox language" about the Trinity, seems to have been in other respects a

"normal" Trinitarian.

These differences between them were certainly recognised by both and discussed

between them. Somehow, they managed to satisfy each other, although just how they did that is not at all clear. It does seem likely, from Stone's remarks several years later, that in the interests of "unity", he and Campbell simply agreed not to ask each other awkward questions! The aim of both was tolerance, not doctrinal argument.

The end result was that some 7000 largely Unitarian Stonites joined with about half that number of mainly Trinitarian Campbellites.

Two years later in 1834, a young English migrant, Dr. John Thomas, was converted and baptised by the Campbellites. It seems almost certain that it was amongst them that he learned his Unitarian theology. More about this later.

This strong Unitarian presence amongst the early Disciples, seems to be an aspect of Campbellite history which is perhaps just a little embarrassing to his Trinitarian spiritual descendants. It has been mainly ignored, or else glossed over, in the "official"

histories to which I have been able to gain access.

However the several contemporary sources quoted by the Unitarian historian, Earl Morse Wilbur, indicate that it was a fact well known at the time.

For the Stonites, the merger seems to have resulted, eventually, in the complete submergence of their Unitarian theology.

Today, amongst the Churches of Christ who are the spiritual descendants of the Disciples, it would not be tolerated at all!

The Christian Church

The Smith-O'Kelly Eastern section of Christian Connection did not join with the Stonites in the merger with the Campbellites, to any great extent. In the main, they held back.

For a time they maintained their separate Unitarian presence. Then about 1837, there were suggestions of merger between the Unitarian association and what remained of the Christian Connection, in order to establish a new liberal theological school. It was discussed but never consummated.

Ultimately they again adopted a denominational identity, calling themselves the Christian Church. Still later, in 1931, they merged with the part of the Congregational Church, adopting the name Congregational Christian Church. Another merger

followed in 1957, this time with the Evangelical and Reformed Church, to produce the United Church of Christ.

Just like the Stonites, the final result seems to have been the extinction of their Unitarian theology.

At the same time, their once powerful witness to simple undenominational Christianity without formal creeds, has also been lost.

THE SPIRITUAL "SPIN-OFF"

Although those who followed the path of merger were eventually completely absorbed, losing all distinctive theological identity in the process, there were other developments which are of interest to many of us who clearly owe our 20th century theological heritage to the developments reported in this paper.

Out of the Campbellite movement came Dr. John Thomas, founder of the Christadelphians.

Out of the same movement came Benjamin Wilson, translator of the Emphatic

Diaglott, who was originally baptised by John Thomas, but who was a leader amongst those who became the Church of God of the Abrahamic Faith.

Out of the Christian Connection came Joseph Marsh, another forefather of the Church of God of the Abrahamic Faith.

There is no doubt of the commonality of origin of the Christadelphians and the Church of God. The three men just named above, knew each other well. (and between John Thomas and the other two, divisive warfare developed much too well!) Without

attempting to apportion blame, or record the details of the disagreements which led them to walk separate paths, we simply note the role they played in the parallel development of the two remarkably similar Churches to which many of us now owe

our own Spiritual heritage.

However it is perhaps much too simplistic to attribute to any of these three, the sole responsibility for the developments associated with their names. There were certainly others whose names are less well known.

In the U.S.A. there seem to have been a number of individuals, as well as independent and isolated groups, who were probably never part of either the Christian Connection, or the Campbellites. Some may have held back from association from the beginning.

Others may have been dissatisfied and left afterwards. For some it may have been the constraint of geography.

The fact is that from amongst all of the religious turmoil of the times, men of like minds about their faith in the One True God, did gravitate to one another and these two Churches did emerge, complete with their unique doctrine.

BIBLICAL UNITARIANISM IN THE 1990S

This paper is NOT intended as a record of " *Apostolic Succession*"!

Nor is it a claim that the Polish Brethren would have accepted us all (or we them) without at least some questions. There are important differences on other matters.

It is however, the product of several years of searching for the "Spiritual Roots" from which came my own faith in the ONE LORD of Moses who is also the God and Father of Jesus.

In particular, it answers to some degree at least, my long held question about where the early founders of the Christadelphians and the Church of God, learnt their unique Unitarian theology.

Of course they did find it in the Bible, but whether directly or indirectly, it also seems to stem from the influence of the Polish Brethren and their Racovian Catechism.

It may be that these 19th century men in America never heard of the document itself.

However, it would have been virtually impossible for any of them not to have

encountered the Unitarian controversy of their day. That can certainly be traced, at least indirectly, to Racovian influences. There is a similarity of language in their writings which seems beyond the limits of mere coincidence. Instead of rejecting it they have searched the scriptures and believed.

Their spiritual descendants exist today. I count myself amongst the many who owe their spiritual heritage to the work of these men, from the 16th century, down to our own time.

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Chapter 11: THE JOHANNINE COMMA - 1 John 5:7

*" For there are three that bear record in heaven,
the Father, the Word, and the Holy Ghost:
and these three are one."*

(1 John 5:7 KJV)

This verse from the KJV is commonly called the "*Johannine Comma*".

It is often quoted by Trinitarians as the strongest Biblical "proof text" in support of the doctrine of the Trinity.

Of course, taken at face value, it doesn't do that! It does not say that the three witnesses are "one God". It says nothing at all about co-equality and co-eternity. It does not say any of the other complicated and mathematically impossible things

contained in the Trinitarian Creeds. If it says anything at all to readers of the KJV, it is simply that the three witnesses are united in complete agreement about the identity of Jesus as Messiah and Son of God. That is the subject of the surrounding verses in the chapter.

However the REAL issue is that the verse should not be there at all! Modern

translations omit it, and sometimes include a footnote to the effect that it is found only in a few late MSS. e.g NASB.

It is widely recognised by scholars as a forgery, of unknown origin.

There are in fact, only FOUR Greek NT manuscripts which contain the verse.

Codex Montfortianus, dating from the early 16th century.

#918: A 16th-century manuscript at the Escorial, Spain.

#2318:

An 18th-century manuscript, influenced by the Clementine Vulgate, at

Bucharest, Rumania.

#629: 16th Century. Much of this was back-translated from the Vulgate, including a partial quote of the Comma Johanneum.

(The phrase, "*... and these three are one*" is missing.)

There are another four which contain it as a variant reading. (marginal note)

#88: A variant reading in a 16th-century hand, added to the 14th-century Codex

Regius of Naples.

#221: A variant reading added to a 10th-century manuscript in the Bodleian Library at Oxford.

#429: A variant reading added to a 16th-century manuscript at Wolfenbützel.

#636: A variant reading added to a 16th-century manuscript at Naples.

It is believed by many scholars to have first appeared in a fifth century Latin manuscript from Spain.

Since that time it has been included in a number of LATIN NT manuscripts. However, it is significant that it was not contained in the early editions of Jerome's 5th century Latin Vulgate translation. It was added to later versions of the Vulgate somewhere about 2 centuries after Jerome died! It remained there until the 20th century, when after much debate, Catholic authorities decided to remove it again! Current editions of the Vulgate no longer contain it.

CONCLUSION

This verse is not a Trinitarian "proof text". Even For KJV readers who are not aware of the deception, it does not really say the things contained in the Trinitarian Creeds.

Careful readers of the Bible already know that Jesus calls His Father "The only true God", thus indicating that He Himself is not God!

However the evidence quoted above removes any remaining problem about this verse.

It should not be there at all. It is a forgery!

Chapter 12: DID JESUS EXIST BEFORE HE WAS BORN? FREQUENTLY

ASKED QUESTIONS

There are a number of Bible verses which are often quoted as appearing to support of the pre-existence of Jesus. Such a conclusion is too casual by far.

A closer look at these verses will show that they never use the word "pre-exist", or anything like it!

The truth is that our conclusion about their meaning will be affected by our pre-existing theology!

If we are truly logical, we will discover that this assumed pre-existence is in direct conflict with other Biblical claims that Jesus was, and still is a REAL MAN.

If we start from that position, we will read those verses quite differently to those who start from a position of "preconceived pre-existence". Our eyes will be open to the TRUTH that if Jesus is a real man, then He began His life at His birth just as all the rest of us did!

INTRODUCTION

In the Old Testament there is not one reference that speaks of Jesus as a person then presently existing.

What we do have is many prophecies which speak of the future existence of the MAN who was to be born as Son of God. This happened when Jesus was born of His virgin mother. That was when His existence began.

References like Isaiah 42,1 show how God sometimes speaks of future events in the present tense to express the certainty of their fulfilment. (See also Romans 4,17 KJV

which shows how God speaks of things which do not exist, as though they already do exist).

Certainly, in the New Testament there are some verses, which are sometimes thought to support the notion that Jesus pre-existed.

However, if they are approached from the correct premise that Jesus is a man, and that men simply do not pre-exist, (for then they are not men!) a vastly different picture emerges.

A few of these references are discussed below.

1. John 1:1-2

"In the beginning was the word "

The Greek word "λογος" (logos), which is used here is NOT a proper name. **(It does not have a capital letter, as is incorrectly shown in most translations!)** It is a noun which simply means " *a spoken word*". It can also mean the inward thought which is expressed by the spoken word.

Of course, in Greek, "logos", is a masculine noun. *However this is no proof of personality!*

Many words which are *neuter* in English, are either masculine or feminine in Greek.

For example, in Greek the word translated "beginning" in this same verse, is feminine.

No one would seriously claim that this means that "beginning" should be regarded as having a feminine pre-existent personality!

In the same way it is quite improper to give "*logos*" a masculine *personality*, or make it into a proper name, as the theologians have done.

(For a more detailed discussion of this subject, see Bible Digest papers Nos 6 & 33.) **2. John 1:15**

"After me comes a man who ranks before me, for he was before me".

This does not mean that Jesus existed before John. *He was, in fact, conceived six months after John.*

It does mean that Jesus *ranks above John*, not in time but by right of birth. The Greek verb "was" literally means "came into existence". The Greek word translated "before", can mean either "before in time" or "superior in rank".

Clearly, it is the second of these meanings which is intended here. The verse is saying that Jesus holds His superior rank, not by right of prior existence, but because *He was born to it* as Son of God.

3. John 6:38

"I have come down from Heaven".

Again, the words are simply a statement of divine origin - not of personal pre-

existence in heaven. All Jesus is saying is that He is like the manna which God miraculously provided for Israel. (see verses 31, 32, 51, and 48 -58 of the same chapter).

4. John 6:62

"What if you see the Son of man ascending where he was before".

These words are spoken in the same context as the previous verse discussed. (See John 6:38 above)

Certainly they do speak of His personal ascension to the place where He had His *origin*. However Jesus is not speaking about *personal* pre-existence in that place of origin!

All that is implied is that, after His death and resurrection, He will ascend in person to be with the God who is the source of His existence. (and effective "spiritual eating"

(see verse 52) depends on our faith in those things.

5. John 8:23

"You are from below, I am from above".

For the Jews, the source of their physical existence and their spiritual values was

"from below". This contrasts with Jesus, whose physical existence and spiritual values had their origin "from above".

The Jews lived in the Kingdom of men. Jesus lived and served in the Kingdom of God.

6. John 8:38

"I speak of what I have seen with my Father".

Any man who knows what it is to spend time with God in the secret place, ought to know what this means. In the place of prayer, deep within our hearts and minds, heaven comes down to earth and a man communes with God until he is able to speak, not on his own authority, but as he is taught by God.

(John 8,28).

7. John 8:42

"I proceeded and came forth from God".

This is simply a statement in Jewish idiom, of the *biological origin* of Jesus. Every Jew "came forth" from his father's body. (see Gen 15,4 and 2 Sam 7,12).

In using this language, Jesus is expressing his claim for His divine origin and begetting.

The one essential difference in his case, of course, was that Jesus came forth from his Father's mouth as a spoken word which accomplished God's purpose through the

miracle of the Virgin Birth.

8. John 8:42

"I came not of my own accord, but he sent me".

Jesus is not the only one who was "sent by God". Almost identical words are used about John the Baptist. (John 1,6).

And the same words are used of disciples to say that they also are sent in exactly the same way that Jesus was. *"As the Father has sent me, even so I send you"*. (John 20,21).

These words when used about Jesus do not imply that He pre-existed in Heaven any more than they do for John the Baptist, or for us.

9. John 8:56

"Abraham rejoiced to see my day."

This statement by Jesus refers to the story (in Gen 17,15-17) where God promised 99 year old Abraham that his 89 year old wife would conceive and bear a son. Abraham fell on his face before God, rejoicing in faith.

God's long standing promise that the savior of the world would be his descendant (Gen 12,3) was about to begin its fulfilment, with the birth of Isaac.

10. John 8:58

"Before Abraham was, I am."

Jesus is usually said to be claiming the divine name "I am" for Himself. This is supposed to show that He is God and therefore existed before He was born!

However a careful study of other uses of the words "I am" in John's Gospel, shows that they are used repeatedly by Jesus, without any suggestion at all that the divine name is meant.

In fact, the Greek grammar requires that in this verse, another word should be

understood as implied after "am". In other places, where Jesus uses the words the translators have recognised this by inserting the word "he". e.g John 8,24,28, *"I am He"*.

If this is also done in verse 58, as it ought to be, then we are left with the simple statement by Jesus that He is the one spoken of in the prophetic writings, long before Abraham's time. [For a more detailed discussion of this verse, see HOUSMAIL No

11. John 17:5

"Glorify me with the glory which I had with thee before the world was made".

God spoke in a similar way about Jeremiah. (Jeremiah 1,4)

The words spoken of Jesus do not imply pre-existence for Him any more than they do for Jeremiah! All the verse says is that before the world, was made, it was God's plan to glorify Jesus.

It does not mean that Jesus was present when the plan was made.

12. Philippians 2:5-11

"Though he was in the form of God, (He) did not count equality with God a thing to be grasped, (note here - "grasp" = "steal") but emptied himself, taking the form of a servant, being born in the likeness of men."

This is something Jesus did as a man not something He did *before He was born!*

"(He) emptied himself" of all *human* ambition for recognition, status, power and authority. (The KJV says *"He made Himself of NO reputation"* -- meaning no reputation amongst men)

For a more detailed discussion of these verses, read Bible Digest No 65.

13. Colossians 1: 15-16

"The firstborn of all creation."

In the Hebrew language, the word "firstborn" means more than simply "born first in time". It also means to be born as the first son of a father, the first of a family, who is by right of that birth, the legal heir to his father's estate.

The word when used about Jesus, describes Him as God's first and only begotten Son, the first born of God's family, taking rank and precedence over all others, as the heir of all creation.

He is first born in rank because of His divine begetting.

He is also in a special sense, first born in time, not because He pre-existed His human birth, but because He is the first to be raised from the dead. (Acts 13,33 *"This day have I begotten thee."*)

He was raised (or begotten) from the dead, both as the firstborn in time, and the firstborn in rank, of all God's *"new creation"*. (Col 1,17-18).

14. Hebrews 1:2

"Through whom He created the world".

This does not mean that Jesus was actually present at the Creation, doing the work!

What it does mean is that because Jesus was CENTRAL to the whole PLAN of

Creation, it can be said that ALL came into existence by (or through) God's intention to be the Father of Jesus.

In another "spiritual" sense, it can also be said that Jesus brought us all into existence by His death on the cross. Without that Adam would have perished unforgiven, in the day that he sinned, and none of us would have been born!

This is another one of those areas where Biblical language often speaks of things which do not yet exist, as though they already did! (Romans 4:17)

15. Hebrews 5:7

"During the days of Jesus' life on earth". NIV (Other translations have *"In the days of His flesh"*)

It has been suggested by some, that "a life on earth" implies another life *before* His time on earth.

However, that is saying much more than is written!

If there is a contrast, it is surely between His time on earth, and the life that He now experiences in Heaven. (*after* His time on earth).

CONCLUSION

If we start with the impossible theory that Jesus somehow personally existed before his human birth,

it leads to great confusion. It becomes virtually impossible to regard Jesus as really a man.

If, instead, we begin with the scriptural premise that Jesus really is a man, just like all other men, (with the sole exception of His virgin birth and His sinless life), there is no longer any "mystery" requiring us to abandon all logic.

In spite of His supernatural origin, and the miracle of His virgin birth, Jesus is not himself a supernatural being. He is just like us in every way. He is a man who makes God real to other men. He reveals what it will be like for us when God lives in us, as He does in Jesus.

That IS Good News. If it is possible for one man to please God, then other men are left without excuse for their failure.

Other men also, can become what God wants them to be.

Under the Lordship of Jesus, the grace of God not only forgives the past, but also guarantees that our sinful carnal nature can be transformed, *until we have become just like the man Jesus.*

Chapter 13: WHAT IS "A DIFFERENT GOSPEL"?

*In Galatians 1:6, Paul refers to a " **different gospel**", which he says is a perversion of the gospel of Christ. There is another similar reference, in 2 Corinthians 11:4, to a*

"different gospel" which was causing problems in the Church in that city.

*We are left in **no doubt about** Paul's condemnation, both of the "different gospel", and those who embrace and propagate it! He said, **twice over**, "let him be accursed".*

*These are strong words! They contain a serious warning about the consequences of embracing such a gospel, which in reality, **is not good news at all!***

Can we identify what Paul means by his use of the term? Are there "different gospels" in the Church today?

A SIMPLE DEFINITION

The term is almost self explanatory! A "different gospel" is **not the same** as the Real Gospel!

A "different gospel" claims to offer Good News, BUT it is **different** Good News, which in the final analysis, is NOT good news at all!

It is not good news because it does not, and cannot, ever deliver what is promised.

A false gospel will use the **name** of Jesus, **but not his words!**

A false gospel will be about a Jesus who has a different identity.

A false gospel will offer a false hope for the future, based on promises different to those made by God.

A false gospel will call its hearers to an inadequate repentance, offering a false expectation of forgiveness.

A false gospel will reject the Gospel call for obedience, allowing people to continue in their sins. (sometimes selectively!)

A false gospel will offer a false sense of security by changing the meaning of Grace and Faith, (often rejecting Works as mere "legalism")

The particular false gospel, about which Paul speaks in Galatians, appears to be one which sought to impose circumcision as an " **extra**" condition of salvation.

That which was found in Corinth, is less clearly identified and much more complex, but we are not left without "clues".

For instance, Paul found it necessary to address the problem of those who denied the Resurrection, Those who did not believe in the Resurrection, were, he said, without hope and still in their sins. That means they were unconverted and unforgiven!

That same false gospel still exists in our day. We still find many who either deny the physical resurrection altogether, or who pay only lip service to it, substituting instead,

the **false expectation** of Heaven for immortal souls, as the real hope offered by their "good news".

Surely that must fall into the same category as the problem which existed in Corinth. Another element of that Corinthian "other gospel" must surely be the problem of **false Pentecostal gifts**, which existed in the Church at Corinth. Their unbalanced emphasis on the place of "spirit gifts", especially the "gift of tongues", is **exactly** paralleled by the claims of many modern Pentecostals that no one is saved, and no one has received the Holy Spirit, until they speak in tongues as evidence of their "spirit baptism".

It is also significant that amongst the other problems at Corinth, there was carnality and gross immorality.

None of this should surprise us. These things are the inevitable fruit of a false gospel.

Only the **True Gospel** has the power to deliver lost mankind from their sins, and from all the other **strong delusions** which they suffer as a consequence of their lack of love for truth. (2 Thess 2:10-12)

THINGS TO REMEMBER ABOUT THE GOSPEL

The concise definition of the real gospel is that preached by Philip "good news about the kingdom of God and the name of Jesus Christ," to which an *adequate*

response was - "they were baptised, both men and women".

Knowing God

It was Jesus Himself who addressed His Father as the one true God. (John 17:3)

In this prayer to God, Jesus left us in no doubt that He Himself is not the one true God!

He is the completely human Son of the one true God.

If Jesus is not the one true God, then neither is He any part of a Triune God (the Trinity) Nor can He possibly be the confused "role player" of the "Jesus Only" God.).

Nor, if He is truly a man, can He be the Arian pre-existent spirit.

Any Gospel which labels us as heretics, when we reject those impossible "mysteries", is *false*.

The Gospel Preached To Abraham.

The *hope* of the Gospel is contained in God's covenant with Abraham, "that they should inherit the world". (Romans 4:13) The resurrection is implicit in that hope.

Inheritance of the promises requires a belief in that Gospel and baptism into Christ.

(Mark 16:15-16 & Galatians 3:27-29).

Any "gospel" which does not offer the future Kingdom of God on Earth and an inheritance of God's promises to Abraham, in a resurrected immortal body, is NOT

the Gospel preached by the Apostles in obedience to the commission given them by Jesus!

The Gospel And Baptism

Any Gospel which substitutes the baptism of unbelieving infants, in place of the real baptism, received in response to belief in a real gospel, is NOT the Gospel of the New Testament.

Any gospel which offers forgiveness of sins without a real "believers baptism", without an adequate definition of sin, and which comes with an equally inadequate definition of the good works to which faith calls us, is also a false gospel.

(How else can we be convicted of sin if we do not know what is sin? And how else shall we bring forth works "worthy of our repentance", Acts 26:20, if we do not know what those works are?)

The Gospel And Works

Any gospel which ignores, or explains away, or justifies and encourages disobedience to the plain teaching of Jesus in Sermon On The Mount, is ***no gospel at all***.

Any gospel which rejects as mere legalism, our insistence on those works as the visible token of a living faith, is a false gospel and a dead faith. Paul says quite definitely that at the resurrection, it is ***our works*** which will form the basis of our Judgement!

CONCLUSION

This is NOT a complete treatise on the subject of saving faith!

Our goal has been to identify just some of the common "other gospels" which ought to have no place, or recognition, or fellowship, amongst those who share the "Faith of Abraham" which was "once delivered to the saints". (Jude v3)

We may not dismiss these differences as "not important", by seeking recognition from, or co-operation with, those who preach "other Gospels".

No lie is of the truth. Some of the things discussed above are certainly lies! They are lies which ***Jesus did not tell, and never would condone***.

They are lies, which he ***will not*** confirm in the preaching of those who use His name,

but not His words! (Mark 16:20)

They are lies, which lead to deception and strong delusion and rejection by Jesus on the day of Judgement.

Chapter 14: WHAT IS "ANOTHER JESUS"?

"Do not believe every spirit, but test the spirits to see whether they are of God; for many false prophets have gone out into the world. By this you know the Spirit of God: every spirit which confesses that Jesus Christ has come in the flesh is of God, and every spirit which does not

confess Jesus is not of God. This is the spirit of antichrist, of which you heard that it was coming, and now it is in the world already." (1 John 4:1-3)

In this passage John is reflecting the words of Jesus in the Olivet Discourse, just a few days before His crucifixion. There He left a final warning, valid for all disciples in all ages, about "*false Christs and false prophets*" who would lead many astray. (Matt 24:24)

Paul also refers to the same thing, using the term - "Another Jesus". (2 Cor 11:4) The false apostles of this "different Jesus" continue to clamour for our attention, appearing in the form of "angels of light", and seeking to lead us astray from the truth, It is a matter of life and death that we should know how to identify and reject them.

THE NAME

There are many men in this world whose name is "Jesus". It is common in South America, for instance. Variations such as "Joshua", are also common.

They have many different fathers. They have many different shapes and colors. They have many different personalities. They believe many different (and often totally incompatible) philosophies. They practice many different ways of life, with many different moral standards.

Most important of all, *none of them is the Son of God!* It is not the name alone, which identifies the *real* Jesus is it?

The identity of the real Jesus can be confirmed by three main things :-

1. WHO IS HIS FATHER?

The "different Jesus" of the Trinitarian creeds does not *really* have a father! (Think about it.)

Of course, that will be challenged by those who follow him. However, it takes only a very little logical thought to decide that although the *word* is used, it does not mean the same as it does for all other men!

It is a simple fact that this *different* Jesus has no beginning. He was not brought into existence by the choice of his father. Instead, He is said to have existed co-eternally with his father.

He is said to have entered this world as a divine being, with a divine mind and nature, clad in a human body.

That is not what the word "son" means when applied to a man!

The truth is that when it is used about Jesus in that way, it denies the real meaning of what it is to be a Son.

The Jesus of the Trinitarian creeds is not, and never can be, a real Son of God.

This different Jesus defies all logic! But his "apostles" hide behind words like "divine mystery", "received by faith", etc., to conceal the faulty logic. And all who reject the logic are declared to be "heretics", for ever beyond the pale of salvation.

2. WHO IS HE?

The "different Jesus" of the Trinitarian, creeds is not and never can be a *real man*.

This also will be challenged. However it is not hard to see that here too, words are used about Jesus, which do not have the same meaning as they do for other men!

For this Jesus, His "conception" and "virgin birth" are merely a means by which a pre-existent god is given the *appearance* of a man, whilst maintaining all the eternal powers and attributes of a god!

No matter how you dress it up, or attempt to conceal it behind such words, this Jesus is not, and never can be, a *real man*.

No other man has ever existed eternally before he was born. No other man was ever born with an infinite mind in a human body.

He did not come to earth from some pre-existent state. He had a beginning. He began His existence at His birth, as all other men do.

He was born with nothing that is not common to all other men. He began with nothing, as we all do.

He is truly a Man, in every sense of the word.

THAT is of supreme importance! Our own "new birth" experience of the REAL obedient manhood for which we were created, depends on our FAITH that a REAL man has shown us not only that it is possible, but also how to achieve it.

3. WHAT DOES HE SAY?

Those two things above, seldom stand alone. It is not only the theology which makes this "other Jesus" different. That is far too simplistic.

Almost universally, the major difference about this pre-existent Jesus, is that he says DIFFERENT THINGS to those taught by the REAL CHRIST described in the four

Gospels.

His *words are different*. And because they are different, they are destructive of *real faith*.

The character of the God he reveals is different.

The Gospel he preaches is different. (For more about this see Bible Digest no 69 -

"What Is A Different Gospel?")

The "obedience" he requires of his disciples is based on different standards.

If you doubt that, just compare the Sermon on the Mount with what is said by that

"other Christ" of the Mainstream Churches!

Here are just a few examples of the differences between what is said by the Real Christ and the counterfeit Christ.

Peacemakers

The Real Christ says "Blessed are the peacemakers", and "Turn the other Cheek", and

"Resist not evil", and "Love your enemies".

The different Christ approves of war makers, who prove their hatred for their enemies by the terrible things they do to them.

Adultery

This different Christ approves of both divorce and remarriage, in circumstances which the real Jesus has plainly labelled as *adultery*.

Responsibility For Sin

The most destructive of all the different things said by the different Jesus, is that the nature of man is inherently corrupt by physical descent from Adam; and that men are powerless to obey because of some fault inherent in the nature with which we are born into the world.

It is essential to the concept of morality and justice that mankind is held accountable for his own free will choices to obey or disobey.

Beware of anything which allows people to reduce their own responsibility for sin.

That includes the Catholic doctrine of "Original Sin", (or one of its Protestant variations) or "The Devil made me do it" (or the Pentecostal variation "I was demon possessed"!).

It includes also, any "Cheap Grace" Gospel which divorces Grace and Faith from Works in order to diminish our personal responsibility to exercise that fruit of the Spirit called "self control".

Obedience

The bottom line is what is said about obedience to God.

The Real Christ says "Blessed are those who hunger and thirst after righteousness".

But the different Christ says "That is Legalism! All you need is Grace."

No man has truly repented from sin until he has identified his sins by name, been convicted of his need for change, and entered into a covenant with God to forsake his sin and live for righteousness.

And no man can hunger and thirst after righteousness if he does not know what it is!

The Real Gospel of the Real Christ has much to say about the standard of righteousness for which we must hunger and thirst, in order to be filled.

That is the goal of the "Blessing of Abraham", which is central to the mission and Gospel of Jesus.

" God, having raised up his servant, sent him to bless you in turning every one of you from your wickedness." (Acts 3:26)

Chapter 15: SIT THOU AT MY RIGHT HAND

(Psalm 110:1)

"The LORD said unto my lord, Sit thou at my right hand until I make thine enemies thy footstool".

This Old Testament verse, from Psalm 110:1, is quoted in the New Testament, no less than 21 times! (1) The Messianic significance attached to it by the New Testament writers demands our attention.

It is unfortunate that the translators of the KJV clouded the meaning of David's words by assigning an upper case "L" to that second "lord" in the verse. This "lapse" has unfortunate complications for those who are unable to read the Hebrew text

*themselves. It fails to follow the normally expected "translators convention" which uses an upper case "L" to distinguish between two quite different Hebrew words, one of which **always** refers to God, and the other of which **never** refers to God.*

The error has been perpetuated by some later versions (NKJV, NASB, NIV), but has been recognised and corrected, by several others. (RSV, NRSV, NEB).

That upper case "L" has led many to misuse the verse as a Trinitarian "proof text".

However as we shall see, that is not the intention of the verse at all.

MORE ABOUT THAT "TRANSLATOR'S ERROR"

In our English Bibles, the same word "lord" translates several distinct Hebrew words.

A long established "translators convention" uses different combinations of upper and lower case letters ("LORD", "Lord", and "lord") to differentiate between the original Hebrew words.

When we see "Lord" written with an upper case "L", those of us who don't read Hebrew, rely on the established convention that it is, most often, a translation of

"Adonai". (2)

The problem is that in this verse the original Hebrew word is not "adonai"! In *this one verse*, the KJV has clouded the issue by assigning an upper case "L" to the quite different word, "ADONI". In all other places where this word is translated as "lord" in the KJV, it appears with a lower case "l".

THE HEBREW LESSON

We need first to look at the use of all the Hebrew words which are translated "lord".

The information for the following short "Hebrew lesson" has been gleaned from Young's Concordance and recent E-mail correspondence with my good friend

Anthony Buzzard. (3)

YHWH, ADON, ADONI, AND ADONAI

Young lists eleven Hebrew words which are translated "lord". The four which concern us here are those listed in the heading immediately above.

1. YHWH (Yahweh or Jehovah)

This word is the first "LORD" in Psalm 110:1. It is the Divine Name considered so sacred by the Jews, that it is **never** pronounced.

Instead when reading from the Scriptures they substitute the word "Adonai". (see below)

The accepted convention is that in English translations it **always** appears as either LORD, or GOD (all upper case) thus enabling us to recognise that the original word is

"Yahweh"

2. ADON

This word is formed from the Hebrew consonants Aleph, Dalet, Nun. It appears often in this form (without any suffix). Apart from about 30 occasions where it refers to the Divine Lord, all of the other occurrences refer to human lords.

In English, it always has a lower case "l", except on those comparatively few occasions where it refers to God. In those cases it is given an upper case "L".

It is important to distinguish between "Adon" and three other similar, but quite distinct, words which are formed from it by the addition of suffixes.

3. ADONAI

"Adonai" accounts for **two** of the three other words just mentioned above. It is formed from the root word "adon" with the addition of the suffix "AI".

In its main form, "Adonai" is singular, always referring to God, and **no one else**.

The accepted "translators convention" is that in this form, it always appears in English, as "Lord" (with an upper case "L").

The second form of "Adonai" has a different vowel point under the "N" to distinguish it from the main form just described. This is a much less common form of the word. In its plural form it appears that way only a very few times, referring to **men** or **angels**

.(Cf. Gen 19:2, KJV and RSV)

4. ADONI

This is formed by adding the suffix "i" to "adon". With this suffix it means " *my* lord".

(It is also sometimes translated as "master".)

It appears 195 times, and is used almost entirely of human lords (but occasionally of angels). When translated "lord", it always appears with a lower case "l" (except for that one time in Psalm 110:1).

THE VOWEL POINTS IN PSALM 110:1

The Hebrew text identifies vowels by a system of "vowel points" (which, to the untrained eye, look like random "dots" and "squiggles") placed above, below, or alongside the appropriate consonant. This vowel pointing system was developed by the Massoretes. **(4)**

Now for some more information provided by Anthony Buzzard. **(3)**

As mentioned above, the two words "ADONAI" and "ADONI" are both formed from the root word "ADON".

They share the same consonants - ADNY

i.e. In Hebrew ALEPH, DALET, NUN, YOD.

The difference is in the vowel pointing :

- "ADONAI" is formed by placing the point "quamets" under NUN.

- "ADONI" is formed by placing the point "hireq" under NUN.

(Just one tiny letter different, but an enormous difference in meaning!)

CONFIRMATION FROM THE SEPTUAGINT

There are some who persist in reading the word ADONAI in this verse, instead of ADONI. This is usually justified by claiming that the Massoretes have assigned the wrong vowel points. However the "Greek Factor" from the Septuagint version (LXX) supports the Massoretes.

The following information was passed on to me recently by Bill Wachtel. **(5)**

The Hebrew text in Ps 110:1 is actually LADONI. ("L" + "adoni)

ADONI = my lord.

LADONI

=

TO my lord.

In the Greek of the LXX, LADONI becomes :-

" *to kurio mou*" (= to my lord)

If the text had read :-

LADONAI (= to the Divine Lord)

the Greek would have read simply "*to kurio*".

Thus the LXX confirms for us that the original Hebrew is ADONI, and that the Massoretes got it right.

THE MESSIANIC CONNECTION

Many have incorrectly assumed that the original Hebrew word in Psalm 110:1, is

ADONAI, (which ***always*** refers to God). This has led to the further incorrect assumption that the verse is a "proof text" for the doctrine of the Trinity.

However, we have seen that the actual Hebrew word used is ADONI. This word refers to *human lords*. It speaks of the HUMANITY of Jesus not Deity.

Psalm 110:1 should be studied in the context of the many New Testament quotations which use it.

Viewed properly, it is clearly Messianic NOT Trinitarian.

In the 21 places where it is quoted in the NT, the overwhelming conclusion is that the early Church relied very heavily on Psalm 110:1, to prove that the MAN Jesus, who now sits at the right hand of God, is indeed both ***Messiah*** and **Son of God**.

As David's ***descendant***, Jesus would normally be considered by Jewish tradition, to be INFERIOR in rank to David.

But through His miraculous Divine paternity, the impossible has happened!

Although Jesus is ***both*** totally Human, and descended from David, He nevertheless OUTRANKS him by *right of birth*.

As "Son of David", Jesus has inherited David's throne. (Luke 1:32-33) But as "Son of God", Jesus has also been " *highly exalted to receive the name which is above every name*". (Philippians 2:9-11)

In accordance with the Scriptures,

Jesus is forever both man and Messiah.

His throne is for ever.

His name is above David's name for ever.

He is David's King for ever!

THAT is why David calls Him "lord"!

Footnotes

1. Psalm 110:1 is quoted in :-

- Jesus: Matt. 22:44; Matt. 26:64; Mark 12:36; Mark 14:62; Mark 16:19; Luke 20:42, 43; Luke 22:69; Rev 3:21.

- Peter : Acts 2:33-34, Acts 5:31. I Pet. 3:22.

- Stephen: Acts 7:55-56.

- Paul: Rom 8:34; I Cor. 15:25; Eph 1:20; Col 3:1; Heb 1:3; Heb 1:13 Heb 8:1; Heb. 10:12-13; Heb. 12:2.

2. On about 30 occasions the word "adon" is also translated with an upper case "L".

However it should be noted that

"adon" much more often refers to a human lord, and then it is translated with a lower case "l".

3. Sir Anthony F. Buzzard , Bt., M.A., (Oxon.), M.A. Th., A.R.C.M., teaches at the Atlanta Bible College of the Church of God General Conference.

4. THE MASSORETIC VOWEL POINTS

The following information on the Massoretes and their work has been condensed from various books, encyclopedias and Internet sources.

The ancient Hebrew texts were comprised of consonants only. There were no vowels or punctuation marks. The Massoretes were Hebrew scholars who over several centuries, established a system of vowel markings to indicate the traditional pronunciation and intonation. We call these the "vowel points".

This work was not completed until several centuries after the beginning of the Christian era.

One sometimes encounters people whose determination to retain Psalm 110:1 as a Trinitarian "proof text" leads them to (selectively) discount the reliability of the Massoretic vowel pointing system, in favour of some other personal preference, especially when it suits their particular theological bias.

However unless there is compelling documented evidence for changes of this kind, they are seldom helpful. We must be very cautious about introducing arbitrary changes of this kind, lest we leave ourselves open to accusations of "intellectual dishonesty".

The following summary will provide a brief introduction to the Massoretes :-

- The work of the Massoretes was done principally in the period AD 500-900.
- Although there were different schools of Massoretes, their differences seem to have left us very few variations in the meaning of the Hebrew consonantal text.
- It was the goal of the Massoretes to preserve the traditional meaning of the Hebrew text. (This was perceived as necessary, because ancient Hebrew is a strictly consonantal language, and therefore prone to error in transmission.)
- One of the ways they did this was to develop a system of vowel pointing, which indicates the traditional pronunciation and meaning of the text.
- Since Hebrew is a consonantal language, there are many places where the same consonants are used for quite different words.

(Note :- That is no different to English! Often the same consonants form different words when associated with different vowels. Often the same combination of consonants and vowels, has a different pronunciation, and a different meaning. When that happens, we use context and tradition to interpret the intended meaning.)

- The Massoretic vowel pointing indicates the traditional meaning, understanding, and pronunciation which had formerly been passed down from generation to generation, by oral tradition, through their teachers.
- In cases where identical groups of consonants were traditionally understood to be different words, with different meanings attached, the pointing system made that clear and preserved it for future generations.

- Our current English translations all rely heavily on the pointed text.

As a LAYMAN, I conclude that what we have now is the work of dedicated Jewish Scholars, which reflects the best consensus about what was ALREADY accepted as the traditional understanding of the text, over many centuries.

Consequently when the Massoretes reported "adoni" instead of "adonai", in Psalm 110:1, they were following the oral tradition. As we have already seen above, the LXX which predates the pointed text by centuries, supports this conclusion.

The Massoretes knew that in the unpointed text for that verse, the word "ADNY" was properly read and understood as a human lord, "ADONI", and not the divine Lord, "ADONAI".

And in the providence of God, they inserted vowel points which preserved it that way for us (and our English translators).

5. Bill Wachtel has an M.A. in New Testament from Wheaton College, Wheaton, Illinois. He was an instructor at the former Oregon Bible College of the Church Of God General Conference, from 1962 to 1968, and president from 1963 to 1968. At OBC he taught Greek classes, as well as other subjects.

Chapter 16: THE FOUNDATION STONE OF THE CHURCH (WHAT GOD REVEALED TO PETER)

*(Jesus) asked his disciples, "Who do men say that the **Son of Man** is?" And they said,*

"Some say John the Baptist, others say Elijah, and others Jeremiah or one of the prophets." He said to them, "But who do you say that I am?" Simon Peter replied,

*"You are the **Christ**, the **Son of the living God**. "*

(Matt 16:13-17)

THE CLAIM

This passage is NOT a Trinitarian theological statement! Rather it is a claim that Jesus is the man who fulfils specific Old Testament promises and prophecies, dating back to the Garden of Eden.

Matthew gives us three specific identifying marks from the Old Testament, which we need to examine, in order to rightly understand the Gospel claims about who Jesus is.

All three were well known to the Jews of Jesus' day. They were built in to the

"prophetic expectations" of the time. The Old Testament promises and prophecies, and the Gospel stories of the life of Jesus, contain the PROOF that Jesus is THE ONE who is entitled to make these claims about himself. (Luke 24:27, John 20:31) They have been recorded by Matthew so that God can use them to reveal to us the same truth that Peter discovered. They are the foundation on which our own FAITH in Jesus MUST

be built.

1. - "SON OF MAN"

This is Jesus' own "favorite" description of himself, taken from the Old Testament, and repeated often in the Gospels. By applying it to himself he is making specific claims about himself. It is a well known Messianic title, and is intended to direct us to the Old Testament prophecies which use it.

In passing, it also teaches us one VERY important thing about the clear distinction between Jesus and God. We learn that " **God is not a man or a son of man**".

(Numbers 23:19) Therefore when Jesus calls himself "Son of Man", he is saying to us very clearly, that although He is truly the Son of God, **he is NOT God!**

Perhaps the most significant use of this title referring to Jesus, is in Psalm 8:4-5. and Hebrews 2:5-10: " *What is man that thou art mindful of him, or the **son of man** that thou carest for him?* " Hebrews confirms for us that Jesus is THE son of man, of whom this Psalm speaks.

The "Creation Promise" of dominion over all the earth. (Genesis 1:28) is for Jesus and those who belong to Him. (Gal 3:29)

Another important reference to Jesus as "Son of Man", is in Psalm 80:17. There we learn that the "Son of Man" is to be identified with "the man of God's right hand".

Note carefully that "God", in this Psalm, is the LORD GOD of hosts. (Verses 4 & 19) The "Son of Man" is someone else who has been "made strong". Of course we quickly

make the connection from there to Psalm 110:1. There, again, Jesus is identified as the HUMAN Messiah, who currently sits at the right of God. (See BIBLE DIGEST No.

86)

A third important reference is in Daniel 7:13. This is a prophecy of the future Kingdom of God on Earth. In the vision, Jesus (one like the son of man) is presented before the "Ancient of Days" (God) and given everlasting dominion over a kingdom which shall never be destroyed.

These references all confirm for us that the "son of man" is not God, but Son of God.

In EVERY place where this title is used of Jesus in the OT, the "Son of Man" is ALWAYS someone else apart from God.

2. - "CHRIST" (ANOINTED ONE, MESSIAH)

The title "Christ" is also taken from the Old Testament. There it more often appears as

"anointed". It translates the Hebrew word "Messiah". (which is the same as the Greek word "Christ.") It tells us of the future role that Jesus is to play in the Kingdom of God on Earth.

One of the most important places where this word appears is in Psalm 2:2. There David speaks prophetically of Jesus, as the LORD's anointed. (Hebrew - Messiah) This "Messiah" was prophesied by David, to be God's future king, who will reign in Zion. (verse 6)

Another reference to the Messiah is in Daniel 9:26. In this passage, the time of the appearance of the Messiah, and the fact of his sacrificial death, are clearly prophesied.

The Messiah spoken of here, was not to be the immortal God in disguise! He was to be a mortal man, who could truly die for our sins.

3. - SON OF THE LIVING GOD

The "Messiah" of Psalm 2, was also to be God's son. (verse 7) It is this Psalm to which Peter referred, when he identified Jesus as both "the Christ, the son of the Living God".

It is also applied to Jesus by Peter again in Acts 4:25-27, by Paul in Acts 13:33, and by the writer to the Hebrews in chapters 1:5 & 5:5.

Another passage which uses different words to describe Jesus as "son of man",

"Messiah", and "son of God, is found in 2 Samuel 7:11-16. Here again we confirm the humanity of Jesus as a descendant of David (Son of Man) future king (Messiah) and Son of God not God, but someone else quite distinct from God.

THE IMPORTANCE OF THIS IDENTITY

Jesus told Peter that this threefold TRUTH about himself is THE ROCK on which the Church is built. THE TRUTH about Jesus is that:

1. He is the son of man, the human descendant of Adam, heir of God's promises to Abraham, and David.
2. He is the Messiah, the anointed one chosen by God to sit on David's throne, and rule over the Kingdom of God for ever.
3. He is the Son of God, to whom all power in Heaven and earth has been delegated.

The Gospel of the Kingdom of God stands or falls on the truth of those claims. And it was to the truth of those claims by Jesus, that God gave his own witness, by raising Him from the dead. By that act of power, God has declared that Jesus is the Son of God (Romans 1:1-4) That truth is the guarantee that our own frail humanity can be swallowed up in the same victory over sin and death. (1 Cor 15:12-14, 54-58)

WHAT PETER PREACHED LATER

(Remember this is what God had revealed to Peter! This is THE GOSPEL preached by Peter!)

" Men of Israel, listen to these words: Jesus the Nazarene, a man attested to you by God with miracles and wonders and signs which God performed through him in your midst, just as you yourselves know--this man, delivered up by the predetermined plan and foreknowledge of God, you nailed to a cross and put him to death and God raised him up again since it was impossible for him to be held in its power

Therefore let all the house of Israel know for certain that God has made him both Lord and Christ." (Acts 2:22-36, NASB)

CONCLUSION

Matthew 16 does not say at all that Jesus is God-the-son! The words used there, are

"SON OF MAN", "CHRIST" and "SON OF GOD". They mean something quite different.

The use of those titles from the Old Testament, confirms to us that Jesus is a MAN

not God. They confirm to us that Jesus is the King to whom we must surrender the rule over our lives. Most important of all, they identify Him as THE HUMAN SON OF

GOD who has authority to speak and act for His Father.

That truth is the essential foundation on which the Church is built!

And it contains "Good News" for all of us. It gives us assurance that where the Man Christ Jesus has gone before, other men may follow Him to the same eternal

inheritance in the kingdom of God. (Rev 3:21)

"Let each man take care how he builds upon the foundation." (1 Cor 3:10)

Chapter 17: WHO IS "GOD"? (SOMETIMES IT ISN'T WHO YOU THINK!)

WHO IS GOD AT THE BURNING BUSH?

In the Bible, words spoken in the *First Person* are not always "proof" of the identity of the speaker!

For example, at the burning bush Moses heard what appeared to be the "voice of God", saying, "I am the God of your father, the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob". (Exodus 1:3-6) It even says that "Moses was afraid to look at God".

At first glance, it would seem to say that God was present in person and that Moses was hearing the genuine voice of God. However, there is more information here about the real identity of the speaker.

The voice that Moses heard was not actually that of God Himself. Back in verse 2, it says that "the angel of the LORD appeared to him". It was the angel who spoke in the first person, as though it was God speaking.

Angels act as God's agents. They do not speak for themselves. When they speak in the first person, as though it was God speaking, it is because they are God's messengers, communicating the words of God to the hearer.

WHO IS GOD TO AARON?

In the same way, Moses became "as God" to Aaron. (Exodus 4:16) Not that Moses was God, but that he was to "put God's words in Aaron's mouth". When Moses told Aaron what to say to Pharaoh, he was giving him God's words, not his own.

Moses stood in God's place to be God's human messenger (angel) to Aaron.

WHO IS GOD TO PHARAOH?

In the same way, Moses was also "made God" to Pharaoh. (Exodus 7:1) Aaron was Moses' "prophet", speaking to Pharaoh the words that God gave to Moses. "Thus says the LORD Let my people go."

Aaron did the actual speaking, but it was Moses (not Aaron) who stood in God's place, to be God's human messenger (angel) to Pharaoh.

WHO IS GOD IN PSALM 8:3-4?

This is another place where a Hebrew word, most often used for God Himself, actually refers to someone who is not God!

The "Son of man" (Jesus' "favorite" title for Himself) is made (created) a "little less than God" (RSV, NASB, NEB) or "the angels" (KJV - but margin note says "God").

The Hebrew word is "ELOHIM".

That "angels" is the valid translation, is shown from its use in Hebrews 2:6-9.

WHO WERE THE "GODS" IN PSALM 82:6?

This leads to another piece of useful information about the application of the word

"God" to ordinary human beings.

On one occasion, Jesus was accused of "making himself God" because, as a man, he said that God was his Father. (John 10:31-33) However the accusation was FALSE!

What Jesus had actually claimed was NOT that He was God, but that He was the Son of God. (Verse 36)

But He also pointed to Psalm 82:6, where the word "Gods" is used of ordinary men who are "sons of the Most High". (The Hebrew word for God in this Psalm is

"ELOHIM") Jesus is not saying here that He is GOD! Rather, he is saying that if other MEN can be called "God", because they speak for God, then it is also valid for Him, as both SON OF MAN and SON OF GOD, to claim the same authority and status for

Himself.

WHO WERE THE "GODS" IN EXODUS 21?

Another less obvious place where the same Hebrew word "ELOHIM" is used about men, is Exodus 21:6 (KJV). There it is translated "Judges". (It is also translated that way in Exodus 22:8, 9)

We are meant to understand that the judges, though mere mortal men, spoke on behalf of God, when they rendered just judgment from God's laws.

WHO IS GOD WHEN JESUS SPEAKS?

The above Scriptures show us that both men and angels can be sent to stand in place of God, to carry messages and speak Gods words to others.

When that happens, it does not mean that the messenger is actually God in person! It means simply that God has sent an AGENT to stand in His place and speak for Him.

It should not surprise us therefore, to find that as Son of God, Jesus claims similar authority to stand in God's place, to speak God's words to us:

" For I have not spoken on my own authority; the Father who sent me has himself given me commandment what to say and what to speak. And I know that his

commandment is eternal life. What I say, therefore, I say as the Father has bidden me. " (John 12:49-50)

BUT WE MUST NOT MAKE THE MISTAKE OF SAYING THAT MEANS THAT JESUS IS GOD!

Jesus went out of His way to leave us in no doubt that He himself WAS NOT GOD.

He said clearly that HIS FATHER is the only true God. (John 17:3) Jesus is someone else. He is the Son of God.

When theologians "interpret" other verses in a way which contradicts that plain statement from Jesus Himself, confusion is certain to follow!

Chapter 18: WHO IS THE "LORD GOD" IN REV 1:8?

This paper is written in response to the following question:

Point has been made that Jesus is quite clearly referred to as Almighty God in a number of places in the book of Revelations. e.g. Rev 1-8, Rev 4-8, Rev 11-17, Rev 15-3, Rev 16-14, Rev 21-22.

Superficially some of these references do appear to be referring to Jesus, more so if you note some of them in a "red letter" New Testament, where it shows Jesus as making the Rev 1-8 statement.

*" I am the Alpha and the Omega," says the Lord God, * who is and who was and who is to come, the Almighty. " (Rev 1:8 RSV)*

* Note that RSV, NIV, NASB, NEB say "Lord God". KJV and NKJV omit "God".

Over enthusiastic use of red ink by a misguided 20th century publisher, is no proof that Jesus is the one speaking in Rev 1:8. There is NO RED INK in the Greek text!!!

Or in older English Bibles!!!!

As to who actually is speaking in Rev 1:8 In other places in the book of Revelation, God and Jesus are very clearly SEPARATELY identified.

e.g. In Rev 4:2-3,8-11, 5:1, the LORD GOD ALMIGHTY is the one seated on the throne in heaven. (Not to be confused, by the way, with the throne of Jesus, in the Kingdom of God, in Jerusalem, on EARTH, in the future.)

THE LORD GOD ALMIGHTY, who is seated on the throne in heaven, has a scroll in His hand. (Rev 5:1).

BETWEEN the throne and the elders, but NOT ON THE THRONE, stands a LAMB which appears "as though it had been slain". This Lamb is clearly Jesus. And in v7, the LAMB (Jesus) is seen to approach the throne, and take the scroll from the hand of the one on the throne. (THE LORD GOD ALMIGHTY). The hymn of praise by the 24

Elders (v9-10) says that the LAMB has redeemed men for GOD.

Thus it is clear that the LAMB (Jesus) is NOT the LORD GOD ALMIGHTY, either in Chapters 4 & 5, or anywhere else in the book of Revelation! (especially including Rev 1:8)

The LAMB who stands BETWEEN the 24 Elders and the throne, is pictured that way, because in Chapter 5, a MEDIATOR has been ADDED to the scene described in

Chapter 4. That mediator is NOT GOD. The mediator stands BETWEEN God and men. He is the MAN Christ Jesus. (1 Tim 2:5-6)

We may not take isolated verses from other places in the book, and then mishandle them in a way which contradicts those clearly established separate identities for God and Jesus. That is one of the ways in which people distort the scriptures to their own destruction! (2 Pet 3:15-16)

Instead, we must use the Bible's carefully defined SEPARATE identities for GOD and JESUS to understand who is referred to in other parts of the book.

GOD is GOD. Jesus is someone else! (John 17:3)

The message of the Old Testament is also consistent.

The LORD, the LORD GOD, the LORD GOD ALMIGHTY, are all names of God the Father.

They NEVER refer to Jesus!

Chapter 19: THE ALPHA AND THE OMEGA, THE FIRST AND THE LAST

" I am the Alpha and the Omega , " (1) says the Lord God, (2) who is and who was and who is to come, the Almighty. " (Rev 1:8 RSV)

(1) KJV & NKJV add here, "the beginning and the ending". A margin note in NKJV excludes it. It is omitted from RSV, NIV, NASB, NEB.

(2) RSV, NIV, NASB, NEB say "Lord God". KJV and NKJV omit "God".

" I was in the Spirit on the Lord's day, and heard behind me a great voice, as of a trumpet, Saying, I am Alpha and Omega, the first and the last:" (3) (Rev 1:10-11 KJV) (3) RSV, NIV, NASB, NEB exclude "Alpha and Omega, the first and the last". It is included by NKJV.

" I sawone like a son of man, saying, "Fear not, I am the first and the last"

(Rev 1:11-17 RSV)

Who is the "Alpha and Omega" in Rev 1:8? Who is the "first and the last" in Rev 1:17?

Is it the same person speaking in both verses? Do these words "prove" that Jesus is God?

THE MEANING OF THE WORDS

"Alpha and Omega", "the beginning and the end", and "the first and the last", appear to mean essentially the same thing. The "Theological Dictionary of the New Testament", says that the meaning is simply that God begins and ends all things. All three phrases are used together in Rev 22:13.

However, it is poor logic to suggest that when the same words are spoken in different places, by two different identities, those two MUST therefore be the same person!

Nevertheless, that is what some theologians do with the three Bible verses which are the subject of this paper!

THE OLD TESTAMENT SOURCE

We should note at the beginning, that Rev 1:8 is NOT part of John's vision. It is part of his *introduction* to the vision.

God calls Himself the "First and last" in Isaiah 41:4, 44:6, 48:12. We need to read those verses in their context in Isaiah, to understand who is speaking in Rev 1:8, and why John has included it in his introduction.

In Isaiah, the words are spoken by the LORD. (YAHWEH in the Hebrew) The word

"LORD" (in upper case letters) in the Old Testament, ALWAYS refers to the ONE

GOD, who is described in what Jesus calls the "first and greatest commandment of all". (Deut 6:4-5, Mark 12:29))

This LORD says of Himself "There is no God beside me." (Deut 32:39) Jesus prays to Him as "The only true God". (John 17:3) And Paul says of Him "There is but one God, the Father." (1 Cor 8:6)

We have already discovered (see Bible Digest No 89) that in other parts of the

Apocalypse, John has taken care to identify The Lord God Almighty and Jesus, as two separate beings. Further careful study of the Scriptures will provide abundant

evidence, in both Old and New Testaments, that Jesus is someone else, quite distinct from the ONE GOD who is called The LORD.

So Rev 1:8 is NOT spoken by Jesus!

Rather it has been included by John, to point us back in time, to the LORD who "calls generations from the beginning". (Isaiah 41:4) whose "word stands for ever" (Isaiah 40:8) who spoke of the coming of John the Baptist to prepare the way for Jesus (Isaiah 40:3-5, Luke 3:4-6) who declares new things before they come to pass (Isaiah 42:8-9) who

"announced from of old the things that are to come (Isaiah 44:7) whose counsel has stood the test of time, and who has accomplished His ancient plan and purpose for His Son. (Isaiah 46:9-11)

In Isaiah, God is the *author* of the prophecies it contains. They all begin with God. He is the "*first*", the "*alpha*", the "*beginning*". And God is the one who will bring them all to pass. When that happens, He is the "*last*", the "*omega*", the "*end*".

By quoting these words, John is reminding us that all prophecy begins and ends with God. And He is claiming that his Apocalypse has the same origin, status, and authority as the Old Testament prophecies. They are from the same God who spoke through

Isaiah.

And he later claims that his vision provides the key to understand many of the things they foretold.

NOW THE VISION STARTS

"I was in the Spirit on the Lord's day, and I heard behind me a loud voice saying,

"Write what you see in a book....." Then I turned to see the voice that was speaking to me, and on turning I saw seven golden lampstands, and in the midst of the lampstands ONE LIKE A SON OF MAN." (Rev 1:10-11, 12-13)

Those words "one like a Son of man" point us to Daniel 7:13. John uses them to identify Jesus as the fulfilment of Daniel's prophetic vision. "One like a son of man"

(Jesus) came to the "Ancient of Days" (God) and was given everlasting dominion and glory and kingdom. (John tells us more about that in Ch 5:6-14.) Clearly, in Daniel's vision, Jesus is NOT the Ancient of days! Instead, John has identified Him as the "Son of Man", the one who is to inherit the Kingdom the Messiah.

"When I saw him, I fell at his feet as though dead. But he laid his right hand upon me, saying, "Fear not, I am the first and the last, and the living one; I died, and behold I am alive for evermore, and I have the keys of Death and Hades." (Rev 1:17) This time it is Jesus speaking. Only He could say "I died and am alive for evermore." Not even the Lord God Almighty can say of Himself that He died!

However, in Rev 5:6-7, John distinguishes between God and Jesus as two separate identities. (see Rev 5:6-7) And in John 17:3, (same author!) Jesus specifically declared His Father to be the ONLY TRUE GOD. We should understand therefore, that in Rev 1:17, Jesus CANNOT be making any claim at all, that He Himself is GOD. Why then does He speak in the first person, to say "I am the first and the last", using a title which in the OT, is applied only to His Father?

The simple answer is that this is a claim to DELEGATED AUTHORITY from God, to

stand in place of God, and speak for God. " *All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me.*" (Matthew 28:18, Philippians 2:9-11)

It is the same delegated authority by which the angel spoke in the first person to Moses at the burning bush, (Exodus 3:2-6) and by which Moses "became God to Pharoah", (Exodus 7:1) and by which Judges were called "god" in Ex 21:6 (KJV).(4) (4) See Bible Digest no 88.

GOD SPEAKS AGAIN

The words "ALPHA AND OMEGA" are used again in Rev 21:6.

We are not left in doubt about who is speaking. It is "the one who sits upon the throne". (Identified as The Lord God Almighty in chapter 4) This identity is confirmed by the quotation of words spoken by the LORD, from 2 Samuel 7:14, "I will be his God and he shall be my son." Jesus is NOT the one who made that promise to David.

Rather, He is both the subject, and the fulfilment of the promise. That is Good News for us! We also are invited by Jesus to share the throne with Him. (Rev 3:21)

ONE LAST TIME

The words are used one last time, in the concluding chapter of the book. This time it is Jesus speaking, not in person, but through an angel, who speaks in the first person as agent for Jesus.

" I am coming soon, bringing my recompense, to repay every one for what he has done.

I am the Alpha and the Omega, the first and the last, the beginning and the end."

(Revelation 22:12-13)

We remind ourselves again, that in speaking thus Jesus is NOT claiming to be God.

Instead, He is saying that when He does come back to earth, He is coming to fulfil the task to which He is appointed by God. He will stand in place of God, speak for God, and administer Judgement. He is THE MAN by whom, Paul tells us, GOD will judge

the world. (See Acts 17:31)

Finally, when that work is completed, Jesus will, Paul says, remain eternally subject to His Father, that God alone may truly be EVERYTHING TO EVERYONE (1 Cor

15:24-28)

The LORD GOD ALMIGHTY, the God of Creation,

the ONE LORD of Moses,
The FATHER of Jesus,
of whom Jesus says "You alone are truly God"
THIS GOD is:

The Alpha and the Omega
the beginning and the end
the first and the last!

Chapter 20: EQUALITY WITH GOD - NOT TO BE STOLEN!

" Have this mind among yourselves, which is yours in Christ Jesus, who, though he was in the form of God, did not count equality with God a thing to be GRASPED, but emptied himself, taking the form of a servant, being born in the likeness of men. And being found in human form he humbled himself and became obedient unto death, even death on a cross."
(Philippians 2:5-8 RSV)

Note that the RSV uses "grasped" where the KJV has "robbery".

The point Paul makes is that Jesus did not attempt to STEAL equality with God.

The primary THEOLOGICAL issue is the implied comparison between Adam and Eve
(and all the rest of us) and Jesus.

In the dialogue between Eve and the Serpent, are contained the three elements of temptation and sin, listed by John - "*The lust of the FLESH, the lust of the EYES, and the PRIDE of life*" (1 John 2:15-17)

Eve thought that :-

- the tree looked good for food (the lust of the flesh),

- it was a delight to the eyes (the lust of the eyes),
- it was to be desired to make one wise (the pride of life).

And under the subtle influence of the serpent, Adam and Eve tried to **STEAL** that impossible "short cut" to **EQUALITY WITH GOD!** (Genesis 3:5 "You will be like God") When we compare what happened in Eden, with the temptation of Jesus in the wilderness, we discover the same three elements.

From Luke 4:3-12

"The devil said to him, 'If you are the Son of God, command this stone to become bread.' (the lust of the flesh) And the devil took him up, and showed him all the kingdoms of the world in a moment of time, (the lust of the eyes) and said to him,

"To you I will give all this authority and their glory; for it has been delivered to me, and I give it to whom I will. If you, then, will worship me, it shall all be yours." (the pride of life)

In contrast with Adam and Eve, Jesus rejected the devil's offer, and refused the temptation to attempt to STEAL that attractive looking "SHORT CUT" to power and glory (without the cross).

"It is written, 'You shall worship the Lord your God, and him only shall you serve.'"

(Luke 4:8)

In making that choice, Jesus "**HUMBLED HIMSELF**" to obey His Father. He committed Himself, irrevocably, to walk the hard, narrow road of obedience, which was God's chosen path for His own perfection and our salvation. (Hebrews 5:8-9)

"Have this mind among yourselves, which is yours in Christ Jesus, who, though he was in the form of God, **JUST LIKE ADAM** (Genesis 1:27)

Jesus was also made a **MAN** in the image of God. "being born in the **LIKENESS** of men"

(Philippians 2:7)

But unlike Adam, when presented with the "short cut" to equality, "(He) *did not count equality with God a thing to be grasped* (prematurely)"

Instead, when faced with temptation, he refused elevate Himself. He had been "born in the likeness of men" and He refused to be ANYTHING OTHER THAN A MAN!

Instead of taking "the place of honor" at the feast (Luke 14:8) he chose to "take the form of a servant." (cf Luke 22:27 & John 13:3-17)

Instead of grasping prematurely at the devil's offer of the THRONE, he chose to wait for God's time. "He humbled himself and became obedient unto death, even death on a cross." (Philippians 2:8).

This MAN who was made in all points exactly like us, (Hebrews 2:14,17) and who was tempted in all the same ways (Hebrews 4:15) humbled Himself there in the wilderness.

His whole life was one of humility and service. And at the end, He humbled Himself **ONE MORE TIME** by accepting without complaint, the totally undeserved and unjust death penalty reserved for common criminals. He "became obedient unto death, even death on a cross." (Philippians 2:8.)

He "emptied himself" of all human **AMBITION** for recognition, status, power, and authority.

(The KJV says "He made Himself of NO reputation")

All this Jesus **DID AS A MAN** It is **NOT** something He **DID BEFORE HE WAS BORN!**

"Therefore (because of His **HUMAN** obedience) God has highly exalted him and bestowed on him the name which is above every name, (by giving Him the glory that had been planned for Him before creation - John 17:5) that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, in heaven and on earth and under the earth, and every tongue

confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father." (Philippians 2:5-11)

However, in our preoccupation with those other theological issues, we must not lose sight of the **MAIN POINT**.

The real question posed by these verses in Philippians is this :-

We have all made the same terrible mistake as Adam and Eve. We have all attempted to grasp at (steal) our own "short cut" to equality with God. We have all assumed the throne in our own lives, to make our own sinful "laws" for behaviour. We have all fallen **SHORT** of the glory of God! (Romans 3:23)

Will we continue to bow down before the Devil

Or will we repent of our sins, and walk in newness of life. (Romans 6:4) Will we, like Jesus, **HUMBLE** ourselves to live by God's laws?

Will we now bow down before this **MAN**, who God has highly exalted and confess Him as **LORD**? (Philippians 2:10-12)

Will we **LOVE** this **MAN**, and obey Him? (John 14:15)

THAT IS THE ONLY ACCEPTABLE PATH TO GLORY!

(Romans 2:6-7)

Chapter 21: WORSHIP OF JESUS?

I received the following question in response to Bible Digest Nos. 87, 88, 89 & 90. I thought it might be worth sharing my answer.

QUESTION

After perusing these studies, I would like you to answer the following:

Did the disciples worship Jesus?

Should Christians worship someone other than God?

MY ANSWER

It depends what you mean by "worship". The word seems to have several different shades of meaning.

In the English language it can mean:

1. Reverent homage or service paid to God.
2. Recognition, honor, respect given to men.
3. Great love or adoration for a person or thing.
4. A title of respect for some officials. (such as magistrates or mayors)

In the Bible, the main meaning seems to be much the same.

1. To bow down before.

2. By kneeling or prostration to do homage (to one) or make obeisance, whether in order to express respect or to make supplication.

It is used of homage shown to superior rank to GOD; and to MEN; and to ANGELS.

WHEN ANGELS OR MEN RECEIVE "WORSHIP" IT DOES NOT MEAN THAT THEY ARE GOD!

WORSHIP OF GOD ALONE

We have seen above that "worship" has several meanings. But there is ONE particular sense in which GOD ALONE is to be worshipped. Worship in this sense applies to no other.

There are many places in the Old Testament where it is clear that The LORD is to be the sole object of divine worship. The LORD (Yahweh) is the ONLY GOD.

"For thou shalt worship NO OTHER GOD: for the LORD, (Yahweh) whose name is Jealous, is a jealous God." (Exodus 34:14)

It is quite clear from many OT references that God the Father is Yahweh, and that Jesus is NOT Yahweh.

IN THE NEW TESTAMENT

It was Jesus who said:

" You shall worship the Lord your God and him ONLY shall you serve".

(Matt 4:10)

and,

" This is eternal life, that they might know thee the ONLY TRUE GOD, and Jesus Christ whom thou hast sent". (John 17:3)

and,

" I ascend unto my Father, and your Father; and to MY God, and YOUR God." (John 20:17) and, "True worshippers shall worship THE FATHER in spirit and in truth: for the Father seeketh such to worship him." (John 4:23)

From this we understand that Jesus directs all (primary) worship to His Father, and that Jesus Himself intends us to understand that He is NOT to be worshipped as the One True God.

THE STATUS OF JESUS

When the OT prophets foretell the coming of the Messiah, he is made SECOND in rank after GOD.

e.g. "Sit thou at my right hand." (Psalm 110:1)

Any HONOR, or RANK, predicted for the Messiah, is DERIVED or DELEGATED from His Father.

WORSHIP OF JESUS

BY ANGELS.

"Let all the angels of God worship him." (Hebrews 1:6)

BY THOMAS.

"My Lord and my God". (John 20:28)

BY ALL MEN.

" Therefore God has highly exalted him and bestowed on him the name which is above every name, that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, in heaven and on earth and under the earth, and every tongue confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father."
(Philippians 2:9-11)

In each of these places "worship" cannot mean quite the same as it does when applied to Yahweh. Instead it has the secondary meaning of bowing the knee to someone of superior rank.

In Australia, it is customary to bow to the Governor General, not in his own right, but as a token of homage to the Queen, whose representative he is. When we "worship"

Jesus, it means much the same thing. He is the RULER appointed by GOD. We acknowledge the authority of God vested in Him as God's representative.

Philippians explains that men are to bow before Jesus (worship) because He has been exalted by God. This is actually worship of GOD, WHO EXALTED Him. It is done to the GLORY OF GOD THE FATHER not to Jesus as God!

WORSHIP OF MEN

"But when thou art bidden, go and sit down in the lowest room; that when he that bade thee cometh, he may say unto thee, Friend, go up higher: then shalt thou have

WORSHIP in the presence of them that sit at meat with thee." (Luke 14:10) Newer versions use "honor" instead of "worship".

"Behold, I will make them of the synagogue of Satan to come and WORSHIP

before thy feet, and to know that I have loved thee." (Revelation 3:9)

Of course the MEN who are worshipped here are NOT supplanting God, or being worshipped as GOD! They are merely being acknowledged as of superior rank to those who bow before them.

We close with the last message from the angel who brought the vision to John from Jesus. Speaking for Jesus, the angel said:

WORSHIP GOD!

(Rev 22:9)

Chapter 22: MY LORD AND MY GOD

"Now Thomas, one of the twelve, called the Twin, was not with them when Jesus came. So the other disciples told him, "We have seen the Lord." But he said to them,

"Unless I see in his hands the print of the nails, and place my finger in the mark of the nails, and place my hand in his side, I will not believe." Eight days later, his disciples were again in the house, and Thomas was with them. The doors were shut, but Jesus came and stood among them, and said, "Peace be with you." Then he said to Thomas,

"Put your finger here, and see my hands; and put out your hand, and place it in my side; do not be faithless, but believing." Thomas answered him, "My Lord and my God!"

(John 20:24-29)

This incident is often quoted as a "proof text" to support the claim that Thomas addresses Jesus as "Lord" because he recognises Him as YAHWEH of the Old Testament. However, this misuse of the text is VERY confusing, and illogical.

Jesus Himself says that there is only ONE TRUE GOD His Father! And He also uses those same words "My God", when speaking of His Father. (e.g Matt 27:46, John 20:17, Rev 3:2,12) Obviously then, when Thomas uses them, he is not contradicting Jesus. He does NOT mean that Jesus is the One True God! He MUST mean

something else. So then, how are we to understand Thomas' words?

THE TRANSLATION PROBLEM

In the Old Testament Hebrew text, there are a number of different words which are translated as "lord". The Greeks have only ONE word available to translate ALL of these words. (kurios). However, this word also often means no more than "master", as an acknowledgment of authority. (It is used many times this way, of Jesus.) It is also used as a respectful form of address to men. e.g. "sir" in John 12:21; 20:15; Acts 16:30.

Hebrew also has many different words for "god". Again, Greek has only ONE. (theos) It would be a serious error indeed to assume that every time the words "lord" or "God"

appear in the NT, they refer to Yahweh. For instance, it would be patently absurd to suggest that when Festus addresses Agrippa as "my lord", in Acts 25:26, that he means that Agrippa is Yahweh! But alas an error of that same magnitude is being made with the verse in John! We must learn to read such passages a little more honestly.

There are many places in the New Testament where, in order to understand which Old Testament word for "lord" or "God" is intended, we must depend heavily on both the context, and the appropriate OT source.

MY LORD

Psalms 110:1 refers to TWO different "lords". The first "LORD" in this verse is YAHWEH. The second "lord" is ADONI, "my lord" to whom Yahweh is speaking.

This "my lord" is the Messiah, the Son of Yahweh.

In passing we note that when this Psalm is quoted in Matthew 22:44, the NT Greek text, and also our English translations, are unable to make the essential distinction between the two different Hebrew words for "lord". To understand the importance of that, we must go to the Old Testament passage from which the words are quoted by Matthew. **(1)**

Note 1 - For a more detailed discussion of this subject, see chapter 15

Since the OT is so very positive that Jesus is NOT Yahweh, it is not difficult to conclude that Thomas must be referring to this second "lord" from Psalm 110:1, when he calls Jesus "my lord". After all, that is EXACTLY who Jesus is!

MY GOD

The overwhelming evidence of the Old Testament is that God (Yahweh) and Jesus are NOT the same. In the face of all that evidence, it becomes obvious that the use of the words " *my God*" by Thomas, CANNOT mean that Thomas is addressing Him as the ONE LORD GOD of Israel. (Deuteronomy 6:4-6)

We need to search for a different meaning for Thomas' words.

Jesus provides the answer in John 10:34. It is not inappropriate to refer to MEN who are "sons of God", by the title "god". (See also Psalm 82:6) But that does not mean that they ARE God. In several places the OT refers to men as "god", when they stand in place of God, to speak for Him. e.g. Moses in Exodus 7:1, and the "judges"

(Hebrew "elohim") in Exodus 21:6; 22:8; 22:9.

That is what Jesus means when He speaks to Philip in John 14:7-11. Of course, it is obvious that Jesus is not the same person as the Father who alone is God (John 17:3) but a different person who reveals the Father to us. The Father dwells in Him. (verse 11) The writer to the Hebrews also tells us that Jesus is the SON through whom God speaks. He is uniquely equipped for this task, because He personally bears the IMAGE

(likeness in character) of God, and REFLECTS the glory of God. (Hebrews 1:2-3)

It is in this sense that Thomas acknowledges Him as "my God". The words "my lord"

confess Jesus as the "my lord" of Psalm 110:1, the Messiah. The words "my God", tell us that Thomas believes that the Messiah stands in place of God, to speak to us for God, to reveal God to us by His words and example.

WHY DID JOHN WRITE HIS GOSPEL?

In the verses which follow immediately after the incident which we have been considering, John tells us WHY he wrote this Gospel.

"Jesus did many other signs in the presence of the disciples, which are not written in this book; but these 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 20:30-31)

We note carefully that John did NOT write to convince us that Jesus is Yahweh!

Rather, He wrote to convince us that Jesus is the Messiah (the Christ) the Son of God (Yahweh).

Taken properly in context, it must be obvious that those words used by Thomas, tell us that THIS is what he believed about Jesus, when He said "my lord and my God".

And Paul tells us that when we join with Thomas, bowing the knee to Jesus to confess Him as "lord", then Yahweh Himself is glorified by our submission to the authority delegated to His Son. (Philippians 2:9-11)

Chapter 23: THE "CREED OF MOSES"

"Hear, O Israel: The LORD our God is one LORD; and you shall love the LORD your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your might." (Deut 6:4-5)

The "Creed of Moses" is clearly NOT a Trinitarian document!

By any fair standard of appraisal, its positive UNITARIAN theology is

uncompromising. Its simplicity stands in stark contrast to the complicated Trinitarian creeds of the mainstream Church (Nicene, Chalcedonian, Athanasian.) which it

predates by nearly 2000 years! And if we view it correctly, it is the standard by which all man made creeds must be judged.

According to Moses, there is ONLY ONE GOD! There is no hint of anything

resembling "Tri-unity". We should not be surprised therefore that, despite the efforts of theologians to tell us otherwise, the rest of the Bible agrees with this simple

"Unitarian Creed" from Moses.

WHO IS "THE LORD"?

This LORD of whom Moses speaks, is easily identified as YAHWEH, the self existent God. This is the new name by which God revealed Himself to Moses as the one who is also known as God Almighty, the God of Abraham Isaac and Jacob. (Exod 6:3)

Of course this reference to Abraham pointed Moses to the 400 year old promise that God would rescue his descendants from their slavery and oppression in Egypt. (Gen 15:13-16) God was reminding Moses that it was time for that promise to be fulfilled.

But there is a something even more important in the "Creed of Moses". It points US to the COVENANT which God has with Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. By revealing

Himself as the God of these three forefathers of the Jews, the LORD is reaffirming the

"Gospel preached to Abraham"!

The COMMANDMENT to love and serve the ONE LORD revealed in the "Creed of

Moses" is not only for Jews. It is established for all believers in all time. It is the first and greatest commandment of the Christian faith, reaffirmed by Jesus in the New Testament. (Mark 12:29-30)

Inheritance of the Gospel promise to Abraham, is for those who share his faith in that same God. (Rom 3:16-17, Gal 3:29) It is not for those who worship other gods!

JESUS AND THE HOLY SPIRIT IN THE CREED OF MOSES

In this simple creed, we are directed to the LORD ALONE as God.

Of course Moses does mention both Jesus and the Holy Spirit elsewhere in his

writings but NEVER are either described as "objects of worship"; NEVER does he refer to Jesus as a person already in existence; and NEVER is the Holy Spirit mentioned in any way which gives even the slightest hint of its existence as separate personal being in its own right.

It is significant that Jesus Himself confirmed and adopted this UNITARIAN faith as His own, when He addressed His Father in prayer as "the ONLY true God"! (John 17:3)

CONCLUSION

The "Creed of Moses" is far more than a mere theological statement of the unity of God. It is THE foundation upon which all other true religion is based. It affects how we think about our relationship with God and His Son. Ultimately, it conditions our response to the Gospel call to obedience to Jesus. And it has been confirmed by Jesus as an eternal, non-negotiable COMMANDMENT, which ranks above all others!

"I am the LORD your God, who brought you out of the land of Egypt, out of the house of bondage. "You shall have no other gods before me". (Deut 5:6-7)

Chapter 24: THE HOLY SPIRIT - HE? SHE? OR IT?

In an article I read recently, a so called "expert" commentator claimed that in the Greek text, masculine gender nouns and pronouns are used to speak about the Holy Spirit. This led to the further claim that this "proved" that the Holy Spirit is a MALE

PERSON.

For those of us who don't read Greek, and are not qualified in Greek grammar, it can be a daunting task to test this claim. However, with a little effort, it is not impossible to get at the REAL facts, by stumbling (one Greek letter at a time) through one of the readily available Greek Grammars, a couple of Lexicons, and an interlinear

Greek/English New Testament. It also helps if you know my good friend Anthony

Buzzard, who has supplied me with the information which reveals the gender of the respective Greek and Hebrew words! [1]

So then what are the REAL Bible facts about this claim?

FACT NO 1

In Greek, many nouns which are neuter in English, have either masculine or feminine gender. That does not mean they have suddenly become male or female persons,

simply because we have switched languages! It is merely one more evidence of the Tower of Babel still at work in our time! And when we translate those words back into English, it is simple common sense to translate the gender as well as the word!

FACT NO 2

Nowhere in the Greek Text are masculine pronouns used with the word "Pneuma".

(translated into English as "spirit") It is grammatically impossible! In Greek "pneuma"

is neuter gender and the rules of Greek grammar require that pronouns which refer to it MUST also be neuter gender.

FACT NO 3

In four places in the NT, the Greek word "parakletos" is translated "comforter".

("helper" in the KJV margin, or "counsellor" in the RSV) It is used as another name for the Holy Spirit. (John 14:16; 14:26; 15:26; 16:7)

This word IS masculine gender, so the rules of Greek grammar require that pronouns which refer to it must also be masculine gender. But that does not mean at all, that it MUST therefore refer to a MALE PERSONALITY with separate existence in its own

right. The context in which the word is used, must be taken into account when

determining the correct translation of masculine gender nouns from Greek to English.

In the only other place where the word appears (1 John 2:1) it refers to Jesus. Of course, it is quite unnecessary to "prove" that Jesus is a person! And John does not use it for that purpose. Instead, it is used to describe His OFFICE or ROLE in Heaven.

Careful reading of those four places in John's Gospel, will show that the use of

"parakletos" has the same purpose in view as in his epistle. That use is clearly NOT to assign personality to the Spirit, but to describe the FUNCTION for which the Spirit is given. And since it is simply another name for the Holy Spirit, common sense ought to dictate that it be translated with the same gender as "spirit". We can easily determine from other Bible

references to the Spirit of God (especially in the OT) that the Holy Spirit should be viewed as SOMETHING which belongs to God, rather than

SOMEONE who is a DEITY. It should therefore be translated into English as a neuter gender noun.

A further illustration of the futility of attempting to use Greek gender to assign personality to the Spirit, is seen in the reference in John 15:26. Here we have ALL

THREE genders applied to the "spirit" in the same sentence!

"When the COMFORTER (Gk "parakletos" -masculine) is come even the SPIRIT (Gk "pneuma" - neuter) of TRUTH (Gk "aletheias" - feminine) he (?) shall testify of me".

No one in their right mind would seriously suggest that the Greek gender of "truth"

indicates that "truth" is a feminine PERSONALITY! Why should it be any different with "comforter"?

FACT NO 4

Anthony Buzzard [1] tells me that Hebrew nouns have *only* masculine or feminine gender. There is NO NEUTER gender.

[1] Sir Anthony F. Buzzard, Bt., M.A., (Oxon.), M.A. Th., A.R.C.M., teaches at the Atlanta Bible College of the Church of God General Conference.

The Hebrew word for "spirit" is "RUACH". This word also has several other meanings such as "wind", or "breath". When used in conjunction with "QODESH" (3 times) it is translated "Holy Spirit". In other places it appears with the word "god" (without

"holy") and is translated "Spirit of God". In other places God speaks of it as "My Spirit", or "the Spirit". (e.g Gen 6:3; Num 11:17 - use a Concordance to check it out) In Hebrew, "RUACH" is always FEMININE gender! However, no one in their right mind, would ever use this to suggest that it means God's Holy Spirit is a separately existing FEMALE DEITY!

To correctly assign English Gender when translating this word, we must make a

careful study of the way it is used in the Old Testament. This will show that the Spirit of God is NOT spoken of as a person at all. Rather it is clearly seen to be something which belongs to God in exactly the same way that the spirit of a man belongs to the man. A man's spirit is NOT another person existing apart from the man. It is an essential part of the whole man. Without it the man simply would not exist.

God's Spirit bears the same relationship to God, as the spirit of a man does to the man.

(1 Cor 2:2-16)

"Hear, O Israel: The LORD our God is one LORD; and you shall love the LORD your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your might." (Deut 6:4-5) This ONE TRUE GOD (John 17:3) has a spirit which is an integral part of Himself, in exactly the same way that the men He created also each have a spirit! (Which is not surprising, since we are created in His image!)

Chapter 25: WHEN THE SONS OF GOD SHOUTED FOR JOY

"God said, 'Let us make man in our image, after our likeness.'" (Gen 1:26) This verse is often quoted as a "proof" of the doctrine of the Trinity. The claim is that the use of a plural Hebrew noun "elohim" for "God", and the pronoun "us", indicates that there was more than one person involved in the creation of mankind. Then, in a giant leap of "circular logic" (1) the conclusion is made that this must be a reference to a "triune Godhead".

Note 1 Circular logic - the process by which a proposal is used to "prove"

itself! e.g. If the doctrine of the trinity is accepted, then the plural words used in Genesis 1:26 must refer to a "triune godhead"! And that therefore proves the doctrine!

Circular? yes! But REAL logic "proving" the Trinity? NEVER!

Of course that "logic" is not only completely "circular". It also fails to take notice of other Scripture which reveals the TRUE IDENTITY of those others to whom God was speaking at the creation.

God said to Job:

"Where were you when I laid the foundation of the earth? when the morning stars sang together, and all the sons of God shouted for joy?"

(Job 38:4-7)

The "sons of God" referred to here, are of course, the ANGELS.

It should not surprise us at all, to learn that the "US" in whose image we are made, includes the angels who shouted for joy at the creation!

When angels appear to men, THEY LOOK JUST LIKE MEN! We have been made in

their physical image, but "for a little while lower". (Heb 2:7) i.e. We do not yet share their immortality. That is reserved for the "age to come" which lies beyond the Resurrection. (Luke 20:36)

The reference in Hebrews is of course a quotation from Psalm 8:5. Comparing the two references, we learn that the NT word which has been translated as "angels", is actually "elohim" in the Psalm. A little more study with a Concordance will find several other places where "elohim" refers either to angels, or even mortal men! (See Chapter 17)

In Gen 1:26, the word "elohim" is plural, (2) NOT because God is a three person "triunity", but because it reminds us that YAHWEH (who alone is truly God) HAS A FAMILY OF SONS! As sons of God the angels are part of that family. And if we

belong to Jesus, so are we also sons of God. We bear the physical image of those other sons who were present at the creation. But as mortals we are temporarily "a little

lower". When Jesus appears we shall be elevated to the full status, and likeness, and dominion over the earth, for which we were created in the image of the "elohim".

(Gen 1:26, Luke 20 35-36, Rom 8:21-25, 1 John 3:1-3)

Note 2 – For more about the plurality of the word "elohim" refer to chapter 37

Praise God! Jesus, the "Son of Man" has been confirmed as THE Son Of God, when His Father raised Him from the dead. (Rom 1:4) And He has been elevated to a status far above that of those other sons of God, who were present at the creation (Heb 1:4).

To Him we bow the knee and confess Him as Lord to the glory of His Father (Phil 2:10-12) who alone is truly God.

(John 17:3)

Chapter 26: THY THRONE O GOD IS FOR EVER - Heb 1:8

"But unto the Son he saith, Thy throne, O God, is for ever and ever: a sceptre of righteousness is the sceptre of thy kingdom. Thou hast loved righteousness, and hated iniquity; therefore

God, even thy God, hath anointed thee with the oil of gladness above thy fellows." (Hebrews 1:8-9)

This verse has long been wrongly used to support the Doctrine of the Trinity. It is alleged that because the verse addresses Jesus as "God", He must therefore be a part of a Triune "godhead".

However, as we shall see, that conclusion goes one big step beyond what is actually written.

We note first that, in John 17:3, Jesus addresses His Father as "THE ONLY TRUE

GOD". In the same prayer He also carefully identifies Himself as distinct from the

"one true God", by whom He is sent (delegated) to perform the task of glorifying His Father's name on earth.

This verse from John, should be enough in itself, to remind us to tread a little more carefully with the reference in Hebrews 1:8. However if we need more, it is contained in the immediate context in verse 9.

There we read two things which make it quite clear that Jesus is NOT the supreme deity.

1. JESUS IS "ANOINTED".

This word "anointed", points us directly back to the OT prophecies about the Messiah.

(Messiah is an Anglicised form of the Hebrew word for "anointed one", which is directly equivalent to the Greek "christos", and our English "Christ") Reference to those prophecies will quickly reveal that the Messiah is NOT the ONE GOD of the OT. Instead He is clearly described as someone else, quite distinct and separate from God.

2. JESUS HAS BEEN ANOINTED BY HIS GOD!

This confirms again that, although addressed as "God", Jesus is NOT Himself the supreme God. Instead He also worships that God, as the one who has anointed Him with a (delegated) authority to rule over His (future) Kingdom.

(For a discussion about how the Bible applies the word "God" to others apart from the Supreme God, see Chapters 17 & 22.

ALTERNATIVE TRANSLATIONS

Hebrews 1:8-9 is a direct quotation from Psalm 45:6-7. In verse 6, in place of " *Thy throne, O God*" the RSV has " *Your Divine throne*". And a marginal note in the RSV

offers a further possible alternative as - " *Your throne is a throne of God*". The NEB

has " *Your throne is like God's throne*".

Since I am not a Hebrew Scholar, I won't attempt to resolve the reason why the

translators feel it necessary to offer these alternatives. We merely note in passing that if correct, they only serve to emphasise what is already clear from verses 5-7 that there is a distinction drawn between Jesus and God. The "anointed one" is NOT

Himself the Supreme God, but a worshipper of that God.

Chapter 27: THOU LORD DIDST FOUND THE EARTH - Heb 1:10

"Thou, Lord, didst found the earth in the beginning, and the heavens are the work of thy hands; they will perish, but thou remainest; they will all grow old like a garment, like a mantle thou wilt roll them up, and they will be changed. But thou art the same, and thy years will never end." (Hebrews 1:10-12)

This is another verse which has been incorrectly used to support the Doctrine of the Trinity. It is alleged that because the verse flows directly on from verse 9, it refers to Jesus as "The LORD" who created the earth. From there another big leap is made to conclude that Jesus is the same person as the LORD (Yahweh), and is therefore part of a triune "godhead". However as we shall see, that conclusion flies in the face of other Scriptures which clearly identify the Father of Jesus as the ONLY TRUE GOD, and Jesus as someone else who is NOT that God.

The problem is quickly resolved if we realise that between verses 9 & 10, the author of the Hebrews has CHANGED THE SUBJECT without explicitly saying so! Verse 9 is

about Jesus. Verse 10 is NOT about Jesus, but about Yahweh, who alone is truly God.

(John 17:3) We are left to work that out for ourselves, by referring back to Psalm 102:25-27, from which he has quoted. Be a Berean! Check it out! (Acts 17:13)

The Psalm is a prayer for help in the midst of affliction. It is clearly a messianic prophesy of the sufferings and distress of Jesus, as he hung on the cross. In this prophetic aspect, Jesus is NOT the LORD who is the creator who laid the foundation of the earth, but the one saying the prayer. This is completely consistent with many other Psalms which also draw a careful distinction between the LORD, who is the only true God, and Jesus as someone else.

Returning to Hebrews chapter 1, we should be able to see that the REAL intention is NOT to establish that Jesus is God, but to draw a careful distinction between God and Jesus. It is obvious in verses 1-3 that God is NOT Jesus, but the one who now speaks to us THROUGH Jesus, in the same way that He once did through the prophets. He is NOT Jesus, but the God whose glory Jesus REFLECTS. (verses 1-3)

- In verse 4, We see that neither is Jesus an angel, but one who has BECOME

greatly superior to angels.

- In verses 5-6 Jesus is identified NOT as God, but the SON OF GOD, whose relationship to God is thus uniquely and completely different to that of angels.

- In verse 7 the status and role of the angels is defined.

- In verses 7-8 Jesus is contrasted with the angels, when He is identified as the Messiah (the anointed one) of the OT prophecies.

- And in verses 9-12 the writer shifts the focus again, this time to point us to the LORD (Yahweh) as the everlasting author of the grand scheme of creation and salvation.

Finally, in verse 13, the conclusion is:

To what angel has HE (the LORD just identified in verses 9-12) ever said - "Sit thou at my right hand?" This verse is of course another direct quotation from the Psalms

this time from Psalm 110:1. There Jesus is again clearly identified, NOT as the LORD

(Hebrew Yahweh), but as "my lord" (Hebrew adoni), the one who now sits at the LORD's right hand, awaiting the time for His return to rule over the Kingdom of God on earth.

Read the discussion about the identity of the two DIFFERENT "lords" in Psalm 110:1, in Chapter 15.

Chapter 28: HOW DID JESUS ACQUIRE HIS WISDOM?

At the age of 12 Jesus was already far advanced in His grasp of the Word Of God. All who heard Him were amazed at His understanding and answers. (Luke 1:47) 20 years later, when people heard Jesus speak, and saw what He did, the same question was still on every lip - "*Whence hath this man this wisdom, and these mighty works?*" (Matt 13:54)

So how did Jesus acquire this unique wisdom and understanding?

Firstly we need to set aside the common almost "superstitious" mistake that Jesus had some inherent "knowledge" or ability that enabled Him to bypass the normal methods of learning! He was a MAN "made like His brethren in EVERY respect". (Heb 2:17) His life was a demonstration of what God wants from ALL other men who become

adopted as Children of God. It seems most unlikely therefore, that He had any special channel of communication with God, which is not also available to all of us on the same terms.

It should not surprise us to learn that the answer to our question is contained in the

"learning method" spelled out in the Old Testament, for ALL MEN who seek after God. If we think about that, it becomes obvious that Jesus must also have done it that way. With God there is no "respect of persons", especially for a beloved Son who must be an example for all other men to follow. There are no "short cuts" no

"exam cheat tools" to compensate for lack of inclination or effort no easy way to bypass the long road of persistent Bible Study.

Moses' commandment to Israel is timeless. We must learn to love God with all our heart and soul and might. (Deut 6:4-5) In the same breath He also commanded that his Words from God should be kept upon our "heart", and taught diligently to our children. And in Jeremiah we learn that success in finding God depends on searching with ALL OUR HEART. (Jer 29:13)

So if Jesus is made just like all other men, it seems clear that His UNDERSTANDING

of God's Word, and His unique relationship with God, resulted from nothing less than radical obedience to that commandment, firstly by faithful parents who taught Him from what was laid up in their own hearts, and then from His own personal

FREEWILL choice to obey it for Himself.

He CHOSE to LOVE GOD, and SEARCH for God, just as we must. He WORKED

diligently to acquire the KNOWLEDGE which would reveal God to Him, just as we

must. And He found the source of that knowledge in the written WORD of God, just as we must.

In order to keep God's words on His heart, Jesus must have first read them to LEARN

what they said. He read them prayerfully. He read them often. He used God's Words to establish the clear boundaries between the true and the false. (And we may be sure that He also READ THEM ALL to make certain he had missed nothing!)

HOW DO WE KNOW ALL THAT?

"Oh, how I love thy law! It is my meditation all the day. Thy commandment makes me wiser than my enemies, for it is ever with me. I have MORE UNDERSTANDING than all my teachers, for thy testimonies are my meditation Through thy precepts I get UNDERSTANDING; therefore I hate every false way. Thy word is a lamp to my feet and a light to my path. I have sworn an oath and confirmed it, to observe thy righteous ordinances." (Psalm 119:97-98,104-105)

That same UNDERSTANDING is also freely available to other men, on the same terms, and by the same method. That is the basis of the promise inherent in James 1:5-8:

"If any of you lacks wisdom, let him ask God, who gives to all men generously and without reproaching, and it will be given him."

However James does spell out one very important condition which we should have

noted already in the Psalm quoted above. We will need to cease from being *double minded* about SIN and adopt the same *single minded* pursuit of HOLINESS that we see in Jesus!

The only reliable method of Bible Study I have yet discovered, begins with opening our eyes, and "unplugging" our ears, by a diligent dealing with all known sin in our lives. At the same time we need to learn how to LOVE Jesus enough to OBEY Him.

AND NOW FOR THE REAL SECRET OF "SUCCESS" IN BIBLE STUDY!

When we do THAT, Jesus promises that the Holy Spirit will become our teacher.

(John 14:15,24-25, Acts 5:32) But note carefully again these verses do say very clearly that the Holy Spirit is given ONLY to those who LOVE Jesus and OBEY

Jesus. This is not a promise for those whose persistently disobedient actions PROVE that they do not love Jesus at all. (John 14:24)

There is great hope in this promise. Jesus says that when we do meet the conditions for receiving the TEACHER, we will be guided into THE TRUTH. (John 16:13)

But that can't and won't happen without serious Bible Study! You can't love Jesus without also loving God's Word the same way He does. There are no short cuts!

Especially, you can't substitute humanistic "education" and "hermeneutics", in place of

"love" and REAL "obedience"! And you can't use "grace" to nullify those other words from God about obedience and regular meditation on the Word of God! Grace comes with obligations!

Like the Bereans (Acts 17:11) we must read the "source materials" personally, prayerfully, and often, until God's words are quickened to us, and we KNOW

THAT WE KNOW THAT WE KNOW BEYOND ALL QUESTION that

we have found THE TRUTH, through hearing God's own words for ourselves just as Jesus did. That is the only way to avoid the delusion which is the lot of those who refuse to love THE TRUTH and so be saved. (2 Thess 2:10-12)

In passing we should note carefully that "knowledge" acquired this way is not at all the same thing as that which Paul says "puffs up". (1 Cor 8:1) TRUE "knowledge"

creates meekness and humility. And it is ESSENTIAL to FAITH. You can't personally believe what you don't personally know from your own personal hearing of God's

word. Don't be afraid of it. "Knowledge" is NOT a "swear word" the way you hear it from some people!

Make no mistake about this. If we do this faithfully, we will acquire LEARNING that can't help but show! And when it is acquired, people will begin to hear from our lips the same challenging and life changing wisdom from above, which we have heard

from Jesus "First pure, then peaceable, gentle, open to reason, full of mercy and good fruits, without uncertainty or insincerity." (James 3:17)

One final comment In God's "Bible School" we need not be daunted by any perceived lack of superior human ability. For even the least academically gifted, the main requirement for "success" is that we search for God with all that we have been given heart, mind, soul, and strength.

Be that 10 talents, five, or only one from that point on, success no longer depends on mere human academic ability. It depends ever so much more on:

GOD'S SUPERIOR ABILITY TO TEACH THE MEEK!

Blessed are they for they shall inherit the earth! (Matt 5:5)

Chapter 29: HOUSMAIL HM#047 - WHEN JESUS SAID "I AM"

It has long been claimed by Trinitarians that in John 8:58 Jesus used the words "I AM"

to appropriate the Divine Name to Himself, in order to claim that He is God. However as we shall see, that is a misuse of the passage which falls far short His real intention.

To set the background for what follows, we note first that the whole of John's Gospel must be understood in the context of John's stated purpose in Ch 20:31. John did NOT

write to convince us that Jesus is God! Rather His purpose is that we should believe that Jesus is the Christ, (MESSIAH), the SON of God. And that identity is to be understood in terms of the many Old Testament prophecies to which the Gospels point us. (Luke 24:45-46) There we find Jesus clearly identified, neither as God, nor as an already existing person, but as the FUTURE human Son of God, who will rule for ever over the Kingdom of God on earth.

Also the relationship between Jesus and His Father must be understood alongside Jesus' own ABSOLUTE statement that his Father ALONE is the ONLY true God, and

that He himself is NOT God, but the SON of God. (John 17:3) It would indeed be a glaring contradiction if, in other parts of the same Gospel, Jesus was using the words

"I AM" to claim the Divine name for Himself as God!

USE OF THE WORDS IN ENGLISH

If someone came into a room where I and several others were present, and asked "which one here is Allon?", I would put my hand up and say " **I AM**".

No one would ever assume from that answer, that I was claiming to be God!

A couple of generations ago the "grammatically correct" answer would have been "I AM HE". However, in our time, the common usage of our language no longer requires the word "HE" to be spoken aloud. We all know that it is implied, and we make the necessary mental adjustment as we listen to what is said.

In other circumstances, the words "I AM" would be quite meaningless without specific additional spoken words. e.g. To introduce myself to someone who does not know me, I would need to say "I AM ALLON". To convey additional information about myself I would need add other words. (e.g. "I AM A CHRISTIAN").

The Koine Greek of the New Testament is like that. The words "I AM" appear repeatedly in the Greek text, with "extra words" which indicate their meaning. And on the other occasions when they do stand alone, the translation into English requires the insertion of the necessary IMPLIED extra words which give us their proper meaning in context words that Greek speakers of the first century KNEW were implied!

The Greek words for "I AM" are "εγω εμι".

Using the search facility in the Interlinear Greek "Online Bible", I found some 24

places where they appear in John's Gospel. Then I used the RSV Interlinear Greek-English New Testament to check each of those, to see how the words were used. If

you are interested enough, you can check it out for yourself. (Hey it's not that hard!

Our Sunday School students ages 7-12, have all been able to memorise the Greek alphabet, and some of them can also write it!).

On 15 of these occasions they appear with other words following. e.g.:

John 4:26 "I who speak to you AM HE"

(Translated from Greek which literally says "I AM, the [one] speaking to

you")

John 6:35 "I AM the bread of life".

John 8:12 "I AM the light of the world".

John 8:18 "I bear witness to myself".

(Translated from Greek which literally says "I AM
the [one] witnessing concerning myself".

John 11:25

"I AM the resurrection".

In John's Gospel, the words "ἐγώ εἰμι" appear standing alone, on NINE occasions.

(John 6:20, 8:24, 8:28, 8:58, 9:9, 13:19, 18:5, 18:6, & 18:8)

SIX of these are translated "I AM HE". (John 8:24, 8:28, 13:19, 18:5, 18:6, & 18:8) ONE is translated "IT IS I" (John 6:20)

ONE is translated "I AM the man" (John 9:9) Spoken by the blind man healed at the pool of Siloam.

And ONE is simply rendered as "I AM". (John 8:58)

On EIGHT of those occasions the translators have recognised that something needed to be added after the words "I AM", to make the meaning clear AND THEY

HAVE DONE SO!

In John 6:20, 9:9, 18:5, 18:6, & 18:8, they are used in exactly the same way as we would in English, to identify the speaker to others. There is no suggestion at all that Jesus was using the Divine name or claiming to be God. And it goes without saying, doesn't it, that the blind man was most certainly NOT claiming to be God.!

In John 13:19, Jesus uses the words "I AM", to identify Himself to the disciples present at the Last Supper, as the one spoken of in the Messianic prophesy in Psalm 41:9. In the Psalm, Jesus is clearly NOT God (the LORD). He is the one who prays to God. His impending betrayal by Judas, and His death and resurrection, are all clearly mentioned there. He said that He was reminding the disciples of it in advance, so that when it did happen they would be able to believe His claim that "I AM [HE]", -- i.e.

THE PROMISED MESSIAH -- who fulfilled the prophesy when He was betrayed by Judas.

That leaves us with the THREE remaining references in John Chapter 8.

In John 8:24, 8:28, the translators have seen fit to add the word "HE", because it is clearly required by the context. When Jesus says "I AM [HE]", He is using it in a similar way to what we have just seen in John 13.

In V12 He has just said "I AM the light of the world". In V16 & 18 His claim to be sent by the Father, (who alone is truly God) clearly separates between Himself and God. In V23 He again claims that He is "from above". (i.e. that the authority by which He has been sent, is not from any mere earthly human source - like theirs - but has been received from God.)

Thus it should be abundantly clear that when Jesus says "I AM" again in V58 (in the very same conversation) He is NOT using the Divine name of Himself. Instead, He clearly means the same "HE" already identified only a few verses earlier. And it ought to be translated as "I AM HE", giving it the same meaning, as it clearly has in the other places in the same chapter.

CONCLUSION

Dare we suggest that it is only theological bias which has perpetuated the

"grammatical monstrosity" created by the translators, when they TRANSLITERATED

"εγω ειμι" as "I AM" instead of TRANSLATING it as "I AM [HE]"?

Properly viewed, Jesus has NOT claimed the Divine name for Himself. Nor has He

claimed to have been alive before Abraham. Rather, the overall message of the chapter is that the place of Jesus in the PROPHETIC PLAN of God, was fixed and spoken of, long before the time of Abraham. That dates back to the Garden of Eden, where both the Kingdom Of God, and the Future Saviour are first mentioned. (Gen 1:26 & 3:15)

Chapter 30: MADE BY JESUS?

Question asked - What about the verses that say all things were made BY Jesus? e.g.

Eph3:9;

And to make all men see what is the fellowship of the mystery, which from the beginning of the world hath been hid in God, who created all things by Jesus Christ:"

(KJV)

Note - the RSV and other modern versions omit the words "BY JESUS CHRIST".

They are not in the revised Greek text from which these translations were made.

So the RSV reads:

"and to make all men see what is the plan of the mystery hidden for ages in God who created all things;"

John 1:3, 10; KJV

V3 All things were made by him; and without him was not any thing made that was made.

V10 He was in the world, and the world was made by him, and the world knew him not.

Col 1:16-17 KJV

V16 For by him were all things created, that are in heaven, and that are in earth, visible and invisible, whether they be thrones, or dominions, or principalities, or powers: all things were created by him, and for him:

V17 And he is before all things, and by him all things consist.

I don't often try to give Greek lessons! But this is one of those occasions when a little Greek will help! I will try to keep it at a level which does not require anyone to be a Greek "expert", and uses tools which are readily available to those who speak only English!

The Greek word which is translated "BY" in these verses, is δια (*dia*):

The actual meaning of this word is best resolved by looking at several modern translations, most of which translate it as "through" instead of "by".

You can do a little more homework for yourself, with an RSV Greek/English interlinear text, and/or a Strong's Concordance.

In the Greek this word is Strong's #1223, δια (*dia*)-

"A primary preposition denoting the channel of an act."

AV - by 241, through 88, with 16, for 58, for ... sake 47, therefore + 5124 44, for this cause + 5124 14, because 53, misc 86; 647

"Through" - Strong gives quite a few ways in which δια is used of "place" and "time"

and "means". In the context of the verses quoted, the most significant of these is "the ground or reason by which something is or is not done", "by reason of", "on account of", "because of", "for this reason", "therefore", "on this account".

In the verses quoted above, the RSV Greek Interlinear renders "δια" as "through." i.e.

Jesus was NOT the ACTIVE CREATOR. Instead he was THE CHANNEL OR REASON FOR THE ACT OF CREATION.

In other words, Jesus is the REASON WHY God acted, or created all things.

This is reinforced by other verses, from which we understand that Jesus could not have been the active creator, because he was not present at the creation! He did not come into existence as a person until 4000 years AFTER the creation.

Amongst the verses which indicate that Jesus had a beginning are: Psalm 2:7, and 2

Sam 7:14. These OT prophecies about Jesus are quoted in the NT, in Heb 1:5.

"For unto which of the angels said he at any time, Thou art my Son, this day have I begotten thee? And again, I will be to him a Father, and he shall be to me a Son?"

The words "this day have I begotten thee" tell us that the Son had a beginning. (a time when He was begotten).

And then the "future tense" of the next phrase --- "Will be," and "shall be," --- tell us that the Father-Son relationship between God and Jesus, was to be FUTURE to the time when the promise was made to David.

Further confirmation that the Creator is YAHWEH alone, and NOT Jesus, is found in other Old Testament passages such as Isa. 44:24; 45:12, 18; 51:13. It can be clearly demonstrated from the OT, that YAHWEH always refers to God - the Father of Jesus -

and never to Jesus Himself.

God was the ACTIVE CREATOR. Jesus was the REASON for Creation --- and when, by the grace of God, we belong to Jesus --- so are we part of that reason!

“God has highly exalted him and bestowed on him the name which is above every name, that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, in heaven and on earth and under the earth, and every tongue confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father.” (Phillippians 1:9-11)

Bow before Jesus, and Praise God!

Chapter 31: THE JUSTINIAN CODE

The Council of Nicea is best remembered for its introduction of the first version of the Nicean Creed, which was written in an attempt to resolve the Arian controversy.

However, it was also the source of another less known, but amazing development in the history of the Church! For the first three centuries of its existence, the Church had endured regular outbreaks of fierce persecution for its faith. At Nicea it gained a measure of political influence, (and a seared conscience!) which allowed it to employ

"legal" persecution as a measure to protect the "faith" -- such as it had become. Down through the centuries countless thousands have been persecuted and martyred, for their refusal to pay dishonest lip service to the Creeds of the Mainstream Church.

Despite vigorous attempts to eliminate them, Arian beliefs survived, mainly in the northern regions of the Empire, for several centuries afterwards. They were still a force to be reckoned with, when the Emperor Justinian came to the throne in the sixth century AD.

It is not surprising therefore, that when Justinian commissioned a review of Roman Law, harsh measures against anti-trinitarianism came to be written into the Civil Laws of the Empire.

In the interest of accuracy, it should be recognised that the Code of Justinian was NOT

primarily written for this reason. Its major purpose was a massive overhaul of the Roman Civil Law, which at that time it was in a very disorganised condition. It was so costly to reproduce the entire mass of laws promulgated over previous centuries, that even public libraries did not contain complete collections.

Justinian appointed a Commission of 16 eminent lawyers to undertake the task of compiling, clarifying and simplifying. The results were published in 533AD in 50

books. Over the following years, until his death in 565AD, Justinian issued a great number of new ordinances, some of which seriously altered previous laws. All of this work is collectively known as the "Corpus Juris Civilis". (Source Encyclopedia Britannica 1999, CD-ROM Standard Version.)

Although enforcing Christianity as the State Religion was not the only concern,

"heresy" did appear high on the list of "crimes" which incurred severe penalties, and Church authorities were not slow to invoke them. These same attitudes were also adopted into the laws of other countries. In England, the last public execution for anti-trinitarianism took place in Edinburgh, in 1697.

***"The Imperial law code from Justinian's time (A.D. 529) on,
made rebaptism one of the two heresies penalized by death,
the other being Anti-Trinitarianism."***

Quoted from - <http://www.anabaptists.org/history/mennoen1.html>

(From the Mennonite Encyclopedia)

The following extracts are taken from Book 1 of the Justinian Code. They reveal the hearts of men who thought Religious Conviction could be imposed by force! But, how

very far they are from the heart of the Jesus revealed in the Gospels, whose teaching made obedience conditional on LOVE! (John 14:15)

[They can be found on-line at - http://www.aloha.net/~mikesch/jus-code.htm](http://www.aloha.net/~mikesch/jus-code.htm)

QUOTE_____

"We desire that all peoples subject to Our benign Empire shall live under the same religion that the Divine Peter, the Apostle, gave to the Romans, and which the said religion declares was introduced by himself, and which it is well known that the Pontiff Damascus, and Peter, Bishop of Alexandria, a man of apostolic sanctity, embraced; that is to say, in accordance with the rules of apostolic discipline and the evangelical doctrine, we should believe that the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit constitute a single Deity, endowed with equal majesty, and united in the Holy Trinity."

"We order all those who follow this law to assume the name of Catholic Christians, and considering others as demented and insane, We order that they shall bear the infamy of heresy; and when the Divine vengeance which they merit has been

appeased, they shall afterwards be punished in accordance with Our resentment, which we have acquired from the judgment of Heaven."

"Let no place be afforded to heretics for the conduct of their ceremonies, and let no occasion be offered for them to display the insanity of their obstinate minds. Let all persons know that if any privilege has been fraudulently obtained by means of any rescript whatsoever, by persons of this kind, it will not be valid. Let all bodies of heretics be prevented from holding unlawful assemblies, and let the name of the only and the greatest God be celebrated everywhere, and let the observance of the Nicene Creed, recently transmitted to Our ancestors, and firmly established by the testimony and practice of Divine Religion, always remain secure."

*"Moreover, he who is an adherent of the Nicene Faith, and a true believer in the Catholic religion, should be understood to be one who believes that Almighty God and Christ, the son of God, are one person, God of God, Light of Light; and let no one, by rejection, dishonor the Holy Spirit, whom we expect, and have received from the Supreme Parent of all things, in whom the sentiment of a pure and undefiled faith flourishes, as well as the belief in the undivided substance of a Holy Trinity, which true believers indicate by the Greek word *αμουνσιος*. These things, indeed do not require further proof, and should be respected."*

"Let those who do not accept those doctrines cease to apply the name of true religion to their fraudulent belief; and let them be branded with their open crimes, and, having been removed from the threshold of all churches, be utterly excluded from them, as We forbid all heretics to hold unlawful assemblies within cities. If, however, any seditious outbreak should be attempted, We order them to be driven outside the walls of the City, with relentless violence, and We direct that all Catholic Churches, throughout the entire world, shall be placed under the control of the orthodox bishops who have embraced the Nicene Creed."

"Source: Corpus Juris Civilis (The Civil Law, the Code of Justinian), by S.P. Scott, A.M., published by the Central Trust Company, Cincinnati, copyright 1932, Volume 12 [of 17], pages 9-12, 125."

END QUOTE_____

This is an unpalatable aspect of history which is largely unknown, or ignored, by the current generation of the Abrahamic Faith. However, those of an older generation, will know that the lasting effects of the Code of Justinian, still influence current attitudes of mainstream Church leaders against anti-trinitarians. And although execution of heretics is no longer permitted by law, many of us have been subjected to verbal abuse and the "religious exile", still practised in many parts of the Mainstream Church.

THE GOSPEL CHALLENGE

This is a record of history. It records the deeds of a Church which lost its way, and in past centuries, murdered many of our brethren. BUT it is NOT an incitement to hatred, or bitterness, against any who persecute us!

It is however a reminder of the WARNING from John that we should not extend

fellowship to those who say that Jesus is not a REAL man. Nor should we participate in, or support, their "ministries". (2 John 10-11)

For those of us who profess Biblical Unitarian Faith in the one who Jesus Himself says is alone truly God, (John 17:3) the Gospel Challenge is to accept persecution joyfully, (Matt 5:11-12) without hating the persecutors.

We are to love those who make themselves our enemies on account of our faith in Jesus. And we are to pray for them. (Matt 5:44)

Chapter 32: BEHOLD A VIRGIN SHALL CONCEIVE (Isaiah 7:14)

Matthew quotes from Isaiah 7:14 to point us to Isaiah's 700 year old prophecy as being fulfilled by the miraculous conception and VIRGIN BIRTH of Jesus.

Bible critics have often challenged this, by claiming Matthew got it wrong! They say that the Hebrew word used by Isaiah (*almah*) does not mean "virgin" but merely "a young woman", who may not necessarily be a virgin. It is further claimed that if Isaiah had really meant to say "*virgin*", he would have used the Hebrew word "*Bethulah*"

which does *always* mean "virgin".

Where then does the truth lie in the selective uses of "Almah" and Bethulah"? Can there be any doubt about what Isaiah intended to say?

1. There is NO DOUBT AT ALL that when Matthew quotes Isaiah in Greek he uses the word *parthenos* which is never used to mean anything else but "*virgin*".

2. There is equally NO DOUBT that when the Septuagint Greek translation was made, the word used in Isaiah 7:14, was "*parthenos*". The Jews who translated the LXX

meant to say "virgin" -- not something else.

3. In Gen 24:14 Abraham's servant prays for God to identify the "damsel" (Heb.

"naarah") who will become Isaac's wife. But in the same chapter in verse 43, the word used to describe this "damsel" when referring to the very same prayer, is

“virgin” (“*almah*”). And, given the importance which the Old Testament gives to virginity in selection of a wife, there should be no doubt at all, that Abraham’s servant had nothing less than a *true virgin* in mind, when asking God’s help to choose a wife for Isaac.

4. Add to this the fact that, although we cannot argue positively from absence, there is NO Old Testament occurrence of the word “*almah*”, where it can be shown that this word designates a young woman who is NOT a virgin. (See footnote)

Footnote

Young’s Analytical Concordance says that the word *Almah* is used only 7 times, as follows: virgin 4, Gen 24:43; Song 1:3, 6:8; Isaiah 7:14.

maid 2, Exod 2:8; Prov 30:19.

damsels 1; Psalm 68:25.

Chapter 33: THE DOCTRINE OF “CELESTIAL FLESH”

Late last year, when researching the life of Michael Servetus, I encountered for the first time, the term “Celestial Flesh”. (Also sometimes referred to as “Heavenly Flesh”) Further research revealed that it was taught by such well known 16th Century names as Melchior Hofman and Menno Simmons. As would be expected, it was

normally found only amongst Trinitarians and Arians. Consequently it came as a total surprise to discover that it is also listed amongst the charges brought against Michael Servetus, for which he was tried, condemned and murdered. **[1] [2]** (Servetus did not believe in either the Trinity or the personal pre-existence of Jesus.)

Briefly, “Celestial Flesh” explains the sinlessness of Jesus, by saying that he brought His flesh with Him from Heaven, rather than from

deriving it from Mary. Thus of course, they can then claim that He had no “Original sin” coursing through his veins! -- and was thereby both able to overcome temptation, and at the same time, be under no personal “condemnation” for His humanity.

According to E.A. Green[3] *“it emerged as a Reformation-era explanation of the theological problem of the sinlessness of Christ”*.

As reported by Green, it appears to be largely just one more clumsy variation of the Catholic doctrine of the “Immaculate Conception of Mary”. Depending who you read, it seems to take various forms, and is not necessarily quite accurately reported by those with an “anti-Anabaptist axe” to grind. Accusers howling for blood, are seldom to be relied on for strict and impartial accuracy!! (Remember? In their desperate attempt to condemn Jesus, the Jews hired false witnesses giving perjured

testimony -- didn't they?)

In the Catholic version Mary was claimed to have been born free of the taint of “Original Sin”, so that Jesus could derive His flesh from her, without being subject to “Adamic Condemnation” on account of his humanity.

In Calvin’s “Reformed Theology”, “Original Sin” is replaced by “Total Depravity”.

Others call it by different names, (such as “sin-in-the-flesh”, or “inherited sin” or “sin nature”), but it usually amounts to pretty much the same thing! i.e All men are said to be born with some built in factor, allegedly added to Adam’s nature after the Fall in Eden, and passed on genetically to all his descendants. For various reasons, (again depending who you hear it from) this becomes the subject of God’s displeasure and requires “Atonement” just as much as personal sin! And since it also says that it prevents men from ever truly overcoming sin in this life, of course it becomes a monstrous excuse for personal sin! (I personally suspect that THIS latter point is the real reason underlying its “invention”!)

The *name* of this teaching seems to be little known amongst “ordinary believers” in the 21st century. However I have encountered it under different “guises” from time to

time, amongst those who wrestle with the question of how Jesus could have been perfectly obedient, when all other men failed. e.g. For many exponents of the doctrine of the Trinity, Jesus has become a two natured god/man, able to overcome because he is “God”.

Sadly, some Unitarian believers in the ONE GOD of Moses, have managed to invest Jesus with a specially created, divinely strengthened “genetic make up” derived from His miraculous Divine begettal, which enabled him to resist the temptations in which all other men failed. i.e. Jesus was some sort of “divine/human hybrid”, not quite the same as other men! This is just another version of “Celestial Flesh” under a different name!

And, when you think about it, that also, just as much as the Trinity, or Arianism, or Oneness, amounts to another subtle variation of the ancient “Spirit of Antichrist heresy” reported by John in his first Epistle. Although Jesus is said to have “flesh”, intellectual honesty will quickly recognise this is mere lip service to words! Specially created genetically different flesh is clearly NOT the same flesh as that of all other men.

And it is to be rejected, along with all other teaching

which excuses sin by making the nature of Jesus

subtly different from that of other men!

Footnotes:

1. "The Complaint of Nicholas de la Fontaine Against Servetus, 14 August, 1553"

items XIV and XX

<http://history.hanover.edu/texts/comserv.html>

2. However, it was interesting to note that it was NOT held by Adam Pastor, who was excommunicated by

Menno Simmons for rejection of the Trinity and espousal of “Biblical Unitarianism.

3. E.A. Green, “Heavenly Flesh Doctrine”

<http://www.home.sprynet.com/~eagreen/celest.htm>.

Chapter 34: WAS JESUS REALLY FORSAKEN BY GOD? (Mark 15:34)

" At the ninth hour Jesus cried with a loud voice, saying, Eloi, Eloi, lama sabachthani?"

which is, being interpreted, My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?" (Mark 15:34)

Did Jesus really say on the cross, that He thought God had abandoned Him? (meaning

"gone away" and left Him alone.) Sadly the most commonly encountered "traditional answer" to that question is that Jesus was indeed forsaken and rejected by God -- that God turned His back on Jesus because He was too "holy" to look on the "sins" that had been laid on Jesus -- that in order to properly experience the penalty of our sins, Jesus had to "feel" that God had rejected Him and withdrawn His presence -- that He was somehow completely separated from God -- and that He cried out in despair.

How sad that the relationship between God and His beloved Son could be so misunderstood, by any who claim to know the God revealed by Jesus.

But how comforting it is to know that this traditional explanation could NEVER be true!

THE "TRADITIONAL" EXPLANATION REJECTED AND REFUTED

A lot of gobbledegook has been written about this. Of course there are some

exceptions, but the worst orthodox commentators seem to have some sort of collective

"kings new clothes" syndrome. I can't devote a lot of space to this aspect -- and it will be impossible to do justice to all the variations encountered. But, in brief, the traditional explanation usually seems to accompany an unacceptable version of the Atonement, in which God is portrayed as so angry about *our* sin that He had to "vent His wrath" by beating up on "someone else" before He could be "placated" about us!

And in a further completely grotesque misrepresentation, they then say that He had the innocent Jesus vicariously tortured and bruised, in order to change His feelings towards US! And from there, they create the other theological monstrosity which says that Jesus had somehow become so "unclean" that God's offended "holiness" could no longer even look at Him -- So He forsook Him.

The problem with THAT is that the cross is NOT a demonstration of WRATH. It is an expression of the GREAT LOVE towards us, which is SHARED by God and His Son!

(John 3:16; Rom 5:8; 1 John 4:9-10) The cross is not meant to change God's

feelings towards us -- It is designed to change our feelings towards God. "We love because He FIRST loved us". (1 John 4:19)

Whether or not Jesus was quoting the first line from Psalm 22 in ARAMAIC, is not the real issue! However, it is worth noting that the Psalm itself tells us that it is NOT

TRUE that Jesus was "abandoned" by God in the sense of DESERTION! The whole tenor of the Psalm is that it is written by someone who KNOWS that, regardless of

"feelings", God has not "gone away"! HE IS STILL THERE LISTENING TO THE

PRAYER! And He WILL answer! Notice especially verse 24. " *For he has not*

despised or abhorred the affliction of the afflicted; and he has not hid his face from him, but has heard, when he cried to him."

It was Jesus who said " *I am with you ALWAYS*". (Matt 28:20) That promise is not just His own! It is His expression of THE TRUTH about God! (John 14:6) And

THAT is the EXPRESS IMAGE of God. (Heb 1:3) That is what God meant by " *I will NEVER leave nor forsake you*". (Heb 13:5) And that is THE GREAT PROMISE of Psalm 23:4! " *In the valley of the shadow of death Thou art with me*". (David wrote it about himself, but surely it must also be a prophecy which applies to Jesus? -- (Luke 24:45)

Finally -- there is NO PLACE, and NOTHING IN ALL CREATION, which can

separate a Child of God from the Father. (Rom 8:38) Not even in death or in the grave! (Psalm 139:8)

Of course it is important to note that the truth of those promises does NOT depend on OUR FEELINGS! It doesn't always "feel good" in the "valley of the shadow"! The promises are true simply because GOD SAID IT. They are true whether we "feel" it or not!

Real FAITH is meant to rise above our feelings, to KNOW that God is ALWAYS still

"there".

ELIJAH?

Why might the bystanders have mistakenly thought that Jesus was calling for Elijah?

(Mark 15:35)

I have read somewhere, some years ago, that calling for help from Elijah, was a fairly common practice of the day, for Jews when in distress. But of course Jesus wouldn't have been doing that.

There was also another common Jewish misconception, based on Malachi 4:5, that Elijah was going to appear in person, in association with the coming of the Messiah.

[Indeed that same mistaken perception still exists in many parts of the 21st century Church, in relation to the second coming!] So perhaps the bystanders

thought Jesus was calling for Elijah for that reason. But of course Jesus wouldn't have been doing that either! He had said VERY plainly that John the Baptist had already fulfilled this prophecy. (Matt 17:10-13) We are not meant to look for Elijah in person

-- but for John who came in the "*spirit and power of Elijah*". (Luke 1:17) **A QUOTATION FROM PSALM 22?**

I have read some commentators who claim that Jesus actually recited the WHOLE

Psalm 22 from the cross. Attractive as the thought might be, it is another mere speculation from overactive minds. There is of course, nothing in the context to support that claim. Indeed, given that Jesus was at the last extremity of physical strength, and on the very threshold of death, it seems highly improbable!

The word "sabachthani" is *Aramaic*. So it could not be from the *Hebrew* version of Psalm 22, as preserved in the "sacred language" of the scrolls which were kept and read in the Synagogues. However, it appears that the common language spoken in

Israel was Aramaic. Although Hebrew was still known amongst the educated, few amongst the common people understood it. Consequently when the Scriptures were

read in Hebrew, it had become customary for a translator (known as a "meturgeman") to stand with the reader and give an oral paraphrase in Aramaic, verse by verse.

("Sketches of Jewish Social Life", by Alfred Edersheim, Chapter 17)

From that some conclude that it seems quite possible that Jesus could be quoting from the *Aramaic paraphrase* of the first line of the Psalm, which the people were used to hearing in the synagogue. However, whether or not that is true, the real issue is still what Jesus meant when He said it. The clue for that is in the word Jesus used, which has been translated "forsaken" -- "SABACHTHANI". (More about that below.)

A GREEK LESSON!

I don't often resort to Greek to explain the Scriptures! However this is one of those cases where it really does help. The English word "forsake" does not quite adequately translate this Aramaic word. The literal meaning of SABACHTHANI is actually

something more like -- "To leave down in" (a situation)

When "sabachthani" is translated into Greek, the word used in both Matthew and Mark is -- EGKATELIPES. According to Bauer's Greek Lexicon, it has THREE alternative meanings!

- leave behind.

- forsake, abandon, desert.

- leave, allow to remain.

Bagster's Analytical Greek Lexicon is even more positive about that third alternative.

It has - "to leave in a place or situation"

It is that third alternative meaning which best matches the ARAMAIC word in the context of what Jesus meant when He spoke it from the cross. And it is that one we should chose to best fit with the other promises contained in the Scriptures.

Did we really need the Greek lesson? For those familiar with the promises quoted above, the confirmation provided by a study of the Hebrew and Aramaic and Greek, is only the "icing on the cake"!

But we shouldn't really need that to establish IN ENGLISH, that Jesus could not possibly be saying that He had been abandoned by God, in the usually accepted sense proposed by popular mainstream theology.

We should know THAT from our understanding of what the rest of the Scriptures tell us about the character of God, and the relationship between the Father and His

Beloved Son, in whom He is well pleased.

SO WHAT DID JESUS REALLY MEAN?

The clue is in the time of the day when Jesus said it -- just as He was dying at the 9th hour. The sacrifice of the Passover Lambs was supposed to be offered " *in the evening*". (Exod 12:6) But there is a marginal note in the KJV which points out that

the Hebrew actually says "*between the two evenings*". And from the first century Jewish historian, Josephus, (War 6,9,3) we learn that the Jews understood this peculiar phrase to mean "between the 9th and 11th hour of the day".

Jesus knew that it was the 9th hour. He knew that, in the temple, the priests were about to commence the slaughter of the Passover lambs -- and here He was -- THE REAL

PASSOVER LAMB -- still alive!

HE KNEW THAT IT WAS TIME FOR HIM TO DIE!

This is no agonised cry expressing feelings of despair for abandonment or rejection! It is a final prayer of surrender and submission to His Father's will. And it is a great triumphant shout of victory! It really says something like:

"It is time for me to die -- My suffering is almost ended! My God, why have you LEFT ME HERE IN THIS SITUATION (SABACHTHANI) still alive? Take me

NOW!"

* And then he cried, "It is finished"! (John 19:30)

* And then He cried, "Father, into thy hands I commit my spirit".

(Luke 23:46)

* And then, at the precise moment foretold by the OT type of the Passover Lamb, He bowed His Head and GAVE up His spirit. (John 19:30) -- Emphasise

"GAVE"!

He wasn't in despair. He wasn't gasping for breath to stay alive -- He was GIVING

Himself -- for our sins!

And then, on the third day, He rose again -- for our justification!

Praise God for this great expression of His love for His Father, and for us -- foretold by the OT prophets even to the exact year, and the exact day of the year, and the exact time of day!

CONCLUSION

The bottom line is that Jesus could not have been saying that God had rejected or abandoned Him! That would amount to a complete lack of faith in those wonderful OT promises!

In this wonderful example of trust in extremity, we are meant to find encouragement when our own time comes to be confronted with the reality of what it means to walk through the "valley of the shadow".

Chapter 35: UNTO US A CHILD IS BORN - Isaiah 9:6

For unto us a child is born, unto us a son is given: and the government shall be upon his shoulder: and his name shall be called Wonderful, Counsellor, The mighty God, The everlasting Father, The Prince of Peace. Of the increase of his government and peace there shall be no end, upon the throne of David, and upon his kingdom, to order it, and to establish it with judgment and with justice from henceforth even for ever.

The zeal of the LORD of hosts will perform this. (Isaiah 9:6-7 KJV)

There are many Trinitarian believers, who have not done their Bible homework

carefully enough, who try to *misuse* this verse as a "proof text" for the Doctrine of the Trinity. In this short article we will consider some of the evidence which is available to refute that misuse of Isaiah's words.

Of course those of us who are not Hebrew Scholars do need to be very cautious about venturing into areas where we lack the expertise to usurp the role of the "official"

translators. However this is one of those easier cases where we do not need to be

"experts" in Hebrew ourselves, in order to understand that many recognised scholars are divided in their opinions about the meaning of these verses. Many of them tell us that several Hebrew words in this verse, have been inadequately rendered into English by the KJV translators.

THE MESSAGE OF THE PROPHET - A CHILD IS BORN

Isaiah is prophesying the birth of a child. The words "UNTO US", tell us that this is about a "CHILD OF THE JEWISH PEOPLE" -- a descendant of Abraham. That points us to God's promise to Abraham, that through one of his descendants, all nations of the earth will receive a blessing. (Gen 12:3; Gal 3:8)

More specifically still, Isaiah says that this "child of the Jewish people" is to sit on the throne of David. And that points us to God's promise to David, that one of his

descendants will establish the Kingdom FOR EVER. Even more wonderful, this "son of David" will also be "SON OF GOD". (2 Sam 7:12-16)

Isaiah repeats the same prophecy in different words, in Isaiah 9:6-7; 11:1-10.

ISAIAH'S THEOLOGY

It will be easier if we start with a proper overview of Isaiah's theology. A prayerful and careful reading of the whole of his book will quickly reveal that Isaiah is NOT a Trinitarian! He is a Jewish UNITARIAN whose theology is firmly grounded in the

Creed of Moses -- the Shema. (Deut 6:4-5)

Check it out for yourself in Isaiah 41:4; 42:8-9; 43:10; 44:6-8; 45:5, 21; 46:9-11.

THE THEOLOGY OF JESUS

Since these verses in Isaiah are about Jesus, it will also help if we understand HIS own assessment of His relationship to God. Isaiah is an integral part of the OT Scriptures from which Jesus learnt what His father had planned for Him.

Jesus is NOT a Trinitarian! He worships and prays to the same "ONE LORD" as Moses and Isaiah. He repeats the Shema as His own personal Creed. (Matthew 22:37-38)

When praying, He addresses His Father as "THE ONLY TRUE GOD". (John 17:3) His Father is also both HIS God and OUR God. (John 20:17)

There is only one possible conclusion from those brief statements by Jesus. If the

"ONE TRUE GOD" is someone else apart from Himself, that means that Jesus does NOT regard Himself as either God, or part of a "triune god-head"!

WHAT ISAIAH REALLY SAID

We MUST NOT use this passage in Isaiah 9:6 in any way which contradicts those

very positive Unitarian statements by both Isaiah and Jesus! And if we start from that point, our eyes will be much more open to see the REAL meaning intended by Isaiah.

Since the Scriptures say clearly that Jesus is the SON OF GOD, (which is NOT even nearly the same as saying that He is God!), then what does it really mean when He is called the "Mighty God" and "Everlasting Father"?

1. THE MIGHTY GOD

In our English language, some of the meaning has been lost. The "name" in Isaiah 9:6 is NOT a name in the same sense as we now use the word. It should be understood as a composite TITLE which describes the OFFICE and RANK to which this Child will be appointed when He inherits the throne of David.

The two Hebrew words from which this part of the title is translated, are "EL GIBBOR".

It is certainly true that most uses of "EL" refer to God. BUT THAT IS NOT THE ONLY MEANING of this word. It has several other uses. e.g. In Ezek 31:11, "EL" is translated "mighty one". There it certainly does NOT mean the ONE TRUE GOD!

Instead it refers to a powerful human ruler not yet born in Isaiah's time -- a future MAN who God was going to use to pour out His Judgements against Egypt. ELIM,

(the plural form of EL) appears in Exod 15:15, referring to the leaders of Moab.

Consequently, it should not surprise us to find "EL" is also used of the Son of God, without any inference that it means He is actually God.

The same is true of "GIBBOR". It is frequently translated "mighty men". (e.g. Gen 6:4; Joshua 1:14 KJV) Other eminent translators render it as "hero", or "potentate".

For some of these different renderings, check it out in the NEB and Moffat translations, and the Bagster English translation of the Septuagint version.

2. THE EVERLASTING FATHER - From The Hebrew "AB AD"

Clearly Isaiah cannot be saying that Jesus is either "GOD THE FATHER", or His own father! That would be both illogical and absurd! In any case, other Scriptures draw a clear distinction between Jesus and His Father, which tell us clearly that this cannot possibly be what Isaiah means. We must look for some other meaning.

In other parts of the OT, someone who was the first to do something was called its

"father." For example, in Gen 4:20, Jabal is called "the father of those who live in tents and raise livestock". (Gen. 4:20). And his brother, Jubal, is called, "the father of all who play the harp and flute". (Gen. 4:21). This is not using "father" in the sense of literal father or ancestor. (The descendants of both of these men all died in the Flood.) The word "father" is being used here about Jesus, in the same way.

Concordances and Lexicons tell us that the word which has been translated "everlasting" in the KJV, can also validly be translated as an "AGE", meaning an "(eternal) era of time".

Thus, because the child prophesied by Isaiah, will be the one to establish the "AGE TO COME", raise the dead who will live in that age, and rule over it, he is called "FATHER

FOR ALL TIME", (NEB, Moffat) or the "FATHER OF THE COMING AGE", (LXX, footnote in the Bagster translation) or the "FATHER OF THE WORLD TO COME". (Douai-Rheims and Knox versions)

THE NAME ABOVE EVERY OTHER NAME

Isaiah's "name" for Jesus is not so much a proper name as a title. It is the name given to Jesus by God which is "ABOVE EVERY OTHER NAME". (Philipp 2:9) This

"name" refers to His RANK above all others -- EXCEPT OF COURSE HIS FATHER! (John 14:28; 1 Cor 15:27-28)

Chapter 36: IS JESUS GOD?

The "Religious Education" teacher at the school attended by one of my Grandchildren told the class that John 8:58 "proved" that Jesus is God!

Remember the verse? The bit where Jesus said "Before Abraham was, I am"? The claim by the teacher was that since "I Am" is God's name in Exodus 3:14, then Jesus must be using the name "I Am" to claim to be God.

Of course that interpretation is NOT unusual from religious teachers. After all, it has been the "official party line" of the Mainstream Church since a majority vote made it compulsory, at the Council of Nicea in AD325.

And of course my grandson has been taught from the cradle, that what the teacher said was wrong! He has been taught that such "belief" indicates a lack of understanding of the Scriptures, which, sadly, is common to most of the rest of the Church.

But he has also been taught to show proper respect for authority. In any case, I only ever heard of ONE child that age who had all the Bible background required to

respectfully correct a teacher in front of the whole class! (And it doesn't take long for children of average intelligence to work out that not many teachers can

cope with that, at all!) So my grandson did the next best thing. He asked this question at our mid week Bible Study:

"If Jesus is not God, how come that He said that He is?"

This is where it starts for all of us.

Read the verse carefully for yourself.

Does it really say in so many words, that Jesus is God"?

Of course it does not say that at all!

The REAL meaning of the words "I AM" in this verse, is discussed in some detail in Chapter 29.

Read it for yourself. Ask for a copy if you don't have one. But for now, my 10 and 12

year old Grandchildren, need a much simpler and shorter answer than a Lesson which deals in Greek Grammar and Bible Translation!

The simple bottom line answer is in John 17:3.

There Jesus says plainly that His FATHER is the ONLY TRUE GOD -- and that Jesus is someone else!

THAT MUST MEAN THAT JESUS HIMSELF IS NOT GOD!

It would indeed be a huge contradiction if, in other parts of the very same Gospel, Jesus used the words "I AM" to claim the Divine name for Himself as God! Jesus is definitely NOT confused about who His Father is! Nor is He wrong about His own

identity! THAT *would* be truly *impossible*!

If we keep THAT firmly fixed in our minds, we will always know that other verses in the Bible about Jesus, CANNOT and do NOT contradict that simple statement in John 17:3.

There will always be a way to understand them that does not require us to *scramble our brains* with the ridiculous confusion that arises from trying to "prove"

that Jesus is part of a mind boggling mathematical impossibility where $1+1+1=1$!

The Bible clearly says many times, that Jesus is the "SON OF GOD" -- It NEVER says anywhere that He is "god-the-son".

Chapter 37: ELOHIM - The Hebrew Word for God - Singular or Plural

This paper arose out of a need to explain to my 10 and 12 year old grandchildren how it happens that the most common Hebrew word for "God", (Elohim) can be claimed by Trinitarian theologians to be plural, but is NOT. How can it appear to be plural and yet still be singular?

One of the ongoing effects of the confusion of languages, which invaded the world at the tower of Babel, is that we often find words and concepts which do not obey the normally expected "rules of grammar". We call these "exceptions to the rule". This can be further complicated by differences in "thinking patterns", which exist in different cultures. Sometimes these can be so different that there is no exact "cross cultural equivalent" in other languages.

My own "mother tongue" (Aussie English) is like that. Local Aussie usage can be quite different to the "Queens English". (spoken now only in parts of England). And for English speakers from other countries, sometimes the USA "dialect" can be even more difficult!!

It should not surprise us therefore, to encounter the same sort of problems with Biblical Hebrew!

The Hebrew word we are considering is "*Elohim*". In the OT it is translated more than 2300 times as "God" (singular) and only about 240 times as "gods" (plural). Same Hebrew spelling -- different meaning!

Normally we would expect that the presence of the suffix "IM" should indicate that the word is PLURAL!

HOWEVER "*Elohim*" IS DIFFERENT!

"*Elohim*" can be used as *either* singular or plural! In the Hebrew OT it is most frequently used with singular verbs and/or pronouns. Scholars call this "plural intensive". But don't be fooled by the word PLURAL. *Plural intensive isn't really plural at all!* In Hebrew grammar, it is one of those "scholar's big words" which make things sound more complicated than they really are. In simpler layman's language, all it says is that *Elohim* looks plural but is being used in a way that actually means singular!

But *Elohim* is also sometimes used with plural verbs and pronouns. In those cases it *normally* means plural, and the context clearly refers to something OTHER than the True God. (Deut 6:4-5).

(However we should also take note that there are just a few places where the immediate context tells us that, in spite of plural verbs and pronouns, *Elohim* actually does refer to the ONE God of Moses. We must not allow these

few cases to divert our attention from the the vast majority of other uses of

Elohim where *Elohim* is clearly singular in meaning. In those few cases,

translators allow the context to control the translation -- NOT the plural verbs and pronouns. They are recognised as unusual cases of "Plural Intensive", and therefore translated as singular.)

The common mistake made, especially by Trinitarian theologians, is to fail to

distinguish between these TWO different uses of "*Elohim*" just described above. And THAT leads to all sorts of illogical conclusions! (Such as the Trinity, or Oneness, or Arianism)

Although there is no direct equivalent for "plural intensive" in English, we could use

"sheep" singular and "sheep" plural, to illustrate the important point that words in English can have identical spelling, but be either singular or plural in meaning. We have no way of knowing which is intended until we read the verb and/or pronoun

which accompanies the word. Then we can tell at a glance. i.e.

If we say "the sheep IS in the field", the SINGULAR verb tells us that there is only ONE!

But if we say "the sheep ARE in the field", the PLURAL verb tells us that there is MORE than one.

For simplified practical layman's purposes, that is how it is with the great majority of appearances of ELOHIM in the Hebrew Old Testament.

APPENDIX 1

ILLOGICAL ABSURDITIES COMMONLY ENCOUNTERED

Trinitarians claim that because the most common Hebrew name of God is "ELOHIM"

-- and because the word ends in "IM", it must always be the PLURAL form of

"ELOAH" -- and it must therefore mean that God is more than one person! To

"explain" this, they often resort to desperate and totally illogical examples.

Therefore Q.E.D. the Trinity! But how does THAT even begin to "explain" three co-existent, co-eternal, equally infinite, equally omniscient, and equally all powerful beings, in ONE single essence?

Another is "eggs" -- "shell, yolk, and white". Hey -- you can separate an egg from its shell! And, like poor old Humpty Dumpty in the nursery rhyme, it often finishes up scrambled, uncooked, and never put back together! But -- how does it help to make the Trinity even a remote possibility?

Even more illogical still is the absurdity which they call "compound unity"! (That's the one where the incredibly credulous are invited to scramble their brains with the mathematically preposterous $1+1+1=1$!)

If you get too awkward about any of those, they simply retreat behind saying that it is

"impossible to understand" -- although of course they still insist that believing this illogical "mystery" is essential for salvation! AlasTHAT doesn't get even close to worshipping God with *all our mind* does it?

APPENDIX 2

STATISTICS AND EXAMPLES

STATISTICS - From Strong's and Young's concordances:

Elohim appears in the Hebrew text, about 2600 times.

It is translated as God (Singular, and most often with an upper case "G") 2346 times, and as gods (plural with a lower case "g") 240 times, goddess 2, judges 5, *great 2,

*mighty 2,

*Inexact translations, e.g. of a noun by a verb or adjective, of an active by a passive.

EXAMPLES OF SINGULAR USE OF ELOHIM

TRANSLATED WITH AN UPPER CASE "G":

Always about the ONE LORD of the Shema - THE ONE TRUE GOD who Jesus calls Father. (John 17:3)

Deut 6:4-5 - The Shema - "Hear O Israel: The LORD our God is *one* LORD.

That means - The LORD (YHWH) is ONE (*Echad*). Our God (*elohim*) is ONE (*Echad*).

[Note - *Echad* is Hebrew for the number ONE. It means exactly what it says --

ONE. It

does not, and cannot ever mean, that God is somehow mysteriously

1+1+1=1!]

This greatest commandment of all, is repeated by Jesus for disciples, in Matt
22:38.

Isa 45:21,22 - There is no God (*elohim*) else beside me; for I am God, (*elohim*) and there
is none else.

EXAMPLES OF SINGULAR USE OF ELOHIM

TRANSLATED WITH A LOWER CASE "g":

about men

Exodus 4:16 and 7:1 - about Moses, speaking as God's representative to Aaron and
Pharoah.

About idols - god, goddess

1Kings 11:33 - Referring to Ashtoreth the goddess (*elohim*- singular) of the Zidonians,
Chemosh the god (*elohim*-singular) of the Moabites, and Milcom the god (*elohim*-
singular) of the children of Ammon.

EXAMPLES OF PLURAL USE OF ELOHIM

TRANSLATED WITH A LOWER CASE "g"

About Men -

Psalms 82:6 - The word translated as "gods", is *Elohim*

About Angels

Psalms 8:3-4 - The word translated in the KJV as "angels", is *Elohim*.

About human judges

Exodus 22:8,9 - The word translated in the KJV as "judges", is *Elohim* - Referring to men appointed as God's human representatives to administer the laws of God

About Idols

Exodus 34:15,16; Deut 12:30; 1 Kings 11:2; - The word translated as "gods" is

"*elohim*" - Referring to the idols of the nations surrounding Israel.

Chapter 38: WHO IS THIS GOD WHO CALLS HIMSELF "I AM"?

"Moses said unto God, Behold, when I come unto the children of Israel, and shall say unto them, The God of your fathers hath sent me unto you; and they shall say to me, What is his name? what shall I say unto them? God said unto Moses, I AM THAT I AM: and he said, Thus shalt thou say unto the children of Israel, I AM hath sent me unto you." (Exodus 3:13-14)

However, in the next verse, (v15) we learn that the name was NOT given to the

Israelites in precisely that form. The name Moses was instructed to use, is "the LORD". The Hebrew for this name is YHWH -- the commonly used OT name for God

-- literal meaning "the existing one".

"God said moreover unto Moses, Thus shalt thou say unto the children of Israel, The LORD (YAHWEH) God of your fathers, the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob, hath sent me unto you: this is my name for ever, and this is my memorial unto all generations." (Exod 3:15)

The Hebrew phonetic original for this name "I AM" in v14, is something like

EHYEH ASCHER EHYEH. Newer translations, such as RSV, NEB, tell us in a

marginal note, that the name is better rendered "I WILL BE WHO (or WHAT) I

WILL BE." -- emphasising the FUTURE tense. When this name was translated into Greek in the LXX, it became "HO ON" -- literally "the being".

Further, even if we bend the rules a little, to accept the validity of the present tense, EHYEH, is a form of the name of YHWH! It is **NEVER** used anywhere in the OT, as the name of the prophesied MESSIAH. In the OT, God is NOT the MESSIAH, and the

MESSIAH is NOT God! Psalm 110:1 is only one of many verses, which make this distinction carefully and unmistakably clear.

The surprising implication of all this is that the name "I AM",

(in the present tense,)

NEVER ACTUALLY EXISTED!

And the suggestion that, in John 8:58, Jesus used the words "I AM" to claim this non-existent divine name from Exodus, for Himself, or to claim that he is actually GOD, is quite misleading. When Jesus used these words He had something quite different in mind.

(Refer to Chapter 29 for a more detailed study of the **repeated** use of the words "I AM" in John's Gospel. Be prepared for some surprises!)

In fact in this very same Gospel, Jesus very specifically said that His Father (who is the YHWH of the OT!) is the only true God, and identified Himself separately as the Son of the only true God. (John 17:3-6) -- but NOT as God Himself.

THE GOSPEL AND THE FUTURE

The name God gave to Moses for the Children of Israel, was NOT "I am". (present tense) It is actually FUTURE tense! ("I will be", or "He shall be")

The future tense of the name emphasised then, and still today, that the major purpose of CREATION has to do with the FUTURE. God is working towards a time in the

future, when He will complete His grand CREATION PLAN, to establish a kingdom

on earth, over which the dominion will be exercised by an obedient HUMAN race --

headed by His Glorified Son!

When Jesus preached about this Kingdom, He called His message the "Gospel of the Kingdom". In His mortal life on earth, He established His identity, NOT as YAHWEH

the CREATOR GOD, but as the ONLY BEGOTTEN SON OF THE CREATOR --

Jesus the MESSIAH -- who is chosen from among men to be the future ruler of that Kingdom. It is NOT as YHWH, but as this Messiah that Jesus revealed Himself to the two disciples on the road to Emmaus.

(Luke 24:21-27)

Chapter 39: WHO ARE THE JEWISH "ANTI-MISSIONARIES?"

This article was sparked when a friend pointed me to the Web Site of a determined group of Jewish "Anti-Missionaries". Taken on face value it offered some VERY

persuasive "evidence" aimed at refuting Christian claims that Jesus is the Messiah prophesied in the OT. He was concerned about the potential of its subtle arguments to destroy the faith of "baby Christians". This paper represents an initial response. God willing, I plan to cover other aspects of this subject in other HOUSMAILS in the near future.

Right up front I confess to being BIASED! Jesus said "If any man's will is to do his (God's) will, he shall know whether the teaching is from God or whether I (Jesus) am speaking on my own authority." (John 7:17) Jesus said it, and I KNOW it! The Anti-Missionaries have got it wrong!

A lifetime spent in following Jesus has convinced me beyond question, that the New Testament is a reliable record -- that Jesus is indeed the human Son of God -- that he is the Messiah prophesied in the Old Testament -- that he did rise from the dead and is alive in Heaven today -- that Jesus alone can save us from the penalty and habit of sin

-- and that believing his teaching, and learning to LOVE him and obey his

commandments, is the NARROW WAY he calls us to walk, to prepare ourselves for

immortality, and a future inheritance in the coming kingdom of God on Earth.

All of that is incorporated in what the New Testament calls FAITH and GRACE.

DEFINITION

This is not a new thing! In every generation since the first century, Jewish Rabbis have vigorously repeated for themselves, the tradition of rejection of Jesus, established by their 1st century ancestors.

In this current generation we call them "ANTI-MISSIONARIES". They are the

"spiritual descendants" of the first century Jewish Leaders, who refused to recognise Jesus as their MESSIAH, rejected him, accused him of blasphemy, and delivered him to the Romans to be crucified.

They are called "anti-missionary" because of their objections to the attempts of

"Christian Missionaries" who try to convert Jews from Judaism to Christianity.

THE "TARGET" OF THEIR ATTACK

It should be noted that the main target of attack by the anti-missionaries, is the

"Constantinian" Trinitarian mainstream Church, founded on the Nicean and Athanasian Creeds!

REAL disciples of the REAL MESSIAH will find themselves in sympathetic

agreement with MUCH of what they say about that Church!! It is the Church system (both mother and daughters) about which Jesus says, "Come out of her, my people, lest you take part in her sins, lest you share in her plagues." (Revelation 18:4) Over the centuries, their "christ" has borne little resemblance to the one described in the Gospels. They say many different things, which are often the direct opposite of

what is taught by the REAL Christ. We should NOT confuse "false christs" with the REAL THING! (Matthew 24:24)

This paper is NOT a defence of THAT Church! Nor is it an encouragement to join with it in any way which conceals or denies Old Testament truth about God, or assists it to proclaim its "other gods", (Deut 13:1-5) "false christ", and "false gospel". (2 John 7-11)

This short paper cannot take either the time or the writing space which would be required to address EVERYTHING they have said in the many thousands of pages

written since the 1st century. Some of the answers have already been covered in back issues of BIBLE DIGEST and HOUSMAIL. God willing, some of my future papers

will concentrate specifically on some other aspects of these Jewish objections to Christianity. So for practical purposes here, it will highlight and briefly address the FOUR main issues on which they usually concentrate.

1. THE TRINITY.

This is the major point of attack by the "anti-missionaries".

In the fourth century, the Church formalised the doctrine of the Trinity, thereby creating yet another major "stumbling block" for Jewish acceptance of Jesus as the prophesied Messiah of the Old Testament.

The heart of Judaism is the SHEMA of Moses -- "Hear, O Israel: The Lord our God is one Lord; and you shall worship the LORD your God with all your heart, and all your soul, and with all your might". (Deut 6:4) From the cradle, Jews are taught to recite these words, as an act of worship. Many religious Jews wear them inscribed on tiny pieces of vellum, in little leather boxes (phylacteries) attached to heads and wrists.

When persecuted, they die with these words on their lips. There is simply NO WAY

possible to reconcile Jewish belief in the ONE GOD of the Shema, with the Trinitarian God of the Mainstream Church, described in the Nicean and Athanasian Creeds. Nor for careful logical readers, is this Trinitarian God found anywhere in either the Old or New Testaments!

True Christianity is based on the worship of this same God. This is the God that Jesus addressed as His Father, and the ONLY TRUE God -- thereby declaring that he,

himself, is NOT that God! And when asked, he reinforced the SHEMA as the most

important of all the commandments in His Gospel of the Kingdom! (Mark 12:28-30) There is of course, a quite numerically strong group of Messianic Jews around the world, who worship the Trinitarian God. What is less well known is that there is also a significant growing number of Messianic Jewish believers, who reject the Trinity, and remain faithful to the ONE God of their forefathers. They often come under the same fierce attack from Trinitarian Messianics, as has always been the lot of other

Christians who reject the Trinity!

I have already written extensively on this subject, and don't propose to duplicate it here. God willing I will summarise some available resources in a separate

HOUSMAIL, which should issue along with this one. It is entitled "JEWISH ANTI-MISSIONARIES AND THE TRINITY".

2. OLD TESTAMENT PROPHECIES

The claim of Jesus to be the Messiah, stands or falls on whether he is the one the OT prophecies refer to. In Luke 24:44-46, he pointed two of his disciples back to these to show the amazing detail in which the Old Testament predicted his identity and work.

Like the Bereans in Acts 17:11, our own acceptance of Jesus as the Messiah MUST

begin there, in order to lay a solid foundation for our FAITH in all the rest of his teaching.

The Jews have long recognised this, and have spent considerable effort to devise ingenious alternative "Interpretations", all aimed at disproving Christian claims that they refer to Jesus!

Let us be blunt about this! The Apostle Peter writes that it requires the same Holy Spirit to understand a prophecy, as it did to receive and write it! The starting point is to engage in a totally honest search for God -- with ALL OUR HEARTS. (Jeremiah

29:13-14)

I can't of course, enter into judgement about what is in YOUR heart -- but I can give here, my personal testimony that whilst searching for God with as much of my heart as I know how to give, I have prayerfully examined those Old Testament Prophecies, and the New Testament evidence which points to Jesus as the one who fulfills them. There I became convinced beyond all doubt that Jesus is the Messiah, and the Human Son of the Living God. (but NOT, I hasten to add, "god-the-son"!)

That means that from my perspective, these "anti-missionary" Jewish alternatives are

"delusions" (Ezekiel 13:9) which come, NOT from the Holy Spirit, but from their own rebellious minds! (Ezekiel 13:2; 2 Peter 2:20-21)

I won't attempt to list all the OT messianic prophecies here. Nor will I attempt to expound on them all from a Christian perspective. It is your own responsibility to search them out, and become familiar with them, to reach your own prayerfully

acquired faith that they refer to Jesus. But if any of you do have any difficulty with the

"anti-missionary" versions of particular prophecies, I will be happy to address your individual questions, at some later time.

3. NEW TESTAMENT "DISCREPANCIES"

The anti-missionaries are quick to seize on alleged discrepancies, and inaccuracies, and differences, found in our English NT Translations.

At first glance this might appear to be daunting to those who are not well versed in the history of the origin of the manuscripts from which the various translations are made.

We simply don't have access to the original manuscripts. Both the Hebrew and Greek texts, commonly used for modern translations are COMPOSITES made by comparing

large numbers of earlier manuscripts. Not the least of the difficulties encountered is the problem of "scribal errors" which have crept into individual manuscripts, copied by hand over the centuries. Another problem is the OT version from which the New Testament

writers have quoted. They haven't always used a Hebrew text. Many times they have used instead, the Septuagint version (LXX) which was in common

circulation amongst Greek speaking Jews and Christians when the New Testament

was written. In very much the same category, are the frequent differences between

modern English translations. I have nearly 20 different translations in my possession. I refer to them all when I need clarification of the meaning of a particular verse, about which translators sometimes differ!

Again, I don't propose to list any of them here, or attempt to explain all the alleged discrepancies listed by the anti-missionaries. Suffice to say that experience says that most of them will disappear in a puff of smoke when looked at by serious Bible

students. Careful study by sympathetic Bible students will ALWAYS reveal a logical reason for apparent discrepancies. They are NOT a reason for rejecting the New

Testament!

And just in passing, it is worthy of note that this method of attack BACKFIRES on the Anti-missionaries! The same things can be said about the Hebrew texts of the JEWISH

OLD TESTAMENT!

4. PERSECUTION

They point to the inescapable facts of history. There has been centuries long terrible persecution of Jews, (and other nonconformists) by the MAINSTREAM Churches.

In this of course the anti-missionaries are correct! No TRUE disciple of the REAL

Jesus of the New Testament, would ever condone, or engage in persecution of anyone

-- especially the Jewish people! The Bible predicts terrible consequences for any who ignore this warning.

(Genesis 12:3; Isaiah 54:17)

The persecuting Church is a counterfeit! It has a "false gospel" from a "false Christ"

who says DIFFERENT THINGS compared to the REAL Christ of the NT. It cannot

possibly be the REAL Church of the REAL Jesus.

And the existence of persecutors who *falsely* call themselves Christian, is NOT a valid reason for rejecting REAL New Testament Christianity!

NO SURPRISES

Mature Christians will not be surprised by the existence of the anti-missionaries.

Their major goal is to uphold JUDAISM as the true religion, by rejecting belief in Jesus as the Messiah who fulfills the Old Testament prophecies. Anyone familiar with the four Gospels knows that in this they are no different to their first century "spiritual ancestors". The same tactics were used then, and I suspect that some of these 21st century Jewish apologists just might have the same envy and fear of losing their

"power base", (Matthew 27:18; John 11:48,50; 18:14) that led their forefathers to deliver Jesus to the Roman authorities for crucifixion.

Jesus told the Jewish leaders of that generation that they were afflicted with spiritual BLINDNESS and DEAFNESS from which they could only be healed by a genuine

repentance! (Mark 4:10-12) And Jesus also told them that their rejection of himself, would result in them LOSING their right to inherit the Kingdom. So it came to pass with the destruction of the Jerusalem Temple, and their centuries long expulsion from the Holy Land.

And the Apostle Paul predicted that this same UNBELIEF would persist amongst

Jews, (Romans 11:7-25) leaving the door open for GENTILES to accept the GOOD

NEWS of the Kingdom rejected and LOST by the vast majority of Jews! (Matthew 21:43)

Old Testament and New Testament prophecies combine to tell us that the current

revival of the Jewish nation, heralds other events which will assuredly lead to the restoration of the Kingdom of God, under Jesus. I can't tell you exactly when (Acts 1:7) -- but I do know that it is certain.

CONCLUSION

Of course it doesn't suit the anti-missionaries at all, to recognise that many Christians neither believe nor practice the things that they set out to discredit.

The responsibility for those of us who do worship the same Jewish ONE God of the Shema of Moses, is to ensure that the other major accusations of the Anti-missionaries are NOT true of us! We need to be able to establish from the OT prophecies, that the Holy Spirit has revealed to us that Jesus is the Son Of Man, the Messiah, and the Son of the Living God. (Matthew 16:13-18) Only so can we ourselves become part of the TRUE Church that is built on the rock firm foundation of THAT truth.

And only so can we receive the keys of the Kingdom, which will enable us to bear witness to the life transforming POWER of the Gospel of the Kingdom.

The best evidence of the truth of the Gospels, and the validity of the claims of Jesus to be the Messiah of the OT, will always be the transformed lives of his TRUE disciples, lived out in uncompromising radical obedience to his teaching -- especially the challenging requirements of the Sermon On The Mount.

" You are the light of the world. A city set on a hill cannot be hid. Nor do men light a lamp and put it under a bushel, but on a stand, and it gives light to all in the house.

Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works and give glory to your Father who is in heaven." (Matthew 5:14-16)

How are they to hear and believe without a preacher?

(Romans 10:14-15)

Chapter 40: THE ONLY BEGOTTEN - "SON"? OR "GOD"? - John 1:18

The King James version of the Bible renders John 1:18 as:

*" No man hath seen God at any time; the only begotten **Son**, which is in the bosom of the Father, he hath declared him. "*

The vast majority of the other English translations agree that this verse is saying that Jesus is God's SON.

However, a number of modern translations which do retain "son" as the translation, also add a marginal note which says that some ancient authorities read "god" instead of "son". This is a reference to several Greek manuscripts which have the Greek word

" theos" (god) instead of " huios" (son).

The NASB goes even further. It changes the word "Son" to "God" so that the verse reads *" the only begotten God"*. And it adds a marginal note which says, *" some later MSS read 'Son'".*

The NIV doesn't go quite that far. My 1978 edition has *" God the only [Son]"*, with marginal notes *" Or but God the only begotten"* and *" Some manuscripts but the only son (or but the only begotten son)"*

In the 1984 edition of the NIV, that has been changed to *" God the one and only"*, with marginal notes *" Or the Only Begotten"* and *" Some manuscripts but the only (or only begotten) Son"*

Many Trinitarians like to quote the NASB, and the marginal notes from the other versions, as "proof" of the "deity" of Jesus. However other Trinitarians see theological problems with an "only begotten God", and reject the NASB and NIV readings as a corruption of the text.

Where does the truth lie? Is this alternative reading authentic? What do the Greek Manuscripts really say?

The truth is that the marginal notes in the modern translations are quite misleading!

- * They fail to tell us that the vast majority of the some 5000 NT Greek manuscripts which we have, all read "son"! Only a very small number read "God"!

- * They fail to tell us about the inadequacies of those earlier MSS which include "god" instead of "son"!

- * They fail to tell us that there are ancient translations of the Scriptures into other languages, which must have been made from very early Greek Texts, which support the authenticity of "son".

- * They fail to tell us that there are early Church writings, which support the traditional reading by quoting from John 1:18, using "son" instead of "god".

Which Manuscripts Do Contain the Word "God"?

After a fairly intensive Internet search, I was able to find **only four** Greek manuscripts, dating back to the 2nd and 4th centuries, which were definitely stated to include the alternative reading "God", in John 1:28. Some sources indicated that there could be a few more. However the total number can be no more than a VERY TINY

fraction of the more than 5000 NT Greek Texts which have been found. The overwhelming majority of these have the traditional reading "Son".

These four manuscripts all belong to a group which scholars call the **Minority Texts**.

This group is also called "*Alexandrian*" or "*Egyptian*", because of its origin in Egypt.

They are labelled "minority" because they represent only about 5% of the more than 5000 NT Greek texts we have. Despite this rather alarming statistic, most of the English Bibles produced since the late 19th century English Revised Version, have been based on a composite text which gives preference to the minority Group.

The other main group of texts is often called "**Byzantine**", because of its wide use in the Eastern Church. It is found in the vast majority of Greek New Testament

manuscripts. The text used to translate the 1611 King James version was a composite made from several manuscripts in this family. And of course this Greek text has "son".

Problems With These Manuscripts

There are some major questions about the reliability of these Minority Text

manuscripts. If you do a little research for yourself, you can easily find many highly respected and credible scholars who are convinced that they are flawed and unreliable, in places where they differ from the traditional readings found in Byzantine texts.

These manuscripts contain numerous "corrections", and amendments, some of them made centuries after the original was written. Large sections have been overwritten by later hands. There are many original scribal errors, omissions and additions. Nor are they identical. There are said to be literally thousands of places where they differ, some minor, some much more significant.

It all adds up to more than enough evidence to create grave doubts about the reliability of any conclusion which favors their alternative reading of "God" instead of "Son" in John 1:18.

It is noteworthy that, apart from the NASB, translators of other modern English Bibles have decided that the word "son" from the Byzantine texts, is more likely to be correct. Because of this they have retained it in their main text, and relegated the reading "god" to a marginal note, thus indicating that they think it is less likely to be authentic.

Of course none of the Majority Texts are nearly as old as those very few Minority texts which contain the alternative reading. However we must never make the mistake of thinking that mere age guarantees better reliability. That is quite illogical!

Older Versions in Other Languages

The Greek NT texts are not our only witnesses. There are reported to be quite a few very ancient translations of the NT into other languages, which use the word "son".

Scholars tell us that these translations have their origins in Byzantine type texts, similar to that which has survived to our own time.

One that I have been able to verify is Jerome's Latin Vulgate.

Earlier Writings by the "Church Fathers"

There are early Church writings by men who quoted from John 1:18, using "son".

These writings date back as far as the late 2nd century, and confirm for us that this reading existed and was in use at that time.

Scholars tell us that they were most likely quoting from Byzantine type texts, similar to those which we still have.

The earliest I have found and verified so far, is from the late second century writer Irenaeus. In his "*Against Heresies*", Book III, XI, 6, he quotes from John 1:18 using "son".

What Did John Mean To Say?

Finally we have the witness of John himself.

In John 20:31, we are told that John's reason for writing, is to enable readers to believe that:

"Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God."

It cannot be possible that John would contradict himself elsewhere in the same Gospel by saying that Jesus is actually "God" rather than the "Son of God"! That would defeat the purpose for which he wrote.

Conclusion

From all of this I conclude that the KJV translation has got it right!

John did NOT say that Jesus is "the only begotten God"

He wrote that Jesus is "the only begotten Son".

The vast majority of New Testament Greek texts confirm that.

Chapter 41: GLORIFY ME (John 17:5)

" Father, glorify thou me in thy own presence with the glory which I had with thee before the world was made."

(John 17:5)

This verse is commonly used by both Trinitarians and Arians to support their claim that Jesus existed as a personal being, in heaven, before he was born. Trinitarians of course say

that He must have existed eternally because they think he is God. Arians say that he was not God, and not eternal, but a "spirit being" who came into existence when He was created by God at some point before the world was made.

Of course these claims CANNOT be true.

The Bible says clearly that Jesus is NOT God; (John 17:3) that God is NOT a man; (Num 23:19) and that Jesus IS both a man, and distinct from God. (1 Tim 2:5) God is immortal and cannot die. (1 Tim 6:16) Jesus died. God CANNOT be tempted to sin.

(James 1:13) Jesus WAS tempted in every way that other men are. (Heb 4:15).

It is obvious that no other man has ever existed as an immortal being before he was born, and then "lost" his immortality when he was born! And in any case, that would be a complete denial of the meaning of " *immortality*"! No other man has ever had a pre-existent mind, or pre-existent personality! A man is more than just the body he wears. It is the other " *conscious bits*" inside the body which define him as a real man.

Simple logic tells us that if Jesus did pre-exist, and brought those pre-existing things with him into a " *human look-alike*" body, He would not be a REAL man, but a counterfeit!

All of this means that we must read John 17:5 from a perspective which does NOT presuppose pre-existence.

HAS GOD EVER SPOKEN IN SIMILAR TERMS

ABOUT OTHER MEN?

Yes! See Jeremiah 1:5.

" *Before I formed you in the womb I knew you, and before you were born I consecrated you; I appointed you a prophet to the nations.*" (RSV) When God says He "knew" Jeremiah before he was born, that doesn't mean Jeremiah pre-existed his birth! All it means is that God knew in advance what He planned for Jeremiah to do.

The words spoken by Jesus in John 17:5, do not imply pre-existence for Him, any more than they do for Jeremiah. It is simply a statement that even before the

foundation of the world, it was God's plan to glorify Jesus. It does not mean that Jesus was present when the plan was made.

WHAT DOES IT MEAN TO HAVE GLORY

"BEFORE THE WORLD WAS MADE" ?

Jesus is using a Hebrew *figure of speech* called "PROLEPSIS".

You never heard of "prolepsis"? Don't worry! You are not alone! There are lots of others like you. That is a BIG word theologians love to use, when the rest of us would say something like: "*God speaks in advance of future things as though they had already happened*". (Read Romans 4:17 KJV, NIV, NEB)

God's plan to have a SON and glorify him, was made, and as good as done, BEFORE the world was created.

WHAT DOES IT MEAN WHEN JESUS SAID HE HAD GLORY

"WITH GOD"?

Since Jesus is a REAL MAN, it cannot mean that JESUS was actually present with God before the world was made. What it does mean is that the GLORY itself was

"with God" before the world was made. We use similar language when we say things like "you have a good reputation WITH ME". We do not mean that the person who has the reputation has to be literally in our presence, when we think that way about them. All it means is that we KNOW something ABOUT the person.

In the same way, God knew "before the world was made", what would be accomplished through Jesus that would give him a GLORIOUS REPUTATION.

WHAT DID JESUS MEAN BY "GLORY"?

This is the real crux of the matter.

Is it the sort of "radiant glory" that the disciples saw at the Transfiguration? (Matt 17:2; 2 Pet 1:17) Or is it perhaps the "glory" which he now has in Heaven, seated at the right hand of God? Or is it something else?

We are not left in any doubt. John speaks about this same "glory" elsewhere in his Gospel.

" *These things understood not his disciples at the first: but when (**after** NIV, NEB)*

*Jesus was **glorified**, then remembered they that these things were written of him, and that they had done these things unto him. (John 12:16)*

" *Now is my soul troubled; and what shall I say? Father, save me from this hour: but for this cause came I unto this hour. Father, glorify thy name. Then came there a voice from heaven, saying, I have both glorified it, and will glorify it again.*" (John 12:27-28)

Clearly the "**glory**" Jesus has in mind in John 12, is to do with his imminent crucifixion. But his disciples did not understand that until it was revealed to them after it had happened. (And in passing, it seems that many in our own time, still do not understand!)

WHEN DID THE DISCIPLES UNDERSTAND?

Luke has the answer.

Speaking to the two disciples on the road to Emmaus, Jesus said:

*" O fools, and slow of heart to believe all that the prophets have spoken: Ought not Christ to have suffered these things, **and to enter into his glory**? And beginning at Moses and all the prophets, he expounded unto them in all the scriptures the things*

concerning himself. And they drew nigh unto the village, whither they went: and he made as though he would have gone further." (Luke 24:25-28)

And to the eleven in the upper room later that same day:

" And he said unto them, These are the words which I spake unto you, while I was yet with you, that all things must be fulfilled, which were written in the law of Moses, and in the prophets, and in the psalms, concerning me. Then opened he their

understanding, that they might understand the scriptures, And said unto them, Thus it is written, and thus it behoved Christ to suffer, and to rise from the dead the third day: And that repentance and remission of sins should be preached in his name among all nations, beginning at Jerusalem." (Luke 24:44-47)

It was only after Jesus was crucified and risen from the dead, that the eyes of the disciples were opened to understand that Jesus had already been "glorified" by what had happened on the Cross, making it possible to preach the **Good News** about

" repentance and remission of sins".

That was when he was **LIFTED UP**:

1. so that he could be recognised for who he is – Son of God and Messiah.

(John 8:28)

2. so that those who see it might be drawn to him. (John 12:32)

3. so that "*whoever believes on him may have eternal life*". (John 3:14-15) **AT THE LAST SUPPER**

"(Judas) then having received the sop went immediately out: and it was night.

*Therefore, when he was gone out, Jesus said, **Now is the Son of man glorified**, and God is glorified in him. If God be glorified in him, God shall also glorify him in himself, and shall straightway glorify him. (John 13:30-32)*

Jesus was about to be **GLORIFIED**. It happened when he was crucified.

CONCLUSION

The GLORY which God planned for Jesus BEFORE THE WORLD WAS MADE,

was not about an event before Creation! Nor was it primarily about something which happened after he ascended to heaven. Rather it was about what he has achieved on the CROSS!

Through this Jesus won the right to forgive those who turn to him in repentance. He has won the right to give them ETERNAL LIFE. This is his GLORY for ever!

Chapter 42: AN EXPANDED APOSTLES CREED

An "Expanded" Apostles Creed? Why should there be such a need? Why can't we leave it alone, and all simply say "amen", with our own private reservations about what it means? Why must we "rock the boat"?

That is a fair question! And here is the short answer. Sometimes silence can be just plain dishonest!

Often people use exactly the same words, to mean different things. It is unfortunate that this should be the case with a creed as simply worded as the one under consideration here.

In today's Mainstream Churches, acceptance of the Trinity is the foundation on which all else stands. They read the creed to mean that. Members of those Churches are taught that those who do not believe in the Trinity, are not Christians at all, and must be regarded as heretics. Although there are some liberal souls, (usually laymen) who do not think that way, most list Non-Trinitarians amongst the "cults".

Of course, most Non-Trinitarians could happily say "amen" to the simple words of the Apostles Creed. However that certainly would not mean that they accepted the Trinitarian dogma attached to those words by the Mainstream Churches.

Hard experience has shown that there will be cases where doors will close, and people will choose to act differently towards us when our Non-Trinitarian position is known. At the very least, many may choose to withhold Church fellowship. For the sake of conscience, others may also wish to withhold certain goods, services, assistance, co-operation, or even employment.

We must deal fairly with them. We must give them opportunity to decide for themselves. And if they do reject us, we must not resent them for it, or complain.

It is therefore imperative that we maintain our integrity, by being honest about where we stand. If we know that disclosure of our Non-Trinitarian faith might affect the outcome of a particular situation, honesty demands that we declare ourselves and confess Jesus before men. (Matthew 10:32) "Do unto others"

This "EXPANDED APOSTLES CREED" attempts to speak plainly and simply, for the information of those who deserve to be told no less than the truth about our "Biblical Unitarian" faith.

It is necessarily brief. If you want to know more, you are welcome to ask.

I believe in God the Father Almighty,

Maker of heaven and earth:

There is one alone who is truly God. That is the God who Jesus addresses as Father.

(John 17:3)

And in Jesus Christ his only Son our Lord,

Who was conceived by the Holy Ghost,

Born of the Virgin Mary,

Jesus is the Son of God But not "God-the-Son". (Matthew 16:16) *He is a created being, a man with exactly the same human nature as ourselves. (Hebrews 2:14-17) He began His existence with His miraculous conception and birth of the Virgin Mary.*

(Luke 1-31)

suffered under Pontius Pilate,
was crucified, dead, and buried:

Bearing the penalty of our sins not to appease the wrath of an angry God not to change God's attitude towards us but to change our hearts towards God.

(Romans 5:8 & 1 John 4:10-11)

He descended into hell;

Truly mortal (not immortal) truly dead without conscious existence. (Psalm 6:5, Ecclesiastes 9:5)

And into the grave not into a place of torment. (Psalm 88:10-11)

The third day he rose again from the dead;

He ascended into heaven,

And sitteth on the right of God the Father Almighty;

In Heaven He is the living glorified man, Christ Jesus, mediator between God and men. (1 Timothy 2:5)

Remember, He cannot be God for there is one alone who is truly God the one on whose right hand Jesus sits. (Psalm 110:1, Hebrews 8:1)

From thence he shall come to judge the quick and the dead.

"For he will render to every man according to his works: to those who by patience in well-doing seek for glory and honor and immortality, he will give eternal life; but for those who are factious and do not obey the truth, but obey wickedness, there will be wrath and fury. (Romans 2:6-8) " For the wages of sin is death, but the free gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord." (Romans 6:23)

I believe in the Holy Ghost;

Not as a third person in a triune Godhead nor as a separate person at all but the universal presence and power of God at work throughout creation, (Genesis 1:2, Psalm 104:30, 139:7-8). And the unique special personal presence of the one who alone is truly God, in those human temples where He is worshipped in spirit and in truth (1 Corinthians 3:16 & 6:19, 2 Corinthians 6:16-18) A gift given only to

those who obey Jesus. (John 14:15-17 & Acts 5:32) to teach, help, inspire, enable, succour, comfort, enlighten, and sanctify.

The Holy Catholick Church;

Certainly not Roman Catholic! We regard that Church, and her daughter Churches, as the system about which Jesus commanded, "Come out of her my people"

(Revelation 18:4) We use the word in the universal sense, that the true church is found wherever God dwells in the human hearts of obedient children, whose lives show the fruit of submission to Jesus as Lord, Son Of Man, Son Of God, and Messiah.

The Communion of Saints;

The "Protestant version", yes. This is the fellowship of all true living believers, with Christ, and with each other. The "Catholic version" however adds the dead to that list for fellowship, and includes prayers made to dead "saints", who are supposed to be alive in Heaven. This we reject as a thinly disguised form of Spiritism.

The Forgiveness of sins;

Requiring intelligent faith in the gospel, genuine repentance, forsaking of sin, and Believer's Baptism in water, for remission of sins and the gift of the Holy Spirit. (Mark 16:15-16 & Acts 2:38)

The Resurrection of the body,

At the return of Jesus from Heaven the only hope held out by the Gospel.

(1 Corinthians 15:16-20)

And the life everlasting.

Immortality conditional not inherent at birth received only by the righteous, at the resurrection of the body. (1 Corinthians 15:51-55) to be enjoyed in The Kingdom Of God on Earth - not in heaven (Matthew 5:5)

Amen.

Now read "The Fine print" :-

There are some other matters which we also regard as foundation Christian doctrine.

These include a non-negotiable commitment to the Sermon On the Mount, and other moral teachings about the way of life to which we are called by Jesus. For us, a creed

without that would be only meaningless words, spoken by the lips of people whose hearts are far from God. (Isaiah 29:13, Matthew 15:8-9)

Just to name a few where we are different to most others :-

We do not go to war, or make weapons of war. We do not work in law enforcement.

We do not swear oaths, go to law, or engage in politics. We do not condone divorce, or remarriage after divorce while the first partner is still living.

And we believe that those who do such things, deny the faith to which they are called by the Gospel.