

Is God a Trinity?



by
George L. Johnson
and
Fred R. Coulter

*Is God a Trinity or a family? Was Jesus Christ God, or merely a man ? Was Jesus the born Son of God, or only an adopted son? Is the Holy Spirit a person or the creative power of the Godhead?
These questions about the nature of God are answered in the booklet.*

*Pages 1-22
Copyright 1998 ©
George L. Johnson
Johnson Graphics
P.O. Box 317
Decatur, MI 49045-1993*

*Pages 25-33
Copyright 1998, 2008 ©
Fred R. Coulter
Christian Biblical Church of God
P.O Box 1442
Hollister, CA 95024-1442*

All rights reserved. Except for brief excerpts for review purposes, no part of this publication may be reproduced or used in any form, or by any means—electronic or mechanical, including photocopying, recording, or information storage and retrieval systems, or use of hermeneutical conclusions—without written permission of copyright owner.

IS GOD A TRINITY?

by
George L. Johnson

CHAPTER ONE

Is the Trinity Biblical?

The belief that God is one substance, yet three persons, is one of the central doctrines of mainstream Christianity. The concept of the Trinity is believed by most professing Christians, whether Catholic or Protestant.

A Gallup Poll taken in 1966 found that 97% of the American public believed in God. Of that number, 83% believed that God was a Trinity.

Yet for all this belief in the Trinity, it is a doctrine that is not clearly understood by most Christian laymen. In fact, most have neither the desire nor the incentive to understand what their churches teach. Few laymen are aware of any problems with the doctrine of the Trinity. They simply take it for granted, leaving the mysterious doctrinal aspects to theologians.

And if the layman were to investigate further, he would be confronted with discouraging statements similar to the following: “The mind of man cannot fully understand the mystery of the Trinity. He who would try to understand the mystery fully will lose his mind. But he who would deny the Trinity will lose his soul.” (Harold Lindsell and Charles J. Woodbridge, *A Handbook of Christian Truth*, pp. 51-52).

Such a statement means that the concept of the Trinity should be accepted or else. Merely accepting it as doctrine without first proving it would be contrary to Scripture. God inspired the Apostle Paul to write: “Prove all things hold fast that which is good” (I Thess. 5:21).

Peter further admonished Christians: “...be ready always to give an answer to every man that asketh you a reason of the hope that is in you..” (I Peter 3:15). Therefore the Christian is duty bound to prove whether or not God is a Trinity.

Clear Explanation Difficult

If you were to confine yourself to reading the articles on the Trinity in popular religious literature for laymen, you would conclude that the Trinity is clearly taught in the Bible. However, if you read the Bible and what the more technical Bible encyclopedias, dictionaries, and books say on the subject, you would come to an entirely different conclusion. And the more you have studied the subject, the more you would find that the Trinity is built on a very shaky theological and philosophical foundation indeed.

Chapter One

The problems inherent in clearly explaining the Trinity are expressed in nearly every technical article or book on the subject. The *New Catholic Encyclopedia* begins: “It is difficult...in the second half of the 20th century, to offer a clear, objective, and straightforward account of the revelation, doctrinal evolution, and the theological elaboration of the mystery of the Trinity. Trinitarian discussion, Roman Catholic as well as other, *presents a somewhat unsteady silhouette*” (Vol. XIV, p. 295). (Emphasis ours throughout the booklet.)

But why should the central doctrine of the Christian faith be so difficult to understand? Why should such an important doctrine present an unsteady silhouette? Isn't there a clear Biblical revelation of the doctrine of the Trinity? Didn't Christ and the apostles plainly teach it?

Surely the Bible would be filled with teachings about such an important subject as the Trinity. Unfortunately, the word “Trinity” never appears in the Bible.

“The term ‘Trinity’ is not a Biblical term, and we are not using Biblical language when we define what is expressed by it as the doctrine” (*The International Standard Bible Encyclopedia*, article “Trinity,” p. 3012). Not only is the word “Trinity” never found in the Bible, but there is no substantive proof such a doctrine is even indicated.

In a recent book on the Trinity, Catholic theologian Karl Rahner recognizes that theologians in the past have been “...embarrassed by the simple fact that in reality the Scriptures *do not explicitly* present a doctrine of the ‘imminent’ Trinity (even in the Apostle John’s prologue there is no such doctrine)” (*The Trinity*, p. 22).

Other theologians also recognize the fact that the first chapter of John’s Gospel the prologue—clearly shows the pre-existence and divinity of Christ, but does not teach the doctrine of the Trinity. After discussing John’s prologue, Dr. William Newton Clarke writes: “*There is no Trinity in this*; but there is a distinction in the Godhead, **a duality in God. The distinction or duality is used as basis for the idea of an only-begotten Son, and as key to the possibility of an incarnation**” (*Outline of Christian Theology*, p. 167).

The first chapter of John’s Gospel clearly shows the pre-existence of Christ. It also illustrates **the duality of God** and as Dr. Clarke explains, the key to the possibility of the incarnation—the fact that God could become man.

The Apostle John makes plain **the unmistakable fact that Jesus Christ is God** (John 1:1-14). Yet we find no Trinity discussed in the chapter. WE do not find even a mention of the Holy Spirit in John’s inspired revelation—only **a duality of God the Father and the Son**, who was God before the incarnation.

Seeking More Biblical “Proof for the Trinity”

Probably the most notorious scripture used in times past as “proof of a Trinity is I John 5:7. However, many theologians recognize that this scripture was added to the New Testament manuscripts probably as late as the eighth century A.D.

Notice what Jamieson, Fausset and Brown wrote in their commentary: “The only Greek MSS. [manuscripts], *in any form* which support the words, ‘in heaven, the Father, the Word, and the Holy Ghost: and these three are one.’ And there are three evidently from the *modern Latin Vulgate*; the *Ravianus* copied from the *Complutensian Polyglot*; a MS. [manuscript] at Naples, with the words added in the margins by a recent hand; *Ottobonianus*, 298, of the fifteenth century, the *Greek* of which is a mere translation of the accompanying Latin. All old versions omit the words.”

The conclusions arrived at in their commentary, written over 100 years ago, are still valid today. The more conservatively oriented *The New Bible Commentary* (revised) agrees, though quietly with Jamieson, Fausset and Brown. “...The words are clearly a gloss and are rightly excluded by RSV [Revised Standard Version] even from its margin” (p. 1269).

The editors of Peake’s Commentary on the Bible wax more eloquent in their belief that the words are not part of the original text. “The famous interpolation after ‘three witnesses’ is not printed even in RSV, and rightly... It cites the heavenly testimony of the Father, the logos, and the Holy Spirit, but *is never used in the early trinitarian controversies*. No respectable Greek MS contains it. Appearing first in a 4th century Latin text, it entered the Vulgate and finally the NT [New Testament] of Erasmus” (p. 1038). Scholars clearly recognize that I John 5:7 is not part of the New Testament text. Yet it is still included by some fundamentalist Christians as biblical proof for the Trinity doctrine.

Even the majority of the more recent New Testament translations do not contain the above words. They are not found in Moffatt, Phillips, the Revised Standard Version, Williams or the *Living Bible* (a paraphrase).

It is clear, then, that these words are not part of the inspired canon, but rather were added by a “recent hand.” The two verses in I John should read: “For there are three that bear record, the Spirit, and the water and the blood: and these three agree in one.”

Three things bear record. But to what do they bear record? A Trinity? We shall see.

Chapter One

Bear Record to What?

The Spirit, the water and the blood bear record of the fact that Jesus Christ, the Son of God, is living His life over again in us. John clarifies it in verses 11-12.

“And this is the record, that God hath given to us eternal life, and this life is in his Son. He that hath the Son hath life; *and* he that hath not the Son of God hath not life.”

But how do these three elements—the Spirit, the water and the blood—specifically bear witness to this basic biblical truth?

“The Spirit beareth witness with our spirit, that we are the children of God” (Rom. 8:16). (We will see more about the part the Spirit plays in Chapter Three.)

Water is representative of baptism, which bears witness of the burial of the old self and the beginning of a new life (Rom. 6:1-6).

The blood represents Christ’s death by crucifixion, which pays the penalty for our sins, reconciling us to God (Rom. 5:9, 10).

Now understand why Christ commands the apostles to baptize in the name of the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit (Matt. 28:19). First of all Jesus did not command the apostles to baptize in the name of the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit as an indication that God is a Trinity. Such a relationship is not indicated in the Bible.

They were to baptize in the name of the Father, because it is the goodness of God that brings us to repentance (Rom. 2:4), and because the Father is the One “of whom the whole family in heaven and earth is named” (Eph. 3:15). We are baptized in the name of the Son because HE is the one who died for our sins. We are baptized in the name of the Holy Spirit, making us the Father’s begotten sons (Rom. 8:16).

Many theologians have misunderstood the part that the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit play in each person’s salvation. The doctrine of the Trinity is the result of that misunderstanding.

The Trinity is not a biblical doctrine. It has no basis in biblical fact. Then how did this doctrine creep into the Church? Pagan theology, about the nature of God, was used to interpret scripture. God tells us that scripture is to interpret scripture, not pagan mythology.

History of the Trinity

The ancient idea of monotheism was shattered by the sudden appearance of Jesus Christ on the earth. Here was someone who claimed He was the Son of God. But how could He be? The Jewish people believed for centuries that there was only one God. If the claims of “this Jesus” would have been accepted, then in their minds, their religion

Is the Trinity Biblical?

would have been no different from that of the polytheistic pagans around them. If HE were the Son of God, their whole system of monotheism would have disintegrated.

When Jesus plainly told certain Jews of His day that He was the Son of God, some were ready to stone Him for blasphemy (John 10:33).

To get around the problem of the plurality in the Godhead, the Jewish community simply rejected Jesus. And to this day, Orthodox Judaism will not accept Jesus' Messiahship. However, the more liberal Jews will at least admit that He was a great man, maybe even a prophet.

But the "new" Christian religion still faced a problem. How could proponents explain that there was only one God, not two?

"The determining impulse to the formulation of the doctrine of the Trinity in the church was the church's profound conviction of the absolute Deity of Christ, on which as on a pivot the whole Christian concept of God from the first origin of Christianity turned" (*International Standard Biblical Encyclopedia*, article "Trinity," p. 3021).

The deity of Christ does not mean that the doctrine of the Trinity is necessary, as we shall see in Chapter Two.

Roots in Greek Philosophy

Many of the early church fathers were thoroughly educated in Babylonian, Egyptian and Greek philosophy, from which they borrowed such non-biblical concepts as dualism and the immortality of the soul. However, most theologians, for obvious reasons, are generally careful to point out that they did not borrow the idea of the Trinity from the Triads of Greek philosophy or those of the ancient Egyptians and Babylonians.

But some are not so careful to make such a distinction. Notice: "Although the notion of a Triad or Trinity is characteristic of the Christian religion, it is by no means peculiar to it. In the Indian religion, e.g., we meet with the trinitarian group of Brahma, Siva, and Visnu; and the Egyptian religion with the trinitarian group of Osiris, Isis, and Horus, constituting a divine family, like the Father, Mother and Son in medieval Christian pictures. Not is it only in historical [not biblical] religions that we find God viewed as a Trinity. One recalls in particular the Neo-Platonic view of the Supreme or Ultimate Reality, which was suggested by Plato..." (*Hastings Bible Dictionary*, Vol. 12, p. 458).

Of course, the fact that someone else had a Trinity does not in itself mean that the Christians borrowed it. McClintock and Strong make the connection a little clearer.

"Toward the end of the 1st century, and during the 2nd, many learned men came over both from Judaism and paganism to Christian-

Chapter One

ity. These brought with them into the Christian schools of theology their Platonic ideas and phraseology” (article “Trinity,” Vol. 10, p. 553).

In his book, *A History of Christian Thought*, Arthur Cushman McGiffert shows that the main argument against those who believed that there was only one God and that Christ was either an adopted or created being was that their idea did not agree with Platonic philosophy (*ibid.*, p. 240).

In the latter half of the third century, Paul of Samosata tried to revive the adoptionist idea that Jesus was a mere man until the Spirit of God came upon Him at baptism, making him the Anointed One or Christ. In his beliefs about the person of Jesus Christ, he “rejected the Platonic realism which underlay most of the Christological speculation of the day” (*ibid.*, p. 243).

At the end of his chapter on the Trinity, McGiffert concludes: “...It has been the boast of orthodox theologians that in the doctrine of the Trinity both religion and philosophy come to highest expression” (Vol. I, p. 247).

The influence of Platonic philosophy on the Trinity doctrine can hardly be denied. However, trinitarian ideas go much further back than Plato. “Though it is usual to speak of the Semitic tribes as monotheistic, yet it is an undoubted fact that more or less all over the world his deities are in triads. This rule applies to eastern and western hemispheres, north and south. Further, it is observed that, in some mystical way, the triad of three persons is one...The definition of Athanasius [a forth-century Catholic] who lived in Egypt, applied to the trinities of all heathen religions” (*Egyptian Belief and Modern Thought*, by James Bonwick, F.R.G.S., p. 396).

It was Athanasius’ formulation for the Trinity, which was adopted by the Catholic Church at the Council of Nicaea in A.D. 325. Athanasius was an Egyptian from Alexandria and his philosophy was also deeply rooted in Platonism.

“The Alexandria catechetical school, which reversed Clement of Alexandria and Origen, the greatest theologians of the Greek Church, as it heads, applies the allegorical method to the explanation of Scripture. *Plato influenced its thought*: its strong point was [pagan] theological speculations. Athanasius and the three Cappadocians had been included among its members...” (*Ecumenical Councils of the Catholic Church*, by Hubert Jedin, p. 29).

In order to explain the relationship of Christ to God the Father, the church fathers felt that it was necessary to use the philosophy of the day rather than the scriptures. They obviously thought that their religion would be more palatable if they made it sound like the pagan philoso-

Is the Trinity Biblical?

phy that was extant at the time. These men were versed in philosophy, and that philosophy colored what understanding of the Bible they had.

It was the doctrine of the Trinity - colored by the philosophy of the time—that was accepted by the Catholic Orthodox Church in the early part of the fourth century, over 300 years after Christ's death.

Even theologians recognize that the Trinity is a creation of *the fourth century*, not the first! “There is a recognition on the part of the exegetist and Biblical theologians, including a constantly growing number of Roman Catholics, *that one should speak of Trinitarianism in the New Testament without serious qualifications*. There is also the closely parallel recognition—that when one does speak of unqualified Trinitarianism, *one has moved from the period of Christian origins to say, the last quadrant of the 4th century*. It was only then that what might be called the definitive Trinitarianism dogma ‘one God in three persons’ became thoroughly assimilated into [professing] Christian life and thought” (*New Catholic Encyclopedia*, article “Trinity,” Vol. 14, p. 295).

The Council of Nicaea

It was at the Council of Nicaea in A.D. 325 that two members of the Alexandrian congregation—Arius, a priest, who believed that Christ was not a God, but a created being, and Athanasius, a deacon, who believed that the Father, Son and Spirit were the same being living in a threefold form (or in three relationships, as a man may be at the same time a father, a son and a brother) presented their cases.

The Council of Nicaea was not called by the church leaders, as one might suppose, but by the Emperor Constantine. He had a far-from-spiritual reason for wanting to solve the dispute.

“In 325 the Emperor Constantine called an ecclesiastical council to meet at Nicaea in Bithynia. In the hope of securing for his throne the support of the growing body of [professing] Christians he had shown them considerable favor and it was to his interest to have the church vigorous and united. The Arian controversy was threatening its unity and menacing its strength. He therefore undertook to put an end to the trouble. It was suggested to him, perhaps by the Spanish bishop Hosius, who was influential at court, that if a synod were to meet representing the whole church both east and west, it might be possible to restore harmony. Constantine himself of course neither knew or cared anything about the matter in dispute but he was eager to bring the controversy to a close, and Hosius' advice appealed to him as around” (*A History of Christian Thought*, Vol. I, p. 258).

The decision as to which of the two men the church was to follow

Chapter One

was more or less an arbitrary one. Constantine really didn't care which choice was made. All he wanted was a united church. (Arius was banished, but later recalled by Constantine, examined and found to be without heresy.)

The majority of those present at the Council were not ready to take either side in the controversy. "A clearly defined standpoint with regard to this problem—the relationship of Christ to God—was held only by the attenuated group of Arians and a far from numerous section of delegates, who adhered with unshaken conviction to the Alexandrian [Athanasius'] view. The bulk of the members occupied a position between these two extremes. They rejected the formulae of Arius, and declined to accept those of his opponents.. .the voting was not criterion of the inward conviction of the council" (*Encyclopedia Britannica*, 11th ed., article "Nicaea, Council of," p. 641).

The Council rejected Arius' views and rightly so, but they had nothing with which to replace it. Thus the ideas of Athanasius—also a minority view—prevailed. The rejection of Athanasius' view was not a blanket acceptance of Arius' view. Yet, the church in all the ensuing centuries has been "stuck," so to speak, with the job of upholding—right or wrong—the decision made at Nicaea.

After the Council, the Trinity became official dogma in the church. However, the controversy did not end. In the next few years, more Christians were killed *by other Christians* over that one doctrine than were finally killed by the different pagan emperors of Rome. Yet, for all the fighting and killing, neither of the two parties had a Biblical leg on which to stand.

CHAPTER TWO

Who Was Jesus?

The Bible does not teach the doctrine of the Trinity. But we are still faced with the questions: Who was Jesus Christ? Was He a man that lived such a perfect life that God decided to call Him His Son at baptism? Or was He God who became a man and died for all men?

In the past, in most theological circles, a rejection of the doctrine of the Trinity included a rejection of the divinity of Christ. But, before this booklet becomes classed as an Arian heresy, let me quote from the Catholic theologian, Karl Rahner: "...We must be willing to admit that should the doctrine of the Trinity have to be dropped as false, the major part of the religious literature could well remain virtually unchanged...**the Christian idea of the incarnation would not have to change at all, if there were no Trinity.**

"It is not surprising then, that Christian piety practice remembers from the doctrine of the incarnation only the 'God' has become man, without deriving from this truth any clear message about the Trinity" (*The Trinity*, p. 10-12).

A rejection of the doctrine of the Trinity does not constitute a rejection of the incarnation - the divinity of Christ. In fact, what he says indicates that, for all practical purposes, the Trinity doctrine is meaningless.

Jesus Was the Problem

To this day, Christianity is still confused about who and what Jesus Christ really was. A majority believes in a mysterious Trinity and a vociferous minority believes that Christ was a created being. Neither has the truth.

But why all the confusion?

Who Jesus was is clearly indicated in the pages of the Bible. It has been there for centuries. While Christians were busily excommunicating and killing each other over the questions of who Jesus was, the answer has been in the pages of Bible, and that explanation is not in harmony with what is taught by most churches today. Christ is not the second person in a Trinity, and God did not create Him—*He is the Creator GOD!*

In the Beginning

To find out who Jesus was, let's go back to the beginning. Beginnings are mentioned in the Bible, in at least two separate places—in the first chapter of Genesis and in the first chapter of John's Gospel.

Chapter Two

The Apostle John began his Gospel by describing Who and what Jesus was before He came to this earth, as the Savior of mankind. “In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. The same was in the beginning with God. All things were made by him; and without him was not anything made that was made...And the Word was made flesh, and dwelt among us, (and we beheld his glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father,) full of grace and truth” (verses 1-3, 14).

If we read no further in the New Testament than this, we would be able to know, beyond a shadow of a doubt, that Jesus Christ was God and that He was the One who created man in Genesis 2:7. John clearly stated that the Word—the One who became Christ—created all things. Had Christians clearly understood these verses, there would have never been an Arian controversy or a doctrine of the Trinity, as both doctrines are meaningless.

But the Apostle John was not the only New Testament writer who wrote about the pre-existence of Christ. Notice what Paul wrote to the Corinthians. “Moreover, brethren, I would not that ye should be ignorant, how that all our fathers were under the cloud, and all passed through the sea; and did all eat the same spiritual meat; and did all drink of the same spiritual drink; for they drank of that spiritual Rock that followed them; and *that Rock was Christ*” (I Cor. 10:1-4).

Paul clearly tells us that Jesus Christ was the God of the Old Testament—the One who spoke to Moses and the one that led the Israelites out of Egypt. This clearly shows us that the One who became the Son was the God of the Old Testament, not God the Father. Therefore, Christ was the Jehovah that spoke with Moses and the Holy One that led Israel.

Yet, the doctrine of the Trinity hinges on the assumption that God manifested Himself as the Father in the Old Testament and Christ in the New Testament. Such assumptions are false and without scriptural proof.

Duality of God Throughout the Bible

The plurality of God is not merely a “plural of majesty” as some would have us believe. Six hundred years before Christ, the Prophet Daniel recorded for us a vision. “I saw in the night visions, and, behold, *one* like the Son of man came with the clouds of heaven, and came to the Ancient of days...” (Dan. 7:13). The “Son of man” he describes can be none other than the One who later became Jesus Christ. Daniel then saw Him given rulership and a Kingdom that will never be destroyed (verse 14). The “Son of man” mentioned here could hardly be a mere physical human being!

Who Was Jesus?

The Ancient of Days, in this instance, is the divine Being who is called the Father in the New Testament. Jesus Christ referred to the same occurrence as mentioned in the vision in His parable of the nobleman (Himself) who went to a far country (heaven) to receive a kingdom, and to return (Luke 19:12).

David also referred to the duality of the God family in Psalms 110. “**The Lord** said unto **my Lord**, Sit thou at my right hand, until I make thine enemies thy footstool” (verse 1).

Two different Lords are mentioned here. One is the being who became God the Father and the other is the One who became Jesus Christ. Paul quoted this passage to the Jewish Christians—applying it directly to Jesus Christ: “But to which of the angels said he at any time, Sit on my right hand, until I make thine enemies thy footstool?” (Heb. 1:13).

Was the Son also God? Verse 8 answers, “But unto the Son he saith, Thy throne, *O God*, is forever...” There can be no doubt that God the Father and Jesus the Son are mentioned as two separate beings in the Old Testament.

Who Was Melchizedek?

Now, Notice Hebrews 5:5-6: “So also Christ glorified not himself to be made high priest; but he [glorified him] that said unto him, Thou art my Son, today have I begotten thee. As he also in another place, Thou art a priest forever after the order of Melchizedek.”

So Christ holds the office of Melchizedek. Who was Melchizedek? He was one of the Beings composing God.

In Genesis 14:18, he is called the king of Salem and the priest of the Most High God. Notice why he could not have been merely a human being.

The Apostle Paul, described Him further in Hebrews 7:2-3: “To whom also Abraham gave a tenth part of all; first being by interpretation King of righteousness, and after that also King of Salem, which is King of peace; without father, without mother, without descent, having neither beginning of days, nor end of life; but made like unto the Son of God; abideth a priest continually.”

Paul could not have been describing a human being, or even an angel in those verses, for he is describing a Being that eternally existed, as only God has eternally existed.

Melchizedek was a priest of the *Most High God*. Who was the Most High God? Why of course, the being that became the Father! Jesus Christ said, “My Father is greater than I” (John 14:28). And also Melchizedek still lives (and if you will read Hebrews 7:8 carefully, you will see that Paul repeats this supremely important fact) and is still that High

Chapter Two

Priest. But Christ is also a High Priest (see Heb.7:26; 8:1). There cannot be two High Priests both holding the same office, so Melchizedek and Jesus Christ must be the same.

So we see that even in the first book of the Bible, the plurality of God is shown, although clear understanding of this truth could not be known until Jesus came to reveal it in the New Testament. Jesus said, "...No man knows who the Son is, but the Father; and who the Father is, but the Son, and he to whom the Son will *reveal* him" (Luke 10:22).

Jesus Came to Reveal the Father

A clear distinction has been made in the New Testament between Christ and the Father, again proving that Christ was the God of the Old Testament. "No man has seen God at any time; the only begotten Son, which is in the bosom of the Father, he hath declared him" (John 1:18). Christ came to the earth to reveal the Father and to show that a family relationship has existed in the Godhead.

Unless Jesus had revealed the Father to us, there would be no way for us to know Him. "All things are delivered unto me, of my Father, and no man knoweth the Son, but the Father; neither knoweth any man the Father, save the Son, and he to whomsoever the Son will reveal him" (Matt. 11:27).

The Meaning of the Word YHVH

In the Hebrew of the original inspired text, there are two different names that are commonly used to refer to God. The word first used for "God" in the Genesis is *Elohim*. The second word is YHVH (commonly pronounced "Jehovah"). This word YHVH is generally translated "LORD" (In capital letters) in the King James Version of the Bible. It is first used in Genesis 2:7. There it was the LORD GOD—YHVH—who formed man out the dust of the ground. It was the LORD GOD who dealt directly with Adam and Eve, in the Garden of Eden. As we saw in John 1, it was the Word—Jesus Christ—who created all things.

Therefore, it was the LORD GOD of the Old Testament who became the Jesus Christ of the New Testament. This fact is illustrated by grammatical derivation of the word YHVH.

The word YHVH is explained by Rabbinic sources as encompassing three Hebrew words, HYH meaning *was*, HVH meaning *is* (literally "present tense" —the word "is" is not used in Hebrew) and YHYH, meaning *will continue to be*.

Putting the words all together, YHVH actually means the "Was-Is-Will Continue to Be" Being. Even Hebrew linguistic scholars agree that

Who Was Jesus?

YHVH must be derived from some form of the verb “to be” (was, is, will be).

By His very name, God quite literally encompasses all aspects of time—past, present and future. This is in complete accord with Malachi 3:6, “For I am YHVH, I change not”; Hebrews 13:8 “Jesus Christ the same yesterday [was], and today [is], and forever [*will* continue to be].” Revelations 1:8 says, “I am Alpha and Omega, the beginning and the ending, saith the Lord, which *is*, and which *was*, and which is *to come*, the Almighty.”

Even etymologically, Jesus Christ and YHVH can be equated. Yet, this is only a small part of the picture, because the clear statements of both the Old and New Testaments give overwhelming proof that the God of the Old Testament is the One who became Jesus Christ.

People Stumbled at Christ

In Isaiah 8:13-14, we find a very interesting prophecy concerning the Lord of Hosts. “Sanctify the Lord of Hosts himself; and let him be your fear, and let him be your dread. And he shall be for a sanctuary; but for a stone of stumbling and for a rock of offense to both the houses of Israel, for a gin and for a snare of the inhabitants of Jerusalem.”

Most editions of the King James Version of the Bible note that these verses refer to the One who later became Jesus Christ. But even more accurate proof is found in the New Testament.

In his first epistle, the Apostle Peter writes: “Wherefore also it is contained in the scriptures, Behold, I lay in Sion a chief corner stone, elect, precious: and he that believeth on him shall not be confounded. Unto you therefore which believe he is precious: but unto them which be disobedient, the stone which the builders disallowed, the same is made the head of the corner, and a stone of stumbling and a rock of offence, even to them which stumble at the word, being disobedient: whereunto also they were appointed” (I Pet. 2:6-8).

The very same prophecy is alluded to in Luke 2:34. There can be no denying the fact that Jesus Christ was the God of the Old Testament, the Stone over which many people stumbled.

The religious leaders of the time simply could not understand how Jesus could have been God. Yet, the Old Testament, which they had copied for centuries, is filled with prophecies about Him. Truly, they were blinded, and most remain so to this day. The Apostle Paul explains this in the ninth to the eleventh chapters of his epistle to the Romans.

While Jesus Christ, the God of the Old Testament, was on earth as a human being, there was only one God-Being—the Father—left in heaven. We find that Jesus prayed to His Father in Heaven:

Chapter Two

“And now, O Father, glorify thou me with thine own self, with the glory which I had with thee before the world existed” (John 17:5).

The Jews and the Arians, found it hard to believe that God could become man. Yet, the New Testament explains that it did indeed happen. One of the members of the Godhead became a man that we might have the opportunity to be born into the family of God.

The Apostle Paul explained this concept in his epistle to the Philippians. *The Amplified Bible* makes the passage a little clearer. In chapter 2:5-8, he encourages the Philippians:

“Let this same attitude and purpose and [humble] mind be in you which was in Christ Jesus: [Let him be your example in humility:] Who, although being essentially one with God and in the form of God [possessing the fullness of the attributes which make God God], did not think this equality with God was a thing to be eagerly grasped or retained, But stripped Himself [of all privileges and rightful dignity] so as to assume the guise of a servant (slave), in that He became like men and was born a human being. And after He had appeared in human form He abased and humbled Himself [still further] and carried His obedience to the extreme death, and even the death of [the] cross!” Jesus Christ was God. Still, he voluntarily gave up His position as God to come to this Earth, becoming a physical human being and dying for us so we could be saved.

The true impact and importance of the oft-repeated scripture: “For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life” (John 3:16) becomes abundantly clear.

CHAPTER THREE

Is the Holy Spirit a Person?

We have seen that Jesus Christ is, was and always will be God. However, you can search the Bible from Genesis to Revelation and you will find no such Bible teaching with regard to the Holy Spirit. The Bible does not teach that the Holy Spirit is a third member of the God family or of a Trinity.

This is not a prejudiced anti-trinitarian opinion. It is a fact that is recognized even by Trinitarian theologians!

Discussing the evidence for the doctrine of the Trinity in the Bible, Dr. W. N. Clarke, writes: “The New Testament begins the work, but does not finish it; for it contains *no similar teachings* [like John 1:1-18, concerning the divinity of Christ], with *regard to the Holy Spirit*. The unique nature and mission, of Christ, are traced to a ground in the being of God; but similar ground for **the divineness of the Spirit is nowhere shown. Thought on the New Testament is never directed to that end.** Thus, the Scriptures take the first step toward a doctrine of essential trinity, or threeness in the being of one God, but they do not take that second step *by which alone the doctrine could be completed*” (*An Outline of Christian Theology*, p. 168) (author’s emphasis).

Theologians need to recognize that there is no biblical proof for the divinity or personality of the Spirit. In order to arrive at a doctrine of the Trinity, they must go outside of the Bible to develop an incomplete doctrine, which is false.

Karl Barth, one of the most noted theologians of the 20th century, admits that the church has gone beyond the Bible to arrive at its doctrine of the Trinity.

“The Bible lacks the express declaration that the Father, Son and Holy Spirit are of equal essence and therefore in an equal sense of God Himself. And the other express declaration is also lacking that God is God thus only thus, i.e., as the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit. These two express declarations which go beyond the witness of the Bible are twofold content of the church doctrine of the Trinity” (*Doctrine of the Word of God*, p. 437).

Since, as theologians recognize, the Bible is not the source of the Trinity doctrine, how can they square it with the Bible teachings, that inspired Scripture should be the source of doctrine? (II Tim. 3:16).

The answer is, they cannot square it with the Bible. They must freely admit the painful facts.

Chapter Three

The Spirit of God in the Bible

The personality of Jesus Christ is thoroughly provable from the Bible, but there is no such proof for a personality of the Holy Spirit. “The OT [Old Testament] clearly does not envisage God’s spirit as a person, neither in the strictly philosophical sense, nor in the Semitic sense. God’s spirit is simply God’s Power. If it is sometimes represented as being distinct for God, it is because the breath of Yahweh acts exteriorly (Isa. 48:16; 63:11; 32:15).” So say the authors of the *New Catholic Encyclopedia*.

But let them continue: “Very rarely do the OT writers attribute to God’s spirit emotions or intellectual activity (Isa. 63:10; Wis. 1:3-7). When such expressions are used, *they are mere figures of speech* that are explained by the facts that the *ruah* [Hebrew word for “Spirit”] was regarded also as the seat of intellectual acts and feeling (Gen. 41:8). Neither is there found in the OT or in rabbinical literature the notion that God’s spirit is an intermediary being between God and the world. This activity is proper to the angels, although to them is ascribed some of the activity that elsewhere is ascribed to the spirit of God” (*New Catholic Encyclopedia*, Vol. XIII, p. 574).

In the Old Testament, God’s Spirit is pictured as His power, by which the One who became Jesus Christ, as executive for the Father, created the entirety of the universe. These theologians also recognize that when the Spirit is spoken of as a person or in a personal way, the Bible writer is merely *personifying* the Spirit, as he would wisdom or any other attribute, *without the intent of declaring such personification a person or a separate being of the Godhead*.

Now, what about the New Testament? They say: “Although the NT [New Testament] concepts of the Spirit of God are largely a continuation of those of the OT, in the NT there is a gradual revelation that the Spirit of God is a person.”

But this would be true only if you are armed with a preconceived notion that God is a Trinity. We will see there are only a few scriptures that can even remotely be construed as presenting the Spirit as a person, and in each case only as the result of a grammatical misunderstanding.

But again, let us let the *New Catholic Encyclopedia* continue. “**The majority of NT texts reveal God’s spirit as something, not someone; this is especially seen in the parallelism between the spirit and the power of God.**”

Though theologians would like for the Bible to say that the Spirit is a person, they must admit that the majority of the scriptures connected with the topic show that it is *not someone*, but something. Even the personification of the Spirit is not proof of its personality.

Is the Holy Spirit a Person?

“When a quasi-personal activity is ascribed to God’s spirit, e.g., speaking, hindering, desiring, dwelling, (Acts 8:29; 16:7; Rom. 8:9), *one is not justified in concluding immediately that in these passages God’s spirit is regarded as a Person*; the same expressions are used in regard to rhetorically personified things or abstract ideas (see Rom. 6:6; 7:17). Thus, the context of the phrase ‘blasphemy against the spirit’ (Mt. 12:31; cf. Mt. 12:28; Lk. 11:20) shows that reference is being made to the power of God [the Father]” (*New Catholic Encyclopedia*, Vol. XIII, p. 575).

After such admissions, it is almost inconceivable that any theologian could still teach that the Spirit is a person. Yet, some do!

A Lesson in Greek Grammar

The one section of the scripture that most theologians believe describes the Spirit as a person is resolved by a grammar lesson in the Greek language. In the Greek language, like the Romance languages (Italian, Spanish, French and others), every noun possesses gender; that is, it is masculine, feminine or neuter. The gender of a word has nothing to do with whether it is really masculine or feminine; it is a grammatical tool.

Most Trinitarian theologians use the Gospel of John, Chapters 14, 15 and 16, as proof of their theory that the Spirit is a person. Here Jesus is recorded as referring to the Spirit as “the Comforter.” The pronoun “he” is used in connection with the word “comforter”—*parakletos*—however, the reason for the use of the personal pronoun “he” is for grammatical, not theological, or spiritual reasons.

All pronouns in Greek must agree in gender with the word to which they refer. Therefore, the pronoun “he” is used when referring to the Spirit as the *parakletos* or “Comforter.” The other New Testament writers use the word *pneuma*, which means “breath” or “spirit.” This is the Greek equivalent of *ruah*, the Hebrew word for “spirit” used in the Old Testament. *Pneuma* is a grammatically neuter word and is always represented by the pronoun “it.”

However, the translators of the King James Version, being swayed by the doctrine of the Trinity, have generally mistranslated the pronouns referring to *pneuma* as masculine. One instance where they did not mistranslate, is found in Romans 8:16. “The Spirit *itself* beareth witness with our spirit, that we are the children of God.”

John’s use of the *parakletos* is no proof the Spirit is a person. For if the simple gender of a noun were the basis for the personality of the Spirit, then the Spirit changed gender from the Old to the New Testament. The Hebrew word for “spirit” in the Old Testament can be found

Chapter Three

in the feminine gender in a majority of cases and in a masculine sense less often.

The fact that the word “spirit” is feminine in the Hebrew has led some theologians to believe that the Spirit was a feminine being of the Godhead. They believe in a Trinity of the Father, the Mother and the Son. Interestingly enough, the Trinitarians, who used the same kind of ploy to prove that the Spirit was a masculine being, are condemned by their own belief!

The Holy Spirit—God’s Begettal Power

What is the Spirit? As we saw earlier, theologians admit that the Spirit of God is the power of God. They have no reason to believe otherwise, unless they have a preconceived idea of a Trinity.

The Spirit, or Holy Spirit as it is called in the New Testament, was the power by which Jesus Christ was begotten. “Now the birth of Jesus Christ was on this wise: When as his mother Mary was espoused to Joseph, before they came together, she was found with the Child of the Holy Ghost [Spirit]” (Matt. 1:18).

When Joseph was about to put Mary away because she was pregnant, “the angel of the Lord appeared unto him in a dream, saying, Joseph, thou son of David, fear not to take unto thee Mary thy wife: for that which is conceived in her is of the Holy Ghost [Spirit]” (Matt. 1:20).

Jesus was begotten in the womb of Mary by the power of the Holy Spirit. He was literally born with God’s Spirit in His mind. He became the Son of God and died for us that we might have the same opportunity to be born into the family of God.

The Apostle Paul plainly taught this vital scriptural truth in Romans 8:16. “The Spirit *itself* beareth witness with our spirit, that we are the children of God.” Paul did not mean this in some sentimental sort of way, as he goes on to show in the next verse. “And if the children, then heirs; heirs of God, and joint-heirs with Christ...”

Paul declares that Jesus Christ is the heir of all things in Hebrews 1:2. We then have the opportunity, if we have God’s Spirit in our minds, to inherit all things with Jesus Christ.

The Spirit of God unites with our minds, and we are begotten (or Conceived) again—this time spiritually, not as we originally were physically. We then become a new person.

“Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, which according to his abundant mercy hath **begotten us again** unto the lively hope by the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the Dead” (I Pet. 1:3). Verse 23 says “Being begotten again, not corruptible seed, but of the

Is the Holy Spirit a Person?

incorruptible, by the word of God, which liveth and abideth forever.”

The Holy Spirit impregnates us with God’s nature. That spiritual begettall imbues us with the nature and mind of God. Throughout our Christian lives, we continue to grow and to develop in the understanding and mind of God until we are finally born into the God family and made immortal at the return of Jesus Christ to this earth (I Cor. 15:49-52).

How can we obtain this Spirit? The Apostle Peter gave the answer on the day of Pentecost (Acts 2). When Peter was asked at the end of his sermon what to do, he answered: “Repent, and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for remission of sins, and ye shall receive the gift of the Holy Ghost [Spirit]” (Acts 2:38).

Here again, we can see why the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit are mentioned in the “baptismal formula” in Matthew 28:19. God the Father is the One who brings us to repentance. Jesus Christ—God the Son—is the one who died so we can be forgiven and cleansed of our sins. The Holy Spirit is the power by which God the Father, begets us.

How plain the truth of the Bible is. The Holy Spirit is the power of God. It is not a person. It is the power by which we are begotten that we might become sons of God.

CHAPTER FOUR

God Is a Family

Early theologians were driven by the need to explain the appearance of Jesus Christ. Some found their explanation by fabricating the Trinity doctrine. But since God is *not* a Trinity, and since Jesus Christ is God, what is the relationship in the Godhead? Is God one, or are there two separate Gods and Christianity, therefore, polytheistic?

In Chapter Two, we found that the Bible teaches that Jesus Christ is the God of the Old Testament. We found that he became flesh and came to this earth to die for mankind. He is called the Son of God and He calls God His Father. By now, the relationship should be clear, God is a family.

We found in Chapter Three that we can become begotten sons of God by the impregnation of God's Spirit—again a family relationship.

When we understand that God is a family and that God is reproducing after His kind, we are no longer confronted with the problems inherent in the Trinity doctrine, nor are we faced with the problem of worshipping many gods.

There is only one God family. Yet, there are presently two members, and in the future, there will be *many more*. Jesus was called “the firstborn of *many brethren*” (Rom. 8:29).

Look at yourself. Whether married or single, you are part of a family. You have parents and maybe even children or grandchildren of your own. Yet, you are still one family.

It was God who created man and put him on the earth. He created marriage and the family relationship as a type of His divine family.

God's Name Is Plural

The Hebrew word for “God” used in Genesis 1:1 and 26 is *Elohim*. It is plural in form. Though this word taken by itself does not prove that there are two beings in the Godhead, it allows for the plurality that is clearly indicated in other parts of the Bible.

By what we understand from the rest of the Bible, this word *Elohim* can act like our English words “family, group, church or crowd.” These words often require a singular verb form, but they all contain more than one member.

The Apostle Paul exemplifies this for us in I Corinthians 12:20. Speaking about the Church he says: “But now are they many members, yet one body.”

God is a family. Presently, there are two members in that God fam-

God Is a Family

ily, God the Father—the Head of the family, the lawgiver—and Jesus Christ the Son—the Spokesman, the Creator. But the word *Elohim* is not just dual. There is a dual number in Hebrew, but this would have to be *Elohim*. The God family, however, is destined to be truly plural and to have many members. This is what the word *Elohim* describes and allows.

Belief in a Trinity clouds the real purpose that God has in store for mankind. If we are taught that God is a closed Trinity of three persons, we lose sight of the fact that God's real purpose is to create many more members of the God family.

Look at the creation account in Genesis 1. God created fish after the fish kind, birds after the bird kind, and animals after the animal kind. But in verse 26, God made man—*not* after any animal kinds, but after the God kind—in God's image and likeness. "And God [Hebrew, *Elohim*] said, let *us* make man in *our image*, after our *likeness* and let them have dominion over the fish in the sea, and over the fowl of the air, and over the cattle, and over all the earth, and over every creeping thing that creepeth upon the earth."

God created man in their own image. Man is greater than the rest of the creation, because God gave him mind power. He has dominion over all the creatures. Man is not an animal. He was created in the image of God—after the God kind.

Taught in the New Testament

The Apostle John understood God's plans for mankind. Notice what he wrote in I John 3:1: "Behold, what manner of love the Father [here is the family relationship—not a closed trinity] hath bestowed upon us, that we should be called the sons of God: therefore the world knoweth us not, because it knew him not. Beloved, now are [already] we the [begotten] sons of God, and it doth not yet appear what we shall be: *but we know that when he shall appear we shall be like him.*" We are the *begotten* sons now, and will be *born* sons of God at the resurrection.

It is clearly God's plan to bring many sons into His family. "For it became him [God the Father], for whom are all things, and by whom are all things, *in bringing many sons unto the glory*, to make the captain of the salvation [Jesus Christ] perfect through sufferings" (Heb. 2:10).

The pages of the Bible are filled with God's great purpose for man. And yet, the majority of this world's professing Christians are blinded to this central biblical truth. Why? Because Satan has deceived the whole world (Rev. 12:9). God is not a closed Trinity, God is a family—family in which you can become a member.

Chapter Four

Why the Deception?

Why has Satan deceived the world with the doctrine of the Trinity? Because he doesn't want *you* to rule in his place! Satan was originally created to carry out God's rule on earth. But, he refused to serve the Creator and even fomented a rebellion to dislodge God from His position as Ruler over the whole universe (Ezek. 28:11-19; Isa. 14:12-14). A third of the angels united with Lucifer in that rebellion and were cast back down to this earth with him (Rev. 12:3-4)—having forever disqualified themselves and Satan from ruling in the government of God. However, Satan and his demonic cohorts remain in office until Christ actually returns.

Yet Satan and his demonic cohorts, being disqualified, do not want anyone else to ever take their place. For this reason, they have tried to hide the breathtakingly beautiful truth of God from the world for nearly 6,000 years. If they can succeed in making you believe in the Trinity, you will be deceived into thinking that the Godhead consists of only three persons. You would then never in your wildest dreams imagine that you were created to be born into the God family and to actually have a part in ruling this Earth!

Satan wants you to think that God is a limited Trinity and not a growing family or kingdom into which we may enter, through the grace of God.

That is the truth of the Trinity. God's family isn't closed to mankind as Satan wants you believe.

It is wide open to you and your family and all mankind. You can be made in the exact likeness of God at Christ's return!

Christian Biblical Church of God
P.O. Box 1442
Hollister, California 95024-1442 USA

www.cbcbg.org
www.biblicaltruthministries.org

A Summary of Proofs that God Is Not a Trinity

Historical Proof

1) The Trinity teaching originated in the latter half of the second century—a hundred years *after* the New Testament had been written and canonized.

2) The Trinity doctrine was officially adopted at the Council of Constantinople in 381 AD.

3) A 4th-century spurious addition was made to I John 5:7: "... in heaven, the Father, the Word, and the Holy Ghost: and these three are one...." *Peake's Commentary* says, "No respectable Greek [manuscript] contains it. Appearing first in a late 4th century Latin text, it entered the Vulgate and finally the NT of Erasmus [and eventually the KJV]" (p. 1038). Numerous Bible commentaries agree; most modern translations omit the passage.

I John 5:6-8 should read: "This is He Who came by water and blood—Jesus the Christ; not by water only, but by water and blood. And it is the Spirit that bears witness because the Spirit is the truth. For there are three that bear witness on the earth: the Spirit, and the water, and the blood; and these three *witness* unto the one *truth*."

Biblical Proof

1) The word "trinity" is not in the Bible.

2) The Holy Spirit was "poured out" on Pentecost (Acts 2:18)—and was "poured out" upon Gentiles (Acts 10:45). A person is not "poured out."

3) Acts 2:2: "And suddenly *there* came from heaven a sound like *the* rushing of a powerful wind, and filled the whole house" A person doesn't sound like a mighty wind, and cannot fill a house.

4) The Holy Spirit appeared as cloven tongues—something a person cannot do (Acts 2:3).

5) Christ was conceived by the Holy Spirit (Matt. 1:18, 20). If the Holy Spirit were a person, that would make the Holy Spirit Christ's Father!

6) The Holy Spirit is not a person; it is the *power* God uses to accomplish His work.

7) Sometimes Scripture *personifies* a thing or quality as if it were a person: "Wisdom cries outside; she utters her voice in the streets." (See Prov. 1:20-33.) Another example refers to

A Summary of Proofs that God Is Not a Trinity

“understanding”: “Lift up your voice for understanding; if you seek her as silver, and search *for* her as for hidden treasures....” (See Prov. 2:3-4.) The use of “she” and “her” does not make wisdom or understanding a person. Nor can the use of “he” in the KJV, etc. make the Holy Spirit a person.

8) Christ said, “I and My Father are one” (John 10:30; 17:21-22). He never mentioned the Holy Spirit as being one with Him and His Father.

9) “The Son of man ... came to the Ancient of Days, and they brought Him near before Him” (Dan. 7:13). Daniel, a loyal servant of God, spoke of only *two* members of the Godhead.

10) “THE LORD said to my Lord, ‘Sit at My right hand...’” (Psalm 110:1). David, a man after God’s own heart (Acts 13:22), spoke of only *two* members of the Godhead.

11) In most of his letters Paul gave salutations from God the Father and Christ—but never included the Holy Spirit. If the Holy Spirit were a person and a member of a triune Godhead, Paul would have sent greetings from the Holy Spirit as well.

12) In three of Paul’s letters, God the Father and Christ are referred to as persons—but the Holy Spirit is never referred to as such (Col. 1:3; I Thess. 1:1; Hebrews 1:1-2).

13) Matthew 28:19 reads: “Go ... baptizing them into the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit.” The use of “Holy Spirit” here in no way makes it a person.

14) In John’s vision of the throne of God (Rev. 4-5), he saw only the Father and the Son. He did not see a third person designated as “God, the Holy Spirit.”

15) Satan’s religions teach the doctrine of the *Trinity*; God teaches the *Family*.

16) God is an open *Family*—not a closed, triangular Trinity. Converted, begotten believers can be *born into* the *Family of God* at the first resurrection.

Exegesis for the Translation of the Phrase “the Holy Spirit” as Antecedent in John 14, 15 and 16

by
Fred R. Coulter

In this translation, the true scriptural understanding of the Holy Spirit is presented. The Greek New Testament reveals that the Holy Spirit is not a person. Rather, it is the power of God, which is imparted as the gift of God to everyone who repents of sin and accepts the sacrifice of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of sin. Upon true repentance, baptism and the laying on of hands, God the Father puts the power of the Holy Spirit within each true Christian, thereby making him or her His begotten child. This process is called conversion. However, it is not until the resurrection, when Jesus Christ returns to the earth, that all those who have died in the faith, together with those truly converted Christians who are still alive, will be born again. They will be transformed from fleshly human beings to glorified children of God and will reign with Jesus Christ as kings and priests in the Kingdom of God.

In his account of the begetting and birth of Jesus Christ, Luke clearly describes the function of the Holy Spirit as the power of God. Note the angel Gabriel’s message to the virgin Mary: “ ‘And behold, you shall conceive in *your* womb and give birth to a son; and you shall call His name Jesus. He shall be great, and shall be called *the* Son of *the* Highest; and *the* Lord God shall give Him the throne of David, His forefather; and He shall reign over the house of Jacob into the ages, and of His kingdom there shall be no end.’ But Mary said to the angel, ‘How shall this be, since I have not had sexual relations with a man?’ And the angel answered *and* said to her, ‘**The Holy Spirit** [Greek πνευμα αγιον *pneuma agion*] **shall come upon you, and the power** [Greek δυναμις *dunamis*] **of the Highest shall overshadow you; and for this reason, the Holy One being begotten in you shall be called the Son of God** ’ ” (Luke 1:31-35).

Just before Jesus Christ ascended into heaven, He told His disciples that they would receive power from the Father: “And while *they* were assembled with *Him*, He commanded them not to depart from Jerusalem but to ‘await the promise of the Father, which,’ *He said*, ‘you have heard of Me. For John indeed baptized with water, but, you shall be baptized with *the* Holy Spirit [Greek πνευματι αγιω *pneumati agioo*] after not many days ... **But you yourselves shall receive power** [Greek δυναμις *dunamis*] **when the Holy Spirit** [Greek του αγιου πνευματος *tuu hagiou pneumatos*, neuter gender] **has come upon you, and you shall be My witnesses, both in Jerusalem and in all Judea and Samaria, and unto the ends of the earth** ’ ” (Acts 1:4-5, 8).

Exegesis for John 14, 15 & 16

In the New Testament, the Greek noun *pneuma*, which is translated “spirit,” is in the neuter gender. Likewise, the Greek noun phrases that are translated “the Spirit,” “the Holy Spirit,” and “the Holy Ghost” are always and only in the neuter gender. No masculine gender noun is used anywhere in the New Testament to designate the Holy Spirit, but only the Father and the Son. The use of the neuter gender in every scripture reveals that the Holy Spirit is not a person but the power that emanates from both the Father and the Son.

The forms of the noun *pneuma* that are found in the Greek text of the New Testament are as follows:

- 1) **πνεῦμα** *pneuma* spirit
- 2) **το πνεῦμα** *to pneuma* the spirit
- 3) **το πνεύματος** *to pneumatos* the spirit
- 4) **πνεῦμα ἅγιον** *pneuma hagion* spirit holy
- 5) **το ἅγιον πνεῦμα** *to hagion pneuma* the holy spirit
- 6) **το ἅγιον πνεύματος** *to hagion pneumatos* the holy spirit
- 7) **το πνεῦμα το ἅγιον** *to pneuma to hagion* the spirit the holy

Exegesis For the Translation of “The Holy Spirit”

The Greek noun *pneuma*, in all its various forms, is always and only neuter in gender. Likewise, all pronouns that refer to *pneuma* are always and only neuter in gender. If the Holy Spirit were a person, the nouns and pronouns in the Greek text would have to be written in the masculine gender, as are all the nouns and pronouns that refer to God the Father and Jesus Christ. However, nowhere in the Greek text of the New Testament is the Holy Spirit ever designated by a noun or pronoun in the masculine gender.

It is absolutely incorrect to translate any form or pronoun of **πνεῦμα** *pneuma* in the masculine gender. Unfortunately, because most translators believe in the doctrine of the trinity, they have deliberately and wrongly used the English masculine gender when translating the Greek neuter gender nouns and pronouns pertaining to the Holy Spirit. They have not made such a flagrant, determined mistranslation of the Greek neuter gender for any other word in the New Testament.

The following five key verses in the Gospel of John that have been incorrectly translated in the King James Version:

1) John 14:17, *KJV*: “**Even the Spirit of truth; whom** the world cannot receive, because it seeth **him** not, neither knoweth **him**: but ye know **him**; for **he** dwelleth with you, and shall be in you.”

“**The Spirit of truth**” is translated from the Greek phrase

Exegesis for John 14, 15 & 16

το πνευμα της αληθειας *to pneuma tees aleetheias*—literally, “the Spirit of the truth.” This noun phrase is in the neuter gender. The pronoun “**whom**” is translated from the neuter relative pronoun ο, and should accordingly be translated “which.” If the Greek text were expressing the masculine gender, the masculine relative pronoun ος would have been used instead of the neuter relative pronoun ο.

The three personal pronouns translated “**him**” are incorrectly translated into the masculine gender from the Greek neuter personal pronoun αυτο *auto*, which is properly translated “it.” If “the Spirit” were a person rather than the power of God, the verse would read ο πνευματος, rather than the neuter το πνευμα. However, there is no such masculine noun anywhere in the Greek New Testament. If there were such a masculine gender noun, the masculine pronoun αυτος *autos* would be used instead of the neuter pronoun αυτο *auto*. Translators who know and understand the rules of Greek grammar do not mistake the neuter pronoun αυτο *auto* for the masculine pronoun αυτος. Thus, the translation of the neuter pronoun αυτο in John 14:17 into the masculine personal pronoun “**him**” is completely incorrect. The neuter pronoun αυτο is used twice in this verse: “because it [the world] perceives **it** [αυτο *auto*] not, nor knows **it** [αυτο *auto*].”

The KJV translation of John 14:17 also violates another rule of Greek grammar. In the Greek text, a noun that serves as the subject of a verse often governs a number of verbs. In John 14:17, the noun phrase το πνευμα της αληθειας *to pneuma tees aleetheias*, meaning “the Spirit of the truth,” is the subject. Since the noun *pneuma* is neuter in gender, the subjects of all verbs that it governs should be translated in the neuter gender. In John 14:17, two third person verbs are governed by this noun. In the first instance, the translators have incorrectly translated the third person verb μενει *memei* as “**he dwelleth**,” rather than “**it dwelleth**.” In the second instance, the subject of the verb εσται *estai*, “[**it**] shall be,” was not translated, making it appear that “**he**” is the subject of both Greek verbs.

A correct translation of John 14:17 should read: “*Even* the Spirit of the truth, **which** [ο] the world cannot receive because it perceives **it** [αυτο *auto*] not, nor knows **it** [αυτο *auto*]; but you know **it** [αυτο *auto*] because **it dwells** [verb μενει *memei*] with you, and **shall be** [verb εσται *estai*] within you.”

2) John 15:26, *KJV*: “But when **the Comforter** is come, **whom** I will send unto you from the Father, *even* **the Spirit of truth, which** proceedeth from the Father, **he** shall testify of me.”

The word “which,” referring to “**the Spirit of truth**,” is correctly translated from the neuter pronoun ο. In John 14:17, the translators of the

Exegesis for John 14, 15 & 16

KJV had incorrectly rendered this neuter pronoun as “whom.” However, in John 15:26, they have correctly rendered the neuter relative pronoun *ο* as “which.”

The descriptive noun “**the Comforter**” is correctly translated from the masculine Greek noun *ο παρακλητος* *ho parakleetos*. While this masculine noun is used to describe a vital function of the Holy Spirit, it does not designate the Holy Spirit, or “**the Spirit of the truth**,” as a person. A descriptive noun never changes the gender of the principal noun. For example: Jesus said that He is “the true vine” (John 15:1). The Greek word translated “vine” is the feminine noun *η αμπιλος* *he ampilos*. The use of this feminine noun to describe Jesus Christ does not change His masculine gender to the feminine gender. In exactly the same way, the use of the masculine noun *ο παρακλητος* *ho parakleetos* to describe a function of the Holy Spirit does not alter the fact that the Holy Spirit is neuter. Because the Holy Spirit is neuter in gender—not masculine—there is no basis in the New Testament Greek text for mistranslating and interpreting the Holy Spirit as a person.

Although the Holy Spirit is not a person, it is in accord with Greek grammar to translate the pronoun *ον* *on* as “**whom**” because its antecedent is the masculine descriptive noun *ο παρακλητος* *ho parakleetos*, “**the Comforter**.” However, it is misleading to translate the personal pronoun *ον* *on* as “whom” when the principal noun is *το πνευμα της αληθειας* *to pneuma tees aleetheias*, which is neuter in gender.

The last part of this verse has been translated: “... **he** shall testify of me.” The use of the personal pronoun “**he**” once again gives the impression that the Holy Spirit is a person. However, that is not the meaning of the Greek text. The word “**he**” is translated from the Greek word *εκεινος* *ekeinos*, which means “that” or “that one.” As with the pronoun *ον* *on*, the antecedent of *εκεινος* *ekeinos* is *ο παρακλητος* *ho parakleetos*, “the Comforter,” which is a descriptive noun. Although it is masculine in gender, the principal noun is *το πνευμα της αληθειας* *to pneuma tees aleetheias*, which is neuter. The gender of the principal noun always takes precedence over the gender of the descriptive noun. Therefore, *εκεινος* *ekeinos* has been translated “... **that one** shall bear witness of Me” in order to reflect the true meaning of the Greek text.

The translation of John 15:26 should read: “But when the Comforter has come, **which** I will send to you from the Father, *even* **the Spirit of the truth**, **which** proceeds from the Father, **that one** shall bear witness of Me.”

3) John 14:26, KJV: “But the Comforter, *which* is the Holy

Exegesis for John 14, 15 & 16

Ghost, **whom** the Father will send in my name, **he** shall teach you all things, and bring all things to your remembrance, whatsoever I have said unto you.” As in John 15:26, the descriptive noun *ho parakleetos*, “the Comforter,” is used with the principal noun *to pneuma*, “the Spirit.” In the Greek text, the verse begins with these words: ο δε παρακλητος, το πνευμα το αγιον, ο ... *ho de parakleetos, to pneuma to hagion, o ...* The noun phrase *το πνευμα το αγιον* *to pneuma to hagion*, “the Holy Spirit,” is the antecedent of the neuter pronoun ο, which has been incorrectly translated “whom” in the KJV. Since ο is a neuter relative pronoun, it should be translated “which.” If the Greek text contained the masculine pronoun ος, it should be proper to translate it as “whom” to reflect the masculine gender. However, the Greek text uses the neuter form of the pronoun, not the masculine form.

The pronoun “**he**” in this verse is translated from the Greek *εκεινος* *ekeinos* and should be translated “**that one**.”

The following translation of John 14:26 conveys the precise meaning of the Greek text: “But *when* the Comforter comes, even the Holy Spirit, **which** the Father will send in My name, **that one** shall teach you all things, and shall bring to your remembrance everything that I have told you.”

The translators of the KJV have also used the masculine pronoun “**he**” in Verse 16 of this same chapter: “And I will pray the Father, and he shall give you another **Comforter**, that **he** may abide with you for ever” (John 14:16, *KJV*). As Verse 17 shows, “the Comforter” is describing the Holy Spirit, or “the Spirit of truth,” which is translated from *to pneuma tees aleetheias*, the same noun phrase that is used in John 15:26. Since *pneuma* is the principal noun, the meaning of the pronoun is governed by its neuter gender, not by the masculine gender of *parakleetos*, or “Comforter,” which is a descriptive noun. This translation of John 14:16 accurately conveys the meaning of the Greek text: “And I will ask the Father, and He shall give you another **Comforter**, that **it** may be with you throughout the age.”

4) John 16:13, *KJV*: “Howbeit when **he**, the Spirit of truth, is come, **he** will guide you into all truth: for **he** shall not speak of himself; but whatsoever **he** shall hear, *that* shall **he** speak: and **he** will show you things to come.”

All six occurrences of the pronoun “**he**” in this verse refer to “the Spirit of truth,” which is translated from *το πνευμα της αληθειας* *to pneuma tees aleetheias*. Since *pneuma* is neuter in gender, all six pronouns should accordingly be translated in the neuter gender. The first “**he**” is an incorrect rendering of the Greek *εκεινος* *ekeinos* and should be translated “**that one**.” The remaining five occurrences of “**he**” are all subjects of verbs that are governed by the neuter noun *pneuma* and

Exegesis for John 14, 15 & 16

should be translated “it.”

The correct meaning of John 16:13 is reflected in this translation: “However, when **that one** has come, *even* the Spirit of the truth, **it will lead** [verb *οδηγησει odeegeesei*] you into all truth because **it shall not speak** [verb *λαλησει lalēesei*] from itself, but whatever **it shall hear** [verb *ακουση akousee*] **it shall speak** [verb *λαλησει lalēesei*]. And **it shall disclose** [verb *αναγγειλει anaggelei*] to you the things to come.”

5) John 16:14, KJV: “**He** shall glorify me: for **he shall receive** of mine, and **shall show** it unto you.”

As in John 16:13, the first “**he**” is translated from the Greek *εκεινος ekeinos*, meaning “that one.” Since the antecedent of *ekeinos* is “the Spirit of truth” in Verse 13, both the noun and its pronoun are neuter in gender. The second “**he**,” which is the subject of the verb “**shall receive**,” is governed by “the Spirit of truth,” or *το πνευμα της αληθειας to pneuma tes aletheias*, and should also be translated in the neuter gender. The verb “**shall show**,” which the translators of the KJV have rendered as a compound verb with “**shall receive**,” is also governed by “the Spirit of truth,” and should accordingly be translated in the neuter gender.

This translation of John 16:14 correctly follows the Greek text: “**That one** shall glorify Me because **it shall disclose** [verb *αναγγειλει anaggelei*] to you *the things that it receives* [verb *λημεται leepsetai*] from Me.”

As the New Testament reveals, the Holy Spirit is not a person; rather it is the power of God. All references to the Holy Spirit in the Greek text are in the neuter gender. The use of the descriptive noun “the Comforter,” which is masculine in gender, does not alter the neuter gender of the Holy Spirit. There is no basis in the New Testament for the claim that the Holy Spirit is a third person in a trinity.

Eminent Greek Scholar Refutes Personality of the Holy Spirit

The use of the pronoun *εκεινος ekeinos*, “that one,” does not affirm that the Holy Spirit has personality or is a person. The arguments concerning *ekeinos*, attempting to make the Holy Spirit a third person in the Godhead, are only unsubstantiated theological theories that are not based on the true meaning of the Greek. In fact, there is no place in the New Testament where the Holy Spirit is designated as a third person of a trinity. These fallacious arguments begin with the premise that the Godhead is a so-called “trinity”—a word found nowhere in the New Testament. Rather than seeking the truth of the

Exegesis for John 14, 15 & 16

Scriptures, the proponents of this theory must resort to twisted interpretations of Scripture in order to give a plausible, but false, explanation. However, the Greek New Testament does not teach that the Holy Spirit is a person, nor a third member of a triune Godhead. Rather, it teaches that the Holy Spirit is the power of God that He uses to accomplish His will.

The advocates of attributing personality to the Holy Spirit use several key scriptures to attempt to prove their theory. One verse in question is John 15:26, which reads: “But when the Comforter has come, which I will send to you from the Father, *even* the Spirit of the truth, which proceeds from the Father, **that one** shall bear witness of Me.”

In a detailed refutation of their claims, the eminent New Testament Greek scholar and syntax expert, Daniel B. Wallace wrote of this verse: “The use of **εκεινος** [a masculine pronoun, *that one*] here [in John 15:26] is frequently regarded by students of the NT to be an affirmation of the personality of the Spirit. Such an approach is based on the assumption that the antecedent of **εκεινος** [*that one*] is **πνευμα** [*spirit* a neuter noun]: [It is claimed], ‘the masculine pronoun **εκεινος** [*that one*] is [also] used in John 14:26 and 16:13-14 to refer to the neuter noun **πνευμα** [*spirit*] to emphasize the personality of the Holy Spirit’ ” (Wallace, *Greek Grammar Beyond the Basics*, p. 331). In Footnote 42, Wallace noted: “The view is especially popular among theologians, not infrequently becoming the mainstay [the only basis] in their argument for the personality of the Spirit” (Ibid., p. 331).

“But this [conclusion] is erroneous. In all these Johannine passages, **πνευμα** [*spirit*] is appositional to a masculine noun. The gender of **εκεινος** [*that one*] thus has nothing to do with the natural [neuter] gender of **πνευμα** [*spirit*]. The antecedent of **εκεινος**, [*that one*] in each case, is **παρακλητος** [*comforter*, a masculine noun], not **πνευμα** [*spirit*, a neuter noun]. John 14:26 reads: ο παρακλητος, το πνευμα το αγιον ο πεμψει ο πατηρ εν τω ονοματι μου, **εκεινος** υμας διδαξειπαντα ... (‘the Comforter, the Holy Spirit whom [which] the Father sends in my name, **that one** will teach you all things’). **πνευμα** [*spirit*] not only is appositional to **παρακλητος** [*comforter*] but the relative pronoun that follows it [**πνευμα** (*spirit*)] is neuter! This hardly assists the grammatical argument for the Spirit’s personality. In John 16:13-14 the immediate context is deceptive: οταν δε ελθη **εκεινος**, το πνευμα της αληθειας, οδηγησει υμας εν τη αληθεια παση **εκεινος** εμε δοξασει ... (‘whenever **that one** comes—the Spirit of truth—he [*it*] will guide you in all truth....**he** [*that one*] will glorify me ...’). The **εκεινος** [*that one*] [in these verses] reaches back to v 7, where **παρακλητος** [*comforter*] is mentioned. Thus, since **παρακλητος** [*comforter*] is masculine, so is the

Exegesis for John 14, 15 & 16

pronoun [εκεινος “that one” is masculine]. Although one might argue that the Spirit’s personality is in view in these passages, the view must be based on the nature of a παρακλητος [comforter] and the things said about the Comforter, not on any supposed grammatical subtleties [concerning το πνευμα το αγιον “the Spirit of the truth,” which is neuter gender]. **Indeed, it is difficult to find any text [in the New Testament] in which πνευμα [spirit] is grammatically referred to with the masculine gender [because there are not any]”** (Wallace, *Greek Grammar Beyond the Basics*, pp. 331-332, some bold emphasis and all bracketed comments added).

Wallace added further comments in related footnotes. Concerning John 16:13, he wrote: “Although translations of v. 13 such as that of the NRSV may be misleading as to what the subject of the sentence is (‘When the Spirit of truth comes, he will guide you...’), their objective is not to be a handbook for Greek students” (Ibid., *Footnote 43*, p. 332). To paraphrase, Wallace is saying that John 16:13 in the NRSV is an incorrect translation that does not follow the Greek text.

A correct translation of John 16:13-14 reads: “However, when **that one** has come, *even* the Spirit of the truth, it will lead you into all truth because it shall not speak from itself, but whatever it shall hear it shall speak. And it shall disclose to you the things to come. **That one** shall glorify Me because it shall disclose to you *the things that* it receives from Me.”

Wallace further refuted the notion that personality of the Holy Spirit can be found in the Greek New Testament. In another extended footnote he wrote: “Besides the Johannine texts, three other passages are occasionally used for this: Eph 1:14; 2 Thess 2:6-7; and 1 John 5:7. All of these have problems. In Eph 1:14 ος εστιν αρραβων [which is the earnest] refers back to το πνευματι [the spirit] (v 13), but the masculine relative pronoun [ος he/which] (v.l.) is easily explained without resorting to seeing the theological motifs [of attempting to prove personality of the Spirit] ... In 2 Thess 2:6-7 πνευμα [spirit] is nowhere mentioned; το κατεχον/ο κατεχων [holding back/one Who is restraining] are often assumed to both refer to the Holy Spirit. But in spite of the fact that there is much to commend this view, it certainly cannot use clear natural-gender passages in support [of personality for the Holy Spirit], nor can such a known *crux interpretum* [critical interpretation] become the basis for such a syntactical point. [In other words, such an interpretation is contrary to the Greek.] First John 5:7 is perhaps the most plausible of the passages enlisted. The masculine participle in τρεις εισιν οι μαρτυρουντες [three that bear witness] refers to το πνευμα και το υδωρ και το αιμα [the Spirit and the water and the blood] (v 8), all neuter nouns. Some see this as an oblique reference to the

Exegesis for John 14, 15 & 16

Spirit's personality ... but the fact that the author [John] has personified water and blood, turning them into witnesses along with the Spirit, may be enough to account for [the use of] the masculine gender [plural participle *μαρτυροῦντες*—*bear witness*]. This interpretation also has in its behalf the allusion to Deut. 19:15 (the necessity of 'two or three witnesses'), for in the OT the testimony only of males was acceptable. Thus, the elder [the apostle John] may be subtly indicating (via the masculine participle) that the Spirit, water and blood are all valid witnesses" (Ibid., *Footnote 44*, p. 332, bracketed comments and some bold emphasis added).

When the context of I John 5:6-9 is included, it is clear that Wallace is quite correct: "This is He Who came by water and blood—Jesus the Christ; not by water only, but by water and blood. And it is the Spirit that **bears witness** [neuter singular participle] because the Spirit is the truth. For there are **three that bear witness** [masculine plural participle] on the earth: the Spirit, and the water, and the blood [all neuter nouns]; and these three *witness* unto the one *truth* [that Jesus was God manifested in the flesh and died for the sins of the world]. If we accept the witness of men, the witness of God is superior. For this is the witness of God, which He has witnessed [through the Spirit, the water and the blood] concerning His Son."

In verse 6 "the Spirit **that bears witness**" is translated from the neuter singular participle, *μαρτυροῦν* *marturoun*. If John had intended to attribute personality to the Holy Spirit, he would have used a masculine participle, but he did not. Therefore, the shift to the masculine plural participle *μαρτυροῦντες* *marturountes* in verse 7 does not by any means constitute attributing personality to the Spirit. Moreover, if the use of the masculine plural participle in verse 7 did, in fact, attribute personality to the Holy Spirit, then it would also have attributed personality to the water and the blood. However, no such argument has ever been made. Wallace's analysis of the three witnesses in verse 7 with John's use of the masculine participle is correct.

Proper analysis and exegesis of these critical verses clearly reveals that the Holy Spirit does not have personality. Therefore, the Holy Spirit cannot be a third person in a triune Godhead. The doctrine that the Godhead is a trinity of three persons is found nowhere in the Old or New Testaments.

Finally, the New Testament reveals that there are only two Persons in the Godhead—God the Father and Jesus Christ. The Holy Spirit is revealed to be the power by which God accomplishes His will. There is no basis in the New Testament for the claim that the Holy Spirit is the third person in a trinity.

Christian Biblical Church of God Offices:

Australia

Biblical Truth Ministries
GPO 1574
Sydney 2001
Australia

Canada

Post Office Box 125
Brockville, Ontario K6V 5V2
Canada

New Zealand

Post Office Box 242
Waihi 2981
New Zealand

Republic of South Africa

Post Office Box 2624
Wilro Park
1731
Rep. of South Africa

United Kingdom

Post Office Box 8224
Witham CM8 1WZ
United Kingdom

United States

Post Office Box 1442
Hollister, California 95024-1442

www.cbcbg.org
www.biblicaltruthministries.org