

# **Mysteries of God**

## **What is God?**

The heavens declare the glory of God; And the firmament shows His handiwork. (Psalm 19:1)

For this reason I bow my knees to the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, from whom the whole family in heaven and earth is named, (Ephesians 3:14-15)

**Bob Thiel Ph.D.**

# Mysteries of God

By Bob Thiel, Ph.D.

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Art: Front cover NASA Hubble Space Telescope captures the chaotic activity atop a three-light-year-tall pillar of gas and dust that is being eaten away by the brilliant light from nearby bright stars in a tempestuous stellar nursery called the Carina Nebula.

Back cover photo from Yale University Art Gallery via Wikipedia.

*Scriptural quotes are often taken from Roman Catholic and Eastern Orthodox approved Bibles like the Challoner Douay-Rheims (DRB), Original Rheims NT of 1582 (RNT 1582), New Jerusalem Bible (NJB), Eastern Orthodox Bible (EOB), Orthodox Study Bible (OSB), New American Bible (NAB), Revised Edition (NABRE), English Standard Version-Catholic Edition (ESVCE), Catholic Public Domain Version (DPDV), plus Protestant versions like the King James Version (KJV), NET Bible (NET), Literal Standard Version (LSV), and the New King James Version (NKJV)—used by permission—and some other translations are used such as the A Faithful Version (AFV). When two sets of initials are shown with slashes (/) between, that signifies the translation is identical in those versions. The capitalized term ‘Catholic’ most often refers to the Roman Catholic Church in quotes. The use of these brackets { } in this book means that this author inserted something, normally like a scriptural reference, into a quote. Note: although early texts from post-New Testament writers are not scripture, and some were not preserved as written (as some were tampered with), overall they give clues and other information on what early Christians and other professors of Christ believed.*

## About the Author

The author, Dr. Bob Thiel, was baptized, took catechism classes, was confirmed, and raised Roman Catholic as a child. He also attended Roman Catholic school for part of his elementary school years, studied Latin in high school and later attended Salem Bible Church. From his youth, he has always striven to hold to the original Christian faith.

After seeing shockingly major scriptural issues with Roman Catholic and Protestant teachings, he was later baptized by a Church of God (COG) minister in 1977. He was confirmed as a member of the “original catholic church” in 2008 by formerly Armenian Apostolic Orthodox catholic, but then original apostolic catholic Church of God clergyman evangelist, Dibar Apartian in France. Dr. Thiel later had hands laid on him related to ordination in 2011 and 2017 from other long-time ordained COG ministers (Gaylyn Bonjour, Evans Ochieng, and Samuel Gyeabour).

Though interested in church history all his life, this interest intensified after one of his numerous trips to Vatican City, which then led to his formal studies in church history. Dr. Thiel also made numerous trips to other locations (such as Greece, Israel, and Turkey) where he also learned about early Christianity as well as aspects of the Eastern Orthodox Church. He has a graduate degree in information systems (M.S., USC) along with doctorates in nutrition science (Ph.D. UIU) and early Christianity (Th.D., TGSAT).

The Bible shows that Jesus was attacked for His not accepting certain established religious traditions which conflicted with scripture (Matthew 15:1-9), and because of false statements about Him (e.g. John 8:41b). Jesus’ response to those providing false statements was:

<sup>44</sup> You are of your father the devil, and the desires of your father you want to do. He was a murderer from the beginning, and does not stand in the truth, because there is no truth in him. When he speaks a lie, he speaks from his own resources, for he is a liar and the father of it. <sup>45</sup> But because I tell the truth, you do not believe Me. <sup>46</sup> Which of you convicts Me of sin? And if I tell the truth, why do you not believe Me? <sup>47</sup> He who is of God

hears God's words; therefore you do not hear, because you are not of God. (John 8:44-47, NKJV,OSB).

Dr. Thiel notes that the apostles were disdained for not being trained in institutions with worldly acceptance (Acts 4:13). Their response to religious authorities was, "we can not but speak the things which we have seen and heard" (Acts 4:20, DRB).

He has noted that because of false and maligning information about himself and/or various Church of God groups (particularly on the Internet), that many prefer to 'attack the messenger' instead of dealing with the scriptural and historical proofs he and others have provided in *Continuing Church of God* literature.

The truth is the truth. Dr. Thiel's view is, like that of Jesus, "if I tell the truth, why do you not believe me?" (John 8:46). Though unlike Jesus, Dr. Thiel is not asserting that he, himself, must always be right. But he asserts that showing proofs from the word of God, as well as from actual historical facts that can be verified, is something that should be believed.

## Author's Preface

The reality of God is perhaps the most important subject there is.

My purpose for this book is to delve into what the Bible teaches about God and clarify numerous truths and mysteries about God.

Some revelations may surprise, even shock, some readers. But hopefully you will be willing to “prove all things” (1 Thessalonians 5:21, DRB/KJV) and have “the love of the truth” (2 Thessalonians 2:10, NJB). Do not be deceived like the bulk of humanity is prophesied to be (2 Thessalonians 2:9-12).

This book will often cite both Protestant and Greco-Roman Catholic translations of the Bible to demonstrate the consistency of those translations on many of the Bible's main points about God.

In addition to citing scripture, I will offer testimony from early writers and later scholars to back up the authenticity of those early beliefs. This includes primary, non-primary, conventional, and unconventional sources—which also tend to validate the continuity of those beliefs as well. And yes, I often come to conclusions that differ from the cited non-biblical authors. This book is part of a documented search for truth. Similar to the Apostle Paul, I realize that in the flesh we only “know in part” (1 Corinthians 13:9, DRB).

Regarding original Christianity, the Book of Acts reported that “everywhere, people speak against this sect” (Acts 28:22, EOB). Sadly, that often remains so in the 21<sup>st</sup> century.

Yet in the 1<sup>st</sup> century, those of Berea/Beroea “welcomed the word very readily; every day they studied the scriptures to check whether it was true” (Acts 17:11, NJB). They were willing to change when they saw the truth—despite it being talked against (Acts 28:22). Their scriptural example should still be followed in the 21<sup>st</sup> century.

This book is for readers that have a genuine love of the truth who are willing to be like the biblical Bereans that wanted to learn more of the truths of the mysteries of God.

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# 1. Mysteries-What is God?

Lots of books have tried to teach about God.

Yet, many things about God are somewhat mysterious.

The Bible refers to many mysteries, such as the mystery of the kingdom of God (Mark 4:11), the mystery of grace (Ephesians 3:1-5), the mystery of faith (1 Timothy 3:9), the mystery of the marriage relationship (Ephesians 5:28-33), the mystery of lawlessness (2 Thessalonians 2:7), the mystery of the resurrection (1 Corinthians 15:51-54), the mystery of Christ (Ephesians 3:4), the mystery of His will (Ephesians 1:9), the mystery of the Father (Colossians 2:2), the mystery of God (Colossians 2:2; Revelation 10:7) and even Mystery Babylon the Great (Revelation 17:5).

Although some of the mysteries mentioned above will be covered in this book we also have a free online book that will covers some in more detail, available at [ccog.org](http://ccog.org), titled *The MYSTERY of GOD's PLAN: Why Did God Create Anything? Why Did God Make You?*

Now, what about the mysteries of God and this book?

- This book is written, for those interested in the truth about God so, “that they may have all the riches that assurance brings in their understanding of the knowledge of the mystery of God” (Colossians 2:2, NET).
- This book touches on why people should believe in God.
- This book also goes into what early Christians understood about the Godhead.
- This book explains some of what we can understand and some of what we cannot fully understand about God.
- This book cites many scriptures.

Why?

The Bible is the reliable source of truth. Jesus said God’s “word is truth” (John 17:17).



Furthermore, scripture is used to show you the certainty of many matters:

<sup>20</sup> Have I not written to you excellent things Of counsels and knowledge,  
<sup>21</sup> That I may make you know the certainty of the words of truth, That you  
may answer words of truth To those who send to you? (Proverbs 22:20-  
21, NKJV)

<sup>21</sup> That I might shew thee the certainty, and the words of truth, to answer  
out of these to them that sent thee. (Proverbs 22:21, DRB)

Yes, you can have certainty with the Bible (cf. Luke 1:4), the word of truth.

The Apostle Paul wrote (Protestant, Eastern Orthodox, and Roman Catholic  
accepted translations shown below):

<sup>16</sup> All Scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for  
doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness, <sup>17</sup>  
that the man of God may be complete, thoroughly equipped for every  
good work. (2 Timothy 3:16-17, NKJV/OSB)

<sup>16</sup> All scripture is inspired by God and useful for refuting error, for guiding  
people's lives and teaching them to be upright. <sup>17</sup> This is how someone  
who is dedicated to God becomes fully equipped and ready for any good  
work. (2 Timothy 3:16-17, NJB)

The Bible teaches that it is the source of doctrine, and certainly that would include  
doctrines (teachings) about God.

Yet, most who professed Christ have fallen for changes enforced by imperial  
Roman edicts rather than the inspired scriptures spoken of by Paul.

Regarding God's word, we also have a free online book, available at [ccog.org](http://ccog.org),  
titled: *Who Gave the World the Bible? The Canon: Why do we have the books we  
now do in the Bible? Is the Bible complete?*

Regarding Jesus being the Messiah, we have a free online book, available at  
[ccog.org](http://ccog.org), titled: *Proof Jesus is the Messiah.*

## What is God?

People have often been confused and had wrong ideas about the mysteries of God. The Apostle Paul encountered this situation in Athens:

<sup>22</sup> Then Paul stood in the midst of the Areopagus and said, "Men of Athens, I perceive that in all things you are very religious; <sup>23</sup> for as I was passing through and considering the objects of your worship, I even found an altar with this inscription:

TO THE UNKNOWN GOD.

Therefore, the One whom you worship without knowing, Him I proclaim to you: <sup>24</sup> God, who made the world and everything in it, since He is Lord of heaven and earth, does not dwell in temples made with hands. <sup>25</sup> Nor is He worshiped with men's hands, as though He needed anything, since He gives to all life, breath, and all things. <sup>26</sup> And He has made from one blood every nation of men to dwell on all the face of the earth, and has determined their preappointed times and the boundaries of their dwellings, <sup>27</sup> so that they should seek the Lord, in the hope that they might grope for Him and find Him, though He is not far from each one of us; <sup>28</sup> for in Him we live and move and have our being, as also some of your own poets have said, 'For we are also His offspring.' <sup>29</sup> Therefore, since we are the offspring of God, we ought not to think that the Divine Nature is like gold or silver or stone, something shaped by art and man's devising. <sup>30</sup> Truly, these times of ignorance God overlooked, but now commands all men everywhere to repent, <sup>31</sup> because He has appointed a day on which He will judge the world in righteousness by the Man whom He has ordained. He has given assurance of this to all by raising Him from the dead." (Acts 17:22-31 OSB/NKJV)

God is not like idols/icons people make.

What we see on the earth is material, visible, and therefore seems real. People tend to relate to that, hence idols/icons are often used in the world's worship, often under demonic influence.

Furthermore, since the modern scientific method identifies the world around us almost exclusively through the use of the five senses, they deny the existence of the spiritual, which includes God, as they have no way of measuring spirit. Yet, all our seemingly unsolvable problems and the evils in this world are spiritual in nature for “we do not wrestle against flesh and blood...” (Eph 6:12).

Jesus stated what God is as well as how He wants to be worshiped:

<sup>24</sup> God is Spirit, and those who worship Him must worship in spirit and truth. (John 4:24, NKJV/OSB)

<sup>24</sup> God is spirit, and those who worship must worship in spirit and truth. (John 4:24, NJB)

So, what is God?

The Bible teaches, “God is love” (1 John 4:8,16, NKJV, NJB) and that God is that loving Spirit being who is the Creator of all that is.

The One, True God is not a god that can be worshipped as, or with, an icon made with hands as “they are not gods which are made with hands” (Acts 19:26, NKJV/OSB). The Apostle Paul noted that many of those that previously had icons as part of their worship in the past have become examples of other believers through the worship of the True God (1 Thessalonian 1:6-9).

And if people do not worship God in spirit and truth, they are deceiving themselves as they are not worshipping the true God.

### **Characteristics of Spirit**

Characteristics of Spirit are in contrast to the physical world, though some analogies may be applied.

Jesus made the following comment related to Christians when they are born again into the Kingdom at, and after the first resurrection:

<sup>8</sup> The wind blows where it wishes, and you hear the sound of it, but cannot tell where it comes from and where it goes. So is everyone who is born of the Spirit. (John 3:8, NKJV/OSB)

So, one analogy of the spirit being like the physical world is that spirit is like wind in that it is invisible and can go where it wishes.

The Bible tells us that God is spirit (John 4:24) and angels are spirits (Hebrews 1:13-14). Yet, physical humans are not spirit but flesh—although there is a spirit in humans which gives understanding (Job 32:8; 1 Corinthians 2:11; Zechariah 12:1), we are not yet composed of spirit, but flesh.

Related to flesh and spirit, Jesus said:

<sup>41</sup> Watch and pray, lest you enter into temptation. The spirit indeed is willing, but the flesh is weak. (Matthew 26:41, NKJV/OSB)

So, Jesus made it clear that flesh is weaker than spirit.

In 1 Corinthians 15, we learn that Christians will be spiritual after the resurrection:

<sup>44</sup> It is sown a natural body, it is raised a spiritual body. There is a natural body, and there is a spiritual body. (1 Corinthians 15:44, NKJV/OSB)

<sup>50</sup> Now this I say, brethren, that flesh and blood cannot inherit the kingdom of God; nor does corruption inherit incorruption. <sup>51</sup> Behold, I tell you a mystery: We shall not all sleep, but we shall all be changed — <sup>52</sup> in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trumpet. For the trumpet will sound, and the dead will be raised incorruptible, and we shall be changed. <sup>53</sup> For this corruptible must put on incorruption, and this mortal must put on immortality. (1 Corinthians 15:50-53, NKJV, OSB)

Yes, Christians will be spiritual.

Basically, we can generally assume that everything in the spirit realm is composed of spirit, just as all things in the material realm are composed of matter. We also

see that, unlike the material, the resurrected spiritual children of God are incorruptible.

Spirit and spirit beings are not affected by fire, walls, temperature, or any other elements made of matter. Jesus, for example, walked through walls after His resurrection (John 20:19-20). Spirit is what exists in the realm of God. Neither is the Spirit of God limited by space or time.

Related to Jesus as the last Adam, the New Testament teaches:

<sup>45</sup> The last Adam became a life-giving spirit. (1 Corinthians 15:45, NKJV/OSB)

We see that as a spirit, Jesus can give life. Jesus also stated:

<sup>63</sup> The words that I speak to you are spirit, and they are life. (John 6:63, NKJV/OSB)

Spirit is not physical.

Because God is spirit, physical rules simply do not apply as they do to anything which is physical.

### **God Inhabits Eternity**

For example, the Bible teaches God “inhabits/inhabiteth eternity” (Isaiah 57:15, NKJV, DRB). Physical matter does not.

God has always existed. Notice also what God's name is:

<sup>13</sup> Then Moses said to God, “Indeed, when I come to the children of Israel and say to them, 'The God of your fathers has sent me to you,' and they say to me, 'What is His name?' what shall I say to them?” <sup>14</sup> And God said to Moses, “I AM WHO I AM.” And He said, “Thus you shall say to the children of Israel, 'I AM has sent me to you.'” (Exodus 3:13-14, NKJV)

Before there was a universe, there was God. The name that God identified Himself as "I am who I am" helps signify His eternal existence. The term YHVH is used 5000 times in the Masoretic text of the Old Testament. God wants all to understand He exists.

The Bible reveals that God is eternal. Notice that God is called:

<sup>27</sup> The eternal God ... (Deuteronomy 33:27, NKJV/AFV)

God also does not change and will be around always:

<sup>27</sup> But You are the same, And Your years will have no end. (Psalm 102:27, NKJV)

<sup>6</sup> "For I am the Lord, I do not change ... (Malachi 3:6a, NKJV)

<sup>24</sup> O my God, ... Your years are throughout all generations. <sup>25</sup> Of old You laid the foundation of the earth, And the heavens are the work of Your hands. <sup>26</sup> They will perish, but You will endure; Yes, they will all grow old like a garment; Like a cloak You will change them, And they will be changed. <sup>27</sup> But You are the same, And Your years will have no end. (Psalm 102:24-27, NKJV)

<sup>33</sup> And He will reign over the house of Jacob forever, and of His kingdom there will be no end. (Luke 1:33, NKJV/OSB)

<sup>8</sup> Jesus Christ is the same yesterday, today, and forever. (Hebrews 13:8, NKJV/OSB)

<sup>5</sup> ... He Himself has said, "I will never leave you nor forsake you." <sup>6</sup> So we may boldly say: "The Lord is my helper; I will not fear. What can man do to me?" (Hebrews 13:5-6, NKJV/OSB)

God is reliable.

## God's Existence is Logical

The Bible reveals that the eternal power of the Godhead should be obvious:

<sup>20</sup> For since the creation of the world His invisible attributes are clearly seen, being understood by the things that are made, even His eternal power and Godhead, so that they are without excuse (Romans 1:20, NKJV/OSB).

This does not mean that humans fully understand the eternity of the Godhead, but that there is enough evidence of His existence that logical people will realize that His eternal attributes are, at least partially, understood through what God has made.

World renowned scientists, such as Albert Einstein, believed in God. Even Charles Darwin, the person credited for the so-called scientific development of the theory of evolution (and to be technical, evolution is a model and not a scientific theory), wrote the following in his book *The Origin of the Species*:

If it could be demonstrated that any complex organ existed which could not possibly have been formed by numerous, successive, slight modifications, my theory would absolutely break down (Darwin C. The Origin of Species. In Chapter 6, Difficulties on Theory. Cricket House Books LLC, 2010, p. 124).

It should be noted that the discovery of DNA (deoxyribonucleic acid) would seem to qualify as sufficient complexity to break down his theory, although Charles Darwin was not aware of the existence of DNA. Of course, scientists know that random amino acids also do not come with DNA.

In the late 20<sup>th</sup> century, Nobel Prize winner Dr. George Wald, from Harvard University, stated the following:

The reasonable view was to believe in spontaneous generation (life from nothing); the only alternative, to believe in a single, primary act of supernatural creation. There is no third position ... One has only to contemplate the magnitude of this task to concede that the spontaneous

generation of a living organism is impossible. Yet here we are, as a result I believe, of spontaneous generation. (Scott I. The God Solution: Are You Ready? Xlibris Corporation, 2013, p. 41)

This is an astounding admission. Dr. Wald (Ph.D. in zoology) is saying that he chose to believe the impossible. And “scientists” claim that those who believe in a Creator have blind faith with no proof, but instead believe the impossible! *Merriam-Webster’s* dictionary defines impossible as “incapable of being or of occurring.” Dr. Wald, himself, essentially acknowledges that creation is the only possible explanation for life, and that spontaneous generation is, as *Merriam-Webster* puts it, impossible. It is a falsehood to believe in something that is impossible.

Charles Darwin himself seemed to acknowledge that life could not have started on its own. He seemed, to some degree, to rely on the biblical account in the Book of Genesis as he wrote:

There is a grandeur in this view of life, with its several powers, having been originally breathed by the Creator into a few forms or into one. (The Origin of Species By Charles Darwin, 2nd and subsequent editions)

Thus, apparently Darwin recognized the impossibility of life starting on its own without a Creator (God). His statement seems to have been a reference to the following scripture:

<sup>7</sup> And the Lord God formed man of the dust of the ground, and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life; and man became a living being. (Genesis 2:7, NKJV)

Charles Darwin acknowledged what many modern evolutionists do not. But the fact is that it took a Creator Spirit Being to initiate biological life. No other argument makes true scientific sense.

Even back in New Testament times there were those who called error ‘science,’ which is what evolution as an explanation of the origin of life and the origin of the universe is. Notice that the Apostle Paul warned:



<sup>20</sup> O Timothy, keep that which is committed to thy trust, avoiding profane and vain babblings, and oppositions of science falsely so called: <sup>21</sup> Which some professing have erred concerning the faith. (1 Timothy 6:20-21, KJV)

So, notice that the Apostle Paul is stating that there have been those who claimed Christ who have been misled by intellectual leaders. The Apostle John was also inspired to warn about certain influencers as he wrote:

<sup>26</sup> These things I have written to you concerning those who try to deceive you. (1 John 2:26, NKJV/OSB)

Various scientists know that the biological facts do not support the idea that life could have spontaneously begun on planet Earth. It is God who created physical life. Yet, many are deceived and have deceived others.

For more information on why it is logical to believe in God, check out our free book, available online at [ccor.org](http://ccor.org) titled, *Is God's Existence Logical?*.

## **Eternity**

As mentioned earlier, Isaiah 57:15 states that God “inhabits eternity.” Now eternity is a difficult concept for humans to fully grasp. While most of us seem to have no problem envisioning that we could live forever, the idea of something not having a physical beginning is totally foreign to our lives' experiences.

Notice that God does understand this:

<sup>11</sup> He has made everything beautiful in its time. Also He has put eternity in their hearts, except that no one can find out the work that God does from beginning to end (Ecclesiastes 3:11, NKJV).

<sup>26</sup> Behold, God is great, and we do not know Him; Nor can the number of His years be discovered (Job 36:26, NKJV).

<sup>5</sup> He does great things which we cannot comprehend. (Job 37:5, NKJV)

<sup>8</sup>... God: <sup>9</sup> Who doth great things and unsearchable and wonderful things without number: (Job 5:8d-9, DRB)

Therefore, we see that God put eternity in human hearts and that God is infinite, but we also see that we cannot fully understand the work that God does from the beginning to the end. It is beyond our ability to grasp at this time. Yet the Bible reveals:

<sup>18</sup> Known to God from eternity are all His works. (Acts 15:18, NKJV, OSB)

Thus, it is clear that God knows all His works from eternity, yet there are many things that humans simply cannot fully understand.

It also seems to be beyond our ability to grasp the entire universe (cf. Ecclesiastes 3:11). Like God, the dimensions of the universe have no beginning and have no end. And if one concludes that empty space is the end, where does the empty space end?

Of course, it does not end, as theoretically something could continue into it and keep going forever.

Therefore, just like no one can go to one end or the other of the universe, no one can get to the beginning or the end of the Godhead (which currently consists of two members). Even though the idea of an endless universe can be within our hearts and minds, it is a concept, like the eternity of God, that is difficult for humans to fully understand.

Let's consider numbers as an analogy. There is no limit to numbers. Because no matter what number you come up with, you can always add one (or some other number) to it. The idea of infinite numbers makes sense, but still is difficult to comprehend. Likewise, no matter what the smallest number is, you can always subtract one. The same seems to be true about time. Theoretically, you can always go back to something previous. And, unlike physical matter—which had a beginning (cf. Genesis 1;1)—in the case of God, the Godhead existed always.

The reason that the Godhead was able to exist from eternity is because God is love--anything other than pure love would eventually destruct (cf. Romans

6:23a). There is no fear in love. No fear of destruction/death nor any adverse judgment. Also the Bible teaches us:

<sup>10</sup> Love does no harm to a neighbor; (Romans 13:10, NKJV/OSB)

Notice what the Apostle Paul was inspired to write about aspects of love:

<sup>4</sup> Love suffers long and is kind; love does not envy; love does not parade itself, is not puffed up; <sup>5</sup> does not behave rudely, does not seek its own, is not provoked, thinks no evil; <sup>6</sup> does not rejoice in iniquity, but rejoices in the truth; <sup>7</sup> bears all things, believes all things, hopes all things, endures all things. <sup>8</sup> Love never fails. (1 Corinthians 13:4-8a, NKJV/OSB)

Only an uncorrupt being could exist forever. Because God is love, the Godhead was able to exist from eternity.

The same cannot be said of anything physical.

## 2. Is God Omnipotent, Omnipresent, and Omniscient?

Is God omnipotent, omnipresent, and omniscient?

Yes.

Regarding being omnipotent, the Book of Revelation declares:

<sup>6</sup> Alleluia! For the Lord God Omnipotent reigns! (Revelation 19:6, NKJV/OSB)

The Greek word translated as “omnipotent” here is *pantokrátæ̃r* (Interlinear Transliterated Bible Copyright © 2011-2015 by Biblesoft, Inc). This means “all-ruling” or as it is often translated “almighty.” When we say God is “almighty,” we are acknowledging our belief in His authority and rulership over all creation.

Although scripture states that Satan is now the “god of this age” (2 Corinthians 4:4, NKJV/OSB) and certainly the god of those who yield themselves servants to obey him (James 4:7), his temporal authority only belongs to him because God has granted it to him for a time.

And while Satan offered that authority to Jesus if He would worship him (Luke 4:6-7), Jesus refused and rebuked him (Luke 4:8). Faithful Christians realize that Jesus will come a second time and reign in the future (Revelation 11:15).

It is God who ultimately reigns in the universe, and all legitimate authority must be derived from Him. He is God Almighty.

Jesus said “with God all things are possible” (Matthew 19:26). Hence, that is one reason we see a lot of what we would call miracles throughout the Bible. Such interventions are not impossible for God.

The Bible is clear that God is omnipotent. Notice the following:

<sup>5</sup> For I know that the Lord is great, And our Lord is above all gods. <sup>6</sup>  
Whatever the Lord pleases He does, In heaven and in earth, In the seas

and in all deep places. <sup>7</sup> He causes the vapors to ascend from the ends of the earth; He makes lightning for the rain; He brings the wind out of His treasures. (Psalm 135:5-7, NKJV)

<sup>5</sup> Behold, the nations are as a drop in a bucket, And are counted as the small dust on the scales; Look, He lifts up the isles as a very little thing. <sup>16</sup> And Lebanon is not sufficient to burn, Nor its beasts sufficient for a burnt offering. <sup>17</sup> All nations before Him are as nothing, And they are counted by Him less than nothing and worthless. <sup>18</sup> To whom then will you liken God? Or what likeness will you compare to Him? (Isaiah 40:15-18, NKJV)

<sup>5</sup> ... So you do not know the works of God who makes everything. (Ecclesiastes 11:5, NKJV)

<sup>2</sup> I know that You can do everything, And that no purpose of Yours can be withheld from You. (Job 42:2, NKJV)

<sup>2</sup> I know that you are all-powerful: what you conceive, you can perform. (Job 42:2, NJB)

<sup>24</sup> God, who made the world and everything in it, since He is Lord of heaven and earth, does not dwell in temples made with hands. <sup>25</sup> Nor is He worshiped with men's hands, as though He needed anything, since He gives to all life, breath, and all things. (Acts 17:24-25, NKJV/OSB)

Furthermore, notice the following:

<sup>28</sup> And we know that all things work together for good to those who love God, to those who are the called according to His purpose. (Romans 8:28, NKJB/OSB)

<sup>9</sup> A man's heart plans his way, But the LORD directs his steps. (Proverbs 16:9, NKJV)

<sup>9</sup> The heart of man disposes his way. But it is for Lord to direct his steps. (Proverbs 16:9, CPDV)

Only an all powerful being could make that happen!

### **Things God Cannot Do**

That said, while God is all powerful, the Bible is clear there are things God cannot do.

<sup>19</sup> “God is not a man, that He should lie, Nor a son of man, that He should repent. Has He said, and will He not do? Or has He spoken, and will He not make it good? (Numbers 23:19, NKJV)

<sup>2</sup> God ... cannot lie (Titus 1:2, NKJV/OSB)

<sup>13</sup> ... God cannot be tempted by evil (James 1:13, NJB)

<sup>13</sup> If we are faithless, He remains faithful; He cannot deny Himself. (2 Timothy 2:13, NKJV/OSB)

Notice that the Almighty God is reliable and will do what He has spoken.

There is no limit to the power of God. A search in the NKJV revealed that God was referred to as “Almighty” 48 times in the Hebrew scriptures and 9 times in the Greek scriptures. The DRB has “Almighty” 70 times in its Old Testament and 9 times in its New Testament. The almightiness of God is a point that God wants humankind to clearly understand. As well as the truth that He cannot lie or sin.

### **What About Being Omnipresent?**

Omnipresence in the Bible refers to God’s ability to be everywhere (Psalm 139:7) all the time (Isaiah 57:15).

Being omnipresent is something physical things cannot be.

But God can be, and is, everywhere all the time.

And yes, God is everywhere in the known and unknown universe. And the Spirit of God is infinite.

Notice also the following scriptures that back this up:

<sup>3</sup> The eyes of the Lord are in every place, Keeping watch on the evil and the good. (Proverbs 15:3, NKJV)

<sup>23</sup> “Am I a God near at hand,” says the Lord, “And not a God afar off? <sup>24</sup> Can anyone hide himself in secret places, So I shall not see him?” says the Lord; “Do I not fill heaven and earth?” says the Lord. (Jeremiah 23:24, NKJV)

<sup>7</sup> To where do I go from Your Spirit? And to where do I flee from Your face? <sup>8</sup> If I ascend the heavens—You [are] there, “” And spread out a bed in Sheol, behold, You! (Psalm 139:7-8 LSV)

One cannot truly hide from God. God’s Spirit is present everywhere.

Notice the following:

<sup>13</sup> The LORD looks from heaven; He sees all the sons of men. <sup>14</sup> From the place of His dwelling **He looks On all the inhabitants of the earth;** <sup>15</sup> **He fashions their hearts individually; He considers all their works.** (Psalm 33:11-15)

This shows that God is both omnipresent as He looks on ALL the inhabitants of the earth and that God is omniscient as He considers all their works.

Because God is omnipresent, some people do not believe that God is love (1 John 4:8.16) as they feel that God should stop the suffering in the world. However, the Bible teaches:

<sup>18</sup> ... that the sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory which shall be revealed in us. (Romans 8:18, NKJV/OSB)

<sup>7</sup> Do not be deceived, God is not mocked; for whatever a man sows, that he will also reap. (Galatians 6:7, NKJV/OSB)

<sup>28</sup> And we know that all things work together for good to those who love God, to those who are the called according to His purpose. (Romans 8:28, NKJV/OSB)

<sup>10</sup> I, Yahweh, search the heart, test the motives, to give each person what his conduct and his actions deserve. (Jeremiah 17:10, NJB)

<sup>6</sup> ... Know therefore that God exacts from you Less than your iniquity deserves. (Job 11:6, NKJV)

It sometimes takes faith to believe that. But since God cannot lie (Titus 1:2) and is righteous in ALL His ways (Psalam 145:17), we should trust His plan and realize that what He does is really because of love. And that the omnipresent God does know what is best for us. God does what is best for everyone all the time, but does allow us all to err.

### **What About Being Omniscient?**

Omniscience, when it comes to God, is referring to knowing everything all the time.

Here are some scriptures that support that:

<sup>21</sup> ... He knows the secrets of the heart. (Psalm 44:21, NKJV)

<sup>11</sup> The Lord knows the thoughts of man, (Psalm 94:11, NKJV)

<sup>12</sup> Indeed, the darkness shall not hide from You, But the night shines as the day; The darkness and the light are both alike to You. (Psalm 139:12, NKJV)

<sup>10</sup> I am the Lord who search the heart ... (Jeremiah 17:10, DRB)

<sup>12</sup> For the word of God is living and powerful, and sharper than any two-edged sword, piercing even to the division of soul and spirit, and of joints and marrow, and is a discerner of the thoughts and intents of the heart.

<sup>13</sup> And there is no creature hidden from His sight, but all things are naked



and open to the eyes of Him to whom we must give account. (Hebrews 4:12-13, NKJV, OSB)

Yes, God knows all—and that includes your thoughts.

Although some of this is not possible for humans to fully comprehend (Ecclesiastes 3:11), we need to realize that God, who has always existed, has unlimited understanding:

<sup>5</sup> Great is our Lord, and mighty in power; His understanding is infinite. (Psalm 147:5, NKJV)

<sup>5</sup> Our Lord is great, all-powerful, his wisdom beyond all telling. (Psalm 147:5, NJB)

<sup>5</sup> God is mighty, ... He is mighty in strength of understanding. (Job 36:5, NKJV)

While modern computers cannot compare to God, if there could be a large enough supercomputer to have all knowledge, that could give us an idea about perhaps how God stores and keeps track of information. And, of course, unlike a computer, God knows the true from the false, as well as being updated instantly and always being up-to-date.

Although humans often act like they know more than God, it is fairly certain that God knows more about a single piece of human hair than all the “knowledge” that all humans have accumulated throughout history! That massive difference in true knowledge is one reason to put your faith, trust, and confidence in God and His word.

God declared:

<sup>8</sup> “For My thoughts are not your thoughts, Nor are your ways My ways,” says the Lord. <sup>9</sup> “For as the heavens are higher than the earth, So are My ways higher than your ways, And My thoughts than your thoughts. (Isaiah 55:8-9)

God's ways, had they been followed, would have led inevitably to peace, happiness, prosperity and joy for humanity. God knows vastly more than we do. Remember that unlike us, His “understanding is infinite” (Psalm 147:5).

Being infinitely wiser than us, God’s judgment must differ from our own on many things. What seems right to us may be wrong to God and vice versa. Therefore, it should come as no surprise that the manner in which God expresses His love is not always what we might expect.

Human beings are limited. We see as if through “a darkened glass” (1 Corinthians 13:12, KJV), “a glass in the dark” (1 Corinthians 13:12, DRB). We do not see everything nor how all will work out, but God does and it will work out for what is best if we accept and love God (Romans 8:28). The whole of God's tremendous love is much greater than we can understand. But we can indeed be grateful God and His love towards us is not limited, and that neither is His boundless love and concern for His human creation.

Although it may not seem that way to us, understand that God really does know what is best for each and everyone of us. And yes, that includes allowing us to suffer and die (Romans 8:18) as this physical life is only temporary—it is not the end!

Since the Apostle Paul was inspired to write that we are to walk by faith, not by sight (2 Corinthians 5:7), we should not deceive ourselves that we know better than God about anything.

God is all powerful, everywhere, and an all knowing Spirit. Because of that, is capable of being omnipotent, omnipresent, and omniscient. The Bible clearly supports that.

### **Your Place?**

While we do not know all the details, one of the mysteries of God is that He has prepared a place for us beyond what we even imagine. The Apostle Paul, citing the Hebrew scriptures, wrote:

<sup>9</sup> But as it is written:

"Eye has not seen, nor ear heard,  
Nor have entered into the heart of man  
The things which God has prepared for those who love Him." (1  
Corinthians 2:9, NKJV/OSB)

Jesus declared:

<sup>2</sup> In my Father's house there are many dwelling places. If it were not so, I would have told you. I am going to prepare a place for you. (John 14:2, EOB, footnote)

God is preparing a place for each and every one of us. Do you comprehend how much knowledge is needed to perform such a massive task?

God has to figure out where you will be able to fit the best, not just for a few hours or years, but for all our future eternity. That is something not you, but only God is capable of doing and getting right (and yes, you will still have what is called free will).

God is also preparing us for immortality, eternal life:

<sup>4</sup> For we who are in this tent groan, being burdened, not because we want to be unclothed, but further clothed, that mortality may be swallowed up by life. <sup>5</sup> Now He who has prepared us for this very thing is God, who also has given us the Spirit as a guarantee. (2 Corinthians 5:4-5, NKJV/OSB)

So God is preparing us for eternity and preparing a place for each of us. And those who have God's Spirit have a guarantee to succeed if we endure to the end (Matthew 24:13).

Furthermor, understand that eternity will not be boring. Consider that just as there are an infinite number of numbers, there looks to be an infinite degree of happiness we can have eternally.

God must be omniscient in order to be able to make each of us a place so special that we will continually make eternity better for others and others will alsocontinually make eternity better for us.

So, preparing us is one of the reasons we face chastisement and suffer through various in this life:

<sup>3</sup> For consider Him who endured such hostility from sinners against Himself, lest you become weary and discouraged in your souls. <sup>4</sup> You have not yet resisted to bloodshed, striving against sin. <sup>5</sup> And you have forgotten the exhortation which speaks to you as to sons:

"My son, do not despise the chastening of the Lord, Nor be discouraged when you are rebuked by Him; <sup>6</sup> For whom the Lord loves He chastens, And scourges every son whom He receives."

<sup>7</sup> If you endure chastening, God deals with you as with sons; for what son is there whom a father does not chasten? <sup>8</sup> But if you are without chastening, of which all have become partakers, then you are illegitimate and not sons. <sup>9</sup> Furthermore, we have had human fathers who corrected us, and we paid them respect. Shall we not much more readily be in subjection to the Father of spirits and live? <sup>10</sup> For they indeed for a few days chastened us as seemed best to them, but He for our profit, that we may be partakers of His holiness. <sup>11</sup> Now no chastening seems to be joyful for the present, but painful; nevertheless, afterward it yields the peaceable fruit of righteousness to those who have been trained by it.

<sup>12</sup> Therefore strengthen the hands which hang down, and the feeble knees, <sup>13</sup> and make straight paths for your feet, so that what is lame may not be dislocated, but rather be healed.

<sup>14</sup> Pursue peace with all people, and holiness, without which no one will see the Lord: <sup>15</sup> looking carefully lest anyone fall short of the grace of God; lest any root of bitterness springing up cause trouble, and by this many become defiled; (Hebrews 12:3-15, NKJV/OSB)

Notice that we are not to become defiled through bitterness, because God knows what is best for us, even when it includes difficulties.

Our awesome God is omniscient and His chastening will help perfect us so we can be part of His glorious family and kingdom forever.

## Where Did God Come From?

Throughout the ages people have wondered where things came from. Furthermore, they have wondered where God the Father came from. What about Jesus? The Bible itself gives some insight into this, although not everyone will necessarily be satisfied with the answers that it provides.

Something has always had to exist. Either in the physical or in the spiritual—for if nothing always existed, then nothing would exist now.

So, just where did God come from?

Most in Western cultures are familiar with the first book of the Bible and how it begins:

<sup>1</sup> In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth ... <sup>26</sup> Then God said, “Let Us make man in Our image, according to Our likeness ...” (Genesis 1:1,26. NKJV).

While that beginning describes the beginning of the physical creation, including humans (and probably the beginning of time as we understand it), it says nothing about where God came from, other than the fact that the Godhead already existed before the physical creation—and, therefore, before time as we know it (cf. Titus 1:2; 2 Timothy 1:9).

Did you know that another beginning in the Bible? Well, there is a beginning that occurred prior to the beginning spoken of in Genesis. Notice the following:

<sup>1</sup> In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. <sup>2</sup> He was in the beginning with God. <sup>3</sup> All things were made through Him, and without Him nothing was made that was made ...<sup>14</sup> And the Word became 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 (John 1:1-3,14, NKJV/OSB).

Notice that the Bible clearly teaches that everything was made through the Word (Jesus) and that otherwise nothing was made that was made and that the Word

was in the beginning with God the Father. In addition, in verse one it is revealed that Jesus is also God. These verses point to a duality in the Godhead and are teaching us that Jesus and His Father always existed and were not created.

There is one Godhead, or one God family, who are of one mind and purpose. But that family is now composed of two individuals, God the Father and His Son Jesus Christ as the first chapter of John's gospel account shows.

### **God Was Around Before the Earth**

Before there was an earth, God already existed as He created it (Genesis 1:1). God also said:

<sup>4</sup> ... I laid the foundations of the earth (Job 38:4, NKJV)

And before there was a universe, there was God.

The following was published by the old Radio Church of God:

"In the Beginning-GOD" God had to be there first because He made everything that ever was. (Genesis 1: 1.) Probably one of the first things you wonder about God is where He came from. He didn't come from anywhere. He has *always* existed.' It is hard for us to understand. We must remember that "the *secret* things belong unto the LORD our God: but those things which are revealed belong unto us and to our children for ever" (Deuteronomy 29:29). God always was and He always will be. (Revelation 1:8.) (Wolverton B. The Bible Story, volume 1. RadioCG, 1961, pp. 2-3)

Notice, also, that there was wisdom before the earth:

<sup>12</sup> "I, wisdom, dwell with prudence, And find out knowledge and discretion. <sup>13</sup> The fear of the Lord is to hate evil; Pride and arrogance and the evil way And the perverse mouth I hate. <sup>14</sup> Counsel is mine, and sound wisdom; I am understanding, I have strength. <sup>15</sup> By me kings reign, And rulers decree justice. <sup>16</sup> By me princes rule, and nobles, All the judges of the earth. <sup>17</sup> I love those who love me, And those who seek me diligently

will find me. <sup>18</sup> Riches and honor are with me, Enduring riches and righteousness. <sup>19</sup> My fruit is better than gold, yes, than fine gold, And my revenue than choice silver. <sup>20</sup> I traverse the way of righteousness, In the midst of the paths of justice, <sup>21</sup> That I may cause those who love me to inherit wealth, That I may fill their treasuries. <sup>22</sup> “The Lord possessed me at the beginning of His way, Before His works of old. <sup>23</sup> I have been established from everlasting, From the beginning, before there was ever an earth. <sup>24</sup> When there were no depths I was brought forth, When there were no fountains abounding with water. <sup>25</sup> Before the mountains were settled, Before the hills, I was brought forth; <sup>26</sup> While as yet He had not made the earth or the fields, Or the primal dust of the world. <sup>27</sup> When He prepared the heavens, I was there, When He drew a circle on the face of the deep, <sup>28</sup> When He established the clouds above, When He strengthened the fountains of the deep, <sup>29</sup> When He assigned to the sea its limit, So that the waters would not transgress His command, When He marked out the foundations of the earth, <sup>30</sup> Then I was beside Him as a master craftsman; And I was daily His delight, Rejoicing always before Him, <sup>31</sup> Rejoicing in His inhabited world, And my delight was with the sons of men. (Proverbs 8:12-31)

Wisdom is the ability to use knowledge and experience to make proper decisions and judgments. Wisdom is the wise dominion over knowledge. God is wise (cf. Romans 16:27) and “wisdom and might are His” (Daniel 2:20b, AFV).

Our wise God has always existed—and before the earth did.

## **Jesus**

Although some groups, like the Jehovah's Witnesses and other unitarians, teach that Jesus did not exist from eternity, their teachings are in error.

The Bible is clear that Jesus existed before the earth or anything else which was created:

<sup>5</sup> And now, O Father, glorify Me together with Yourself, with the glory which I had with You before the world was. (John 17:5, NKJV/OSB)

<sup>9</sup> ... God who created all things through Jesus Christ (Ephesians 3:9, NKJV/OSB)

<sup>11</sup> "You are worthy, O Lord, To receive glory and honor and power; For You created all things, And by Your will they exist and were created." (Revelation 4:11, NKJV/OSB)

<sup>8</sup> And all the dwell upon the earth adored him, whose names are not written in the book of life of the Lamb, which was slain from the beginning of the world. (Revelation 13:8, DRB)

Now notice something that the Apostle Paul wrote:

<sup>15</sup> He is the image of the invisible God, the firstborn over all creation. <sup>16</sup> For by Him all things were created that are in heaven and that are on earth, visible and invisible, whether thrones or dominions or principalities or powers. All things were created through Him and for Him. <sup>17</sup> And He is before all things, and in Him all things consist. <sup>18</sup> And He is the head of the body, the church, who is the beginning, the firstborn from the dead, that in all things He may have the preeminence. (Colossians 1:15-18, NKJV/OSB)

Jesus existed before anything else and, among other things, is also the head of the church. That is a mystery to many.

The Apostle John made the eternity of Jesus clear when he wrote:

<sup>1</sup> In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. <sup>2</sup> He was in the beginning with God. <sup>3</sup> All things were made through Him, and without Him nothing was made that was made (John 1:1-3, NKJV/OSB).

Thus, the Word was God and was with God from the very beginning. Before anything was made. And the Word, Jesus Christ, was God, and was like God the Father, yet became flesh. Notice:



<sup>14</sup> And the Word became 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 (John 1:14, NKJV/OSB).

The above scripture shows that Jesus was God and that He became flesh. It was not that Jesus was an angel that became human (that happens to be what the Jehovah's Witnesses teach). But it is true, that while on earth, Jesus emptied Himself of His divinity and became actually human (cf. Philippians 2:5-7).

### **Limited Knowledge**

Now there are aspects of God that the Bible reveals are now beyond full understanding of humans. But notice that the Bible teaches that eventually we will know:

<sup>12</sup> For now we see in a mirror, dimly, but then face to face. Now I know in part, but then I shall know just as I also am known (1 Corinthians 13:12, NKJV/OSB).

<sup>7</sup> But in the days of the voice of the seventh angel, when he is about to sound *the* trumpet, the mystery of God shall also be completed, according to the gospel *that* He declared to His servants the prophets. (Revelation 10:7, AFV)

<sup>17</sup> For nothing is secret that will not be revealed, nor anything hidden that will not be known and come to light (Luke 8:17, NKJV/OSB).

So, while we only see a little and understand dimly now, in the future we will better understand eternity, the mystery of God, and how the Godhead has always inhabited eternity.

The answer to the question, "Where did God come from?" should be clear: The Godhead has always existed and did not come from anywhere else. And because God is Spirit, God is sinless, and God is love, the Godhead has been able to exist from eternity.

Only a Godhead based on love could always have existed (cf. Romans 6:20-23). But since we humans do not yet have perfect love, we carnal humans still have some difficulties fully understanding that (though we should, to some degree, be able to understand it). But when we are spiritual children of God, we will be able to know clearly.

### 3. What Does God Look Like?

Why is God not real to so many people? Partially, because God the Father and the Word are composed of SPIRIT, not matter, not flesh and blood, like humans. God is basically invisible to human eyes (Colossians 1:15).

To seem real, the human mind naturally wants to visualize a definite form and shape of nearly everything. But even though God is composed of spirit and not of visible matter, God nevertheless does have a form and shape.

And there is information and clues about that in the Bible.

In the Book of Genesis we read:

<sup>24</sup> Then God said, "Let the earth bring forth the living creature according to its kind: cattle and creeping thing and beast of the earth, each according to its kind"; and it was so. <sup>25</sup> And God made the beast of the earth according to its kind, cattle according to its kind, and everything that creeps on the earth according to its kind. And God saw that it was good.

<sup>26</sup> Then God said, "Let Us make man in Our image, according to Our likeness; let them have dominion over the fish of the sea, over the birds of the air, and over the cattle, over all the earth and over every creeping thing that creeps on the earth." <sup>27</sup> So God created man in His own image; in the image of God He created him; male and female He created them. (Genesis 1:24-27, NKJV)

So, while beasts and creeping things were made after their kind, and cattle were made after the cattle kind, we see humans were made in the image of God, or, in a manner of speaking, humans were made after the God kind. Hence, God's appearance is an image basically like human beings.

This is confirmed by the prophet Ezekiel when he saw God above His throne:

<sup>26</sup> And above the firmament over their heads was the likeness of a throne, in appearance like a sapphire stone; on the likeness of the throne was a likeness with the appearance of a man high above it. <sup>27</sup> Also from the appearance of His waist and upward I saw, as it were, the color of amber with the appearance of fire all around within it; and from the appearance of His waist and downward I saw, as it were, the appearance of fire with brightness all around. <sup>28</sup> Like the appearance of a rainbow in a cloud on a rainy day, so was the appearance of the brightness all around it. This was the appearance of the likeness of the glory of the Lord. (Ezekiel 1:26-28, NKJV)

From Ezekiel's account, we see that God (in this case Jesus) looks like a man, with a bright amber color and also colors like a rainbow.

Other scriptures point out that God has arms and hands (Psalm 89:13; 2 Chronicles 18:18), fingers (Exodus 31:18), feet (Psalm 18:9), a face (Genesis 32:30), a waist (Ezekiel 1:27), eyes (Deuteronomy 11:12), ears (Psalm 34:15), a mouth (Matthew 4:4), lips (Job 11:5), nostrils (Exodus 15:8), hair (Daniel 7:9), and a back (Exodus 33:23).

God is composed of Spirit but He formed human of matter, so we are not composed of spirit like God. Although humans were created in the form and shape of God and with one spirit (Job 32:8; 1 Corinthians 2:11a) in them, we need another spirit to go with our spirit, and that Spirit is the Holy Spirit (1 Corinthians 2:11b). The one spirit all people have now gives us physical and material knowledge. Yet, the only knowledge that it can acquire comes through the eyes, the ears, the nose, the mouth, and the sense of feel or touch. And while humans can think and imagine, we cannot know naturally anything else except what we can know through those five senses. But with God's spirit in us, we can know beyond the human senses (1 Corinthians 2:10-11); we can know the deep things of God.

Now, why were humans made in God's image? Well, the truth is that humans have the awesome potential to actually be born into God's own Family as immortal, brilliant, spirit-composed beings like God Himself as God's children:

<sup>20</sup> For our citizenship is in heaven, from which we also eagerly wait for the Savior, the Lord Jesus Christ, <sup>21</sup> who will transform our lowly body that it may be conformed to His glorious body, (Philippians 3:20-21, NKJV/OSB)

Jesus now has a glorious body, and true Christians will receive a similar, glorious body when Jesus returns.

Now, let us notice something that God said to Moses when Moses wanted to see Him:

<sup>20</sup> ... “You cannot see My face; for no man shall see Me, and live.”

<sup>21</sup> And the Lord said, “Here is a place by Me, and you shall stand on the rock. <sup>22</sup> So it shall be, while My glory passes by, that I will put you in the cleft of the rock, and will cover you with My hand while I pass by. <sup>23</sup> Then I will take away My hand, and you shall see My back; but My face shall not be seen.” (Exodus 33:20-23, NKJV)

Although Moses did not die from this, after he saw some of the back of God (the one who became born as Jesus), Moses’ face shone so brightly that he had to cover his face when he went out in public (Exodus 34:29-33). The glory of God and His appearance is great.

### **Appearance of God the Father?**

The New Testament teaches:

<sup>18</sup> No one has seen God at any time. The only begotten Son, who is in the bosom of the Father, He has declared Him. (John 1:18, NKJV, OSB)

*Gill's Exposition of the Entire Bible* states:

John 1:18 *No man hath seen God at any time,....* That is, God the Father,

That is essentially also what the Church of God taught in the 20<sup>th</sup> century:

The God of the Old Testament-the One who appeared to the patriarchs and prophets-was not the Father, but the One who became Jesus Christ. Your Bible says: “No man hath seen God [that is, the Father] at any time; (The Bible Answers Short Questions From Our Readers. Plain Truth, April 1966)

The closest physical description we seem to have of God the Father, beyond what Ezekiel recorded and beyond Him being called the Father (e.g. Isaiah 64:8; Matthew 5:16), is from when Daniel made a reference to the “Ancient of Days”:

<sup>9</sup> I watched till thrones were put in place, And the Ancient of Days was seated; His garment was white as snow, And the hair of His head was like pure wool. (Daniel 7:9, NKJV)

We know that was NOT Jesus, because Daniel then added:

<sup>13</sup> I was watching in the night visions, And behold, One like the Son of Man, Coming with the clouds of heaven! He came to the Ancient of Days, And they brought Him near before Him. (Daniel 7:13, NKJV)

So, God the Father has the basic parts of a human and apparently woolly hair. Jesus was the “One like the Son of Man” as He had not yet become the Son of Man (Matthew 11:19, 20:28) when Daniel saw what he saw.

### **What About Jesus and His Appearance?**

Notice something from John’s Gospel:

<sup>8</sup> Philip said to Him, “Lord, show us the Father, and it is sufficient for us.”

<sup>9</sup> Jesus said to him, “Have I been with you so long, and yet you have not known Me, Philip? He who has seen Me has seen the Father; so how can you say, ‘Show us the Father’? (John 14:8-9, NKJV/OSB)

From this record, we see that Jesus is telling Philip that since he saw Jesus, he should know what the Father looks like. Jesus also seemed to be pointing out that

the spiritual similarities between Him and the Father were such that seeing Him was the same as seeing the Father.

As cited before in Philippians 3:21, we know that Jesus now has a glorious body. As far as how it looks, the Apostle John wrote:

<sup>12</sup> Then I turned to see the voice that spoke with me. And having turned I saw seven golden lampstands, <sup>13</sup> and in the midst of the seven lampstands One like the Son of Man, clothed with a garment down to the feet and girded about the chest with a golden band. <sup>14</sup> His head and hair were white like wool, as white as snow, and His eyes like a flame of fire; <sup>15</sup> His feet were like fine brass, as if refined in a furnace, and His voice as the sound of many waters; <sup>16</sup> He had in His right hand seven stars, out of His mouth went a sharp two-edged sword, and His countenance was like the sun shining in its strength. (Revelation 1:12-16, NKJV/OSB)

So, Jesus has hair and a head white like wool, and His feet are like fine brass. This resembles what Ezekiel described as well and is similar to how Daniel described the Ancient of Days.

### **What Did Jesus Look Like When on the Earth?**

Now at the time Jesus was on the earth, He was not stunningly attractive. Here is a prophecy about Him:

<sup>2</sup> He has no form or comeliness; And when we see Him, There is no beauty that we should desire him. (Isaiah 53:2, NKJV)

Jesus also had to be identified out of a crowd as a “kiss of death” was used by the one who betrayed Him (cf. Mark 14:44).

He was not tall (cf. Luke 4:28-30).

Many people have seen images that are supposed to be that of Jesus.

Yet, we have no photographs as photography had not been invented then nor paintings from Jesus’ day.

However, some believe that the *Shroud of Turin* accurately depicts His image and that it was miraculously made and preserved so we would have an image of Jesus when He was on the earth.



*Face in Shroud: Actual and Enhanced  
(Dianelos Georgoudis via Wikipedia)*

But is the image on the *Shroud of Turin* possibly Jesus?

No.

While there are various arguments about the Shroud's age, composition, etc., consider something that a Roman Catholic priest once pointed out:

Saint Thomas {Aquinas} teaches, there is no argument against a fact—*contra factum non argumentum est*. If a statement is contrary to fact, then no authority on earth can expect us to believe it. (Kramer P. *The Devil's Final Battle*. Good Counsel Productions, 2002, p. xxiii)

While a single fact is enough to eliminate the Shroud as authentic, let's consider three facts that each prove that the Shroud was not the burial cloth of Jesus.



For the first one, here is some of what the Bible teaches about the burial clothes of Jesus:

<sup>39</sup> And Nicodemus, who at first came to Jesus by night, also came, bringing a mixture of myrrh and aloes, about a hundred pounds. <sup>40</sup> Then they took the body of Jesus, and bound it in strips of linen with the spices, as the custom of the Jews is to bury.

<sup>41</sup> Now in the place where He was crucified there was a garden, and in the garden a new tomb in which no one had yet been laid. <sup>42</sup> So there they laid Jesus, because of the Jews' Preparation Day, for the tomb was nearby. (John 19:39-42, NKJV/OSB)

Basically, strips of linen were placed on Jesus' body somewhat like a mummy (this is also basically what happened to Lazarus, see John 11:43-44). Even if the *Shroud of Turin* had been placed over those strips which were saturated with myrrh and aloes, it would by now be fairly stiff and would tend to look quite different than the Shroud now does.

For the second fact, consider that the Bible says:

<sup>14</sup> Does not even nature itself teach you that if a man has long hair, it is a dishonor to him? (1 Corinthians 11:14, NKJV/OSB)

<sup>14</sup> Does not nature itself teach you that if a man has long hair, it is a disgrace to him, (1 Corinthians 11:14, NJB)

The fact is that the image in the *Shroud of Turin* has long hair, yet Jesus did not have long hair. If He did, the Apostle Paul would not have written the above. For additional proof, consider the following:

<sup>1</sup> Imitate me, just as I also imitate Christ. (1 Corinthians 11:1, NKJV/OSB)

Paul would not be imitating Christ by denouncing His hair length.

For the third fact that disproves the image in the *Shroud of Turin* being Jesus, notice the following:

## Length Measurements on the Shroud of Turin ...

Measurements taken by Bruno Barberis and Gian Maria Zaccone give (frontal image at the bottom left, dorsal image at the top) 441.5 cm for the right height, and 442.5 cm for the left height. The bottom width is 113.0 cm and the top width is 113.7 cm. (<http://www.iro.umontreal.ca/~latendre/shroud/shroudCal.html> accessed 08/01/24)

This means that the Shroud of Turin is 174 inches, 14.5 feet, long. The height of the human image in the shroud would need to be about 6 ft. tall. That could not be Jesus.

Why?

The Bible records the fact that Jesus did not stick out in a crowd (cf. Luke 4:28-30), and even needed someone to identify Him (Matthew 26:48). Men were much shorter then than now (average was about 5'3" to 5'4") and a six foot man would be noticeable.

If the Shroud was that of Jesus, Jesus would have had to be much too tall to blend into the crowds at that time. There is no reason to believe Jesus was tall or had any special appearance—the Bible indicates the opposite (cf. Isaiah 53:2).

So, no, the *Shroud of Turin* does not show what Jesus looked like.

### **Oldest Picture of Jesus?**

There were no cameras back in Jesus' day. But some people did paint portraits of people.

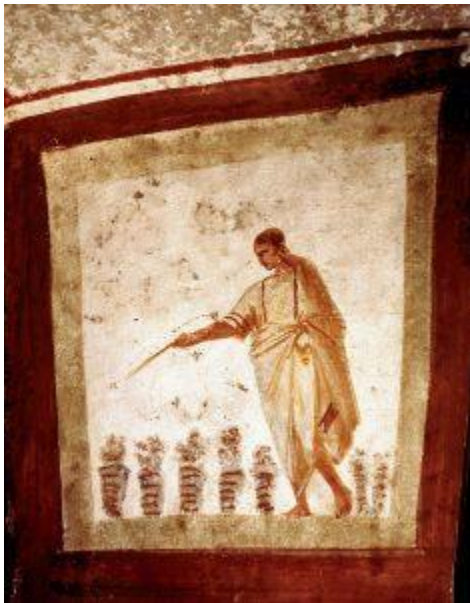
The following looks to be the earliest surviving painting claimed to be of Jesus, from a church at the ruined city of Dura-Europos on the Euphrates (dating from first half of the 3rd century AD):



*(Yale University Art Gallery)*

Jesus is not shown to have long hair nor a long beard.

Notice also the following fresco from a cave in the 3<sup>rd</sup> or 4<sup>th</sup> century:



*(MeisterDrucke)*

Jesus, again, is not shown to have long hair or a long beard. This is another depiction that does NOT resemble the *Shroud of Turin* nor the common portrayals of Jesus' appearance.

The *BBC* addressed the fact that the commonly seen pictures claiming to be of Jesus are false, but instead are of a Byzantine version of Zeus:

**Everyone knows what Jesus looks like. He is the most painted figure in all of Western art, recognised everywhere as having long hair and a beard, a long robe with long sleeves (often white) and a mantle (often blue).**

Jesus is so familiar that he can be recognised on pancakes or pieces of toast.

But did he really look like this?

Probably not.

In fact this familiar image of Jesus actually comes from the Byzantine era, from the 4th Century onwards, and Byzantine representations of Jesus were symbolic – they were all about meaning, not historical accuracy.

They were based on the image of an enthroned emperor, as we see in the altar mosaic of the Santa Pudenziana church in Rome. ...

Jesus is dressed in a gold toga. He is the heavenly ruler of all the world, familiar from the famous statue of long-haired and bearded Olympian Zeus on a throne . . . Byzantine artists, looking to show Christ's heavenly rule as cosmic King, invented him as a younger version of Zeus. What has happened over time is that this visualisation of heavenly Christ – today sometimes remade along hippie lines – has become our standard model of the early Jesus. (Taylor J. What did Jesus really look like? *BBC*, 24 December 2015)

From the above, we can also conclude that when we have reports of people who claim to have seen Jesus in various ways, those who claimed He had long hair, etc., clearly were not seeing Jesus.

Consider the following:

- The earliest known depictions of Jesus had short hair and did not look like the man in the Shroud of Turin.
- Jesus is not reported as being tall in the Gospels or by the Apostle Paul.
- Jesus would not have been as tall as the Shroud suggests.
- The ‘traditional’ image of Jesus is more of a compromise with how the pagan god Zeus looked.
- The Bible said Jesus would not have an outstanding physical appearance.
- The Bible shows that Jesus now has a glorified body and that true Christians will be granted one like His.

That glorified body also has a resemblance like the appearance of God the Father, the Ancient of Days.

God looks glorious—more glorious than we can imagine—and that is one of the mysteries of God.

That is one of the many reasons not to degrade His image by producing icons or statues that are supposed to represent Him.

They do not.

The differences of God being Spirit, inhabiting eternity, being omnipresent, knowing all, being all powerful, and being love, set God apart from any images humans have tried to make of God. Attempting to reduce God to an image is bearing false witness against Him, His power, and His majesty.

The Apostle Paul said that Christians are to walk by faith and not by sight (2 Corinthians 5:7), hence he and other faithful early Christians did NOT have idols or icons claimed to be or represent the Father or Jesus.

## 4. Is the God Family a Trinity?

Is the trinity a doctrine from the Bible? Or is there a plurality of the Godhead that is different than the attempt at a trinitarian explanation of the Godhead?

The plurality of the Godhead is referred to in the first verse of the Bible:

<sup>1</sup> In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth” (Genesis 1:1, NKJV)

The Hebrew word translated as 'God' is '*elohim*'. *Strong's* defines it this way:

OT:430 'elohiym (el-o-heem'); plural of OT:433; gods in the ordinary sense; but specifically used (in the plural thus, especially with the article) of the supreme God; occasionally applied by way of deference to magistrates; and sometimes as a superlative (Biblesoft's New Exhaustive Strong's Numbers and Concordance with Expanded Greek-Hebrew Dictionary. Copyright (c) 1994, Biblesoft and International Bible Translators, Inc.).

So, the first time God is mentioned in the Bible, the indication is that God is mentioned as plural (“indication” because in some places '*elohim*' can refer to singular).

And to make sure the plurality of God was known, Genesis 1:26 states:

<sup>26</sup> Then God said, “Let Us make man in Our image, according to Our likeness; let them have dominion over the fish of the sea, over the birds of the air, and over the cattle, over all the earth and over every creeping thing that creeps on the earth. (Genesis 1:26, NKJV)

Genesis 1:26 shows that '*elohim*' above refers to “Us.” Both '*elohim*' and “us” are plural.

Some say that this, along with Matthew 28, proves a trinity.

Yet, that is not true. It does not prove a trinity.

### **Matthew 28:19-20**

In Matthew 28, Jesus proclaimed:

<sup>19</sup> Go therefore and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, <sup>20</sup> teaching them to observe all things that I have commanded you; and lo, I am with you always, even to the end of the age. (Matthew 28:19-20)

Related to that and the nature of God, the old Worldwide Church of God published the following

Matthew 28:19-20 is often cited by the advocates of the Trinity to prove the Holy Spirit is a separate individual.

What this verse actually shows is that when we are baptized, we are inducted into A FAMILY. When we are baptized into the name of God, we are simply being baptized into the family of God.

All that is shown by the mentioning of the Holy Spirit in this verse is that the Holy Spirit also BELONGS TO THE GOD FAMILY. It is the essence or power of God. And just as the seed of life or spermatozoon of a man engenders a child and makes that child his, so God uses His Spirit to engender us, upon baptism, into His family and make us His begotten children.

The Holy Spirit then is the power of God which emanates from God. Since this power belongs to God, it is also found to be with all His sons, and to be the joining force which makes them a family.

The truth of the matter in this verse is positive proof of the family relationship of God. It has nothing whatsoever to do with a triune God. (Just What Is The Holy Spirit? Ambassador College Production, 1983)

Understand that the word for God in Genesis 1:1 is *Elohim*, which signifies a plurality or family relationship between the Father and Son.

### **A Family Situation**

Consider further that in the Hebrew scriptures, the prophet Daniel wrote of one he said looked like the “Son of Man” (Daniel 7:13).

Jesus, later, repeatedly identified Himself as the “Son of Man” (e.g. Matthew 9:6).

Yet, in several passages of scripture, Jesus also identifies Himself as the “Son of God” (Revelation 2:18; John 3:18, 5:25, 10:36, 11:4; Luke 24:7). Jesus was the “Son of Man” because He was born human and the “Son of God” because God is His Father.

Jesus identified God as His father when He said things like the following:

<sup>27</sup> All things have been delivered to Me by My Father, and no one knows the Son except the Father. Nor does anyone know the Father except the Son, and the one to whom the Son wills to reveal Him. (Matthew 11:27, NKJV/OSB)

One of the reasons Jesus came was to reveal God the Father.

The Father-Son relationship is a family relationship.

The Apostle Paul also pointed out the family connection (Protestant, Church of God, Eastern Orthodox, and Roman Catholic translations all shown):

<sup>14</sup> For this reason I bow my knees to the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, <sup>15</sup> from whom the whole family in heaven and earth is named, (Ephesians 3:14-15, NKJV/OSB)

<sup>14</sup> For this cause I bow my knees to the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, <sup>15</sup> Of Whom the whole family in heaven and earth is named, (Ephesians 3:14-15, AFV)



<sup>14</sup> And so, I bow my knees to the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, <sup>15</sup> from whom every family in heaven and on earth is named, (Ephesians 3:14-15, EOB)

<sup>14</sup> For this reason I kneel before the Father, <sup>15</sup> from whom every family- in heaven and on earth is named, (Ephesians 3:14-15, NAB)

God is a family, now consisting of the Father and the Son. But more, will be added to that family (the truly converted) after the first resurrection as the brethren of Jesus:

<sup>9</sup> Jesus ... <sup>10</sup> For it was fitting for Him, for whom are all things and by whom are all things, in bringing many sons to glory, to make the captain of their salvation perfect through sufferings. <sup>11</sup> For both He who sanctifies and those who are being sanctified are all of one, for which reason He is not ashamed to call them brethren, (Hebrews 2:9-11, NKJV/OSB)

Yes, those who are converted are to be Jesus' brethren in the family of God.

God's family is not limited to a closed trinity.

### **Apostles' Creed?**

What about the trinity and the writing known as the Apostles' Creed?

An Eastern Orthodox supporter wrote to this author claiming that something that was from the 5<sup>th</sup> or 6<sup>th</sup> century A.D. was an original Christian belief. After informing her it was not an original belief, she responded by listing what is called the Nicene Creed, which is what the Orthodox believed, and asked sarcastically if that was "original enough?"

This author responded with "no, that is not original enough", that was a late 4<sup>th</sup> century document and was not from the original apostles. Furthermore, it was NOT accepted by the Archbishops of Constantinople (later called Patriarchs) prior to imperial enforcement (Socrates Scholasticus. THE ECCLESIASTICAL HISTORY OF SOCRATES. London, 1853, p. 266).

The Church of Rome concurs that the Nicene Creed is not original. Furthermore, it cites a different document as the oldest known creed.

Here is translation of what Rufinus, a monk of Aquileia, put together of what has been claimed as the oldest creed (known as the Old Roman Form) as shown in *The Catholic Encyclopedia*:

- (1) I believe in God the Father Almighty;
- (2) And in Jesus Christ, His only Son, our Lord;
- (3) Who was born of (de) the Holy Ghost and of (ex) the Virgin Mary;
- (4) Crucified under Pontius Pilate and buried;
- (5) The third day He rose again from the dead,
- (6) He ascended into Heaven,
- (7) Sitteth at the right hand of the Father,
- (8) Whence He shall come to judge the living and the dead.
- (9) And in the Holy Ghost,
- (10) The Holy Church,
- (11) The forgiveness of sins;
- (12) The resurrection of the body.

(Thurston H. Apostles' Creed. 1907).

Furthermore, Roman Catholic scholars recognize that the apostles did not come up with this creed (e.g. *ibid*). But note that this creed does not have many statements that were later added as those that are in parts of the creeds of the Greeks or the Latins. At least some of its statements have been claimed to have been from the mid-late 2<sup>nd</sup> century (Moehlman CH. *The Origin of the Apostles' Creed. The Journal of Religion*, Vol. 13, No. 3, Jul., 1933: 301-319), but it looks to have not fully existed until sometime in the 4<sup>th</sup> century (Carola J. *The Apostles' Creed. Gregorianum*, Vol. 85, No. 3, 2004: 587-591).

Although we in the CCOG do not have a creed *per se*, we have a book titled *Statement of Beliefs of the Continuing Church of God* which helps show how we understand many aspects of scripture. Nothing in what is believed to have been the "original creed" is in direct conflict with what the CCOG teaches. For example, the Bible teaches the true church is "holy" (Ephesians 5:27), and the old Radio

Church of God taught, “God’s church is a holy church” (Hoeh H. Does GOD Have a Headquarters Church Today? Good News, October 1953).

The following is claimed to be the *Creed of Lucian* of Antioch (it surfaced a couple of decades after he was martyred—if he was the writer, it may be the oldest written creed):

We believe in ONE GOD, the Father Almighty; And in THE LORD JESUS CHRIST, his Son, who was begotten of him before all ages, the Divine Logos, through whom all things were made, both those in the heavens and those on the earth; who came down and was made flesh; and suffered; and rose again; and ascended to the heavens; and shall come again to judge the quick and the dead. And in the Holy Ghost; and in the resurrection of the flesh; and in the life of the world to come; and in a kingdom of heaven; and in one Catholic Church of God which extends to the ends of the earth. (Schaff P. The Creeds of Christendom: The Greek and Latin creeds, with translations, Volume II. Harper and Brothers, 1877, pp. 28-29)

Note: While Jesus was not physically begotten until about nine months before His human birth, the plan for His birth existed before the ages of the earth began (cf. Revelation 13:8). Note also that the original Greek text, καθολικὴν ἐκκλησίαν τοῦ θεοῦ, does not separately capitalize ‘Catholic Church.’ Yet it is interesting that this ‘creed’ refers to the *catholic church of God* as well as teaches that Jesus was made flesh.

Lucian of Antioch was not in communion with the Greco-Roman bishops of Antioch, and yet is considered a saint by the Greco-Romans. Although there are contradictory reports about him and his theology (like him supposedly reconciling with the area’s Greco-Roman Bishop while still reportedly maintaining his binitarianism, Sabbath-keeping, biblical literalism, etc.), he looks to probably have been a COG leader. If so, Lucian may be one who held the church leadership succession mantle from about 275 through his martyrdom in 312.

The later Nicene Creed was not the original creed. But it was declared a required belief in 380 by Emperor Theodosius as part of his *Edict of Thessalonica* (also known as *Cunctos populos*):

Theodosius ... Out of political as well as religious motives, he energetically undertook to bring about unity of faith within the empire. His position was improved by the fact that during 379 the followers of the Nicene Creed gained ground, whereupon **Theodosius on February 28, 380, without consulting the ecclesiastical authorities, issued an edict prescribing a creed that was to be binding on all subjects.** (Lippold A. Theodosius I Roman emperor. Encyclopedia Britannica, accessed online 09/16/19)

In 381, the Nicene creed was formally adopted at the Council of Constantinople that Theodosius had called. But since that creed had been changed, it was not original.

### **The Original Christian View of the Godhead**

How did the original Christian church view the Godhead?

Well, the Father was considered to be God. And Jesus was considered God, the Lord, the Son of God, our High Priest, and Saviour.

Before going further, consider what Jesus Himself taught

<sup>27</sup> Everything has been entrusted to me by my Father; and no one knows the Son except the Father, just as no one knows the Father except the Son and those to whom the Son chooses to reveal him. (Matthew 11:27, NJB)

Note that only the Father and Son know each other (other than those to whom Jesus reveals the Father and to those the Father calls) -- which shows, for example, that the Holy Spirit, which is not mentioned in Matthew 11:27, does NOT know the Father or the Son. Therefore, it should be clear that according to Jesus' own words, the Holy Spirit is NOT a co-equal member of the Godhead. Therefore, the idea of a Greco-Roman trinity does not stand up to Biblical scrutiny. But Jesus' words are consistent with the binitarian view of the Godhead.

Though the Father is SUPREME in the God Family, as witnessed to by Christ Himself (John 14:10, 28), Jesus is the administrator of the Holy Spirit (Matthew

11:27, John 15:26), Jesus is greater, not merely co-equal to that Spirit. These three scriptures alone nullify and make void the supposition that the Holy Spirit is of equal rank with the Father and the Son, which is what trinitarians assert.

Now consider that early church leaders and saints like Polycarp of Smyrna and Melito of Sardis wrote that Jesus and the Father were God:

Lord Jesus Christ, our Saviour ... Jesus Christ Himself, who is the Son of God ... Now may the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, and the eternal High-priest Himself, the God Jesus Christ ... (Polycarp. Letter to the Philippians, Chapters 1 & XII)

“Father, and God of Truth” (Melito, A Discourse Which Was in the Presence of Antoninus Caesar)

Saviour ... Head of the Lord-His simple Divinity; (Melito. Book of Extracts, IV & IX)

Yes, the Father is God and Jesus is God and our Divine High Priest and Savior.

### **High Priest and Melchizedek**

The Book of Hebrews teaches:

<sup>5</sup> So also Christ did not glorify Himself to become High Priest, but it was He who said to Him:

"You are My Son, Today I have begotten You."

<sup>6</sup> As He also says in another place:

"You are a priest forever According to the order of Melchizedek"  
(Hebrews 5:5-6, NKJV, OSB)

Despite existing forever, the Father begot Jesus. Before Jesus was conceived by Mary, He was not the SON of God.

Jesus also is our High Priest, forever.

Herbert W. Armstrong taught:

Now, one of the mysteries of the Bible, that very few have ever understood is the identity of this mysterious man; Melchizedek. ...

Now, who is this Melchizedek? Now, first, Melchizedek was God's High Priest. It was way back at the time of Abraham, He'd always been a High Priest but we only find matter recorded during the time of Abraham. ...

Melchizedek was the king of Salem. Salem is the original Jerusalem. It now is called Jerusalem but that's just Jeru-Salem. They prefixed Jeru on the front of it and they call it Jerusalem now. Now, Hebrew words have meaning; the meaning of the name Melchizedek is 'king of righteousness.' Now, if we would translate that Hebrew word into English, we wouldn't say Melchizedek we'd say 'king of righteousness' and that would be His name. ...

There's only one High Priest: Melchizedek is that High Priest. Christ is that High Priest! Then my friends they are one and the same person exactly!

Melchizedek Is Christ ... Melchizedek cannot be God the Father, because He was a Priest of the Most High God. Now, scripture says no man has ever seen the Father, but Abraham saw Melchizedek. Saw Him and talked with Him. So, He can't be God the Father. (Armstrong HW. World Tomorrow radio broadcast, 20<sup>th</sup> century)

Here are some additional scriptures related to Melchizedek:

<sup>1</sup> For this Melchizedek, king of Salem, priest of the Most High God, who met Abraham returning from the slaughter of the kings and blessed him, <sup>2</sup> to whom also Abraham gave a tenth part of all, first being translated "king of righteousness," and then also king of Salem, meaning "king of peace," <sup>3</sup> without father, without mother, without genealogy, having neither beginning of days nor end of life, but made like the Son of God, remains a priest continually. (Hebrews 7:1-3, NKJV, OSB)

Jesus was the original Melchizedek. He was then like the Son of God, because He had not been born human back then. Melchizedek could not have been any human, because all people have had parents and a beginning of days. Yet, Jesus is eternal.

### **Jesus is Savior**

Notice statements from Jesus and Peter related to Him being the Savior:

<sup>6</sup> Jesus said: I am the Way; I am Truth and Life. No one can come to the Father except through me. (John 14:6, NJB)

<sup>10</sup> ... **Jesus Christ of Nazareth** ... <sup>12</sup> **There is salvation in no one else**, and there is no other Name under heaven that is given among mortals by which we should be saved! (Acts 4:10,12, EOB)

Salvation is only through the way of Jesus. God the Father sent Him (John 3:16) so that “the world may be saved by him” (John 3:17, DRB).

“There is salvation in no one else” (Acts 4:12, EOB/NIV).

The Apostle Paul was inspired to state:

<sup>29</sup> Therefore, since we are the offspring of God, we ought not to think that the Divine Nature is like gold or silver or stone, something shaped by art and man's devising. (Acts 17:29, OSB)

So, it should be clear that early Christians did not think they should have icons of the Godhead (“divinity” in DRB).

The Apostle Paul wrote:

<sup>14</sup> ... I kneel before the Father, <sup>15</sup> from whom every family in heaven and on earth is named, ... <sup>19</sup> and to know the love of Christ that surpasses knowledge, so that you may be filled with all the fullness of God. (Ephesians 3:14-15,19, NABRE)

God is one family, currently consisting of the Father and the Son, and Christians will be born into that family at the resurrection when we are made immortal (1 Corinthians 15:53).

### **Scholars on Binitarian Formulas**

Regarding the New Testament statements on the components of the Godhead, a trinitarian scholar, William Rusch has admitted:

The binitarian formulas are found in Rom. 8:11, 2 Cor. 4:14, Gal. 1:1, Eph. 1:20, 1 Tim 1:2, 1 Pet. 1:21, and 2 John 1:3 ... No doctrine of the Trinity in the Nicene sense is present in the New Testament ...

**There is no doctrine of the Trinity in the strict sense in the Apostolic Fathers ...** (Rusch WG. *The Trinitarian Controversy*. Fortress Press, Phil., 1980, pp. 2-3).

Thus, a trinitarian scholar admits that the New Testament uses what he calls binitarian formulas and no doctrine of the Nicene trinity was found in the writings of those called "Apostolic Fathers." Trinitarianism was simply not part of the original Christian faith.

Notice also:

"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, 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 John's prologue is no such doctrine)" (*The Trinity*, p. 22). (Author's emphasis.)



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 and 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. This 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. (Johnson G. *Is God a Trinity?* Ambassador College Press, 1973, p. 9)

Here is something from a Roman Catholic scholar:

... nowhere does the Bible normally and explicitly state the doctrine of **the Trinity**, ... **the doctrine is clearly a development** ... (Sungenis RA. NOT BY SCRIPTURE ALONE A Catholic Critique of the Protestant Doctrine of *Sola Scriptura*, 2<sup>nd</sup> ed. NIHIL OBSTAT Monsignor Carroll E. Satterfield Censor Librorum, IMPRIMATUR Monsignor W. Francis Malooly Vicar General of the Archdiocese of Baltimore, 1997. Catholic Apologetics International Publishing, 2013, pp. 76-77)

What has been called "the oldest complete Christian sermon that has survived" (Holmes MW. *The Apostolic Fathers: Greek Texts and English Translations*, 2nd ed. Baker Books, Grand Rapids, 2004, p. 102)--outside those in the Bible--sometimes erroneously referred to as *Second Letter of Clement*, is support for binitarianism. This sermon was given perhaps within a year or so of the Apostle John's death (though others have suggested that perhaps the Roman Bishop Soter wrote or gave it c. 170; Holmes, p. 103), has the following:

Brothers, we ought so to think of Jesus Christ, as of God, as "Judge of the living and the dead (An Ancient Christian Sermon (2 Clement), 1:1. In Holmes MW, p. 107).

So then, brothers, if we do the will of God our Father ... (Ibid, p. 121).

Now the church, being spiritual was revealed in the flesh of Christ, thereby showing us that if any of us guard her in the flesh and do not corrupt her, he will receive her back again in the Holy Spirit. For this flesh is a copy of the Spirit. No one, therefore, who corrupts the copy, will share in the original. This, therefore, is what he means, brothers: guard the flesh, in order that you may receive of the Spirit. Now if we say that the flesh is the church and the Spirit is Christ, then the one who abuses the flesh hath abuses the church. Consequently such a person will not receive the Spirit, which is Christ. So great is the life and immortality which this flesh is able to receive, if the Holy Spirit is closely joined with it, that no one is able to proclaim or to tell "what things the Lord hath prepared" for his chosen ones (Ibid, p. 121).

Thus, what may be the oldest preserved sermon says to think of Jesus as God and that the Father is God, but it never indicates that the Holy Spirit is God. This is consistent with the binitarian view.

Consider that, Bishop/Overseer Ignatius of Antioch, who is the first known leader to use the term "catholic church," wrote the following around 110-135 A.D.:

For our God, Jesus Christ, was conceived by Mary in accord with God's plan: of the seed of David, it is true, but also of the Holy Spirit. He was born and baptized so that by His submission He might purify the water. (Ignatius of Antioch, Letters to the Ephesians 18,2--note this is translated the same by at least three separate translations as done by Dr. Lightfoot, J.H. Srawley, and Roberts & Donaldson)

Permit me to be an imitator of the passion of my God. (Ignatius, Letter to the Romans, 6,3)

Hence, Ignatius clearly recognized Jesus as God, and thus could not have been a traditional unitarian. Nor was he trinitarian.

Ignatius further wrote to the Ephesians:

Ignatius, who is also Theophorus, unto her which hath been blessed in greatness through the plentitude of God the Father; which hath been

foreordained before the ages to be for ever unto abiding and unchangeable glory, united and elect in a true passion, by the will of the Father and of Jesus Christ our God; even unto the church which is in Ephesus [of Asia], worthy of all felicitation: abundant greeting in Christ Jesus and in blameless joy. (Ignatius' Letter to the Ephesians, Verse 0. In Apostolic Fathers. Lightfoot & Harmer, 1891 translation)

He wrote something similar to the Smyrnaeans:

Ignatius, who is also Theophorus, to the church of God the Father and of Jesus Christ the Beloved, which hath been mercifully endowed with every grace, being filled with faith and love and lacking in no grace, most reverend and bearing holy treasures; to the church which is in Smyrna of Asia, in a blameless spirit and in the word of God abundant greeting. I give glory to Jesus Christ the God who bestowed such wisdom upon you." (Ignatius' Letter to the Symrnaeans, Verses 0-1.1. In Apostolic Fathers. Lightfoot & Harmer, 1891 translation)

Professor Hurtado notes that:

there are numerous places where Ignatius refers to Jesus as "God" (*theos*) ... Yet Ignatius refers to Jesus as *theos* while still portraying him as subordinate to the ""Father". (Hurtado LW. Lord Jesus Christ, Devotion to Jesus in Earliest Christianity. William B. Eerdmans Publishing, Grand Rapids, 2003, pp. 637, 638)

That is a binitarian view. Early Christians were careful about avoiding the charge of ditheism, likely because they were reinforcing the binitarian position that God is *one family*, currently consisting of the Father and the Son. That is a family relationship, in which the Father is greater than the Son (John 14:28)--but remember the true saints will become part of that family.

Even though he was a trinitarian, Augustine of Hippo taught that Christians were part of the "family of God" (Augustine. Letter 43; To Glorius, Eleusius, the Two Felixes, Grammaticus, and All Others to Whom This May Be Acceptable, My Lords Most Beloved and Worthy of Praise, Augustine Sends Greeting, Chapter 9. 397

A.D. From Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers, First Series, Vol. 1. Edited by Philip Schaff. (Buffalo, NY: Christian Literature Publishing Co., 1887).

The *National Catholic Register* published:

In Baptism Christians come to participate by adoption in the eternal Sonship of Jesus Christ, becoming “sons in the Son,” brothers and sisters in Christ in the family of God and adopted sons and daughters of God the Father — filial and fraternal bonds not shared with non-Christians. (Greydanus, SD. Are Muslims and Jews Our Brothers and Sisters? It’s Complicated. *National Catholic Register*, July 13, 2019)

More accurately, upon receipt of the Holy Spirit after baptism, Christians are begotten children in God’s family and after the resurrection become true, born again, brethren of Jesus.

Pope Paul VI wrote:

Jesus Christ ... He commanded His Apostles to preach to all peoples the Gospel’s message that the human race was to become the Family of God, in which the fullness of the Law would be love. (*Gaudium et Spes-- Pastoral Constitution on the Church in the Modern World*, Second Vatican Council, December 7, 1965)

Well, God’s plan is for humans who truly convert to become part of God’s Family and give love.

Getting back to Ignatius, it is important to note that he referred to both the Father and the Son as God in two of his letters (and this author verified that it is in the original Greek), but he never called the Holy Spirit ‘God.’ Instead, he wrote:

... using as a rope the Holy Spirit (Ignatius. Letter to the Ephesians, 9:1. In Holmes, p. 143)

In the 2<sup>nd</sup> century, Church of God leaders who could be considered to be part of the “original catholic church” taught that the Father and Son were God, but did

not teach that the Holy Spirit was God. This has been called a “binitarian” view or formula by various scholars:

As for the binitarian confessional formula, which confesses the Father and the Son, we likewise find examples in Polycarp and Ignatius. (Monroy MS. *The Church of Smyrna: History and Theology of a Primitive Christian Community*. Peter Lang edition, 2015, p. 292)

The following quote attributed to Bishop/Overseer Polycarp shows that he (and thus by inference the rest of Smyrna) was not unitarian:

Now may the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, ... the God Jesus Christ, build you up in faith and truth, and in all gentleness and in all avoidance of wrath and in forbearance and long suffering and in patient endurance and in purity; and may He grant unto you a lot and portion among His saints, and to us with you, and to all that are under heaven, who shall believe on our Lord and God Jesus Christ and on His Father (The Epistle of Polycarp to the Philippians in APOSTOLIC FATHERS (as translated by J.B. LIGHTFOOT) 12:6,7).

It should be pointed out that there is another translation of this section by Roberts and Donaldson in *Ante-Nicene Fathers, Vol, 1* which omitted the term “God” before Jesus Christ, but this author verified that the term “deum” is in the Latin version of this epistle (the original Greek versions did not survive past chapter 10).

Dr. Lightfoot’s translation “our Lord and God Jesus Christ” is a literal translation of the Latin “dominum nostrum et deum Iesum Christum.” The *University of Notre Dame Latin Dictionary and Grammar Aid* states “deus -i m. [a god , deity].” The term “deum” is the masculine accusatory form of the word “deus.” Since traditional unitarians do not call Jesus “God,” it is clear that Polycarp clearly was not one of them. Furthermore, he did not ever call the Holy Spirit “God.”

Here is a report about how Jewish leaders described early Christian theology:

The argument that Christianity is not binitarian but trinitarian, hence could not be perceived as a two-powers heresy, ignores the fact that it is

not so much what Christianity thought of itself that counts but how it appeared to its rabbinic critics. And there we see clearly that **it was often described as binitarian or dualistic** rather than trinitarian. (Summary of response by Alan F. Segal. International Conference on the Historical Origins of the Worship of Jesus. 13-17 June 1998)

Hence, the early Jewish rabbis recognized early Christianity as binitarian, not trinitarian or unitarian. But this observation is not limited to critics of the Christian religion.

The Greco-Roman saint Justin Martyr wrote:

Christ being Lord, and God the Son of God, ... When Scripture says, 'The Lord rained fire from the Lord out of heaven,' **the prophetic word indicates that there were two in number**: One upon the earth, who, it says, descended to behold the cry of Sodom; Another in heaven, who also is Lord of the Lord on earth, as He is Father and God; the cause of His power and of His being Lord and God. Again, when the Scripture records that God said in the beginning, 'Behold, Adam has become like one of Us,' this phrase, 'like one of Us,' is also indicative of number; and the words do not admit of a figurative meaning, as the sophists endeavor to affix on them, who are able neither to tell nor to understand the truth. (Dialogue with Trypho. Chapters 128, 129)

The first scripture that Justin cited above was Genesis 19:24. Notice what a trinitarian supporting website posted about it:

#### **There are two Yahweh's in Gen 19:24**

A. "Then Yahweh [on earth in human form] rained on Sodom and Gomorrah brimstone and fire from Yahweh [in spirit form in heaven] out of heaven." Genesis 19:24 ...

There simply is no way to escape the clear context that there were two Yahweh's: One on earth that talked to Abraham and commanded Sodom be destroyed. And a second Yahweh in heaven who actually sent the fire. (Rudd S, et al. Trinity Proof Texts: Gen 19:24. Bible.ca accessed 11/18/20)

The above website is actually defending a binitarian, not trinitarian, concept of the Godhead. But it seemingly did not realize that.

The family relationship of the Godhead was basically confirmed by the late 2<sup>nd</sup> century Bishop/Overseer Melito of Sardis who wrote:

There is a God, the Father of all ... the Father send His Son from heaven ... when He should put on a body by means of the Virgin's womb, and be born man, He might save man ...

our Lord Jesus Christ, ... He who is Creator together with the Father; (Melito, the Philosopher. Fragments of Melito of Sardis)

Around the middle of the 4<sup>th</sup> century, the Greek Orthodox Catholic and binitarian bishop named Marcellus of Ancyra (who also apparently put together what is known as the oldest 'Apostles' Creed', known as the 'Old Roman Form') wrote on the nature of God:

Now with the heresy of the Ariomaniacs, which has corrupted the Church of God ...These then teach three hypostases, just as Valentinus the heresiarch first invented in the book entitled by him 'On the Three Natures'. For he was the first to invent three hypostases and three persons of the Father, Son and Holy Spirit, and he is discovered to have filched this from Hermes and Plato (Logan A. Marcellus of Ancyra (Pseudo-Anthimus), 'On the Holy Church': Text, Translation and Commentary. Verses 8-9. Journal of Theological Studies, NS, Volume 51, Pt. 1, April 2000, p. 95).

Valentinus was denounced by Polycarp of Smyrna in the 2<sup>nd</sup> century (Irenaeus. Adversus Haeres. Book III, Chapter 3, Verse 4).

One of the so-called *Montanist Oracles*, spoken by the apostate Montanus was:

"I am the Father and the Son and the Paraclete." (Didymus, De trinitate iii. 41. 1.) (Assembled in P. de Labriolle, *La crise montaniste* (1913), 34-105, by Bates College, Lewston (Maine)

[http://abacus.bates.edu/Faculty/Philosophy%20and%20Religion/rel\\_241/texts/montanism.html](http://abacus.bates.edu/Faculty/Philosophy%20and%20Religion/rel_241/texts/montanism.html) 01/31/06).

This is one of the first references to a trinitarian view of the Godhead (the other earliest one was from the heretic Valentinus, it is unclear which was first). The *paraclete* is a term used to signify the Holy Spirit (it is from the Greek term *parakletos*).

It was apostate 'catholics' (Valentinus and Montanus) who clearly taught the trinity in the 2<sup>nd</sup> century.

Consider, also, some quotes from the Greco-Roman saint Irenaeus:

**... there is none other called God by the Scriptures except the Father of all, and the Son,** and those who possess the adoption (Irenaeus. *Adversus haereses*, Book IV, Preface, Verse 4)

Notice that Irenaeus states that only the Father, the Son, and those who possess the adoption (Christians) are God. Although there is a threeness to that (it is not limited to three, as is the trinity, as the third is a reference to a family), his was a binitarian, not a trinitarian view, of the Godhead.

The Roman Catholic saint Hippolytus, who had ties to Irenaeus, also held a binitarian view of the Godhead:

These things then, brethren, are declared by the Scriptures. And the blessed John, in the testimony of his Gospel, gives us an account of this economy (disposition) and acknowledges this Word as God, when he says, "In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God." If, then, the Word was with God, and was also God, what follows? Would one say that he speaks of two Gods? I shall not indeed speak of two Gods, but of one; of two Persons however, and of a third economy (disposition), viz., the grace of the Holy Ghost. For the Father indeed is One, but there are two Persons, because there is also the Son. (Hippolytus. *Against Noetus*, Chapter 14. In *Ante-Nicene Fathers*, Volume 5)



In the 3<sup>rd</sup> century, Hippolytus was elected to be “Bishop of Rome” (Lopes A. Translation by Charles Nopar. The Popes. Pontifical Administration, Rome, 1997 and 2005 editions, pp. 5-6). This seems to have happened either after or near the time one named Callistus allegedly paid a bribe to gain, at least access to, that office (Hippolytus. Philosophumena aka Refutation of All Heresies, Book IX, Chapter VI).

*The Catholic Encyclopedia* notes that it was claimed:

According to the “Philosophumena” (c. ix) Callistus ... obtained great influence over the ignorant, illiterate, and grasping Zephyrinus by bribes.

We are not told how it came about that ... Callistus ... became archdeacon and then pope. ... he had thus given occasion for infanticide. ... The orthodoxy of Callistus is challenged by both Hippolytus and Tertullian ... (Chapman, Pope Callistus I)

Despite his support for abortion/infanticide, charges of simony (paying bribes for ecclesiastical office), and other forms of immorality, the Church of Rome chose to claim its apostolic succession through Callistus and not Hippolytus.

The 3<sup>rd</sup> century Roman Catholic saint Hippolytus has been called Rome’s “**most important theologian ... in the pre-Constantinian era**” yet promoted “**Ditheism**” with the Son “altogether subordinate to the Father” (Kirsch JP. St. Hippolytus of Rome, *The Catholic Encyclopedia*). One can be forgiven for believing that Callistus has been claimed to be the true successor, and not Hippolytus, because Rome later adopted the trinity in 381 and Hippolytus clearly did not hold that view. Hippolytus was some type of a binitarian.

In the 3<sup>rd</sup> and 4<sup>th</sup> centuries, Lucian of Antioch was also known to be binitarian (Newman JH, Cardinal. *The Arians of the Fourth Century*, pp. 277, 406).

## **Holy Spirit**

While the Holy Spirit is covered in more detail in the next chapter, notice this astonishing admission from a Protestant scholar:

Sabellius taught the strict unity of the godhead: “one Person (*hypostasis*), three names.” God is *hyiopater*, Son-Father. The different names Father, Son, and Spirit, merely describe different forms of revelation; the Son revealed the Father as a ray reveals the sun. Now the Son has returned to heaven, and God reveals himself as the Holy Spirit ... Despite these flaws, Sabellianism seems to have won the adherence of two bishops of Rome, Victor and Zephyrinus, both who were involved in bitter struggles with the adoptionists. Zephyrinus' successor, Callistus, repudiated Sabellius, but continued to use rather Sabellian language ... The entanglement of these three bishops ... has proved a continuous embarrassment to the traditionalist Roman Catholic doctrine of papal infallibility ...

The modalism of Sabellius influenced later orthodox formulations in that it insisted on the deity of the Holy Spirit ... **By insisting that the Holy Spirit is also God, Sabellianism helped counteract the tendency to what we might call ditheism** (Brown HOJ. *Heresies: Heresy and Orthodoxy in the History of the Church*. Hendrickson Publishers, Peabody (MA), 1988, p. 103).

If the doctrine of the trinity is so critical to being a “Christian” then why did even the Roman bishops misunderstand it so much?

Could it have been because the true Church was never Sabellian nor trinitarian? If the doctrine of the trinity was true from the beginning (which it was not), **why do Protestant scholars feel the need to credit Sabellianism (and two corrupt Roman bishops, Callistus and Zephyrinus) for insisting that the Holy Spirit is God?** The simple truth is that the early true Church never considered that the Holy Spirit was God or that God was some type of trinity.

Notice that Sabellianism was condemned from the start in Asia Minor, then decades later in Rome according to Roman Catholic scholars:

Yet further evidence regarding the Church's doctrine is furnished by a comparison of her teaching with that of heretical sects. The controversy with the Sabellians in the third century proves conclusively that she would tolerate no deviation from Trinitarian doctrine. Noetus of Smyrna,

the originator of the error, was condemned by a local synod, about A.D. 200. Sabellius, who propagated the same heresy at Rome c. A.D. 220, was excommunicated by St. Callistus (Joyce GH. *The Blessed Trinity*. The Catholic Encyclopedia, Volume XV. Published 1912. New York: Robert Appleton Company. Nihil Obstat, October 1, 1912. Remy Lafort, S.T.D., Censor. Imprimatur. +John Cardinal Farley, Archbishop of New York ).

It should be noted that the above writing is a bit in error. While it is true that the Church in Asia Minor (Smyrna) would not tolerate Sabellian heresy from the beginning, the Roman Catholic Church did until around 220 A.D.—the Church of Rome was NOT clearly trinitarian in the early 3<sup>rd</sup> century. If so, people like Hippolytus would not have had such backing as he did.

As far as trinitarian practices go, the late Roman Catholic Cardinal James Gibbons wrote:

... most Christians pray to the Holy Ghost, a practice which is nowhere found in the Bible. (Gibbons J, Cardinal. *The faith of our fathers: being a plain exposition and vindication of the church founded by Our Lord Jesus Christ*, 83rd reprint edition. P. J. Kenedy, 1917, p. 73)

Since the Bible never says to pray to the Holy Spirit (only to pray to receive it and/or the gifts of), praying to it was not a practice of the original catholic faith. The personhood of the Holy Spirit was debated and then denounced by some, and accepted by other, Greco-Roman councils in the mid-late 4<sup>th</sup> century.

The following from that same Cardinal Gibbons suggests such changes should not have been accepted:

**No new dogma unknown to the Apostles not contained in the primitive Christian revelation can be admitted.** (John xiv 26; xi 15; xvi 13.) **For the Apostles received the whole deposit of God's word**, according to the promise of the Lord: (Ibid, p. 9)

The reality is that trinitarianism, the personhood of the Holy Spirit, Sunday as the Christian day of worship, Christmas, Lent, Ash Wednesday (adopted around the 8<sup>th</sup> century per *The Catholic Encyclopedia*), eating unclean meats, Passover/Easter

on Sunday, and many other Greco-Roman practices were unknown to the original Apostles and are also not in the Bible.

## **Isaiah 9**

Isaiah wrote the following:

<sup>6</sup> For unto us a Child is born, Unto us a Son is given; And the government will be upon His shoulder. And His name will be called Wonderful, Counselor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace. <sup>7</sup> Of the increase of His government and peace There will be no end, Upon the throne of David and over His kingdom, To order it and establish it with judgment and justice From that time forward, even forever. The zeal of the Lord of hosts will perform this. (Isaiah 9:6-7)

Yes, Jesus is the Son and yes, Jesus is God.

But since Isaiah 9 shows Him as Everlasting Father, does not that prove the trinity?

No.

The old Worldwide Church of God published the following:

Isaiah 9 is generally accepted as a prophecy referring to Christ. In verse 6 He is referred to as "the everlasting Father," which also can be rendered "the Father of the everlasting age," or the "Father of eternity." The God family inhabits eternity (Isa. 57:15). (Questions & Answers. Good News, November 1975)

Regarding Jesus being the 'Everlasting Father,' in the 1800s Gilbert Cramner wrote:

"I take the position that Christ is to take the place the first Adam might have occupied, as the 'Everlasting Father of all the redeemed family. Go with me to 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.' Now, the question arises, How, and when does he become 'the everlasting Father'? Go with me to Isaiah 22:21, 'And I will clothe him with thy robe, and strengthen him with thy girdle, and I will commit thy government into his hand: and he shall be a father to the inhabitants of Jerusalem, and to the house of Judah.'" (The Birth of the Spirit, The Hope of Israel, 14 Sept 1863, p. 3)

While Jesus is the Son, to us He will also be the everlasting Father.

### **Was Jesus Fully God?**

What about Jesus?

Is He fully God?

Yes, but not when He was truly human.

if Jesus were fully God while on earth, prior to His resurrection, He would not have made the following statements:

<sup>19</sup> Most assuredly, I say to you, the Son can do nothing of Himself (John 5:19)

<sup>30</sup> I can of Myself do nothing. (John 5:30)

<sup>28</sup> I do nothing of Myself; but as My Father taught Me, I speak these things. (John 8:28)

But, since Jesus did say those things, Jesus was not fully God then.

Regarding His sonship, the old Worldwide Church of God taught:

The fact that Christ is spoken of as God's Son refers to His human begetting and birth. Before His advent He was the "Word," not the "Son." This was His name, the badge of His power and authority as Spokesman for God the Father. (Questions & Answers. Good News, November 1975)

So, did Jesus empty Himself of His divinity when He was born of Mary?

Yes, the Bible teaches that Jesus:

<sup>7</sup> ... emptied himself, taking the form of a servant, being made in the likeness of men, and in habit found as a man. (Philippians 2:7, DRB)

<sup>5</sup> ... Christ Jesus; <sup>6</sup> Who, although He existed in the form of God, did not consider it robbery to be equal with God, <sup>7</sup> But emptied Himself, and was made in the likeness of men, and took the form of a servant; (Philippians 2:5-7, AFV)

<sup>5</sup> ... Christ Jesus: <sup>6</sup> Who, being in the form of God, did not count equality with God something to be grasped. <sup>7</sup> But he emptied himself, taking the form of a slave, becoming as human beings are; and being in every way like a human being, (Philippians 2:5-7, NJB)

Jesus emptied Himself of His divinity when He was begotten in Mary. That is when He became human.

Herbert W. Armstrong wrote:

Heb. 1:5 — speaking of CHRIST'S begettal in the virgin Mary. This verse shows that Christ, later BORN of God by a resurrection from the dead (Rom. 1.4), was an actual BEGOTTEN SON OF GOD, in a manner that no angel is, or can be. Angels are merely created beings. They are not actually begotten of God, so that in this sense they are not His born sons, as Christ now is — and as we may also be. Notice the verse: "For unto which of the angels said he at any time, Thou art my son, this day have I begotten thee?" (Armstrong HW. Just what do you mean ... BORN AGAIN. Worldwide Church of God booklet, 1972)

Aspects of Jesus' incarnation are a mystery to many. Jesus emptying Himself of His divinity is part of the "mystery of Christ" (Ephesians 3:4; Colossians 4:3).

Notice also:

<sup>9</sup> But we see Jesus, who was made a little lower than the angels, for the suffering of death crowned with glory and honor, that He, by the grace of God, might taste death for everyone. (Hebrews 2:9, NKJV/OSB)

Jesus was made LOWER than the angels, so were regular humans per Hebrews 2:6-7. Plus, Jesus died. Jesus was NOT 100% God if He was lower than the angels once He came through Mary and could die.

Binitarians, like the CCOG, teach that Jesus was fully human while on the earth. That is consistent with scripture and early beliefs.

The trinitarian view that Jesus was both fully God and fully human on the earth is also in conflict with what Irenaeus wrote in the 2<sup>nd</sup> century:

For as He became man in order to undergo temptation, ... that He might be capable of being tempted, dishonoured, crucified, and of suffering death, (Irenaeus. Adversus haereses, Book III, Chapter XIX, Verse 3)

We in the CCOG agree with the above (though we would have translated “crucified” as “impaled”).

### **More on the Humanity of the Pre-Resurrection Jesus**

As far as Jesus’ humanity goes, consider also the New Testament makes it clear that Jesus was tempted:

<sup>11</sup> For in that He Himself has suffered, being tempted, He is able to aid those who are tempted. (Hebrews 2:18, NKJV/OSB)

<sup>18</sup> For in that, wherein he himself hath suffered and been tempted, he is able to succour them also that are tempted. (Hebrews 2:18, DRB)

Consider that the New Testament also teaches that God cannot be tempted by evil:

<sup>13</sup> ... God cannot be tempted by evil (James 1:13, NJB)

It should be pointed out that James 1:13 uses the same basic Greek word for “tempted” that Hebrews 2:18 uses.

Furthermore, notice:

<sup>14</sup> Having therefore a great high priest that hath passed into the heavens, Jesus the Son of God: let us hold fast our confession. <sup>15</sup> For we have not a high priest, who can not have compassion on our infirmities: but one tempted in all things like as we are, without sin. (Hebrews 4:14-15, DRB)

<sup>17</sup> Therefore, in all things He had to be made like His brethren, that He might be a merciful and faithful High Priest in things pertaining to God, to make propitiation for the sins of the people. <sup>18</sup> For in that He Himself has suffered, being tempted, He is able to aid those who are tempted. (Hebrews 2:17-18, NKJV/OSB)

Jesus HAD TO BE MADE LIKE HIS HUMAN BRETHREN. Humans, of course, can sin. Therefore, these verses clearly show that Jesus was not fully God after His incarnation and prior to His resurrection.

Consider that the Bible teaches God cannot lie (Hebrews 6:18, Titus 1:2), neither can He be tempted by evil (James 1:13). For Jesus to have been “tempted in all things like as we are,” “being tempted” to position Him to fully “have compassion on our infirmities,” He had to be capable of actually sinning, otherwise He was NOT tempted as we are.

Thus, since God cannot sin (cf. James 1:13; Psalm 145:17), and scripture cannot be broken (John 10:35), we must conclude Jesus could not have been fully God while on earth. For, if Jesus was fully God on earth, He was not tempted as we are. So, while Jesus was tempted like us, temptation does not happen with God. Jesus could have sinned, and He was tempted, but He did not sin.

Jesus also actually died (Romans 5:6,8)—which is not something that happens to God.

Furthermore, Polycarp of Smyrna of the 2<sup>nd</sup> century understood that Jesus actually died and needed to be resurrected:



Jesus Christ, who for our sins suffered even unto death, [but] “whom God raised from the dead, having loosed the bands of the grave” ... He who raised Him up from the dead will raise up us also, if we do His will, and walk in His commandments, and love what He loved ... (Polycarp’s Letter to the Philippians, Chapters 1,2)

The false Jesus that trinitarians actually claim to worship did NOT give up all so that humans could be saved, was not subject to transgression like humans, did not have to have the faith to rely on the Father for miracles and His resurrection, did not really die, did not need His Father to resurrect Him, and, hence, did not really come in the flesh.

Although trinitarians do not word it exactly that way, their view of Jesus not fully coming in the flesh is warned against by the Apostle John:

<sup>7</sup> Many deceivers have gone out into the world, people who do not confess Jesus Christ came in the flesh. This is the deceiver and the Antichrist. (2 John 7, EOB)

<sup>7</sup> For many seducers are gone out into the world, who confess not that Jesus Christ is come in the flesh: this is a seducer and an antichrist. (2 John 7, DRB)

This passage does not mean an antichrist would not believe that there was a Jesus. Even many false Christians (Matthew 7:21-23; 24:4-5) and atheists acknowledge the historical fact of Jesus, as do the demons (James 2:19). This passage in 2 John is saying that an antichrist teaching is that Jesus was not truly human when incarnate.

The original Christian belief was that Jesus had emptied Himself of His divinity, became fully human, was tempted, and allowed Himself to actually be put to death in order to be our Saviour.

## **Mystery of Christ**

Traditional Roman Catholics generally believe:

It is impossible to believe explicitly in the mystery of Christ, without faith in the Trinity...Wherefore just as, before Christ, the mystery of Christ was believed explicitly by the learned, but implicitly and under a veil, so to speak, by the simple, so too was it with the mystery of the Trinity. And consequently, when once grace had been revealed, all were bound to explicit faith in the mystery of the Trinity (The Summa Theologica of St. Thomas Aquinas. Second and Revised Edition, 1920. Literally translated by Fathers of the English Dominican Province. Online Edition Copyright © 2003 by Kevin Knight. Nihil Obstat. F. Innocentius Apap, O.P., S.T.M., Censor. Theol. Imprimatur. Edus. Canonicus Surmont, Vicarius Generalis. Westmonasterii. APPROBATIO ORDINIS. Nihil Obstat. F. Raphael Moss, O.P., S.T.L. and F. Leo Moore, O.P., S.T.L. Imprimatur. F. Beda Jarrett, O.P., S.T.L., A.M., Prior Provincialis Angliæ).

However, one can believe in Christ and know the mystery about Him without belief in the Greco-Roman Trinity. Consider further that the Roman Catholics also teach that their trinity did not clearly come from the Bible and cannot be fully understood:

In Scripture there is as yet no single term by which the Three Divine Persons are denoted together.... The Vatican Council has explained the meaning to be attributed to the term mystery in theology. It lays down that a mystery is a truth which we are not merely incapable of discovering apart from Divine Revelation, but which, even when revealed, remains "hidden by the veil of faith and enveloped, so to speak, by a kind of darkness" (Const., "De fide. cath.", iv). (Joyce G.H. The Blessed Trinity. The Catholic Encyclopedia, Volume XV Copyright © 1912 by Robert Appleton Company).

Thus, the Roman Catholic Church teaches that the trinity is a mystery and not a biblical term, but only a supposedly revealed doctrine. The truth is that the trinity is a doctrine adopted from paganism and apparitions that had Imperial enforcement.

The Apostle Paul specifically wrote of the "mystery of Christ":

<sup>1</sup> For this reason I, Paul, the prisoner of Christ Jesus for you Gentiles — <sup>2</sup> if indeed you have heard of the dispensation of the grace of God which was given to me for you, <sup>3</sup> how that by revelation He made known to me the mystery (as I have briefly written already, <sup>4</sup> by which, when you read, you may understand my knowledge in the mystery of Christ), <sup>5</sup> which in other ages was not made known to the sons of men, as it has now been revealed by the Spirit to His holy apostles and prophets: <sup>6</sup> that the Gentiles should be fellow heirs, of the same body, and partakers of His promise in Christ through the gospel, (Ephesians 3:1-6, NKJV/OSB)

Since the mystery of Christ had been revealed by the Spirit by the time of the Apostle Paul (the *Epistle to the Ephesians* was written c. 61 A.D.), and the trinity did not come to have major acceptance until the 4<sup>th</sup> century, knowledge of the trinity is not, nor was it ever, needed to believe in the mystery of Christ.

Part of the mystery of Christ is not only how He emptied Himself of His divinity to become human, but that God's plan through his apostles and prophets was always to one day reach Gentiles to be fellow heirs with Israelites with His Spirit (see also the free book, online at [ccog.org](http://ccog.org), titled *Universal OFFER of Salvation, Apokatastasis: Can God save the lost in an age to come? Hundreds of scriptures reveal God's plan of salvation*). That is a mystery to many.

Paul further connected the will of God to make the mystery known to the Gentiles, as well as to make known the mystery that Christians have Christ in us:

<sup>27</sup> To them God willed to make known what are the riches of the glory of this mystery among the Gentiles: which is Christ in you, the hope of glory. (Colossians 1:27, NKJV/OSB)

<sup>2</sup> Continue earnestly in prayer, being vigilant in it with thanksgiving; <sup>3</sup> meanwhile praying also for us, that God would open to us a door for the word, to speak the mystery of Christ, for which I am also in chains, <sup>4</sup> that I may make it manifest, as I ought to speak. (Colossians 4:2-4, NKJV/OSB)

The Book of Acts teaches that God “opened the door of faith to the Gentiles” (Acts 14:27), which was a mystery to many of the Jews.

One is not a true Christian simply by claiming Christ or calling Him 'Lord' (cf. Matthew 7:21-23). Having Jesus live His life through His Spirit in us is the only way one is a true Christian (cf. Romans 8:9). Yet, that is a mystery to many. That Spirit of Christ is available to Gentiles and Israelites (Galatians 3:28-29).

The mystery of Christ has to do with Him emptying Himself of His divinity to become human (Philippians 2:5-7), the calling of Gentiles and Israelites, the giving of the Spirit, how the Father and Son are one (John 17:22), that Jesus lives in the lives of those who are converted, and since He is the firstborn of many brethren (Romans 8:29), that we may be glorified/deified with Him once He returns (John 17:10; Romans 8:17,29; 2 Thessalonians 1:10).

The trinity is NOT the mystery of Christ.

### **What About 1 John 5:7-8?**

Some point to 1 John 5:7-8 as "proof" of the trinity.

But most rely on something ADDED to the text centuries later.

Consider that the *Codex Amiatinus* (Codex Amiatinus. Novum Testamentum Latine interpreter Hieronymo. Epistula Iohannis I V:6-8. Constantinus Tischendorf, Lipsiae. 1854), which is believed to be the closest to the original document that Jerome originally translated, also does not have the extra words.

Regarding its importance, *The Catholic Encyclopedia* states:

**Codex Amiatinus** The most celebrated manuscript of the Latin Vulgate Bible, remarkable as the best witness to the true text of St. Jerome ... (Fenlon JF. Codex Amiatinus. The Catholic Encyclopedia)

The Latin in the *Codex Amiatinus* differs from more modern version of the Latin Vulgate because the modern version adds "*in caelo, Pater, Verbum, et Spiritus Sanctus. Et hi tres unum sunt. Et tres sunt qui testimonium dant in terra:*" (Source: Latin Vulgate.com is provided by Mental Systems, Inc. <http://www.latinvulgate.com/verse.aspx?t=1&b=23&c=5> viewed 04/21/12).

Well, “in caelo, Pater, Verbum, et Spiritus Sanctus. Et hi tres unum sunt. Et tres sunt qui testimonium dant in terra:” translates into English as:

“in heaven, the Father, the Son, and Holy Spirit. And these three are. And there are three that bear witness in earth”

In other words, the text that Jerome originally translated DID NOT include the above. What we see in the Douay-Rheims is from a CHANGED version of the *Latin Vulgate*. It is NOT a translation of what Jerome originally wrote.

Notice also a copy of the relevant section of a Greek document called the *Codex Sinaiticus* c. 350 (the *Codex Sinaiticus* is considered to be the oldest complete copy of the New Testament):

ΚΑΙ ΤΩ ΑΙΜΑΤΙ ΚΑΙ  
ΤΟΙΣ ΤΡΙΝΑ ΕΣΤΙΝ ΤΟ  
ΜΑΡΤΥΡΟΥΝ ΟΤΙ  
ΤΙΝΑ ΕΣΤΙΝ ΗΜΑΝ  
ΟΙ ΤΡΕΙΣ ΟΙ ΤΡΕΙΣ  
ΟΙ ΜΑΡΤΥΡΟΙ  
ΕΣΤΟΙΝ ΑΚΑΙΤΟΥ  
ΛΟΥ ΚΑΙ ΤΟ ΑΙΜΑ  
ΚΑΙ ΟΙ ΤΡΕΙΣ ΕΙΣ  
ΕΝΟΙΝ ΕΙΣ ΗΜΑΝ  
ΤΥΡΙΑΝ ΤΟΥ ΘΥΣΑΝ  
ΚΑΝΟΜΕΝ ΗΜΑΝ

Here is a translation of 1 John 5:7-8 as shown in the *Codex Sinaiticus* from a scholastic source:

<sup>7</sup> For they that testify are three, <sup>8</sup> the Spirit, and the water, and the blood, and the three are one. (CodexSinaiticus.org accessed 07/02/20)

The added statements, found in some translations, was not in the *Codex Sinaiticus*.

So, when did the extra statement get put in?

Notice what seems probably to be the most accepted view from Dr. Daniel Wallace:

the earliest manuscript, codex 221 (10<sup>th</sup> century), includes the reading in a marginal note which was added sometime after the original composition. Thus, there is no sure evidence of this reading in any Greek manuscript until the 1500s; each such reading was apparently composed after Erasmus' Greek NT was published in 1516. Indeed, the reading appears in no Greek witness of any kind (either manuscript, patristic, or Greek translation of some other version) until AD 1215 (in a Greek translation of the Acts of the Lateran Council, a work originally written in Latin) ...

The Trinitarian formula (known as the *Comma Johanneum*) made its way into the third edition of Erasmus' Greek NT (1522) because of pressure from the Catholic Church ...

In reality, the issue is history, not heresy: How can one argue that the *Comma Johanneum* must go back to the original text when it did not appear until the 16<sup>th</sup> century in any Greek manuscripts? (Wallace DB, professor of New Testament Studies at Dallas Theological Seminary. The Textual Problem in 1 John 5:7-8. <http://bible.org/article/textual-problem-1-john-57-8> viewed 07/03/20)

Basically, what seems to have happened is that a monk put a personal note related to his interpretation of the 'three' mentioned in the first part of 1 John 5:7. One or more scribal monks after him, actually inserted his note into the text. It was NOT inspired by God.

Some wish to believe the expanded passage of 1 John 5:7-8 was real because early heretics seem to have possibly referred to it. At least one popular online source falsely claims that Tertullian, who followed the trinitarian heretic Montanus, quoted the omitted words in *Against Praxeas*. However, this is not true as that writing does not have a full quote of 1 John 5:7-8.

### **The 3<sup>rd</sup> and 4<sup>th</sup> Centuries**

Notice this condemnation by a Roman Catholic Cardinal for holding the original view of the Godhead:

Lucian, who schismatized or was excommunicated on his deposition, held heretical tenets of a diametrically opposite nature, that is, such as were afterwards called Semi-Arian . . . I would rather direct the reader's attention to the particular form which the Antiochene corruptions seem to have assumed, viz., that of Judaism . . . (Newman JH, Cardinal. *The Arians of the Fourth Century*, pp. 7,9).

This is showing that there were people in the Antioch area in the 3<sup>rd</sup> and 4<sup>th</sup> centuries that held to some form of Judeo-Christianity, as well to binitarianism. And who, according to Roman Catholic sources, were not part of the group in communion with Rome and Alexandria.

*The Catholic Encyclopedia* states:

Lucian of Antioch ... Though he cannot be accused of having shared the theological views of Paul of Samosata, he fell under suspicion at the time of Paul's condemnation, and was compelled to sever his communion with the Church ... The opposition to the allegorizing tendencies of the Alexandrines centred in him. He rejected this system entirely and propounded a system of literal interpretation ... (Healy PJ. Lucian of Antioch. *The Catholic Encyclopedia*)

Yes, those who literally believed scripture were condemned by the allegorists. Lucian was probably considered to be a type of 'Paulician,' which is a name the Greco-Romans assigned to people with beliefs like his.

Yet, it is also a fact that Eastern Orthodox patriarchs in the 4<sup>th</sup> century held to a semi-arian/binitarian view of the Godhead until after Demophilus was deposed by Emperor Theodosius for refusing to accept trinitarianism.

*The Catholic Encyclopedia* reported:

Towards the middle of the fourth century, Macedonius, Bishop of Constantinople, and, after him a number of Semi-Arians, while

apparently admitting the Divinity of the Word, denied that of the Holy Ghost. (Forget J. Holy Ghost).

Consider also that there is no clear proof that earlier bishops of Byzantium or Constantinople were truly trinitarian. *The Catholic Encyclopedia* also reported that binitarians were “**the conservative majority in the East in the fourth century**” (Chapman, Semiarians). This included the famous Greco-Roman historian Eusebius (and his successor Acacius). 85-90% of the Greco-Roman bishops who attended the Council of Nicea in 325 were not trinitarian (Gruner N, Priest. Part II FATIMA: Roadblocks and Breakthroughs. The Fatima Crusader 110, Fall 2014, p. 48; Feldmeth N. Early Christianity. CD Lecture. Fuller Theological Seminary, c. 2003).

The fact is that most of the people the Greco-Roman Catholics considered to have been saints before the Council of Nicea were not trinitarian, nor were the bulk of their leaders before Theodosius.

The 18<sup>th</sup> century scientist Isaac Newton noted the late arrival of the trinity and pointed to its late acceptance (though Athanasius did not originate it, he was a factor in Nicea and its post-Nicean adoption):

Isaac ... Newton traced the doctrine of the trinity back to Athanasius (298-373); he became convinced that before Athanasius the Church had no trinitarian doctrine. In the early 4<sup>th</sup> century Athanasius was opposed by Arius (256-336), who affirmed that God the Father had primacy over Christ. In 325 the Council of Nicea condemned as heretical the views of Arius. Thus, as viewed by Newton, Athanasius triumphed over Arius in imposing the false doctrine of the trinity on Christianity.

Newton further asserted that, in order to support trinitarianism, the Church deliberately corrupted the Bible by modifying crucial texts. For example, Newton claimed that the well-known words of I John 5:7 (“there are three that bear record in heaven, the father, the Word and the Holy Ghost: and these three are one”) were not in the original, pre-4<sup>th</sup> century Bible (Newton, it seems, was not a King James only man). Newton writes that “the Fathers...preferred to desert the Scriptures than not to condemn Arius”. Soon thereafter a universal corruption of



Christianity followed the central corruption of doctrine: in the 4<sup>th</sup> century trinitarianism fouled every element of Christianity.

According to Newton, the seventh seal began ... when trinitarianism was officially ratified at the Council of Constantinople. The great apostasy was not Romanism, but trinitarianism, “the false infernal religion”, to quote Newton’s own words. (Byl J. ON NEWTON AND THE TRINITY. Translated in 2005. <http://www.geocentricity.com/ba1/no077/newton-b.html> accessed 05/22/21)

While the 7<sup>th</sup> seal was not opened in 381 (and is not opened yet), it is true that trinitarianism was not a belief of the original Christian church.

Into the middle of the fourth century, many major leaders of the Greco-Roman churches endorsed Semi-Arian, non-trinitarian positions. In 359, there was even a “semi-Arian council of Seleucia” attended by Greco-Roman church leaders (Bagatti B. *The Church from the Gentiles in Palestine*, p. 56).

However, the Greco-Romans changed their minds on this and officially adopted the trinity at the Council of Constantinople in 381 A.D. To ensure that people would be forced into accepting the trinity, on February 27, 380, Emperor Theodosius decreed:

... let us believe in the one deity of the father, Son and Holy Spirit, in equal majesty and in a holy Trinity. We authorize the followers of this law to assume the title Catholic Christians; but as for the others, since in our judgment they are foolish madmen, we decree that they shall be branded with the ignominious name of heretics, and shall not presume to give their conventicles the name of churches. They will suffer in the first place the chastisement of divine condemnation and the second the punishment of our authority, in accordance with the will of heaven shall decide to inflict ... (Theodosian Code XVI.1.2. Cited in Bettenson H, ed., *Documents of the Christian Church*, London: Oxford University Press, 1943, p. 31)

So, the trinity ended up needing the force of Imperial Roman punishment against non-trinitarians who were called “foolish madmen.” The trinity simply was not something that original Christians believed or taught.

Historical scholar Jonathan Roberts wrote:

Until Theodosius commanded his subjects to believe in the doctrine of the Trinity, and enforced his commands upon them by the most inhumane ways, that doctrine was rejected and resisted by the Greek and Roman followers of the Christos ... That so senseless and unnatural doctrine should have been forced upon any people, by any means, however tyrannical is a mystery ... (Roberts JM. *Antiquity Unveiled: Ancient Voices from the Spirit Realms Disclose the Most Startling Revelations, Proving Christianity to be of Heathen Origin ...* Oriental publishing co., 1894, p. 468)

From Theodosius’ decree forward, Greco-Romans tended to call those who held to the original beliefs names such as heretics, madmen, and Nazarenes. Also, to avoid persecution, those who held to the original catholic beliefs tended not to refer to themselves as catholic Christians in public.

Although some have improperly asserted that the trinity is a central doctrine of the New Testament, here is what one modern historian, Dr. Bart Ehrman, has written about it:

Like other doctrines that became central to the faith, however, belief in the Trinity was a historical development, not a “given” from the early years of the faith.

**A.** The basic notion of the Trinity is that there are three persons in the Godhead: Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. These are all equally God and of the same substance, but despite the fact there are three persons, together, they compromise only one God, indivisible in nature.

**B.** This doctrine does not appear to be a doctrine pronounced by the historical Jesus, Paul, or any other Christian writer during the first hundred years or so of Christianity.

**C.** It cannot be found explicitly stated in the earliest Christian writings. The only passage of the New Testament that declares the doctrine (1 John 5:7-8) was not originally part of the text but was added by doctrinally astute scribes at a later date (it is not found in any Greek manuscripts until the 11<sup>th</sup> century) (Ehrman B. From Jesus to Constantine: A History of Early Christianity, Part 2. The Teaching Company, Chantilly (VA), 2004, p. 43).

It should also be pointed out that the terms trinity, threeness, or trinitarian are not found in the Bible.

In the 6<sup>th</sup> century A.D., centuries after the Greco-Romans changed and adopted the trinity, the so-called Athanasian Creed was written (Athanasius himself is not believed to have written it). It goes so far as to state that one cannot be saved unless one believes in the trinity. Here is part of that Creed:

... the Trinity in Unity, is to be worshipped. He therefore that will be saved, let him thus think of the Trinity.

While the Bible says one must believe in God and Jesus to be saved (e.g. Romans 10:9) it NEVER says anything about the trinity and salvation. Yet, the promotion and use of this false Athanasian Creed has been widespread among the Greco-Romans, Lutherans, and some Anglicans.

Those in the COG did not accept the change that the Greco-Romans did on the nature of the Godhead and we in the CCOG continue to hold the original catholic binitarian view of the Godhead today.

### **What About Theophilus of Antioch? What About Tertullian?**

It has been asserted that Theophilus of Antioch was the first to use the term trinity in the late 2<sup>nd</sup> century.

*The Catholic Encyclopedia* states:

The word *trias* (of which the Latin *trinitas* is a translation) is first found in Theophilus of Antioch about A.D. 180 ... Afterwards it appears in its Latin

form of *trinitas* in Tertullian (“De pud.” c. xxi) (Joyce G. The Blessed Trinity)

As far as Theophilus goes, here is a typical mistranslation of something he wrote in Greek:

In like manner also the three days which were before the luminaries, are types of the Trinity, of God, and His Word, and His wisdom. And the fourth is the type of man, who needs light, that so there may be God, the Word, wisdom, man (Theophilus of Antioch. To Autolycus, Book 2, Chapter XV. In Ante-Nicene Fathers, Volume 2).

It is mistranslated because trinity was NOT a Greek word, but a Latin one. Thus, the proper translation, in line with his other writings, would be:

In like manner also the three days which were before the luminaries, are types of the three of God, and His Word, and His Wisdom. And the fourth is the type of man, who needs light, that so there may be God, the Word, Wisdom, man. (Theophilus of Antioch. To Autolycus, Book 2, Chapter XV)

Some may argue that this is just a semantics issue and that Theophilus is actually still talking about the trinity that Emperor Theodosius later promoted. Yet, he was not.

Why?

The third part is what Theophilus was teaching that humans become. And that is what Theophilus is teaching--that now humans are a fourth type, but will become part of God.

Theophilus verifies this when he wrote:

... if I call Him Wisdom, I speak of His offspring (Theophilus of Antioch. To Autolycus, Book 1, Chapter III)

For if He had made him immortal from the beginning, He would have made him God ... so that if he should incline to the things of immortality,

keeping the commandment of God, he should receive as reward from Him immortality, and should become God. (Theophilus of Antioch. To Autolyclus, Book 2, Chapter XXVII)

Theophilus clearly taught that deification for the converted was the third part in the 'threeness' of God. This is consistent with the binitarian view of the family of God (cf. Ephesians 3:14-15, 19).

Furthermore, it has been claimed that:

The concept of *theosis* (English: "deification") is central to Orthodox doctrine. (Roeber AG, et al. CHRISTIANITY: EASTERN ORTHODOXY. Worldmark Encyclopedia of Religious Practices, 2nd Edition, Volume 1, Gale Research Inc, 2014, p. 227)

We in the *Continuing* Church of God, to this day, hold to the doctrine of being deified as a true member in the family of God.

Getting back to Theophilus of Antioch, he did not teach that the Holy Spirit was, or somehow would be, one of three persons in any trinity. He verified that when he taught the following about the Spirit of God:

... if I say He is Spirit, I speak of His breath ... the whole creation is contained by the spirit of God, and the containing spirit is along with the creation contained by the hand of God (Theophilus of Antioch. To Autolyclus, Book 1, Chapters III,V)

So, no, Theophilus did not teach the Greco-Roman trinity. He taught the third part had to do with deification of the converted.

As far as Tertullian goes, he taught a threeness and followed the apostate Montanus.

Tertullian is actually the first to introduce the Latin *trinitas* into Christian literature. (Rusch W.G. The Trinitarian Controversy. Fortress Press, Phil., 1980, p. 10).

It was not until after Tertullian (over 100 years after the Book of Revelation was written) that professing Christian writers suggested the concept of the trinity even close to the way it is now understood. It was not part of the true and original faith.

But what Tertullian taught was not the same as the Greco-Roman trinity that was adopted later (see Tertullian. *Against Praxeas*, Chapters 3,4-5,9. In *Ante-Nicene Fathers*).

Neither of the two claimed earliest sources of the word trinity, according to *The Catholic Encyclopedia*, actually clearly taught the trinitarian concept the way it is now taught. Also, Tertullian admitted that the majority around the early third century did not accept the trinity (*Against Praxeas*, Chapters 3,4-5,9).

Here is a list of early binitarians and trinitarians with their respective centuries:

**Binitarians**

- Ignatius 1<sup>st</sup>/2<sup>nd</sup>
- Polycarp 1<sup>st</sup>/2<sup>nd</sup>
- Justin Martyr 2<sup>nd</sup>
- Athenagoras 2<sup>nd</sup>
- Melito 2<sup>nd</sup>
- Theophilus 2<sup>nd</sup>
- Irenaeus 2<sup>nd</sup>
- Hippolytus 3<sup>rd</sup>
- Lucian 3<sup>rd</sup>/4<sup>th</sup>
- Eusebius 4<sup>th</sup>

**Trinitarians**

- Valentinus 2<sup>nd</sup>
- Montanus 2<sup>nd</sup>
- Tertullian 2<sup>nd</sup>/3<sup>rd</sup>

Everyone in that binitarian list is considered to be a saint by at least some of the Greco-Roman Catholics, whereas those listed as trinitarians are ALL considered to be heretics by the Greco-Roman Catholics. Although some Greco-Roman Catholics have asserted that several of those listed as binitarian were trinitarian, a careful review of their writings demonstrates that those writings are significantly more in line with a binitarian, and not a trinitarian, view of the Godhead.

The original catholic church clearly was binitarian, not trinitarian.

## **Origen and Gregory**

Perhaps it should be pointed out that in the 3<sup>rd</sup> century, Origen of Alexandria, who often pushed allegory (though he castrated himself misinterpreting Jesus' words in Matthew 5:30), put forth some type of subordinate trinitarian view which seemed to be a cross between trinitarianism and binitarianism (Origen. De Principiis, Book 1, Chapter 3, Verse 7. In Ante-Nicene Fathers).

Origen, himself, did not have Christian "self-control" (2 Timothy 1:7, NJB/EOB) or a biblically "sound mind" (2 Timothy 1:7, OSB). But he, himself, pushing allegory, did help the movement towards trinitarianism. As did the demonically-influenced Gregory the Wonder Worker (P.G., X, 986, as cited in Joyce G. "The Blessed Trinity." The Catholic Encyclopedia. Vol. 15. New York: Robert Appleton Company, 1912).

That Gregory is also known as Saint Gregory Thaumaturgus (wonder worker) by the Greco-Roman Catholics. He had been trained by allegorical teacher Origen in Alexandria.

Around 238-244 A.D. Gregory (died roughly 270 A.D.) seems to have been the first to have claimed to have seen an apparition of Mary (the possible apparition associated with the protoevangelicum of James is not considered to have happened according to most Greco-Roman Catholic scholars).

This apparition allegedly appeared to Gregory before he became a bishop.

Related to Gregory, Roberts and Donaldson reported:

He was believed to have been gifted with a power of working miracles, which he was constantly exercising ... the demons were subject to him ... he could cast his cloak over a man, and cause his death ... he could bring the presiding demons back to their shrine. (Roberts A, Donaldson J. Ante-Nicene Christian Library. Translations of the Writings of the Fathers down to A.D. 325. Edited by Alexander Roberts, and James Donaldson. Volume 20: The Works of Gregory Thaumaturgus, Dionysius of Alexandria, and

Archelaus. Syriac documents attribute. Originally 1871, modern printing by Elibron.com, 2006, p. 3)

Because Gregory's power over demons and other "wonders" were apparently accepted by many, he had influence. It seems that Gregory's enchantments and/or sorceries: (cf. Isaiah 47:5-12; Nahum 3:4), along with Imperial persecutions, may have greatly assisted the Greco-Roman faction in essentially eliminating the organized faithful in Asia Minor. Gregory was also a factor in the Marian cults that began to rise up around that time. His writings teach praise and excessive devotion to the "Holy Virgin," including the blasphemous teaching that Mary "blotted out" Eve's "transgressions." He was amongst the earliest ones to promote the expression the "Holy Trinity" and the pagan idea that humans had an immortal soul.

Gregory claimed"

Here, where the mystery of the Holy Trinity was revealed by the archangel to the Holy Virgin according to the gospel (Gregory Thaumaturgus, Homily concerning the Holy Mother of God, Section 35. Translated from the Armenian by F. C. CONYBEARE The Expositor 5th series vol.3 (1896), p. 173).

We prove, then, that the soul is simple...that what is simple is immortal...If, therefore, the soul is not corrupted by the evil proper to itself, and the evil of the soul is cowardice, intemperance, envy, and the like, and all these things do not despoil it of its powers of life and action, it follows that it is immortal. (Gregory Thaumaturgus. On the Soul, Chapters 5, 6. Translated by S.D.F. Salmond. From Ante-Nicene Fathers, Vol. 6. Edited by Alexander Roberts, James Donaldson, and A. Cleveland Coxe. Buffalo, NY: Christian Literature Publishing Co., 1886)

The gospel never uses the expression trinity, much less "Holy Trinity" nor does it teach that the soul is immortal. To the contrary, the Roman Catholic *Douay-Rheims Bible* teaches "the soul that sinneth, the same shall die" (Ezekiel 18:4) and "The soul that sinneth, the same shall die" in Ezekiel 18:20.



Gregory put his own interpretation on scripture (in the trinity case, he was referring to Luke 1:35 which was not proof; and for the immortality of the soul, he did not cite scripture). Gregory was a major reason that the trinity started to get accepted outside of Montanist circles; Origen, too, was a factor.

### **Councils of Emperors and Greco-Roman Catholic Leaders**

As far as the fourth century goes, it was Emperor Constantine, whose pagan Mithra sun god religion taught a trinity, that endorsed the trinitarian position put forth by Athanasius at the Council of Nicea. Yet even at that 4<sup>th</sup> century Council, 75-80% of the Greco-Roman bishops who attended were binitarian/semi-arian.

Notice also:

The second Formula of Sirmium (357) ... the Semi-Arian bishops, assembled at Ancyra, the episcopal city of their leader Basilius, issued a ... formula, asserting that the Son is in all things like the Father, afterwards approved by the Third Synod of Sirmium (358). **This formula, ... was signed by ... orthodox bishops, and probably by Pope Liberius,** (Benigni U. Council of Rimini. The Catholic Encyclopedia)

In the Council of Rimini, 359 A.D ... nearly all bishops present, 400 in number {decided} ... to sign a semi-Arian creed. (Kramer, p. 165)

EPISTLE OF THE SYNOD OF RIMINI TO THE EMPEROR CONSTANTIUS.

“We believe that it was by the appointment of God, as well as at the command of your piety, that we, the bishops of the West, came out of various districts to Rimini, in order that the faith of the Catholic Church might be detected. ... God the Father, through Jesus Christ our God and Lord, the power of ruling the world. ...” (Socrates, pp. 140-141)

Also in the 4<sup>th</sup> century, Bishop of Rome Liberius excommunicated the trinitarian's champion Athanasius (Gruner, p. 48). Bishop Liberius also signed a binitarian statement (Lopes, p. 12). Furthermore:

367. COUNCIL OF TYANA accepted the letter of Liberius pronouncing the Semiarian Bishops to be orthodox. (Johnson CFH, ed. The book of Saint Basil the Great, Bishop of Cappadocia, on the Holy Spirit. Claredon Press, 1892, p. lviii)

While Emperor Constantine endorsed the trinitarian view, that did NOT become a decree of that Council. Furthermore, note that the following Greco-Roman councils that were not called for by an emperor took binitarian/semiarian positions:

### **1. Council of Antioch (341)**

- Put out the semiarian dedication creed of the Greco Catholic Theophronius, Bishop of Tyana semiarian.

### **2. Council of Sirmium (351)**

- Issued a creed which says that the Father and Son are “like” each other, but the Son is subordinate to the Father. Holy Spirit not mentioned.

### **3. Council of Sirmium (358)**

- Produced the “Creed of Sirmium,” which says that the Father and Son are “like” each other, but the Son is subordinate to the Father. Holy Spirit not mentioned. It specifically opposed the use of the trinitarian terms “hypostasis,” and “homousios.”

### **4. Council of Ancyra (358)**

- Gathered by Basil of Ancyra, this council concluded with a creed that the Father and Son are like each other, the Son existed eternally, and that there is a Holy Spirit.

### **5. Council of Tarsus (358)**

- Supported the Semi-Arian position with a creed about the same as the Council of Ancyra.

## **6. Council of Philippopolis (359)**

- Its “Dated Creed” supported the Semi-Arian position.

## **7. Council of Sirmium (359)**

- Issued its “Dated Creed,” which was the same as the one above.

## **8. Council of Rimini and Seleucia (359-360)**

- Also known as the “Double Council,” this meeting resulted in the “Creed of Rimini,” which taught a Semi-Arian view of the Father and Son, while stating that there is a Holy Spirit.

Consider that from 370-380, Demophilus was the Patriarch (Archbishop) of Constantinople (List of Patriarchs of Constantinople. Patriarchate of Constantinople, <http://patriarchateofconstantinople.com/list-of-patriarchs.html> accessed 07/21/21).

Theodosius pushed decisions of his council over scripture and removed Demophilus because he refused to accept Theodosius’ creed.

Jesus warned that it was the narrow way His people are to take, not the broad way (Matthew 7:13-14)—which is the way of the trinitarians. Jesus also taught you could tell the true religious leaders from the false by their fruits (cf. Matthew 7:15-20).

Did Theodosius have fruits of a Christian? What kind of person was Theodosius who mandated that creed?

For one, he was a persecutor of those who held to the original catholic date of the Passover on the 14<sup>th</sup> (called Quartodecimans by historians) as he issued a decree for their death (Gibbon E. Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire, Volume III, Chapter XXVII. ca. 1776-1788). And:

**To the reign of Theodosius belonged the glory or the infamy of establishing Inquisitors of Faith, who seem to have been specially**

**enjoined to look after the crime of the Quartodecimans** (Smith W. A Dictionary of Greek and Roman Biography and Mythology: Oarses-Zygia. J. Murray, 1890 Item notes: v. 3 Original from Harvard University Digitized Jul 8, 2008, p. 1064).

Theodosius removed the one he thought was the top ecclesiastical leader in his region (Demophilus) and then pushed decisions of his council over scripture. He did not act like a true Christian would.

Furthermore, in 390 he brought in a pagan obelisk related to Tuthmosis III from Karnack, Egypt to be placed in a central public location in Constantinople (Kahzdan A, editor-in-chief. Obelisk of Theodosius. The Oxford Dictionary of Byzantium, Volume 3. Oxford University Press, 1991, p. 1509). The obelisk was originally part of the worship of the pagan sun-god Amun-Ra. Theodosius had images of himself and his sons added to the base of that obelisk (Kahzdan A, editor-in-chief. Theodosius I. The Oxford Dictionary of Byzantium, Volume 3. Oxford University Press, 1991, p. 2051)—hence directly connecting himself to the object of pagan sun-god worship.

A similar obelisk, started by Tuthmosis III, but finished by Tuthmosis IV, was ordered to be brought to Constantinople by Constantine in 330 A.D. However, that one was delayed and sent to Rome in 337. Currently, that obelisk is at the Piazza di San Giovanni in Laterano, Rome. So, we see that both Emperors Constantine and Theodosius took steps that promoted sun-god veneration after their alleged conversion to ‘Christianity.’

Here is what *The Catholic Encyclopedia* says about Theodosius:

**Theodosius I** Roman Emperor (also known as Flavius Theodosius), born in Spain, ... Theodosius is one of the sovereigns by universal consent called Great. He stamped out the last vestiges of paganism, put an end to the Arian heresy in the empire, pacified the Goths, left a famous example of penitence for a crime, and reigned as a just and mighty Catholic emperor. (Fortescue A. Theodosius I)

No, killing people who held to original catholic views on Passover as well as for other unscriptural reasons shows he did not reign justly as a real Christian

emperor. No, by promoting obelisks he did not stamp out the last vestiges of paganism. Theodosius did NOT “bear fruits worthy of repentance” (Luke 3:8, NKJV/OSB).

Furthermore, here is something written about Theodosius’ actions in 390 A.D. by a contemporary witness and Greco-Roman theologian named Theodoret who reported:

THESSALONICA ... Here arose a great sedition, ...

The emperor was fired with anger when he heard the news, and unable to endure the rush of his passion, did not even check its onset by the curb of reason, but allowed his rage to be the minister of his vengeance. When the imperial passion had received its authority, as though itself an independent prince, it broke the bonds and yoke of reason, unsheathed swords of injustice right and left without distinction, and slew innocent and guilty together. No trial preceded the sentence. No condemnation was passed on the perpetrators of the crimes. **Multitudes were mowed down like ears of grain in harvest-tide. It is said that seven thousand perished.** (Theodoret. Ecclesiastical History of Theodoret. Dalcassian Publishing Company, 2019, p. 200)

The same source also said Theodosius was involved in “continual wars” (Ibid). Theodosius did not act like a true Christian would and most certainly was not a “great” or real Christian. Yet, it was he that used Imperial might to overturn the majority view pushed trinitarianism.

Consider, further, that in the early 2<sup>nd</sup> century, Polycarp of Smyrna wrote:

For I trust that ye are well versed in the Sacred Scriptures (Polycarp, Chapter XII. Letter to the Philippian. In Ante-Nicene Fathers).

Yes, true Christian beliefs come from the Bible. Not from councils of men or Roman emperors who changed them from what the Bible teaches.

The current Nicene creed, that was adopted at the 381 Council of Constantinople which was convened by Emperor Theodosius, met resistance before acceptance.

Remember that Theodosius removed Demophilus from being the Patriarch of Constantinople because he would NOT accept the Emperor's trinitarian Nicene Creed. The 5<sup>th</sup> century Greco-Roman historian Socrates Scholasticus wrote:

When the emperor found the Church in this state, he began to consider by what means he could make peace, effect a union, and enlarge the Churches. Immediately therefore he intimated his desire to Demophilus, who presided over the Arian party, and inquired whether he was willing to assent to the Nicene creed, and thus reunite the people, and establish concord. Upon Demophilus's declining to accede to this proposal, the emperor said to him, "Since you reject peace and unanimity, I order you to quit the churches."

Which when Demophilus heard, weighing with himself the difficulty of contending against superior power, he convoked his followers in the church, and, standing in the midst of them, thus spoke: "Brethren, it is written in the Gospel.' If they persecute you in one city, flee ye into another. ' ' Since therefore the emperor excludes us from the churches, take notice that we will henceforth hold our assemblies without the city. (Socrates Scholasticus, pp. 265-266)

Therefore, consider that: 1) trinitarianism was not the position of the patriarchy of Constantinople, 2) Arian meant Semi-Arian above (and this happens in other writings as well), and 3) that political considerations, not theological ones, looks to have been the reason to push trinitarianism.

Even the official website of the Ecumenical Patriarch of Constantinople once admitted that the arians/semi-semiarians ruled that "see" for at least "forty years" in the fourth century (Gregory I of Nazianzen 379-381. © 2010 The Ecumenical Patriarchate of Constantinople. <http://www.patriarchate.org/patriarchate/former-patriarchs/gregory-i-of-nazianzen> viewed 04/17/10). Furthermore, it should be understood that there is no evidence that Constantinople had any "bishops" prior to the fourth century who were actually trinitarians.

The pagan convert Theodosius declared the trinity to be the official policy of his empire in 380 A.D. and said only those who accepted it could use the term

“Catholic Christian.” So yes, that late declaration also supports the view that trinitarianism was not an original catholic belief.

But now the trinitarian view is so widely held that most outside the Church of God consider it an essential view in order to be called a Christian.

For example, the Vatican’s 21<sup>st</sup> century, handbook, *The Bishop and Christian Unity: An Ecumenical Vademecum*, basically divides professing Christianity into two groups. One group that accepts the trinitarian godhead definition adopted by the 381 A.D. Council of Constantinople and the other group does not accept it. The Vatican’s handbook only calls for ecumenical unity with the first group.

Furthermore, that is consistent with the trinitarian position adopted last century by the World Council of Churches (WCC Approves a Trinitarian Basis, Christianity Today, December 22, 1961), that has remained in effect in the 21<sup>st</sup> century (Thomas TK. “WCC, Basis of,” in Dictionary of the Ecumenical Movement, 2nd ed., ed. Nicholas Lossky et al. Geneva: WCC Publications and Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2002: 1238–1239). In other words, the WCC only accepts trinitarians.

Thus, since the CCOG does not accept the 381 A.D. trinitarian adoption, it would not even be a target of the ecumenical efforts of the Vatican or the WCC. They, and churches closely like them, are a different group.

### **Blasting the Trinitarian Myth**

The idea that early Christians held to trinitarianism is a myth, as all reputable theological scholars admit.

Let’s summarize some facts of scripture and early church history:

1. The Father and Son are not co-equal per John 14:10 and 14:28. The Father is greater.
2. The Holy Spirit is not co-equal to the Son, as Jesus administers it per Matthew 11:27; John 15:26.
3. Jesus was not fully human AND fully God while a man on the earth as He emptied Himself of His divinity (Philippians 2:7), He, of Himself could do nothing (John 5:19, 30, 8:28), was tempted as we are (Hebrews 2:18)—

(remember, God cannot be tempted (James 1:13), and He died (Romans 5:6,8)—which God cannot do.

4. So called “binitarian formulas” are frequently seen in the New Testament (e.g. Romans 8:11, 2 Corinthians 4:14, Galatians 1:1, Ephesians 1:20, 1 Timothy 1:2, 1 Peter 1:21, and 2 John 1:13).
5. Although 1 John 5:7-8 is cited as proof of the trinity, the “trinitarian portion” claimed to be in those verse was added centuries after the New Testament was written.
6. What has been referred to as the oldest preserved Christian sermon outside of the Bible (sometimes referred to as 2 Clement) holds a binitarian view of the Godhead.
7. The first known trinitarians who claimed Christianity, Montanus and Valentinus, are considered to be apostates by the Greco-Roman Catholics and Protestants as well as the Church of God.
8. Early church leaders such as saints Ignatius, Polycarp, and Theophilus were binitarian.
9. Greco-Roman saints such as Justin Martyr and Irenaeus were binitarian.
10. The bulk of those that the Greco-Roman Catholics and Protestants consider to have been early saints were binitarian.
11. The “mystery of Christ” has nothing to do with the trinity as scripture says that mystery was known by the time of the Apostle Paul (Ephesians 3:1-5), which was centuries before the trinity was formally adopted.
12. The Holy Spirit was not considered to be God by early Christians.
13. The so-called ‘Apostolic Fathers’ did not hold to trinitarianism.
14. Hippolytus, called “the most important theologian ... in the pre-Constantinian era” by *The Catholic Encyclopedia* was binitarian.
15. Although there was a type of trinity in the Mithraic sun god religion of Emperor Constantine and he endorsed trinitarianism, his Imperial Council of Nicea did not decree the trinitarian position of the Godhead.
16. There are no clearly stated trinitarian statements made by any early Bishop of Byzantium/Constantinople expressing a true trinitarian position.
17. Bishop Liberius of Rome endorsed the orthodoxy of semiarianism.
18. The two earliest know creeds (the *Old Roman Form* and *Creed of Lucian*) were not trinitarian.
19. There were at least eight ecclesiastical councils, not called by an emperor, after the Council of Nicea, that endorsed some type of a semiarian creed.



20. Shortly after converting from ancient Roman paganism, Emperor Theodosius pushed what is now called the Nicene Creed.
21. When Archbishop/Patriarch Demophilus of Constantinople remained semiarian, Theodosius removed him from his position.
22. The adoption of the Nicene creed by Theodosius' Council of Constantinople in 381 A.D. proves it was not part of the original "faith once for all delivered to the saints" (Jude 3).
23. Emperor Theodosius later used imperial force to get his Nicene Creed accepted in order to persecute those who would not accept it. He had people murdered—he was not functioning as a real Christian.

The idea that the Bible and early Christians believed in the trinity of Theodosius is clearly a myth. It was not part of the original faith and should not be embraced by true Christians.

### **The Family of God**

The Bible shows that God is a family currently consisting of the Father and the Son.

The Bible does not teach the trinity.

NOT ONE of those that the Greco-Romans consider to be "early fathers" taught (prior to the 3<sup>rd</sup> century) the trinity (Rusch, pp. 2-3). The essentially unanimous view of the Godhead was binitarian (also called semi-arian).

Binitarianism did not just spring up in the 4<sup>th</sup> century as some have suggested—it was the original Christian view of the Godhead, as some knowledgeable scholars have affirmed (e.g. Hurtado, pp. 52-53, 605, 637; Summary of response by Alan F. Segal. International Conference on the Historical Origins of the Worship of Jesus. 13-17 June 1998).

(For more details about scriptures that Protestants sometimes claim supports trinitarianism, check out the free book, available online at [ccog.org](http://ccog.org), *Hope of Salvation: How the Continuing Church of God Differs from Protestantism*.)

The Bible, as well as historical records, confirm that the original catholic view of the Godhead was binitarian, not trinitarian.

## 5. The Holy Spirit

What about the Holy Spirit?

The Holy Spirit is a mystery to most.

The Holy Spirit is the impersonal power of God. Several of the scriptures that support that are Genesis 6:3; Job 33:4; Psalm 139:7; Isaiah 11:2, 42:1; 61:1; Ezekiel 36:27; 39:29; Luke 1:15, 35, 67; 11:13; John 20:22; Acts 4:8; 31; 13:9; 15:8; Romans 8:11; 2 Corinthians 1:22; and 2 Peter 1:21.

Interestingly, at least one trinitarian scholar has admitted:

The language of the New Testament permits the Holy Spirit to be understood as an impersonal force or influence more readily than it does the Son ... The attempt to develop an understanding of the Holy Spirit consistent with the trinitarian passages ... came to fruition at Constantinople in 381. There were a number of reasons why the personhood of the Holy Spirit took longer to acknowledge than the Son: (1) the term *pneuma*, breath, is neuter in general and impersonal in ordinary meaning; (2) the distinctive work of the Holy Spirit, influencing the believer, does not necessarily seem as personal as that of the Father ... in addition, those who saw the Holy Spirit as a Person, were often heretical, for example, the Montanists; (3) many of the early theologians attributed to the Logos or Word, the revelatory activity later theologians saw as the special, personal work of the Holy Spirit (Brown HOJ. *Heresies: Heresy and Orthodoxy in the History of the Church*. Hendrickson Publishers, Peabody (MA), 1988, p. 140).

In other words, trinitarian scholars understand that:

- 1) a concept close to what trinitarians teach about the Holy Spirit was not widely accepted until the fourth century,
- 2) normal understanding of koine Greek reveals that the Holy Spirit would be impersonal, not a person,
- 3) the work of the Holy Spirit can be attributed to an impersonal force from God,

- 4) second-century heretics were associated with treating the Holy Spirit as a person,
- 5) early church writers made statements contradicting the current trinitarian view of the Holy Spirit, and
- 6) after the trinity was accepted, later writers decided statements must support the trinity, thereby inadvertently PROVING that the Holy Spirit as part of a divine trinity WAS NOT an original Christian teachings.

The Bible shows that the Holy Spirit emanates from God (1 Kings 8:27; Psalm 139:7; Jeremiah 23:24) and is given to all who repent of their sins and are baptized (Acts 2:38-39). The Father and Son work through the Holy Spirit. Though not a separate person in the theological sense, the Holy Spirit is the power (Acts 1:8; 2 Timothy 1:6-7) which helps all believers overcome evil (Romans 12:21; Revelation 2:26-27) attain eternal life (Philippians 3:12; Romans 6:23). The Holy Spirit is given to those who obey (Acts 5:32) after they have properly repented and been baptized (Acts 2:38-39).

The old Radio Church of God taught:

As *both* Christ and the Father constitute God-the Family of God-both *individually* have THE HOLY SPIRIT. Both have this *same perfect* mental attitude, for this scripture says God is Holy. The *Holy Spirit* is the *one* harmonious perfect *HOLY ATTITUDE OF MIND* which is shared by both Father and Son. This spirit or attitude of mind is called The Holy Spirit! ...

It was the Spirit of God moving over the face of the earth which fashioned our earth as shown by Genesis, chapter I. ...

The Holy Spirit expresses the unified creative will of the God Family. It transformed God's spirit energy into the material world we see about us. The Holy Spirit *of* God may be compared to A TOOL or machine. A tool serves man in making things. The Holy Spirit serves this same purpose for God. Spirit is capable of infinite work-never running down because of dissipation or friction. God's divine Spirit fills the universe. How clear it is that the Holy Spirit is *not* a *third* person in the Godhead as taught by the pagan trinity idea.

Spiritual qualities and entities seem so unreal to most people. And no wonder. Spiritual things are invisible, not discerned by the senses until REVEALED IN WRITING in the *Bible*! When we speak of the Holy Spirit, many cannot picture in their minds what it is. Yet the Bible makes clear the nature of the Holy Spirit. Man is matter. God is Spirit. Spirit, unlike living matter, is eternal. I Cor. 15:53. ...

When God formed the first earth and heavens nothing else existed. He willed that the SPIRIT *ENERGY* FROM HIS OWN BODY be TRANSFORMED into physical energy and matter. ...

God *wills* and *speaks* His will, and His spirit energy acts on any or all things He has created. All nature obeys His will. We do not understand, and He does not reveal, the exact mechanism. But He does reveal clearly the *general process*. (Lesson 9: Does God Exist? Ambassador College Bible Correspondence Course. 1956)

Yes, there are certain mysteries about God. Yet those who will believe His word, can and do understand that what God is doing is based on love, even though as the above suggests, we may not always understand “the exact mechanism.”

The old Worldwide Church of God also taught:

The human spirit in man and the Holy Spirit of God *join* to make a begotten child of God, just as the male sperm cell and the female ovum or egg cell join to make a begotten human, but not yet developed or ready to be born as a human being.

God's Holy Spirit, when it combines with the human spirit in the human mind, does two things: 1) it begets the human with divine, eternal life to be later born into the God family as a divine being, then composed wholly of spirit; 2) it imparts to the mind the ability to comprehend *spiritual* knowledge-to understand the things of God. ...

Just as the human body and brain gradually begin to form during the gestation period in human reproduction, the righteous and holy

character of God must begin to form and *grow* once one is begotten by God's Spirit.

Obviously, we cannot become absolutely perfect in character until the resurrection, when God will complete the process by giving each of us a new, perfect spirit body with its perfect- sinless (1 John 3:2, 9)- nature that will be like Christ's and the Father's. But in the meantime, God wants us to *grow* in His spiritual character daily by obeying His commandments and overcoming and rooting sin out of our lives--*growing toward* that spiritual perfection! Such perfect, holy character cannot be created by fiat. It must be developed, and that requires time and experience. (Lesson 15: What Makes Man Unique? Ambassador College Bible Correspondence Course. 1982)

The New Testament shows that the Holy Spirit was given to those baptized through the laying on of the hands of Christ's ministers, such as apostles or elders (Acts 8:17; 9:17; 19:6; 2 Timothy 1:6) or others properly designated by them to do so (cf. 1 Corinthians 1:14-17; John 4:2).

God is reproducing Himself through His people whom He begets through the Holy Spirit:

<sup>22</sup> Having purified your lives by obedience to the Truth unto unfeigned brotherly love through the Spirit, love one another fervently with a pure heart. <sup>23</sup> For you have been begotten again, not from corruptible seed, but from incorruptible seed, by the living Word of God, which remains forever. (1 Peter 1:22-23, AFV)

<sup>22</sup> Having purified your souls in the hearing of the truth by the Spirit to unfeigned brotherly love, out of pure hearts love ye one another cordially: <sup>23</sup> Begotten again, not of corrupted seed, but uncorrupted, by the word of God, living and remaining forever. (1 Peter 1:23-24, Smith's Literal Translation)

Upon receiving the Holy Spirit, Christians are begotten by God (cf. 1 Peter 1:3; 1 John 5:1), then after a period of spiritual growth/gestation (cf. 2 Peter 3:18), Christians will literally be born again (John 3:5-7) as spirits at the resurrection (1

Corinthians 15:49-54), just as Christ was (Romans 1:4-5). Early Christian writers, such as Theophilus of Antioch, also taught this (Theophilus of Antioch. To Autolytus, Book 2, Chapters XV, XXII, XXVII. Translated by Marcus Dods, A.M. Excerpted from Ante-Nicene Fathers, Volume 2. Edited by Alexander Roberts & James Donaldson. American Edition, 1885).

The old Ambassador College explained this as follows:

The Bible speaks of the plan of salvation as being a mystery. But that doesn't mean that God's truths are a MYSTERY to those whom He is calling to salvation. ... the doctrines of salvation or the very words of life are a mystery TO THOSE WHO ARE NOT BEING CALLED. Only those who are His very own disciples are privileged TO KNOW THE MYSTERY OF THE KINGDOM OF GOD. His truth, His way and His teachings aren't "mysterious, hard-to-define, etc." to His people. ...

We are to learn what God is planning by observing the happenings here on earth (Rom. 1:20). Everywhere we look we can see every animal, bird, microbe and plant reproducing itself. In Genesis 1:26, God (Elohim) is quoted as saying: "... Let us make man in OUR IMAGE... " God is reproducing Himself! How very plain that is to any rational, thinking individual. WE ARE TO BE MADE IN THE VERY IMAGE OF GOD! We are to become Gods ourselves.

The Spirit of God, the Holy Spirit, unites with our minds and we are BEGOTTEN AGAIN — this time spiritually. Read it in your own Bible.

"Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, which according to his abundant mercy hath BEGOTTEN US AGAIN unto a lively hope by the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead" (I Pet. 1:3). In Verse 23, it says, "Being BEGOTTEN AGAIN, not of corruptible seed, but of incorruptible, by the word of God, which liveth and abideth for ever" (Ivan Panin Translation).

The Holy Spirit impregnates us with the God nature. That spiritual begettal imbues us with the nature and mind of God. Throughout our Christian lives we continue to grow and 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). We will then rule this earth as God's sons. (Just What Is The Holy Spirit? Ambassador College Production, 1983)

The Holy Spirit is essential to salvation and is working in God's people now.

### **Early Post-New Testament Writers**

Let us look at some writings from early professing and actual Christian writers related to the Holy Spirit.

A second century Greco-Roman apologist named Athenagoras wrote the following:

And, the Son being in the Father and the Father in the Son, in oneness and power of spirit, the understanding and reason (*nous kai logos*) of the Father is the Son of God ... The Holy Spirit ... which operates in the prophets, we assert to be an effluence of God, flowing from Him, and returning back again like a beam of the sun ... (Athenagoras. A Plea for the Christians, Chapter X. Translated by B.P. Pratten. In Ante-Nicene Fathers, Volume 2)

Thus, Athenagoras explained that the Father and the Son are God, have a oneness of power and spirit, and that the Holy Spirit is the effluence of God. He never called the Holy Spirit God. And he stated that both, the Father and the Son (the term in English refers to two), are both united and distinct--this is a binitarian view.

*The Shepherd of Hermas* was reportedly written in the 2<sup>nd</sup> century by Hermas, the brother of Pius who is considered to have been the bishop of Rome at the time of its writing. It contains such statements about the Holy Spirit such as:

... hear now how grief crushes the Holy Spirit and saves again. (p. 403)

For no spirit given by God needs to be consulted; instead having the power of deity, it speaks everything on its own initiative, because it is



from above, from the power of the divine Spirit. (Shepherd of Hermas. Mandate 10.2.1 also called Chapter 41.1 in: Holmes M. The Apostolic Fathers--Greek Text and English Translations, 3rd printing 2004. Baker Books, Grand Rapids (MI), Mandate 11.1.5, chapter 43:5, p.407)

... the Holy Spirit speaks to the multitude, just as the Lord wills. In this way then, the Spirit of the Deity will be obvious. (ibid. Mandate 11.1.9-10, chapter 43:9-10, p. 407)

... the divine Spirit that comes from above. (ibid. Mandate 11.1.20, chapter 43:20, p.409)

... the son is the Holy Spirit. (ibid. Parable 5.5.2, chapter 59:5.2, p.437, see also p. 471)

Hence, other than the views of the heretics Valentinus and Montanus, it appears that the early Roman writers considered that the Holy Spirit was either the Son or a power from above.

In the 2<sup>nd</sup> century, Polycarp reportedly said:

And all things whatsoever being taught of God ye know, when ye search the inspired Scriptures, engrave with the pen of the Holy Spirit on your hearts, that the commandments may abide in you indelible. (Life of Polycarp, Chapter 24. In J. B. Lightfoot, The Apostolic Fathers, vol. 3.2, 1889, pp. 488-506)

Near the end of the second century, Melito of Sardis (whom Greco-Roman Catholics and others consider to be a saint) wrote:

For the deeds done by Christ after His baptism, and especially His miracles, gave indication and assurance to the world of the Deity hidden in His flesh. For, being at once both God and perfect man likewise ... He concealed the signs of His Deity, although He was the true God existing before all ages ... (Melito. On the Nature of Christ. In Ante-Nicene Fathers, Volume 8)

This is the one who became human in a virgin, who was hanged on the tree, (Melito. On the Passover)

This clearly shows that Melito then considered Christ to be God, though truly human while on earth. And as cited earlier, Melito wrote the Father was also God. There is no indication in any of the surviving writings of Melito that he considered that the Holy Spirit was also God, hence he seemed to hold a binitarian view.

Actually, like most binitarians, his writings suggest that the Holy Spirit was simply a manifestation of the power of God as he wrote:

*The tongue of the Lord*-His Holy Spirit. In the Psalm: "My tongue is a pen." (Melito. From the Oration on Our Lord's Passion, IX. In Ante-Nicene Fathers, Volume 8, p. 760).

*The finger of the Lord*-the Holy Spirit, by whose operation the tables of the law in Exodus are said to have been written (Melito. From the Oration on Our Lord's Passion. In Ante-Nicene Fathers, Volume 8).

Interestingly, as cited earlier, Polycarp tied the Holy Spirit in with a pen. That said, since God had written the Ten Commandments Himself (Exodus 31:18), this shows that Melito only considered the Holy Spirit to be a manifestation of the power of God, not a separate person.

Instead of accepting what Melito taught about the Godhead and Holy Spirit as related to the original faith, at least one trinitarian scholar (who is also an Anglican priest) wrote:

We must understand that Melito bears witness to the truth as it was understood in his day and that the orthodox faith has been gradually revealed. (Stewart-Sykes A, p. 29)

Yes, Melito was bearing truth to the original Christian view, which was binitarian. The original faith was not to be changed (Jude 3).

In the late 2<sup>nd</sup> century, the Church of God leader of Antioch, Theophilus (who is considered to be a saint by the Greco-Roman Catholics) wrote:

... if I say He is Spirit, I speak of His breath (Theophilus of Antioch. To Autolytus, Book 1, Chapters III)

In the late 2<sup>nd</sup> century, Greco-Roman Catholic saint Irenaeus wrote:

... the Word called the Son, and the Spirit the Wisdom of God.

... according to the good pleasure of the Father, the Son ministers and dispenses the Spirit to whomsoever the Father wills and as He wills. (Irenaeus, St., Bishop of Lyon. Translated from the Armenian by Armitage Robinson. The Demonstration of the Apostolic Preaching, Chapters 5,7. Wells, Somerset, Oct. 1879. As published in SOCIETY FOR PROMOTING CHRISTIAN KNOWLEDGE. NEW YORK: THE MACMILLAN CO, 1920)

Notice that Irenaeus clearly is teaching that the Father and Son disperse the Holy Spirit as each of them wills, and that the spirit is the wisdom of God. Therefore, he is teaching that the Father and Son have separate wills and that they disperse the Holy Spirit. You do not disperse a separate person.

Recall, also, that Irenaeus taught:

... there is none other called God by the Scriptures except the Father of all, and the Son, and those who possess the adoption. (Irenaeus. Adversus haereses, Book IV, Preface, Verse 4. Excerpted from Ante-Nicene Fathers, Volume 1. Edited by Alexander Roberts & James Donaldson. American Edition, 1885)

The above shows that Irenaeus did not consider the Holy Spirit to be God.

Furthermore, similar to Melito who referred to the Holy Spirit as the tongue of the Lord, notice what Clement of Alexandria taught:

... for the mouth of the Lord the Holy Spirit hath spoken these things (Clement of Alexandria. Exhortation to the Greeks, Chapter IX. TRANSLATED BY ALEXANDER ROBERTS AND JAMES DONALDSON)

Clement also wrote:

... And Christ our Lord, “the Holy of Holies,” having come and fulfilled the vision and the prophecy, was anointed in His flesh by the Holy Spirit of His Father. (Clement. Stromata, Book I, Chapter XXI)

... the Holy Spirit dispensed by God, which is the mind of Christ. (Clement. Stromata, Book V, Chapter IV)

Like most in the 2<sup>nd</sup> century, Clement’s writings support more of a binitarian, than a trinitarian, view of the Godhead.

### **Gender of the Holy Spirit?**

The second chapter of the Book of Acts starts off with:

<sup>1</sup> When the Day of Pentecost had fully come, they were all with one accord in one place. <sup>2</sup> And suddenly there came a sound from heaven, as of a rushing mighty wind, and it filled the whole house where they were sitting. <sup>3</sup> Then there appeared to them divided tongues, as of fire, and one sat upon each of them. <sup>4</sup> And they were all filled with the Holy Spirit and began to speak with other tongues, as the Spirit gave them utterance. (Acts 2:1-4)

The appearance of the Holy Spirit in Acts 2 is that of fire.

The koine Greek term for fire is πῦρ (pur), and it is grammatically neuter.

While most translations of the New Testament into the English language use the pronoun “he” related to the Holy Spirit as well as the relative pronoun “who,” neither of those pronouns are supported by the Greek text.

Many languages, including koine Greek—the language that the New Testament was written in—use what is known as grammatical gender.

While most translations of the New Testament into the English language use the pronoun “he” related to the Holy Spirit as well as the relative pronoun “who,” neither of those are supported by the Greek.

The Greek word for “spirit” is *pneuma*. It is a neuter gender. It is not masculine, nor should it be considered so. The Greek word for “holy” (ἅγιον) as in “πνεῦμα ἅγιον” (e.g. Luke 1:35) is also neuter as Greek adjectives must match the gender of the related noun.

And what about the Old Testament word for spirit, is that masculine?

No.

In the Hebrew scriptures, the terms used for “Spirit” is either *ruwach* or *ruah*, which are feminine.

Yet, despite that grammatical fact, some point to that term as proof of a male Holy Spirit. Notice something from *Matthew Henry’s Commentary on the Whole Bible*:

Gen 1:1-2

The plurality of persons in the Godhead, Father, Son, and Holy Ghost. This plural name of God, in Hebrew, which speaks of him... The Spirit of God was the first mover: *He moved upon the face of the waters*. (from *Matthew Henry’s Commentary on the Whole Bible: New Modern Edition*, Electronic Database. Copyright (c) 1991 by Hendrickson Publishers, Inc.)

Seeing the term “He” in biased English commentaries on the Old Testament, in no way supports the concept that the Holy Spirit is a male person since the term being translated in *Matthew Henry’s Commentary* is feminine.

Calling “she” “He” does not change the grammatical facts.

Though in the New Testament it often uses the pronoun “he” associated with the term spirit, the KJV also sometimes correctly translates this as ‘it’:

16 The Spirit itself beareth witness with our spirit, that we are the children of God: (Romans 8:16, KJV)

26 Likewise the Spirit also helpeth our infirmities: for we know not what we should pray for as we ought: but the Spirit itself maketh intercession for us with groanings which cannot be uttered. (Romans 8:26, KJV)

“It” is the appropriate pronoun. The Holy Spirit is the power of God. And that was the belief of early Christians. It took the Council of Constantinople, under imperial order from Emperor Theodosius, to make certain unscriptural declarations related to the Holy Spirit that many accept today.

Sean Finnegan in his paper titled *The Holy Spirit and Translation Bias: A Smoking Gun of Trinity Mischief* wrote:

Although most of these Bibles stay relatively true to the original Hebrew, Aramaic, and Greek in most places, nearly all of them still have significant blind spots that subtly lean readers towards a Trinitarian theology. In what follows I intend to expose one of the smoking guns of text tampering as it relates to the holy spirit. ...

After seeing ... that seventeen out of the nineteen {translations} use “who” or “whom” to refer back to holy spirit, what would someone conclude?

The most frustrating aspect of this chicanery is that these translations mislead honest-hearted men and women who simply want to read and understand the Scriptures. What is more, most Bible readers implicitly trust the scholars who produce translations in the same way that most people trust doctors or school teachers. This is partly due to the impressive verbiage we saw above in their translation philosophies. The NASB team “adhered to the literal philosophy of translation” and required “a word- for- word translation that is accurate and precise,” yet, they literally did not translate the word “ὅ” as “which.” The NET boasts that its nearly 61,000 translators’ notes enable readers to “look over the translator’s shoulder” and make “transparent the textual basis and the rationale for key renderings (including major interpretive options and alternative translations).” However, when I look at the footnotes on Acts 5.32, I see nothing whatsoever indicating they flat out changed a word to make their translation more palatable. Ironically, Daniel Wallace was one

of the primary scholars involved in the NET and his paper on this subject exposes this very issue. The NIV committee stated that they were committed “to the authority and infallibility of the Bible as God’s Word in written form,” yet they corrected the infallible Scripture in their translation to read “whom” instead of “which.” Isn’t a correction the result of an error? But, if Scripture is infallible, why is the NIV correcting it? Lastly, the NRSV claims it is “the most accurate and readable translation” and that it “leaves interpretation in the hands of the reader.” Yet, in this verse (and many others like it), it obscures the meaning of the text and does not so much as leave a footnote indicating their decision. So if the Greek is clear, why do nearly all of these translations get it wrong?

Why do all of these translations think the simple word ὃ (which) is really ὃν (whom)?

Perhaps I should probably mention that someone told me that Dr. Daniel Wallace did try to get the neuter gender used for the Holy Spirit when he was involved in a Bible translation project, but that he was overridden. This is even more appalling when it is realized that Dr. Wallace was the senior *New Testament* editor of the *NET Bible*.

Dr. Wallace, himself, wrote:

About half a dozen texts in the NT are used in support of the Spirit’s personality on the grounds of gender shift due to *constructio ad sensum* (“construction according to sense” or, in this case, according to natural as opposed to grammatical gender). That is to say, these passages seem to refer to the Spirit with the masculine gender in spite of the fact that πνεῦμα is neuter, and grammatical concord would normally require that any reference to the Spirit also be in the neuter gender. ...

Many theologians treat these passages as a primary proof of the Spirit’s personality. ...

John 16:7 can be dismissed ... Whatever the reason for the masculine participle in v. 7, it is evident that the grammaticization of the Spirit’s

personality is not the only, nor even the most plausible, explanation. Since this text also involves serious exegetical problems (i.e., a variety of reasons as to why the masculine participle is used), it cannot be marshaled as unambiguous syntactical proof of the Spirit's personality. In sum, none of the gender shift passages clearly helps establish the personality of the Holy Spirit.

Before going further in Dr. Wallace's work, let us see two translations of John 16:7 that do NOT make the gender error of using the term "him," that most other translations into English commit:

7 But I tell you I am going to do what is best for you. This is why I am going away. The Holy Spirit cannot come to help you until I leave. But after I am gone, I will send the Spirit to you. (Contemporary English Version)

7 But I am telling you the truth. It is profitable for you that I go away because if I do not go away, the Comforter will not come to you. However, if I go, I will send it to you. (A Faithful Version)

Now, back to Dr. Wallace, he wrote:

There is no text in the NT that clearly or even probably affirms the personality of the Holy Spirit through the route of Greek grammar. ...

Evangelical defenses of various doctrines occasionally are poorly founded. We sometimes claim things to be true because we want them to be true, without doing the exhaustive spadework needed to support our conclusions. ...

In sum, I have sought to demonstrate in this paper that the *grammatical* basis for the Holy Spirit's personality is lacking in the NT, yet this is frequently, if not usually, the first line of defense of that doctrine by many evangelical writers. But if grammar cannot legitimately be used to support the Spirit's personality, then perhaps we need to reexamine the rest of our basis for this theological commitment. (Wallace D. Greek Grammar and the Personality of the Holy Spirit. Bulletin for Biblical Research 13.1 (2003) 97-125)



John 15:26 ... The use of ἐκεῖνος {*that one*} here is frequently regarded by students of the NT to be an affirmation of the personality of the Holy Spirit. ... 42 ...

But this is erroneous. In all these Johannine passages, πνεύμα {*spirit*} is appositional to a masculine noun. The gender of ἐκεῖνος has nothing to do with the natural gender ending of πνεύμα. ...

42 The view is especially popular among theologians, not infrequently becoming their mainstay for their argument for the personality of the Holy Spirit ... (Wallace D. Greek Grammar. pp. 331-332).

Yes, many rely of false information to promote the trinitarian personhood of the Holy Spirit.

An Eastern Orthodox priest and scholar, Dr. Laurent Cleenewerck, wrote:

Greek manuscripts do not have any capitalization. Hence, the introduction of capitalized forms is arbitrary ... the capitalization of spirit is especially arbitrary ... (Cleenewerck L. EOB: The Eastern/Greek Orthodox New Testament, p. 33).

So, capitalization does not make the Holy Spirit a person. Dr. Laurent Cleenewerck also wrote (*italics* and **bolding** in source):

The first thing to notice is that both *pneuma* and *ruah* also convey the meaning “breath” or “wind,” which explains the subtle nuances of such passages as Genesis 1:2; John 3:8 or James 2:26. On this basis we could say that *pneuma* and *ruah* are used as a reference to **an unseen causal agent whose effects are visible.**

The Greek ... *pneuma* is neuter, which is why it is never spoken of with personal pronouns ... an unbiased translation requires the use of the conjunction “that/which” instead of “who/whom.” (Cleenewerck, p. 34).

Yes, the Spirit can be considered as a causal agent. Yet, although Dr. Cleenewerck was the editor of *EOB: The Eastern/Greek Orthodox New Testament*, that

particular translation uses “who” in Matthew 10:20 and John 6:63 (to cite two examples), uses “whom” in John 15:26, and masculine personal pronouns “he” and “him” in John 14:17 related to *pneuma* as the Holy Spirit. Yes, that translation has intentionally violated the appropriate grammatical rules according to its editor!

The fact is that there should NOT be personal pronouns—especially male ones—in English language translations of scripture associated with the Holy Spirit.

Ambassador College once published the following:

Somebody is going to ask: “What about the fact that John uses the personal pronoun 'he' when referring to the Holy Spirit or Comforter in the 14th, 15th and 16th chapters of his Gospel?” ... in the Greek language, the gender of a word has nothing whatever to do with whether the thing designated is really masculine or feminine in the human sense at all. If it did — what a contradiction in the Bible itself! For in the Old Testament the Hebrew word for spirit — ruach — is usually feminine, and only rarely in a masculine form. Gender in language is really nothing more than a convenient grammatical tool. In the 14th, 15th and 16th chapters of John, the English pronoun “he” is definitely used in connection with the word “Comforter” — but not for theological or spiritual reasons.

Grammatically, all pronouns in Greek must agree in gender with the word they refer to — or in other words, with the term that the pronoun replaces. The Greek word *parakletos* (“comforter” in English) has masculine gender; hence the translators' use of the personal pronoun “he” for the Greek pronouns *ekeinos* and *autos*. “It” would have been a far better rendering into the English language (Just What Is The Holy Spirit? Ambassador College Production, 1983)

All verses in the New Testament with the word “spirit” are translations of a neuter noun.

While comforter is masculine grammatically, that is not proof that the Holy Spirit is male or a person. The grammatical reality is that the Greek noun *pneuma*

(πνεύμα), in all its various forms, is always and only neuter in gender. Likewise, all pronouns that refer to pneuma are always and only can be neuter in gender.

If the Holy Spirit were a masculine person, the nouns and pronouns in the Greek text would have to have been written in the masculine gender, as are all the nouns and pronouns that refer to God the Father and Jesus Christ. Yet, as Dr. Wallace and others have concluded, nowhere in the Greek text of the New Testament is the Holy Spirit ever designated by a noun or pronoun in the masculine gender.

False tradition has triumphed truth by most translators and religious leaders—this is not new. Jesus condemned that type of thing in His day as well:

7 Hypocrites! Well did Isaiah prophesy about you, saying:

8 “These people draw near to Me with their mouth,  
And honor Me with their lips,  
But their heart is far from Me.

9 And in vain they worship Me,  
Teaching as doctrines the commandments of men.” (Matthew 15:7-9)

Real Christians do not hypocritically worship God in vain.

While Protestantism has tended to claim it believes in *sola Scriptura*, the Bible alone for doctrine as opposed to accepting the councils of men that the Roman and Orthodox Catholic churches do, most Protestants have accepted traditions of men over the Bible related to the Holy Spirit.

Anyway, that said, the grammatical gender of the Hebrew word for spirit is feminine and the grammatical gender of the Greek word for spirit is neutral.

The grammatically proper conclusion after reviewing the Hebrew and Greek scriptures is that the Holy Spirit is NOT a “he.” And if one wants to assign gender to it, “it,” meaning the neuter gender would make the most sense for Christians.

Do not fall for false traditions that say that the Holy Spirit is masculine, because scripturally that is grammatically false.

## Personhood Claims

But what about the scriptures that seem to have “personal characteristics,” do they not prove that the Holy Spirit is a person?

No.

Those scriptures are simply referring to aspects of SPIRIT not unique aspects of PERSONHOOD. What the real issue is is that those who do not understand that the Holy Spirit is not a person simply do not fully understand what the Bible says about spirit.

A couple of biblical passages that help make this clear are the following:

<sup>11</sup> For what man knows the things of a man except the spirit of the man which is in him? Even so no one knows the things of God except the Spirit of God (1 Corinthians 2:11 NKJV).

<sup>15</sup> For ye have not received the spirit of bondage again to fear; but ye have received the Spirit of adoption, whereby we cry, Abba, Father. <sup>16</sup> The Spirit itself beareth witness with our spirit, that we are the children of God (Romans 8:15-16 KJV).

(Note: I chose the KJV for the second passage because it translates the literal Greek word *autos* as “itself”--the NKJV translates *autos* non-literally as “Himself” in an apparent attempt to justify an inaccurate position--no wonder Protestants and others get confused.)

Now no one that I am aware of teaches that the spirit in man is a separate person (nor does anyone teach that the spirit of bondage is a person). But notice that it (and it is an “it”), works in similar manner as the Spirit of God. The truth of course is that the Holy Spirit simply is NOT A PERSON.

As far as the spirit in humans goes, here is something from the old Worldwide Church of God:

This spirit is not the man- it is spirit essence from God that is IN the man. Joined with the physical brain of the man, it forms the human MIND. It imparts to man's brain his unique powers of intellect and personality- the ability to think rationally and make free will decisions. It imparts the ability to learn mathematics, languages or other types of physical knowledge.

But that is all! The spirit that is IN man has no consciousness of itself. It is not an "immortal soul." This spirit is not "the man." Because of this spiritual element, the Bible often uses the word "spirit" simply to mean man's mind, intelligence, attitude. To distinguish this "spirit in man" from mere physical breath, the book of Job continues in context to use two separate Hebrew words-ruach for spirit, neshamah for breath (Job 33:4; 34:14). (Just What IS Man? Ambassador College Bible Correspondence Course, Lesson 5, 1983)

Notice the following from Jesus:

<sup>22</sup> "He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches."  
(Revelation 3:22)

Jesus was the one who spoke, and He said that is what the Spirit says. The Spirit was not a separate person from Jesus here.

Here are several more verses which demonstrate that things associated with spirit do not make the spirit a separate person:

<sup>7</sup> Because of the news; when it comes, every heart will melt, all hands will be feeble, every spirit will faint, and all knees will be weak as water.  
(Ezekiel 21:7)

<sup>1</sup> Now in the second year of Nebuchadnezzar's reign, Nebuchadnezzar had dreams; and his spirit was so troubled that his sleep left him ... <sup>3</sup> I have had a dream, and my spirit is anxious to know the dream. (Daniel 2:1,3)

<sup>20</sup> But when his heart was lifted up, and his spirit was hardened in pride, (Daniel 5:20)

<sup>14</sup> So the LORD stirred up the spirit of Zerubbabel (Haggai 1:14)

<sup>1</sup> Thus says the LORD, who stretches out the heavens, lays the foundation of the earth, and forms the spirit of man within him: (Zechariah 12:1)

<sup>16</sup> Therefore take heed to your spirit, That you do not deal treacherously. (Malachi 2:16)

<sup>41</sup> Watch and pray, lest you enter into temptation. The spirit indeed is willing, but the flesh is weak. (Matthew 26:41)

<sup>33</sup> Therefore, when Jesus saw her weeping, and the Jews who came with her weeping, He groaned in the spirit and was troubled. (John 11:33)

<sup>80</sup> So the child grew and became strong in spirit, and was in the deserts till the day of his manifestation to Israel. (Luke 1:80)

<sup>63</sup> The words that I speak to you are spirit, and they are life. (John 6:63)

<sup>21</sup> When Jesus had said these things, He was troubled in spirit, (John 13:21)

<sup>13</sup> And we rejoiced exceedingly more for the joy of Titus, because his spirit has been refreshed by you all. (2 Corinthians 7:13)

<sup>16</sup> Now while Paul waited for them at Athens, his spirit was provoked within him when he saw that the city was given over to idols. (Acts 17:16)

<sup>25</sup> This man had been instructed in the way of the Lord; and being fervent in spirit, (Acts 18:25)

<sup>9</sup> For God is my witness, whom I serve with my spirit (Romans 1:9)

<sup>8</sup> God has given them a spirit of stupor, (Romans 11:8)

<sup>3</sup> For I indeed, as absent in body but present in spirit, (1 Corinthians 5:3)

<sup>34</sup> There is a difference between a wife and a virgin. The unmarried woman cares about the things of the Lord, that she may be holy both in body and in spirit. (1 Corinthians 7:34)

<sup>45</sup> The last Adam became a life-giving spirit. (1 Corinthians 15:45)

<sup>18</sup> For they refreshed my spirit and yours. (1 Corinthians 16:18)

<sup>13</sup> I had no rest in my spirit, (2 Corinthians 2:13)

<sup>1</sup> Therefore, having these promises, beloved, let us cleanse ourselves from all filthiness of the flesh and spirit, (2 Corinthians 7:1)

<sup>1</sup> Brethren, if a man is overtaken in any trespass, you who are spiritual restore such a one in a spirit of gentleness, (Galatians 6:1)

<sup>18</sup> Brethren, the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with your spirit. (Galatians 6:18)

<sup>23</sup> be renewed in the spirit of your mind, (Ephesians 4:23)

<sup>23</sup> Now may the God of peace Himself sanctify you completely; and may your whole spirit, soul, and body be preserved blameless at the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ. (1 Thessalonians 5:23)

<sup>4</sup> with the incorruptible beauty of a gentle and quiet spirit, which is very precious in the sight of God. (1 Peter 3:4)

Notice that the spirit mentioned in these verses can faint, is anxious, was hardened by pride, can be stirred up, can be formed, can be heeded, can become troubled, has a will, groaned, has strength, can be words, was troubled, was refreshed, was provoked, can be fervent, can serve, can cause a stupor, can judge and be present, can be holy, can be life-giving, was restless, can be cleansed of filthiness, can be gentle, can have the grace of Jesus, can be renewed, can be preserved, and/or can be gentle and kind. However, none of these were referring

to the spirit as a separate personage--even though these can be considered attributes often associated with a person.

Thus, having a list of various attributes does not prove that the Holy Spirit is a separate person or a member of a trinity as some have asserted.

The Holy Spirit is the impersonal power of God, which the Father and the Son use in numerous ways.



## 6. The Names of God and His Church

The Hebrew scriptures have many names of God.

The first listed is Elohim in Genesis 1:1, commonly translated as God, though it would be more technically correct to be translated as Gods. It is used 2596 times in the Hebrew scriptures according to BibleSoft, which defines that word as follows:

'elohiym (el-o-heem'); plural of OT:433; gods in the ordinary sense; but specifically used (in the plural thus, especially with the article) of the supreme God;

(Biblesoft's New Exhaustive Strong's Numbers and Concordance with Expanded Greek-Hebrew Dictionary. Copyright © 1994, 2003, 2006, 2010 Biblesoft, Inc. and International Bible Translators, Inc.)

Yes, Elohiym is a plural name.

In the Old Testament, the Hebrew word Adonai, meaning Lord, is used 449 times.

The term El, meaning God, is used 244 times.

The term Yhvh or Yhwh (sometimes spelled as Yahweh or Yehovah), meaning “I am that I am” is used 5000 times. But because it is often shown in English-language Bibles as LORD, many do not know the eternal nature of God’s name.

Related to names, the late Dr. Herman Hoeh wrote:

### **Meaning in God's NAMES**

In the Old Testament the English word "God" is used for the equivalent Hebrew word Elohim. It is a uniplural word allowing for MORE THAN ONE MEMBER IN THE ONE DIVINE FAMILY.

Sometimes the English word "God" represents another word, El. Often the word El is combined with still other Hebrew words to give new names to the Creator. Thus El Shaddai means the "Almighty God" (Gen. 17:l).

Now turn to Exodus 3:13-14 for another surprising NAME of the Almighty. "And 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? And 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."

Notice! Here is one of the many names of the Creator — "I AM THAT I AM." There is real meaning to this name! It could also be translated from the Hebrew as "I will be what I will be." This name — I AM — means that the One who appeared to Moses is above all creation His name means the One Who Is, the Self-Existent One, the Eternal.

In this context the Creator then introduced to Moses His name YHWH (verse 15) derived from the same Hebrew verb and having approximately the same meaning as I AM.

### **"Jehovah" Is An Error**

But what about the word "Jehovah" which a well-known religious group uses exclusively? Notice what the Jewish Encyclopedia has to say about the origin of this word:

"'Jehovah' is generally held to have been the invention of Pope Leo X's confessor, Peter Galatin... who was followed in the use of this hybrid form by Fagius.... But it seems that even before Galatin, the name 'Jehovah' had been in common use.... It is found in Raymond Martin's 'Pugio Fidei,' written in 1270" Jewish Encyclopedia, vol. VII, p. 88, article "Jehovah").

The word "Jehovah" has come down to the modern world through the Catholic Church! Even the "Jehovah's Witnesses," in the preface to their translation of the Bible, state: "While inclining to view the pronunciation 'Yahweh' as the more correct way, we have retained the form 'Jehovah'

because of people's familiarity with it since the 14th century" (page 25).  
Hoeh H. *The Unknown God*. Ambassador College, 1959/1965)

The emphasis of the names of God in the Hebrew scriptures points to God's eternity, plurality, and lordship.

## **The New Testament**

The New Testament was written in *koine* Greek.

And while koine Greek could have used fairly precise letters for Elohim or Yahweh, those names were not inspired by God to be used in the New Testament.

While in Aramaic, the name Jesus was some version of Yashua/Joshua, the fact is that is not the way it was inspired by God to be used in the New Testament. If God wanted Christians to primarily use the Hebrew (or Aramaic) names pronounced in a Hebrew fashion, He would have inspired the writers of the New Testament to have used different letters. For example, Yhvh in Greek would be Ιηβη and Yashua in Greek would be like Ιησοα (like, because Greek letters do not form a "sh" sound). Instead, the writers were inspired to use the Greek terms for the names.

The Greek expression Ἰησοῦ is used 992 times in the *Textus Receptus* referring to our Savior 990 of those times (the other 2 times it was referring to Joshua of the Old Testament). While it is now translated into English as Jesus, it actually would be pronounced something like "I ee soos" in Greek. In the 16<sup>th</sup> century, the "J" sound became ascribed to that first Greek letter in English, so we ended up with the Anglicized Greek word Jesus.

Some who have challenged the idea that the New Testament was written in koine Greek have claimed that the idea that Christians did not refer to Jesus as some version of Yashua was an invention that did not occur until many centuries after Jesus was resurrected. But that is historically incorrect and easily disprovable.

*The Letter of the Romans to the Corinthians* (A.D. 95-97), also so-called as 1 Clement, uses the Greek term Ἰησοῦ for the Son of God, which is normally rendered 'Jesus' in English (Holmes M. *The Apostolic Fathers: The Greek Texts and*

English Translations. Baker Books, 1999, pp. 28-29). Technically, the transliteration would be leesoú (Interlinear Transliterated Bible. Copyright © 1994, 2003, 2006 by Biblesoft, Inc.). It does not sound like 'Yashua.'

What is believed to be the oldest preserved ancient Christian sermon (c. A.D. 120-140) outside the Bible (sometimes referred to as 2 Clement) also uses Ἰησοῦ for the Son of God. The same is true for the letters of Ignatius (c. A.D. 107-117), Polycarp's Letter to the Philippians (c. A.D. 110-137), and The Martyrdom of Polycarp (c. A.D. 156-167); all use a version of Ἰησοῦ for the Son of God.

Hence, the name Ἰησοῦ (now pronounced in English as Jesus) was not a novel idea that came centuries after Jesus was resurrected.

That said, many still do not realize that Jesus' name would be pronounced as I-ee-soos or I-ee-soo in English, if people used the pronunciation of the Greek word found nearly a thousand times throughout the New Testament.

It is claimed that the term Κυρίου (pronounced kyo-REE-ou in ancient Greek), meaning Lord, is "a title for Zeus" (*Rauch Qadim*, p. 19), hence should not be used by Christians. Yet, that term is found 751 times in the Greek New Testament, known as the *Textus Receptus*, and 717 times in the *Nestle-Aland* manuscripts.

The Didache (c. AD 50-150), also known as *The Teaching of the Twelve Apostles*, also uses the Greek term Κυρίου, which is commonly translated as "Lord" referring to our Savior (Holmes, pp. 250-251). It never uses any version of the term Joshua. Polycarp's Letter to the Philippians (1:1) also uses the Greek term Κυρίου. Plus, it uses Ἰησοῦ Χριστῷ, meaning Jesus Christ.

The word Joshua meant "Yahveh saves," the Anglicized word Jesus means the same thing.

The reality is that early Christians referred to our Savior and Lord as well as used the Greek name Ἰησοῦ. Christians are to realize that Jesus is our Savior and should truly be the Lord of our life. Those who insist on pronunciations that the New Testament does not enjoin are simply not accepting the scriptures as inspired.

## The Catholic Church of God

Let's consider church names. The Bible helps us document the original name of the Christian church.

What is the original name of the Christian church in the Bible?

In this section, we will see how the name "*Continuing Church of God*" conveys Biblical teachings. Then we will look at the historical use of the term "catholic."

The first times we see the word "church" associated with a location or description is in Acts 8:1 & 11:22 which refer to the "church at/in Jerusalem." The next time is a reference to the "church ... at Antioch" (Acts 13:1).

The first time we see "church of" in the Bible is in Acts 20:28, where it is called "church of God."

Jesus said that Christians would be kept in His Father's name (John 17:12), which most often is simply "God" in the New Testament (over 1,300 times!), hence leading to the name "Church of God." The title "Church of God" should help people realize that it is to be the church of God's word and not the councils of men when it comes to doctrines and practices.

Many people are unaware that the predominant name of the true Church in the New Testament is "Church of God." Variants of this expression are clearly stated in singular and plural forms in twelve different places in the New Testament (Acts 20:28; 1 Corinthians 1:2; 10:32; 11:16,22; 15:9; 2 Corinthians 1:1; Galatians 1:13; 1 Thessalonians 2:14; 2 Thessalonians 1:4; 1 Timothy 3:5,15). The only other singular "church of" statement in scripture is a reference to the "church of the firstborn" (Hebrews 12:23).

Throughout Christian history, the true church has normally used a version of the expression "Church of God" (or "Church/es of Christ," cf. Romans 16:16) though often with another term, like a geographic region (cf. 1 Corinthians 1:2; 1 Thessalonians 1:1; 2 Thessalonians 1:1) or another word, with it (1 Timothy 3:15).

However, critics tended to call members of the faithful Church of God other names like sect of the Nazarenes (e.g. Acts 24:5). The true church is also called “holy” in Ephesians 5:27, though that is not used as a name.

The Church of God is not just some brand-new group, as some claim; it has continued for nearly 2,000 years (since the day of Pentecost described in Acts 2:1), despite relocations, name variants, and organizational changes. Details are in the free book, available online at [ccog.org](http://ccog.org), titled: *Beliefs of the Original Catholic Church: Could a remnant group have continuing apostolic succession?*

Since the true Church of God has continued from the time of the original apostles in Acts 2, and since the Bible teaches that ‘Philadelphia’ was to continue (cf. Hebrews 13:1, literal), the use of the name *Continuing* Church of God helps convey those biblical concepts and historical facts.

The Apostle Paul wrote the following mentioning the church:

<sup>1</sup> PAUL called to be an Apostle of JESUS Christ, by the will of God, and Sothenes a brother, <sup>2</sup> To the **Church of God** that is at Corinth, to the sanctified in Christ JESUS, called to be saints, with all that invoke the name of our Lord JESUS Christ in every place of theirs and ours (1 Corinthians 1:1-2, DRB).

<sup>1</sup> PAUL an Apostle of JESUS Christ, by the will of God, and Timothy our brother: to the **Church of God** that is at Corinth, with all the saints that are in all Achaia (2 Corinthians 1:1, DRB).

<sup>13</sup> ... I persecuted the **Church of God** ... (Galatians 1:13, NJB/OSB)

<sup>14</sup> For you, brethren, are become followers of the **churches of God** which are in Judea, in Christ Jesus: for you also have suffered the same things from your own countrymen, even as they have from the Jews, (1 Thessalonians 2:14, DRB)

<sup>15</sup> But if I tarry long, that thou mayest know how thou oughtest to converse in the house of God, which is the **CHURCH of the living God**, the pillar and ground of truth (1 Timothy 3:15, DRB).

(Note that this author bolded the above, but did not capitalize anything--capitalization was by the translators).

The Roman document that is commonly called *1 Clement* begins with:

The Church of God which sojourneth in Rome to the Church of God which sojourneth in Corinth, to them which are called and sanctified by the will of God through our Lord Jesus Christ. (As cited in Lightfoot JB. *The Apostolic Fathers*, Macmillan & Co. 1891)

So yes, the first document that has been found from the Roman church referred to itself as the Church of God, not the "Catholic Church." The term "catholic church" is not found in that 1<sup>st</sup> century document.

In the 2<sup>nd</sup> century, Bishop/Pastor Polycarp wrote from Smyrna:

Polycarp and the presbyters with him to the church of God that sojourns at Philippi. (Polycarp. *Letter to the Philippians*. In Holmes M. *The Apostolic Fathers--Greek Text and English Translations*, 3rd printing. Baker Books, Grand Rapids (MI), 1999, p. 207)

After Polycarp's martyrdom, those in his area wrote:

The church of God which sojourns at Smyrna to the church of God which sojourns in Philomelium. (*The Martyrdom of Polycarp*. In Holmes, p. 227)

Thus, some of the earliest post-New Testament Roman and Eastern Orthodox Catholic-accepted writings (which also tend to be accepted by Protestant scholars) clearly refer to the church as the Church of God.

### **The Catholic Church of God in Smyrna**

But what about church being called "Catholic"?

The world 'catholic' means 'about whole' or 'according to the whole' or 'throughout the whole' or 'complete' and has come to mean 'universal.'

The first time the term “catholic church” has been found in ancient writings is in a letter from Ignatius to the Church of God in Smyrna (Holmes, footnote 109, p. 191). The term was not in a document related to the Church of Rome until almost a century later (Ibid).

Being raised Roman Catholic, this author was surprised to see that the earliest references to the “catholic church” were not references to Rome.

Notice also the following comments from over a century ago from some not part of the COG:

The word “Catholic” had its origin in the Greek language; and the things it stands for in Christianity originated at a time when the Greek language was the religious language of Christians in the West as well as in the East, in Rome and Africa and Gaul, as well as in Alexandria, Asia, and Antioch. The word is not found in the Greek Bible of the Old Testament, or the New Testament. It is an adjective compounded of the preposition κατά, meaning in this connection “throughout,” and the adjective ὅλος, “whole,” properly in the accusative, ὅλον or ὅλην, in accordance with the noun to which it is attached. ... We first meet the word in the epistle of Ignatius, the bishop of Antioch, to the church at Smyrna, early in the second century ... We find three uses of the word in the letter of the church of Smyrna on the martyrdom of Polycarp, its bishop, soon after the martyrdom in 155 or 156. There is no good reason to question their genuineness. (Briggs CA. CATHOLIC-THE NAME AND THE THING. The American Journal of Theology, Volume VII, JULY 1903, Number 3, pp. 417-418)

The Catholic Church was founded in the East by the apostles thirty years before Paul visited Rome. Pentecost was a. d. 33, ... . Hence, the original “Catholic Apostolic Church” was not the Roman Church at all, but the Greek Church in the early days of the apostles. (Canwright DM. The Lord’s Day., 2<sup>nd</sup> ed. Fleming H. Revell Company, 1915, p. 84)

While 33 A.D. is not likely the actual start year, yes, the original apostolic catholic church began in the East.



Here are some quotes from Bishop/Pastor Ignatius of Antioch, in the early 2<sup>nd</sup> century:

Ignatius, who is also called Theophorus, to the church of God the Father and of the beloved Jesus Christ at Smyrna in Asia ... Wherever the bishop appears, there let the congregation be; just as wherever Jesus Christ is, there is the catholic church. (Ignatius. Letter to the Smyrnaeans, 0.0., 8.2. In Holmes, pp. 185-191)

So, Ignatius of Antioch refers to the Church of God in Smyrna and later says that the catholic church is where Jesus is. The bishop he would be referring to in this case was Polycarp of Smyrna. In Ignatius' extant letters (including one to Rome) he never refers to any bishop/pastor in or near Rome. That would include the first-claimed Roman Catholic "popes," like Linus, Cletus, Clement, Evaristus, or Alexander. Nor does he mention the term 'catholic church' in relationship to Rome.

Furthermore, according to Roman Catholic scholars, there are no clear early records proving the existence of any Roman bishops that early in the 2<sup>nd</sup> century (e.g. Sullivan F.A. From Apostles to Bishops: the development of the episcopacy in the early church. Newman Press, Mahwah (NJ), 2001, pp. 13-15, McBrien, Richard P. Lives of the Popes: The Pontiffs from St. Peter to Benedict XVI. Harper, San Francisco, 2005 updated ed., p. 396, and Duffy E. Saints & Sinners: A History of the Popes. Yale University Press, New Haven (CT), 2002, pp. 2,6; Jedin H, ed. History of the Church, Volume 1. Crossroad, New York, 1993, p. 44). While Asia Minor and Antioch clearly had bishops by the early 2<sup>nd</sup> century, that was not the case for Rome (ibid, p. 44).

The fact that it was in Ignatius' letter to Smyrna that the term "catholic church" was first used is well known and accepted by Roman Catholic scholars. *The Catholic Encyclopedia* specifically states (**bolding mine**):

**The combination "the Catholic Church" (*he katholike ekklesia*) is found for the first time in the letter of St. Ignatius to the Smyrnaeans**, written about the year 110. The words run: "Wheresoever the bishop shall appear, there let the people be, even as where Jesus may be, there is the *universal [katholike] Church.*" However, in view of the context, some

difference of opinion prevails as to the precise connotation of the italicized word ... by the beginning of the fourth century it seems to have almost entirely supplanted the primitive and more general meaning ... The reference (c. 155) to “the bishop of the catholic church in Smyrna” (Letter on the Martyrdom of St. Polycarp, xvi), a phrase which necessarily presupposes a more technical use of the word, is due, some critics think, to interpolation ... (Thurston H. Catholic. Transcribed by Gordon A. Jenness. The Catholic Encyclopedia, Volume III. Published 1908. New York: Robert Appleton Company. Nihil Obstat, November 1, 1908. Remy Lafort, S.T.D., Censor. Imprimatur. +John Cardinal Farley, Archbishop of New York)

Although Ignatius did use the transliterated expression, *he katholike ekklesia* (ἡ καθολικὴ ἐκκλησία) in his letter, understand that he used it when addressing the Church of God at Smyrna in Asia Minor. That is the main region through which the *Continuing* Church of God traces its descent after the deaths of the apostles Peter, Paul, and John. The name “Continuing” captures how this church continues to faithfully preach their message, consistent with Jude 3, while in an unstable world influenced by Satan’s deceptions.

Ignatius did not use the term for “catholic” in his letter to the Romans. Therefore, **in a historical sense, the Church of God in Smyrna was (or at least an important part of) the original “catholic church.”** Please read that factual statement again.

### ***The Martyrdom of Polycarp, the Smyrnaeans, and Antioch***

The Smyrnaeans wrote a document known as *The Martyrdom of Polycarp* which seems to have been the second document we still possess that contains the expression translated as “catholic church”:

The church of God which sojourns at Smyrna to the Church of God which sojourns in Philomelium and to all the congregations of the Holy and Catholic Church in every place ... the elect, of whom this most admirable Polycarp was one, having in our own times been an apostolic and prophetic teacher, and bishop of the Catholic Church which is in Smyrna. For every word that went out of his mouth either has been or shall yet be accomplished. (The Smyrnaeans. The Encyclical Epistle of the Church at

Smyrna Concerning the Martyrdom of the Holy Polycarp, 0:1, 16.2. In Roberts A, Donaldson J, eds. *Ante-Nicene Fathers*. Volume 4, 1885. Hendrickson Publishers, Peabody (MA), printing 1999, p. 42)

Therefore, by looking at Ignatius' *Letter to the Smyrnaeans* as well as the Smyrnaeans *Martyrdom of Polycarp*, it is clear that it was Polycarp's church, the Smyrnaean Church of God, that the oldest literature points to as the original "catholic church." (Note: this book has used lower case for the term "catholic church" in many discussions here because the term, according to most scholars, was used originally as more of a description than a title.) By the time of Polycarp's death though, the churches in Asia Minor and Antioch were in communion with each other, yet they were NOT in communion/fellowship with the predominant churches in Rome or Alexandria.

But also note that Polycarp was listed by the Smyrnaeans as "an apostolic and prophetic teacher, and bishop of the Catholic Church which is in Smyrna." This points to the declaration that Polycarp had apostolic succession and should have been considered to have a/the mantle of top leadership of the known faithful prior to his death.

Because it had succession from the apostles (as well as early writings), one could say that the Smyrna church was the original apostolic catholic Church of God. This view was carried forward into the 3<sup>rd</sup> century in Smyrna via Pionius.

Getting back to *The Martyrdom of Polycarp* document itself, scholar Gerd Buschmann says that document is "catholic-normative" and displays "the dogmatic common sense of the proto-Catholic Church" (Weidmann FW. *Reviewed Work: Das Martyrium des Polykarp* by Gerd Buschmann. *Journal of Biblical Literature*, Vol. 120, No. 3 Autumn, 2001, pp. 585-587).

Yet, that is somewhat misleading. Instead, a more logical view would be that the original portions of *The Martyrdom of Polycarp* should be considered part of the original, not "proto" meaning - needing to be changed, catholic church. And, if the *Martyrdom of Polycarp's* statement related to Polycarp, "For every word that went out of his mouth either has been or shall yet be accomplished," is accurate related to doctrine—that doctrine should NOT change!

In the mid-3<sup>rd</sup> century, presbyter Pionius of Smyrna (who allegedly wrote *The Life of Polycarp* based on ancient manuscripts) said he was part of the catholic church:

On the second day of the sixth month, on the occasion of a great Sabbath, and on the anniversary of the blessed martyr Polycarp, while the persecution of Decius was still on, there were arrested the presbyter Pionius, ... a presbyter of the Catholic Church. ... It was Saturday ... Polemon the temple verger came in on them with his men in order to seek out the Christians and drag them off ...

“Pionius, ... “Are you a Christian?” asked Polemon.

“Yes,” said Pionius.

Polemon the verger said: “What church do you belong to?”

“The Catholic Church,” was the answer; “with Christ there is no other.” (The Martyrdom of Pionius and his Companions. Text from H. Musurillo, *The Acts of the Christian Martyrs*. Oxford, 1972, pp. 137, 147)

So, the above account points to some type of a Sabbath-keeping “Catholic Church” in Smyrna. Note: This particular “great Sabbath” is believed by certain scholars to have taken place on the first Day of Unleavened Bread; (see Lightfoot JB. *S. Ignatius. S. Polycarp: Revised Texts with Instructions, Notes, Dissertations, and Translations*, Volume 1, 2nd edition. Macmillan, 1889, pp. 45,702), however for it to have fallen on a Saturday, it would have been the 7<sup>th</sup>, the last, Day of Unleavened Bread in either 249 or 252 A.D.

When Pionius stated that there was no other true church than the catholic church, Smyrna and the rest of the churches in Asia Minor were not in fellowship with the predominant churches in Rome or Alexandria (cf. Eusebius. *The History of the Church*, Book VII, Chapter V, Verse I. Digireads.com, 2005, p. 147). Hence, Pionius was not referring to the Roman or Eastern Orthodox Catholic churches that were confederate at that time. Pionius also did not eat biblically unclean meats, but the Greco-Romans had adopted that practice in the 2<sup>nd</sup> century according to the pseudepigraphal *Epistle of Barnabas* and the less-than-fully-accurate *Liber Pontificalis*.

It should be mentioned that there is some controversy associated with the expression “catholic church” in *The Martyrdom of Polycarp*, as there are differing manuscripts with and without it (Holmes, footnote 22, p. 241; Dehandschutter B. Polycarpiana, Selected Essays. Leuven University Press, 2007, pp.5, 48-50).

The following is a slightly shortened portion of the Greek portion of 16:2 of *The Martyrdom of Polycarp* as reported by Kirsopp Lake and it does use the expressions Polycarp, bishop, Smyrna, catholic, and churches all of which this author **bolded**, in that order, below:

**Πολύκαρπος**, ἐν τοῖς καθ’ ἡμᾶς χρόνοις διδάσκαλος ἀποστολίδος καὶ προφητικὸς γενόμενος, ἐπίσκοπος ἀποστολικὸς καὶ προφητικὸς γενόμενος, **ἐπίσκοπος** τῆς ἐν **Σμύνη** **καθολικῆς ἐκκλησίας**. (Lake K. The Apostolic Fathers in Greek: The Martyrdom of Polycarp. Harvard University Press, 1926)

The above rendering shows that there is an ancient writing in Greek that claims that Polycarp (**Πολύκαρπος**) was the bishop/overseer (**ἐπίσκοπος**) in Smyrna (**ἐν Σμύνη**) of the catholic church (**καθολικῆς ἐκκλησίας**).

So, we have seen that Ignatius and *The Martyrdom of Polycarp* shows that in the first and second document a church was referred to as “catholic,” it was a descriptive term that included the Smyrnaean Church of God that was led by Polycarp.

Now, lest anyone think that this author has ‘pulled a fast one,’ Roman and Eastern Orthodox scholars teach that Polycarp, Ignatius, Pionius, and others we consider early Church of God leaders in Asia Minor (including Smyrna) were all catholics and all were saints. We in the CCOG concur.

Thus, real writings from those leaders (“real,” as there are questions about whether some were improperly changed) should be considered as reliable records (though also containing some opinions) of the beliefs of the original catholic church. Such writings from early Church of God leaders are cited further in this book to demonstrate, and help document, the beliefs of the original catholic church.

In the 20<sup>th</sup> century, the old Worldwide Church of God taught:

Well might Jesus say: "I know . . . where Satan's seat is . . . where Satan dwelleth." His "Pergamos" Church knew, too! This was a different kind of era. An age in which the True Church was actively pursued, and had to remain in hiding. No longer was any part of the True Church associated, as even Polycrates had been, with any part of "the catholic church of God." The great conspiracy had succeeded-it had stolen the name of Christ, the name of God's Church. (Lesson 50 – What Became of the Church Jesus Built? 58 Lesson: Ambassador College Bible Correspondence Course, 1968, p. 8)

Polycrates was a late 2<sup>nd</sup> century Church of God leader that the old WCG taught was faithful. Prior to the time of Pergamos ( which started in the 5<sup>th</sup> century) the Roman church took the names 'catholic' and 'church of God' even though the faithful still used them.

In the late 3<sup>rd</sup> through early 4<sup>th</sup> century, there was a church leader known as Lucian of Antioch. Lucian was not in communion with the succession of at least three Greco-Roman bishops of Antioch, had a school based on literal biblical interpretation, "savoured of Judaism," and was "Semi-Arian" (binitarian) (Newman JH, Cardinal. *The Arians of the Fourth Century*. Longmans, Green, & Co., New York, 1908, pp. 5, 9, 277, 406). Lucian reportedly was a Sabbatarian (Wilkinson BG. *The Truth Triumphant*. TEACH Services, Reprint 1994, pp. 55-57; Kohen E. *History of the Byzantine Jews*. University Press of America, 2007, p. 53).

In a seemingly 4<sup>th</sup> century creed ascribed to him, Lucian (or perhaps penned by a disciple) used the term "Catholic Church of God" (Schaff P. *The Creeds of Christendom: The Greek and Latin creeds, with translations, Volume II*. Harper and Brothers, 1877, pp. 28-29). This would not seem to have been a reference to the Greco-Roman churches as Lucian opposed the Alexandrian school which they encouraged. Lucian looks to have been a Church of God leader.

*Lucian's Creed* seems to be the oldest known document with the exact expression "Catholic Church of God." Although as shown already, Ignatius implied that as he used both "church of God" and "catholic Church" expressions in his 2<sup>nd</sup> century *Letter to the Smyrnaeans*.

## Theodosius and “Paulicians”

On February 27, 380, Roman Emperor Theodosius decreed only those who accepted his trinitarian creed could call themselves “Catholic Christians.”

However, some of those who disagreed with Theodosius still used it after Theodosius’ decree. Fred Conybeare reported that in the Middle Ages the Paulicians of Armenia continued to state, “They were the ‘holy, universal, and apostolic Church,’ founded by Jesus Christ and his apostles” (Conybeare, p. xxxiii). Those called Paulicians opposed Sunday observance and the Greco-Roman festivals, while apparently observing the seventh-day Sabbath (Ibid, pp. clii, cxci).

Also, notice this about them:

They called themselves the Apostolic Catholic church, but ... nicknamed Paulicians by their enemies ... (Paulicians. The Encyclopaedia Britannica: Mun to Pay. 1911, p. 961; Blackwell D. A HANDBOOK OF CHURCH HISTORY: A Thesis Presented to the Faculty of the Ambassador College Graduate School of Theology. April 1973, p.29)

In Kurtz’s Church History, article Nostic and Manichean Heretics:

The Catholics, this sect called Romans, gave them the name Paulicians. (Blackwell, p. 48)

The Paulicians claimed to be THE “holy universal and apostolic church” founded by Jesus Christ and his apostles. Of the false churches, they would say: “We do not belong to these, for they have long ago broken connection with the church.” (Lesson 50 - I Will Build My Church, Part 2. 58 Lesson: Ambassador College Bible Correspondence Course, 1965)

So, while the biblical name of the true church was Church of God, the term catholic was also associated with the faithful as well as others who adopted that name. We in the *Continuing* Church of God hold to the beliefs and practices of the original catholic church (see more details in the free book, available at

ccog.org, titled: *Beliefs of the Original Catholic Church: Could a remnant group have continuing apostolic succession?*



## 7. The Kingdom of God

The Bible teaches that a utopian society, called the Kingdom of God, will replace human governments (Daniel 2:44; Revelation 11:15; 19:1-21). That kingdom is a mystery for many (cf. Mark 4:11), but is part of God's plan.

When Jesus began His public ministry, He began by preaching the ***gospel of the Kingdom of God***. Here is what Mark reported:

<sup>14</sup> Now after John was put in prison, Jesus came to Galilee, preaching the gospel of the kingdom of God, <sup>15</sup> and saying, "The time is fulfilled, and the kingdom of God is at hand. Repent, and believe in the gospel" (Mark 1:14-15, NKJV/OSB).

The term gospel, comes from the Greek word transliterated as *euangelion*, and means "good message" or "good news." In the New Testament, the English word "kingdom," related to God's kingdom, is mentioned approximately 149 times in the NKJV and 151 in the *Douay Rheims Bible*. It comes from the Greek word transliterated as *basileia* which signifies the rule or realm of royalty.

Human kingdoms, as well as God's kingdom, have a king (Revelation 17:14), they cover a geographic area (Revelation 11:15), they have rules of law (Isaiah 2:3-4; 30:9), and they have subjects (Luke 13:29).

Here is the first public teaching from Jesus that Matthew records:

<sup>23</sup> And Jesus went about all Galilee, teaching in their synagogues, preaching the gospel of the kingdom (Matthew 4:23, NKJV/OSB).

Matthew also records:

<sup>35</sup> Then Jesus went about all the cities and villages, teaching in their synagogues, preaching the gospel of the kingdom (Matthew 9:35, NKJV/OSB).

The New Testament shows that Jesus will reign forever:

<sup>33</sup> And He will reign over the house of Jacob forever, and of His kingdom there will be no end (Luke 1:33, NKJV/OSB).

Luke records that the purpose that Jesus was sent was to preach the Kingdom of God. Notice what Jesus taught:

<sup>43</sup> He said to them, "I must preach the kingdom of God to the other cities also, because for this purpose I have been sent" (Luke 4:43, NKJV/OSB).

Yes, Jesus said His purpose for being sent was to preach the Kingdom of God.

Jesus taught that the Kingdom of God should be the top priority for those who would follow Him:

<sup>33</sup> But seek first the kingdom of God and His righteousness ... (Matthew 6:33, NKJV, OSB)

<sup>31</sup> But seek the kingdom of God, and all these things shall be added to you. <sup>32</sup> Do not fear, little flock, for it is your Father's good pleasure to give you the kingdom (Luke 12:31-32, NKJV, OSB).

Christians are to SEEK FIRST the Kingdom of God. They do this by making this their top priority by living as Christ would have them live and looking forward to His return and kingdom. Yet, most who profess Christ, not only do not seek first the Kingdom of God, they do not even know what it is. Many also incorrectly believe that being involved in worldly politics is what God expects from Christians. By not understanding God's kingdom, they do not live now as they should or understand why humanity is so flawed.

Jesus also said that the kingdom will be given to a little flock. Here's is something that the Apostle Paul wrote:

<sup>5</sup> Likewise, at this present time, there is also a remnant according to the election of grace. (Romans 11:5, EOB)

That is a mystery to many, yet that is part of God's plan for this age.

God is only calling some now, and that is a relatively small number, sometimes called the elect, with the rest of humanity blinded (Romans 11:17; see also the free booklet, online at [cccog.org](http://cccog.org), titled *Is God Calling You?*).

It takes humility to be willing to be part of the true little flock.

But the flock will grow, and the Kingdom of God will grow (Luke 13:18-21) after Jesus returns.

### **Satan Pushes False Gospels**

Satan has been pushing a false gospel since he rebelled against God as Lucifer (cf. Isaiah 14:12-14).

In the Garden of Eden, he began to push a false gospel to humans when he enticed Eve to doubt God and deceived her into believing she knew better than God:

<sup>1</sup> Now the serpent was more cunning than any beast of the field which the Lord God had made. And he said to the woman, "Has God indeed said, 'You shall not eat of every tree of the garden'?" <sup>2</sup> And the woman said to the serpent, "We may eat the fruit of the trees of the garden; <sup>3</sup> but of the fruit of the tree which is in the midst of the garden, God has said, 'You shall not eat it, nor shall you touch it, lest you die.'" <sup>4</sup> Then the serpent said to the woman, "You will not surely die. <sup>5</sup> For God knows that in the day you eat of it your eyes will be opened, and you will be like God, knowing good and evil." <sup>6</sup> So when the woman saw that the tree was good for food, that it was pleasant to the eyes, and a tree desirable to make one wise, she took of its fruit and ate. She also gave to her husband with her, and he ate. (Genesis 3:1-6, NKJV)

Satan influenced the children of Israel to repeatedly rebel against God and His government. Related to a rebellion led by Korah (Numbers 16:1-3), Satan wanted people to believe the false gospel that the leadership God installed through Moses and Aaron exalted itself too much, and that they, too, were God's people, so they did not need to heed God's government. That ended in disaster for Korah and his followers (Numbers 16:28-35), as do all of Satan's false gospels.

Through the influence of Satan, Korah pushed a false gospel. Various ones who claim to be Christian do so today.

The Apostle Paul warned:

<sup>6</sup> I marvel that you are turning away so soon from Him who called you in the grace of Christ, to a different gospel, <sup>7</sup> which is not another; but there are some who trouble you and want to pervert the gospel of Christ. <sup>8</sup> But even if we, or an angel from heaven, preach any other gospel to you than what we have preached to you, let him be accursed. <sup>9</sup> As we have said before, so now I say again, if anyone preaches any other gospel to you than what you have received, let him be accursed. (Galatians 1:6-9)

<sup>4</sup> For if he who comes preaches another Jesus whom we have not preached, or if you receive a different spirit which you have not received, or a different gospel which you have not accepted — you may well put up with it! (2 Corinthians 11:4)

What was the false gospel? In general, the false gospel is to believe that you do not have to fully obey God and try to truly live His way all the while claiming to know God. The serpent beguiled Eve to fall for a version of a false gospel nearly 6000 years ago (Genesis 3)--humans have believed that they know better than God and should decide good and evil for themselves. And yes, after Jesus came, His name was often attached to various false gospels--and this will continue into the time of the final Antichrist.

Now back in the Apostle Paul's time, the false gospel was essentially a Gnostic/Mystic version. Gnostics basically believed that special knowledge was what was needed to gain spiritual insight, including salvation. Gnostics tended to believe that what the flesh did was of no particular consequence, and they were opposed to obeying God in matters like the seventh-day Sabbath. One such believer was Simon Magus, who was warned by the Apostle Peter (Acts 8:18-21).

Some of those who were of the mystic side influenced the Greco-Romans to change, as did the sun god worshiping Emperor Constantine. He and people like John Chrysostom also pushed the false gospel that God approved the substitution

of the biblical holy days with non-biblical days. Partially because of that, many do not understand the true gospel nor God's plan of salvation.

Furthermore, because of positions of allegorists as well as Imperial support for the Greco-Roman Catholics, there were also changes against the teaching of a millennial reign of Jesus and the saints on the earth which is laid out in Revelation 20:4-6. Some instead taught a different gospel, that gospel being the Greco-Roman Catholic church represented the Kingdom of God on the earth and the millennial reign.

Furthermore, in the late fourth century, the Bishop of Salamis Cyprus, considered those who still kept the Holy Days as heretical (Ephiphanius. The Panarion of Ephiphanius of Salamis: Book II (sects 1-46) Section 1, Chapter 19, 7-9. Frank Williams, editor. Publisher BRILL, 1987, p. 117-119).

This view held throughout the later centuries first with the Greco-Roman Catholics, and then with the Protestants. Many Protestants took it a step further and claimed that you did not need to try to obey God to be saved, you only needed to call Jesus "Lord," but that was another false gospel.

Why is that a false gospel?

Because Jesus said so in Matthew 7:21-23 and notice what Peter and the other apostles stated:

<sup>32</sup>. And we are His witnesses of these things, as is also the Holy Spirit, which God has given to those who obey Him. (Acts 5:32, A Faithful Version)

The Apostle Paul taught of salvation and obedience to Jesus:

<sup>9</sup> ... He became the author of eternal salvation to all who obey Him, (Hebrews 5:9, NKJV, OSB)

Teaching salvation is obtainable without striving to obey God is a false gospel.

In the 21<sup>st</sup> century, those who go against the ecumenical and interfaith movement as a way towards utopia have been condemned as extremists who follow the agenda of the devil, even though the Bible warns in many places against being unequally yoked with those of the interfaith movement (e.g. 2 Corinthians 6:14-18).

Working for peace (Matthew 5:9) and doing good are worthwhile goals (cf. Galatians 6:10) of groups like the United Nations, World Economic Forum, and World Council of Churches. Yet, many world leaders, including religious ones and those of the institutions just mentioned, believe that it will be international human cooperation that will bring peace and prosperity, and not the Kingdom of God. And while they will have some temporal successes (e.g. Daniel 9:27a), they will not only not succeed, some of their human efforts will also ultimately bring planet Earth to the point that it would make life unsustainable if Jesus did not return to establish His Kingdom. Humans fixing the earth without God is a vain and false gospel (Psalm 127:1; Mark 7:7). Jesus, Himself, warned that calling Him “Lord” and even doing signs and wonders in His name did not make someone a Christian (Matthew 7:21-23)

Interestingly, if people who professed Christ kept the biblical Holy Days, they would not be looking at ecumenical and interfaith compromise with scripture to improve the world. They would realize that they should strive to obey God now, and that Jesus would return to bring in the millennial utopia, the kingdom of God. Unlike true Christians, those who opposed the true church have no hope (1 Thessalonians 4:13), and often do not want to hear the Bible’s message of hope and salvation.

### **God’s Plan of Salvation**

Does God have a plan of salvation that makes sense and will actually work?

The Bible teaches that “God is love” (1 John 4:8), “God is the God of salvation” (Psalm 68:20), God is good (Mark 10:18), and God is all-powerful, and all-knowing (Isaiah 46:9-11).

Would not such a God be wise enough to come up with a plan of salvation that works, and does not doom the overwhelming majority of humans that ever lived to eternal torment and punishing that never ends?

Could that be a major part of why He sent His Son (John 10:10)?

The reason only some are called now, but the bulk of humanity will be called later, is because God, in His wisdom, knew that this would be the way to maximize those who would accept His ways.

Notice what Abraham declared in Genesis 18:25:

<sup>25</sup> Shall not the Judge of all the earth do right?

This was both a question and a prophecy.

Certainly, properly offering salvation to everyone is the right thing a loving God and Father would do. Does your church believe that God will do right by all?

The Bible reveals:

<sup>20</sup> Our God is the God of salvation ... (Psalm 68:20, NKJV)

<sup>20</sup> This God of ours is a God who saves ... (Psalm 68:20, NJB)

<sup>20</sup> The God of our salvation ... <sup>21</sup> Our God is the God who saves us ... (Psalm 68:20-21, OSB)

<sup>3</sup> ... God our Saviour: <sup>4</sup> he wants everyone to be saved and reach full knowledge of the truth. (1 Timothy 2:3b-4, NJB)

Certainly, the loving God of salvation has a plan that results in the vast majority of humanity being saved!

The Bible teaches:

<sup>9</sup> God made man upright, But they have sought out many schemes. (Ecclesiastes 7:29, NKJV)

<sup>23</sup> ... all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God, <sup>24</sup> being justified freely by His grace through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus, (Romans 3:23-24, NKJV, OSB)

So, while God created humans to be good (cf. Genesis 1:26-31), they have sinned and need a savior.

The Apostle Paul noted:

<sup>8</sup> But God demonstrates His own love toward us, in that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us. (Romans 5:8)

Jesus taught:

<sup>16</sup> For this is how God loved the world: he gave his only Son, so that everyone who believes in him may not perish but may have eternal life. <sup>17</sup> For God sent his Son into the world not to judge the world, but so that through him the world might be saved. (John 3:16-17, NJB)

However, we do not see the majority in the world saved yet. Plus, there are countless billions that have not even heard of Jesus and/or the truth about Him.

Yet, notice what the New Testament and the Old Testament plainly teach:

<sup>6</sup> And all flesh shall see the salvation of God. (Luke 3:6, DRB)

<sup>10</sup> ... And all the ends of the earth shall see the salvation of our God. (Isaiah 52:10, DRB)

Yes, all will have a real opportunity for salvation. A real first opportunity—this is not a “second chance.”

Some have called versions of this teaching “the age to come” (cf. Matthew 12:32; Mark 10:30; Luke 18:30; Hebrews 6:5) or the Greek word ἀποκαταστάσεως,



transliterated as 'apokatastasis' (sometimes also spelled in English as 'apocatastasis').

Apocatastasis basically means 'restoration.' The Greek word ἀποκαταστάσεως is used in the Book of Acts 3:21 (Green's Interlinear Bible. 1986, p. 824).

The Apostle Peter taught:

<sup>20</sup> and so that the Lord may send the time of comfort. Then he will send you the Christ he has predestined, that is Jesus, <sup>21</sup> whom heaven must keep till the universal restoration comes which God proclaimed, speaking through his holy prophets. (Acts 3:20-21, NJB)

<sup>20</sup> That when the times of refreshment shall come from the presence of the Lord, and he shall send him who hath been preached unto you, Jesus Christ, <sup>21</sup> Whom heaven indeed must receive, until the times of the restitution of all things, which God hath spoken by the mouth of his holy prophets, from the beginning of the world. (Acts 3:20-21, DRB)

Early Christians understood that God had a plan to offer salvation to all, the elect in this age, and the rest in an age to come (cf. Matthew 12:32; Mark 10:30; Luke 18:30; Hebrews 6:5; Ephesians 1:10, 21; Isaiah 65:20; see also the free book, online at ccog.org, titled: *Universal OFFER of Salvation, Apokatastasis: Can God save the lost in an age to come? Hundreds of scriptures reveal God's plan of salvation*).

God, who holds all power and all destiny, states:

<sup>1</sup> "Behold, the Lord's hand is not shortened,  
That it cannot save;  
Nor His ear heavy,  
That it cannot hear.

<sup>2</sup> But your iniquities have separated you from your God;  
And your sins have hidden His face from you,  
So that He will not hear" (Isaiah 59:1-2, NKJV).

Sin has separated God from the bulk of humanity.

While all have sinned and will be judged, the New Testament teaches:

<sup>32</sup> For God has committed them all to disobedience, that He might have mercy on all. (Romans 11:32, NKJV, OSB).

<sup>13</sup> ... Mercy triumphs over judgment. (James 2:13b, EOB)

<sup>13</sup> ... mercy exalteth itself above judgment. (James 2:13, DRB)

Our “God is a merciful God” (Deuteronomy 4:31, DRB, NKJV; cf. Hebrews 2:17).

### **Apocatastasis**

*The Catholic Encyclopedia* teaches:

**Apocatastasis** A name given in the history of theology to the doctrine which teaches that a time will come when all free creatures will share in the grace of salvation; in a special way, the ... lost souls. (Batiffol P. Apocatastasis)

In the early 2<sup>nd</sup> century, Bishop/Pastor Ignatius of Antioch exhorted Bishop/Pastor Polycarp of Smyrna to teach that all may be saved:

I entreat you, by the grace with which you are clothed, to press forward in your course, and to exhort all that they may be saved. (Ignatius. Letter to Polycarp, Chapter 1).

Notice the teaching “to exhort ALL that they may be saved.” Not just the Jews. Not just some Gentiles. Not just those who are called in this age. But everyone - ALL.

In the late 2<sup>nd</sup> century, Bishop/Pastor Theophilus of Antioch wrote:

And on the sixth day, God having made the quadrupeds, and wild beasts, and the land reptiles, pronounced no blessing upon them, reserving His blessing for man, whom He was about to create on the sixth day. The quadrupeds, too, and wild beasts, were made for a type of some men,

who neither know nor worship God, but mind earthly things, and repent not. For those who turn from their iniquities and live righteously, in spirit fly upwards like birds, and mind the things that are above, and are well-pleasing to the will of God. But those who do not know nor worship God, are like birds which have wings, but cannot fly nor soar to the high things of God. Thus, too, though such persons are called men, yet being pressed down with sins, they mind grovelling and earthly things. And the animals are named wild beasts [θηρία], from their being hunted [θηρεύεσθαι], not as if they had been made evil or venomous from the first — for nothing was made evil by God, but all things good, yea, very good — but the sin in which man was concerned brought evil upon them. For when man transgressed, they also transgressed with him. For as, if the master of the house himself acts rightly, the domestics also of necessity conduct themselves well; but if the master sins, the servants also sin with him; so in like manner it came to pass, that in the case of man's sin, he being master, all that was subject to him sinned with him. When, therefore, man again shall have made his way back to his natural condition, and no longer does evil, those also shall be restored to their original gentleness. (Theophilus. To Autolycus, Book 2, Chapter 17)

And God showed great kindness to man in this, that He did not allow him to remain in sin for ever; but, as it were, by a kind of banishment, cast him out of Paradise, in order that, having by punishment expiated, within an appointed time, the sin, and having been disciplined, he should afterwards be restored. (Ibid, Chapter 26)

Theophilus was teaching that although God consigned humans to be put out of Paradise, this was for the good of humanity so that sinful humans could later be restored.

Italian 21<sup>st</sup> century researcher and Roman professor Ilaria Ramelli considers some passages from Ignatius and those just cited from Theophilus to be supportive of the early Christian understanding of the doctrine of apocatastasis:

In *Ep ad Eph.* 20, Ignatius describes the destructiveness of evil and salvation brought about by Christ in strongly universalistic terms.

Every spell of evilness has been destroyed, every chain of evilness has disappeared; ignorance has been swept away; the old kingdom has fallen into ruin, when God appeared in human form for the novelty of the life that is absolutely eternal [αἰδίου]. What was established by God has begun: since then, all beings have been set in motion for the providential realisation of the destruction of death. ...

This *destruction of death is a work of God*, and the death at stake is not only physical, but also spiritual, since its disappearance is linked to the elimination of evil and ignorance. ...

In *Aut. 2, 17* Theophilus foretells the final restoration of both humans and animals to their original condition ... Theophilus expresses here a notion of apokatastasis ... Also, Theophilus at the same time interprets beasts as the symbol of evil human beings. (Ramelli I. *The Christian Doctrine of Apokatastasis: A Critical Assessment from the New Testament to Eriugena, Supplements to Vigiliae Christianae*. Brill, 2013, pp. 63, 65,66).

Note: Professor Ramelli should have cited *Ep ad Eph. 19*, not *Ep ad Eph. 20*, for her translation in the section above. *Ep ad Eph* is an abbreviation for what in English we would title *Epistle (or letter) to the Ephesians*.

Though not a dogma, the idea that ‘non-elect’ humans will have an opportunity for salvation after death is a hope of the Eastern and Russian Orthodox churches (Benedetto R, Duke J, eds. *The New Westminster Dictionary of Church History: The early, medieval, and Reformation eras*. John Knox Press, 2008, p. 37; Ware T. *The Orthodox Church*. Penguin Books, London, 1997, p. 262).

In the late second century, Irenaeus of Lyon, wrote:

It is indeed proper to God, and befitting His character, to show mercy and pity, and to bring salvation to His creatures, even though they be brought under danger of destruction. “For with Him,” says the Scripture, “is propitiation.” (Fragments of Irenaeus, Fragment 10. Roberts and Donaldson)

Propitiation is a way to gain favour. All humans can gain favor who will truly accept Jesus and His sacrifice.

Professor Ramelli brought out the following related to Irenaeus:

*Irenaeus* connects again ἀνάστα- σις and ἀποκατάστασις in fr. 10: “Life will seize humanity, will *chase death away*, and will restore [ἀποκαταστήσει] humanity. Likewise, at the end of fr. 15 from AH 5 Irenaeus refers ἀποκατέστησε to the work of Christ, who restores humanity to friendship with God .... Humanity will be restored to its original condition, anterior to the fall, and even to a better state. (Ramelli, p. 105)

Yes, it will ultimately be much better (cf. Revelation 21:4-5). Perhaps it should be pointed out that while Irenaeus’ writings do not show he believed all would be saved, some of his writings are consistent with the view that God has a plan to save more than just the elect of this age.

The Bible teaches that God “will plead with all flesh” (Jeremiah 25:31, AFV). God will *offer* salvation to all that ever lived (cf. Luke 3:6). That is what “the merciful Father and the God who gives every possible encouragement” (2 Corinthians 1:3, NJB) teaches in His word.

The *Continuing Church of God* (CCOG) believes that the Bible teaches that all will ultimately be given an opportunity for salvation through Jesus Christ (Acts 4:12; John 17:2-3; Luke 3:6)—“there is no other Name under heaven that is given among mortals by which we should be saved!” (Acts 4:12, EOB).

Proverbs 19:21 shows that God’s counsel will stand, despite traditions of men:

<sup>21</sup> There are many plans in a man’s heart, Nevertheless the LORD’s counsel--that will stand.

The plans of an all-knowing, all-wise, God of love will succeed. It matters not if humans have many plans or different ideas, it is God’s plan that will succeed.

The Apostle Paul wrote:

<sup>5</sup> Therefore **judge nothing before the time**, until the Lord comes, who will both bring to light the hidden things of darkness and reveal the counsels of the hearts. Then each one's praise will come from God. (1 Corinthians 4:5)

Notice Paul wrote that the time of final judgment has not yet come, when it does God will be praised. The final judgment is not to be before the time when the Lord comes, and hidden things will be revealed.

The Apostle Peter wrote:

<sup>9</sup> The Lord is not slack concerning His promise, as some count slackness, but is longsuffering toward us, not willing that any should perish but that all should come to repentance. (2 Peter 3:9, NKJV, OSB)

Yet, many do not understand that even though a lot of time is involved, God's plan is geared towards getting all to repent.

The Apostle Paul wrote:

<sup>7</sup> In Him we have redemption through His blood, the forgiveness of sins, according to the riches of His grace <sup>8</sup> which He made to abound toward us in all wisdom and prudence, <sup>9</sup> having made known to us the mystery of His will, according to His good pleasure which He purposed in Himself, <sup>10</sup> that in the dispensation of the fullness of the times He might gather together in one all things in Christ, both which are in heaven and which are on earth — in Him. (Ephesians 1:7-10)

The Bible shows that God's will is a mystery to most. We see in verse 10 that this particular reconciliation is in the "fullness of the times," which is some time after a coming resurrection, as all things have not yet been gathered together in Christ.

Was the teaching of the Apostle Paul that Jesus is the Saviour of all men or only a few?

<sup>5</sup> ... Jesus, <sup>6</sup> who gave Himself a ransom for all, to be testified in due time. (1 Timothy 2:5-6, NKJV, OSB)

Jesus gave Himself as a ransom/Savior for ALL IN DUE TIME. For some, the proper time is to be called now. For most people, this is not the time, and they will be given that opportunity later.

And that helps explain part of the following:

<sup>9</sup> This is a faithful saying and worthy of all acceptance. <sup>10</sup> For to this end we both labor and suffer reproach, because we trust in the living God, who is the Savior of all men, especially of those who believe. <sup>11</sup> These things command and teach. (1 Timothy 4:9-11)

God is the Savior of all—some in this age, and others in the age to come.

The CCOG believes that nearly all people who ever lived (likely over 99.9%--cf. Luke 15:4-6) will accept that opportunity and thus gain eternal life in the kingdom of God. We teach that the relatively few who do not accept God's offer will not be eternally tormented but will be put out of their misery with the destruction of BOTH body and soul in Gehena fire (Matthew 10:28). So, yes, theologically speaking we are also annihilist (Malachi 4:3) Christians. Our biblical view differs from some who promote apocatastasis who assert that all must be saved.

Therefore, although the CCOG does not teach universal salvation, we teach that the opportunity for salvation will be offered to all, either in this age or the age to come. The Church of Rome officially changed its position on apocatastasis in the 6<sup>th</sup> century, whereas many within the Eastern Orthodox still accept that basic doctrine (as have some Roman Catholics throughout history).

The CCOG maintains the original catholic view of apocatastasis. For more details, including when the Roman Catholics adopted purgatory as a substitute "age to come," please check out the free book, online at ccog.org, titled *Universal OFFER of Salvation, Apokatastasis: Can God save the lost in an age to come? Hundreds of scriptures reveal God's plan of salvation.*

## **The Kingdom is Future**

Jesus taught that the kingdom is not now part of this present world:

<sup>36</sup> Jesus answered, “My kingdom is not of this world. If My kingdom were of this world, My servants would fight, so that I should not be delivered to the Jews; but now My kingdom is not from here” (John 18:36).

Jesus taught that the kingdom will come after He returns as its King:

<sup>31</sup> “When the Son of Man comes in His glory, and all the holy angels with Him, then He will sit on the throne of His glory. <sup>32</sup> All the nations will be gathered before Him, and He will separate them one from another, as a shepherd divides his sheep from the goats. <sup>33</sup> And He will set the sheep on His right hand, but the goats on the left. <sup>34</sup> Then the King will say to those on His right hand, ‘Come, you blessed of My Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world (Matthew 25:31-34).

Since the Kingdom of God is not here, we will not see a real utopia until after it has been established. And because the kingdom of God is not here yet, most do not understand that kingdom, therefore, they fail to understand how His loving government works.

The Kingdom of God will not come “until the fullness of the Gentiles has come in” (Roman 11:25)—and that has not happened yet.

### **What did Jesus say the kingdom was like?**

Jesus provided some explanations of what the Kingdom of God is like:

<sup>26</sup> And He said, “The kingdom of God is as if a man should scatter seed on the ground, <sup>27</sup> and should sleep by night and rise by day, and the seed should sprout and grow, he himself does not know how. <sup>28</sup> For the earth yields crops by itself: first the blade, then the head, after that the full grain in the head. <sup>29</sup> But when the grain ripens, immediately he puts in the sickle, because the harvest has come” (Mark 4:26-29).



<sup>18</sup> Then He said, "What is the kingdom of God like? And to what shall I compare it? <sup>19</sup> It is like a mustard seed, which a man took and put in his garden; and it grew and became a large tree, and the birds of the air nested in its branches." <sup>20</sup> And again He said, "To what shall I liken the kingdom of God? <sup>21</sup> It is like leaven, which a woman took and hid in three measures of meal till it was all leavened" (Luke 13:18-21).

These parables suggest that, at first, the Kingdom of God is quite small, but will become large.

Luke also recorded:

<sup>29</sup> They will come from the east and the west, from the north and the south, and sit down in the kingdom of God (Luke 13:29).

Thus, the Kingdom of God will have people from all over the world. It will NOT be limited to those who have Israelite ancestry or specific ethnic groups. People, from all over, will sit down in this kingdom.

It is after the resurrection (1 Corinthians 15:50-55) that Christians will be born again to enter the Kingdom of God, as John records:

<sup>3</sup> Jesus answered and said to him, "Most assuredly, I say to you, unless one is born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God." <sup>4</sup> Nicodemus said to Him, "How can a man be born when he is old? Can he enter a second time into his mother's womb and be born?" <sup>5</sup> Jesus answered, "Most assuredly, I say to you, unless one is born of water and the Spirit, he cannot enter the kingdom of God (John 3:3-5).

Only God's people will see the ultimate post-millennial Kingdom of God, which begins with the creation of the new heavens and new earth.

Now please further understand that after Jesus was resurrected, He again taught about the Kingdom of God:

<sup>3</sup> He also presented Himself alive after His suffering by many infallible proofs, being seen by them during forty days and speaking of the things pertaining to the kingdom of God (Acts 1:3).

**The first and last sermons that Jesus gave were about the Kingdom of God! Jesus came as the messenger to teach about that Kingdom.**

Jesus had the Apostle John write about the millennial Kingdom of God that would be on the earth. Notice what He had John write:

<sup>4</sup> I saw the souls of those who had been beheaded for their witness to Jesus and for the word of God, who had not worshiped the beast or his image, and had not received his mark on their foreheads or on their hands. And they lived and reigned with Christ for a thousand years (Revelation 20:4).

Early Christians taught that the millennial Kingdom of God would be on the earth and replace the governments of the world as the Bible teaches (cf. Revelation 5:10, 11:15).

Why, if the Kingdom of God is so important, haven't most heard very much about it?

Partially because Jesus called it a mystery:

<sup>11</sup> And He said to them, "To you it has been given to know the mystery of the kingdom of God; but to those who are outside, all things come in parables (Mark 4:11).

Even today the true Kingdom of God is a mystery to most, as is much of God's plan. More on the kingdom of God can be found in the free online booklet, available at [ccog.org](http://ccog.org) in more than 1500 languages, titled *The Gospel of the Kingdom of God*.

Consider, also, that Jesus said that the end (of the age) will come (soon) AFTER the gospel of the kingdom is preached in all the world as a WITNESS:

<sup>14</sup> And this gospel of the kingdom will be preached in all the world as a witness to all the nations, and then the end will come (Matthew 24:14).

**Proclaiming the gospel of the Kingdom of God is important and is to be accomplished in these end times. It is a “good message” as it offers the real hope to humanity’s ills, despite what political leaders may teach.**

One of the mysteries of God is that God realized that humanity would not be able to bring utopia apart from Him. So, Jesus taught His followers not to be part of the world, but to focus on the kingdom of God and God’s righteousness (Matthew 6:33).

Yet, most will not do that. Jesus, Himself, taught most would NOT accept His way:

<sup>13</sup> “Enter by the narrow gate; for wide is the gate and broad is the way that leads to destruction, and there are many who go in by it. <sup>14</sup> Because narrow is the gate and difficult is the way which leads to life, and there are few who find it. (Matthew 7:13-14)

The gospel of the Kingdom of God leads to life!

If you are a real Christian, you are an official envoy for Christ! Notice what the Apostle Peter wrote:

<sup>9</sup> But you are a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, His own special people, that you may proclaim the praises of Him who called you out of darkness into His marvelous light; <sup>10</sup> who once were not a people but are now the people of God, who had not obtained mercy but now have obtained mercy. (1 Peter 2:9-10)

As Christians, we are part of a holy nation, a royal priesthood.

Which nation is now holy?

Well, certainly none of the kingdoms of this world—but they ultimately will be part of Christ's Kingdom (Revelation 11:15). It is the nation of God, His Kingdom that is holy.

As ambassadors, we do not normally engage in the direct politics of the nations of this world.

### **The True Gospel Message is Transformative**

Jesus said, “If you abide in My word, you are My disciples indeed. And you shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free” (John 8:31-32). Knowing the truth about the gospel of the Kingdom of God frees us from being trapped in the false hopes of this world. We can boldly support a plan that works—God’s plan! Satan has deceived the whole world (Revelation 12:9) and the Kingdom of God is the true solution. We need to stand for and advocate the truth (cf. John 18:37).

All who are being called now need to remember that in the beginning there was God (Genesis 1:1). Before any angel or anything in the physical universe existed, there was God (John 1:1-3; Isaiah 57:15; Psalm 90:2). God is “the Lord, ‘who is and who was and who is to come, the Almighty’ “ (Revelation 1:8). Jesus had the glory of God “before the world was” (John 17:5).

Those called now need to remember that—God is eternal and can be counted on.

<sup>7</sup> Therefore submit to God. Resist the devil and he will flee from you. (James 4:7)

<sup>5</sup> Let this mind be in you which was also in Christ Jesus, (Philippians 2:5)

We are to realize that we are to let Jesus live His life in us:

<sup>20</sup> I have been impaled with Christ; it is no longer I who live, but Christ lives in me; and the life which I now live in the flesh I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave Himself for me. (Galatians 2:20, NKJV with the worded impaled inserted where the Greek shows it)

God is love (1 John 4:8,16) and Jesus wants to live His life in you since He loves you and wants the best for you.

While that is a mystery to most, it should not be for real Christians.

The gospel message is more than about personal salvation. The good news of the Kingdom of God should transform one in this age:

<sup>2</sup> And do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind, that you may prove what is that good and acceptable and perfect will of God. (Romans 12:2)

True Christians are transformed to serve God and others:

<sup>22</sup> Bondservants, obey in all things your masters according to the flesh, not with eyeservice, as men-pleasers, but in sincerity of heart, fearing God. <sup>23</sup> And whatever you do, do it heartily, as to the Lord and not to men, <sup>24</sup> knowing that from the Lord you will receive the reward of the inheritance; for you serve the Lord Christ. (Colossians 3:22-24)

<sup>28</sup> Therefore, since we are receiving a kingdom which cannot be shaken, let us have grace, by which we may serve God acceptably with reverence and godly fear. (Hebrews 12:28)

True Christians live differently from the world. We accept God's standards above the world's standards for what is right and wrong. The just live by faith (Hebrews 10:38), as it takes faith to live God's way in this age. Christians were considered so different from the world they lived in, that their mode of life was referred to as "the Way" in the New Testament (Acts 9:2; 19:9; 24:14,22). The world lives selfishly, under Satan's sway, in what has been called "the way of Cain" (Jude 11).

The Gospel of the Kingdom of God is a message of righteousness, joy, and peace (Romans 14:17). The prophetic word, properly understood, is comforting (cf. 1 Corinthians 14:3; 1 Thessalonians 4:18), especially as we watch the world crumble (cf. Luke 21:8-36). The true Christian way of life leads to spiritual abundance and physical blessings (Mark 10:29-30). This is part of why those who live it understand that the world needs the Kingdom of God. Christians are ambassadors of the Kingdom of God.

Christians put our hope in the spiritual, not the physical, though we live in a physical world (Romans 8:5-8). We have the "hope of the gospel" (Colossians

1:23). This is something that early Christians understood that many who profess Jesus today do not truly comprehend.

### **We Need the Kingdom of God**

Although humans like to think we are so smart, yet, there are limits to our understanding, but God's "understanding is infinite" (Psalm 147:5).

That is why it will take God's intervention to fix this planet.

While many believe *in* God, the vast majority of humans are unwilling to live as *He* truly directs. Notice the following:

<sup>8</sup> He has shown you, O man, what is good; And what does the Lord require of you But to do justly, To love mercy, And to walk humbly with your God? (Micah 6:8, NKJV)

To walk humbly *with* God is not something humankind has truly been willing to do. From the time of Adam and Eve (Genesis 3:1-6), humans have chosen to rely on themselves and their priorities instead of God's, despite His commandments (Exodus 20:3-17).

The Book of Proverbs teaches:

<sup>5</sup> Trust in the Lord with all your heart, And lean not on your own understanding; <sup>6</sup> In all your ways acknowledge Him, And He shall direct your paths. <sup>7</sup> Do not be wise in your own eyes; Fear the Lord and depart from evil. (Proverbs 3:5-7, NKJV)

Still, most people will not truly trust in God with all their hearts or wait for Him to direct their steps. Many say they will do what God wants, but do not do it. Humanity has been deceived by Satan (Revelation 12:9) and has fallen for the lusts of the world and the 'pride of life' (1 John 2:16).

Therefore, many have come up with their own religious traditions and secular governments because they think they know best. However, they do not know best (cf. Jeremiah 10:23) nor will most truly repent.

That is another reason humanity needs the Kingdom of God (cf. Matthew 24:21-22).

### **Consider the Beatitudes**

One of the most well know series of statements Jesus gave were the beatitudes, which He gave in His *Sermon on the Mount* of Olives.

Notice some of what He said:

<sup>3</sup> “Blessed are the poor in spirit, For theirs is the kingdom of heaven. <sup>4</sup> Blessed are those who mourn, For they shall be comforted. <sup>5</sup> Blessed are the meek, For they shall inherit the earth. <sup>6</sup> Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness, For they shall be filled. <sup>7</sup> Blessed are the merciful, For they shall obtain mercy. <sup>8</sup> Blessed are the pure in heart, For they shall see God. <sup>9</sup> Blessed are the peacemakers, For they shall be called sons of God. <sup>10</sup> Blessed are those who are persecuted for righteousness' sake, For theirs is the kingdom of heaven. (Matthew 5:3-10, NKJV/OSB)

It is in the Kingdom of God (cf. Mark 4:30-31), often referred to as the Kingdom of heaven by Matthew (cf. Matthew 13:31), where these blessed promises will be fulfilled. It is in the Kingdom of God that the promise will be fulfilled for the meek to inherit the earth and the pure to see God. Look forward to the good news of the blessings in the Kingdom of God!

### **God's Ways Are Right**

The truth is that God is love (1 John 4:8,16) and God is NOT selfish. God's laws show love towards God and our neighbor (Mark 12:29-31; James 2:8-11). The ways of the world are selfish and end in death (Romans 8:6).

Read what 1 John 5:1-3 has to say about those who love Jesus and keeping the commandments:

<sup>1</sup> Whoever believes that Jesus is the Christ is born of God, and everyone who loves Him who begot also loves him who is begotten of Him. <sup>2</sup> By this we know that we love the children of God, when we love God and keep

His commandments. <sup>3</sup> For this is the love God, that we keep His commandments. And His commandments are not burdensome. (1 John 5:1-3, NKJV/OSB)

All of God's "commandments are righteousness" (Psalm 119:172). His ways are pure (1 Titus 1:15). Sadly, many have accepted various forms of "lawlessness" and do not realize that Jesus did NOT come to destroy the law or the prophets, but to fulfill them (Matthew 5:17), by explaining their real meaning and expanding them beyond what many thought (e.g. Matthew 5:21-28). Jesus taught that "whoever does and teaches them, he shall be called great in the kingdom of heaven" (Matthew 5:19) (the terms 'Kingdom of God' and 'kingdom of heaven' are interchangeable).

The Bible teaches that faith without works is dead (James 2:17). Many claim to follow Jesus but will not truly believe His teachings (Matthew 7:21-23) and will not imitate Him as they should (cf. 1 Corinthians 11:1). Jesus "became the author of eternal salvation to all who obey Him" (Hebrews 5:9). "Sin is the transgression of the law" (1 John 3:4, KJV) and all have sinned (Romans 3:23). However, the Bible shows that mercy will triumph over judgment (James 2:13) as God truly has a plan for all (cf. Luke 3:6).

Human solutions, apart from God's ways, will not work. In the millennial kingdom, Jesus will rule with "a rod of iron" (Revelation 19:15), and good will prevail as people will live God's way. **ALL the world's problems exist because societies of this world refuse to obey God and His law.** History shows humanity is not capable of solving the problems of society:

<sup>6</sup> For to be carnally minded is death, but to be spiritually minded is life and peace. <sup>7</sup> Because the carnal mind is enmity against God; for it is not subject to the law of God, nor indeed can be. <sup>8</sup> So then, those who are in the flesh cannot please God. (Romans 8:6-8, NKJV/OSB)

Christians are to focus on the spiritual, and are granted God's Spirit to do so in this age (Romans 8:9), despite our personal weaknesses:

<sup>26</sup> For you see your calling, brethren, that not many wise according to the flesh, not many mighty, not many noble, are called. <sup>27</sup> But God has



chosen the foolish things of the world to put to shame the wise, and God has chosen the weak things of the world to put to shame the things which are mighty; <sup>28</sup> and the base things of the world and the things which are despised God has chosen, and the things which are not, to bring to nothing the things that are, <sup>29</sup> that no flesh should glory in His presence. <sup>30</sup> But of Him you are in Christ Jesus, who became for us wisdom from God—and righteousness and sanctification and redemption— <sup>31</sup> that, as it is written, “He who glories, let him glory in the Lord.” (1 Corinthians 1:26-31, NKJV/OSB)

Christians are to glory in God’s plan! We walk by faith now (2 Corinthians 5:7), looking above (Colossians 3:2) in faith (Hebrews 11:6). We will be blessed for keeping God’s commandments (Revelation 22:14).

### **Why the Gospel of the Kingdom of God?**

Protestants tend to feel that once they have accepted Jesus as savior, that they have sought the Kingdom of God. Greco-Roman Catholics believe those baptized, even as infants, have entered their church, and, as such, have entered the kingdom of God. Roman and the Eastern Orthodox Catholics tend to think that through sacraments, etc., they are seeking the kingdom of God. Roman Catholics and Protestants tend to look to the world’s politicians to solve humanity’s problems. They tend to have an earthly-focus (cf. Romans 8:6-8; 1 John 2:15). True Christians understand that they are to repent, be baptized, and have hands laid on them to receive the Holy Spirit, and are then commanded to seek the Kingdom of God in Spirit and in truth.

Seeking first the Kingdom of God (Matthew 6:33) is to be a lifelong goal for Christians. A goal, not to look to the world for solutions, but to God and His ways. The good news of the Kingdom of God changes our lives.

The Bible says that Christians will rule with Jesus. Do you realize that means that real Christians will actually rule over cities? In Luke 19:12-19 Jesus taught:

<sup>12</sup> “A certain nobleman went into a far country to receive for himself a kingdom and to return. <sup>13</sup> So he called ten of his servants, delivered to them ten minas, and said to them, ‘Do business till I come.’ <sup>14</sup> But his

citizens hated him, and sent a delegation after him, saying, 'We will not have this man to reign over us.'

<sup>15</sup> "And so it was that when he returned, having received the

kingdom, he then commanded these servants, to whom he had given the money, to be called to him, that he might know how much every man had gained by trading. <sup>16</sup> Then came the first, saying, 'Master, your mina has earned ten minas.' <sup>17</sup> And he said to him, 'Well done, good servant; because you were faithful in a very little, have authority over ten cities.' <sup>18</sup> And the second came, saying, 'Master, your mina has earned five minas.' <sup>19</sup> Likewise he said to him, 'You also be over five cities.' (Luke 19:12-19, NKJV/OSB)

Be faithful over the little you have now. Christians will have the opportunity to rule over real cities, in a real kingdom. Jesus also said, "My reward is with Me, to give to everyone according to his work" (Revelation 22:12). God has a plan (Job 14:15) and a place (John 14:2) for those who will truly respond to Him (John 6:44; Revelation 17:14). The Kingdom of God is real, and you can be a part of it!

At the start of 2016, the journal *Science* had an article titled "The power of crowds" that indicated that artificial intelligence and crowdsourcing could solve the "wicked problems" facing humanity. Yet, the article failed to understand what wickedness is, let alone how to solve it.

Cooperation, apart from following the true ways of God, is as doomed to fail in the 21<sup>st</sup> century as it was after the Great Flood when humanity cooperated to build the failed Tower of Babel (Genesis 11:1-9).

Problems in the world, in places like the Middle East (despite expected temporal gains (peace?), e.g. Daniel 9:27a; 1 Thessalonians 5:3), will not be solved by humans—we need the peace of the Kingdom of God (Romans 14:17).

The problems of international terrorism, despite expected gains (when there is a temporary peace deal, cf. Daniel 9:27), will not be solved (cf. Ezekiel 21:12) by the deceived in the United Nations (cf. Revelation 12:9)—we need the joy and comfort of the Kingdom of God.

The problems of the environment will NOT be solved by international cooperation, as the world's nations will help destroy the earth (Revelation 11:18), but they will be solved by the Kingdom of God.

Issues of sexual immorality, abortion, and selling human body parts will not be solved by the USA (cf. Revelation 18:13), but by the Kingdom of God.

The massive debt that the USA, UK, and many other nations have will not be solved through international brokering, but ultimately (after destruction per Habakkuk 2:6-8) by the Kingdom of God.

Ignorance and miseducation will not be solved by the United Nations—we need the Kingdom of God. Religious strife will not truly be solved by any ecumenical-interfaith movement agreeing to salvation, apart from the true Jesus of the Bible. Modern medical science does not have all the answers for human health—we need the Kingdom of God. Sin is THE PROBLEM in the world and for that, we need Jesus' sacrifice and His return in the Kingdom of God.

Hunger issues will not be solved by genetically-modified organisms which are putting parts of the world at risk of famine due to potential crop failures—we need the Kingdom of God.

The massive poverty in parts of Africa, Asia, and elsewhere, while benefiting for a time from end time 'Babylon' (cf. Revelation 18:1-19), will not solve the problem of poverty—we need the Kingdom of God. The idea that, apart from Jesus, humanity can bring utopia in this 'present evil age' is a false gospel (Galatians 1:3-10).

The millennial phase of the Kingdom of God is a literal kingdom that will be established on the earth. It will be based on the loving laws of God and a loving God as leader. The saints will reign with Christ for a thousand years during the millennium (Revelation 5:10; 20:4-6). This kingdom will include those truly in the Church of God, but no scripture states that the Kingdom of God is actually the Church (Roman Catholic or otherwise). The Church of Rome has strongly opposed the millennial teaching as a doctrine of Antichrist (Catechism of the Catholic Church. Imprimatur Potest +Joseph Cardinal Ratzinger. Doubleday, NY 1995, p. 194). Later, the Church of Rome will more powerfully oppose the Bible's gospel

message as we get closer to the end. This will likely get significant media coverage looking at the most faithful church, which may help fulfill Matthew 24:14.

In its later final phase, the Kingdom of God will include the “New Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God” (Revelation 21:2) and of its increase there will be no end. There will be no more unrighteousness, no more sorrow, and no more death.

Preaching and understanding the gospel of the Kingdom of God is an important theme of the Bible. Old Testament writers taught about it. Jesus, Paul, and John taught about it. The oldest ‘Christian’ sermon to survive outside the New Testament taught about it. Early second century Christian leaders, like Polycarp and Melito, taught about it. We in the *Continuing* Church of God teach it today. Recall that the Kingdom of God is the first subject that the Bible shows Jesus preached about (Mark 1:14. It was also what He preached about after His resurrection (Acts 1:3)—and it is something Christians should seek first (Matthew 6:33).

The gospel is not only about the life and death of Jesus. The emphasis of the gospel that Jesus and His followers taught was the coming Kingdom of God. The gospel of the kingdom includes salvation through Christ, but also includes teaching the end of human governments (Revelation 11:15).

Remember, Jesus taught that the end would not come until after the gospel of the kingdom was preached to the world as a witness to all the nations (Matthew 24:14). And that preaching is happening now.

The good news is that **the Kingdom of God is the solution to the problems facing humanity**. Yet, most do NOT want to support it, nor hear it, nor want to believe the truth of it. God’s Kingdom is eternal (Matthew 6:13), while “this world is passing away” (1 Corinthians 7:31).

Proclaiming the true gospel of the Kingdom of God is something that we in the *Continuing* Church of God are serious about. We strive to teach all things that the Bible teaches (Matthew 28:19-20), including the Kingdom of God (Matthew 24:14). While we await that kingdom, we need to learn and follow God’s ways and comfort others who want to believe the truth.

## 8. Deification and the Plan

What is God's basic plan for His creation?

We get some ideas about why God created anything in the first book of the Bible, commonly known as Genesis.

Repeatedly the Book of Genesis shows that God saw what He made was good (Genesis 1:4,10,12,18, 21, 25, 31) and His plan was for humans to rule over His creation (Genesis 1:28, 2:15). And the later Book of Isaiah informs us that God formed the earth to be inhabited (Isaiah 45:18).

Genesis teaches this regarding God making humans:

<sup>26</sup> Then God said, "Let Us make man in Our image, according to Our likeness; let them have dominion over the fish of the sea, over the birds of the air, and over the cattle, over all the earth and over every creeping thing that creeps on the earth."

<sup>27</sup> So God created man in His own image; in the image of God He created him; male and female He created them. <sup>28</sup> Then God blessed them, and God said to them, "Be fruitful and multiply; fill the earth and subdue it; have dominion over the fish of the sea, over the birds of the air, and over every living thing that moves on the earth."

<sup>29</sup> And God said, "See, I have given you every herb that yields seed which is on the face of all the earth, and every tree whose fruit yields seed; to you it shall be for food. <sup>30</sup> Also, to every beast of the earth, to every bird of the air, and to everything that creeps on the earth, in which there is life, I have given every green herb for food"; and it was so. (Genesis 1:26-30, NKJV)

God formed humans after the God kind, not after an animal kind. God is essentially reproducing Himself (Malachi 2:15). We see that humans were created in a somewhat physical image of God to rule over things on the earth (cf. Hebrews 2:5-8), and other scriptures show that deification is part of the plan (cf. 1 John 3:2).

Were humans and the creation bad?

No. The next verse in Genesis tells us:

<sup>31</sup> Then God saw everything that He had made, and indeed it was very **good**. So the evening and the morning were the sixth day. (Genesis 1:31, NKJV)

So, the entire re-creation (Genesis 1:3-2:3) was very good and, as it would seem, so would be God's instructions for humans to subdue the earth (Genesis 1:28).

After the sixth day, God rested:

<sup>1</sup> Thus the heavens and the earth, and all the host of them, were finished.  
<sup>2</sup> And on the seventh day God ended His work which He had done, and He rested on the seventh day from all His work which He had done. <sup>3</sup> Then God blessed the seventh day and sanctified it, because in it He rested from all His work which God had created and made. (Genesis 2:1-3, NKJV)

God, in essence, made a physical creation in six days and a more spiritual creation on the seventh.

By blessing the seventh day God also shows that He considered it "good." In Exodus 20:8, He says to "keep it holy."

Yet, most do not. In fact, most do not even observe the seventh day as the Sabbath.

The Apostle Paul wrote the following about part of God's plan:

<sup>29</sup> For whom He foreknew, He also predestined to be conformed to the image of His Son, that He might be the firstborn among many brethren.  
<sup>30</sup> Moreover whom He predestined, these He also called; whom He called, these He also justified; and whom He justified, these He also glorified. (Romans 8:29-30, NKJV, OSB)

So, we see that we are to be born after the pattern of Jesus and be glorified, which in this case also means deified. That is part of God's plan and is a mystery of Christ that many do not properly grasp.

God's plan is a mystery to most, but God reveals many parts to His saints as the Apostle Paul confirmed when he wrote:

<sup>6</sup> However, we speak wisdom among those who are mature, yet not the wisdom of this age, nor of the rulers of this age, who are coming to nothing. <sup>7</sup> But we speak the wisdom of God in a mystery, the hidden wisdom which God ordained before the ages for our glory, <sup>8</sup> which none of the rulers of this age knew ... (1 Corinthians 2:6-8 NKJV/OSB)

<sup>26</sup> the mystery which has been hidden from ages and from generations, but now has been revealed to His saints. (Colossians 1:26, NKJV/OSB)

<sup>2</sup> that their hearts may be encouraged, being knit together in love, and attaining to all riches of the full assurance of understanding, to the knowledge of the mystery of God, both of the Father and of Christ, <sup>3</sup> in whom are hidden all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge. (Colossians 2:2-3, NKJV/OSB)

<sup>8</sup> He poured out his kindness by giving us every kind of wisdom and insight <sup>9</sup> when he revealed the mystery of his plan to us. (Ephesians 1:8-9a, GTW)

Very few in this age, including the highly educated, understand the mystery of God and His plan. But the Apostle Paul and various other prophets (cf. Revelation 10:7) have explained parts of it.

But God is wise, and His plan will be accomplished.

### **Why Did God Make Males and Females?**

Related to the creation of humans, why did God make them male and female?

Well, an obvious reason would have to do with reproduction as God told the first man and woman:

<sup>28</sup> Be fruitful and multiply; fill the earth... (Genesis 1:28, NKJV).

The Bible gives a fairly specific related reason:

<sup>14</sup> ... Between you and the wife of your youth ... she is your companion And your wife by covenant. <sup>15</sup> But did He not make them one, Having a remnant of the Spirit? And why one? He seeks godly offspring... (Malachi 2:14bd-15, NKJV)

God made humans males and females so when they became one (through marriage) they would ultimately produce godly offspring (for deification).

For further understanding, in Matthew 19:4-6, Jesus revealed:

<sup>4</sup> And He answered and said to them, "Have you not read that He who made them at the beginning 'made them male and female,' <sup>5</sup> and said, 'For this reason a man shall leave his father and mother and be joined to his wife, and the two shall become one flesh'? <sup>6</sup> So then, they are no longer two but one flesh. Therefore what God has joined together, let not man separate." (Matthew 19:4-6, NKJV, OSB)

Consider also how the two properly becoming one as Jesus taught (Matthew 19:5) also helps us better understand the relationship between the Father and the Son (John 17:20-23) which is a mystery to many.

Here is something the Apostle Paul wrote related to the marriage between and man and a woman and the marriage between Christ and the church:

<sup>31</sup> "For this reason a man shall leave his father and mother and be joined to his wife, and the two shall become one flesh." <sup>32</sup> This is a great mystery, but I speak concerning Christ and the church. (Ephesians 5:31-32, NKJV, OSB)



The marriage relationship helps picture the relationship between the Father and the Son (both of whom the Bible identifies as God, e.g. Colossians 2:2, which is a mystery to most) as well as what will happen to converted humans after the resurrection (which the Bible also calls a mystery, e.g. 1 Corinthians 15:51-54).

The Apostle Paul further discussed love and gave some other spiritual lessons related to the marital state:

<sup>4</sup> ... admonish the young women to love their husbands, to love their children (Titus 2:4, NKJV, OSB).

<sup>22</sup> Wives, submit to your own husbands, as to the Lord. <sup>23</sup> For the husband is head of the wife, as also Christ is head of the church; and He is the Savior of the body. <sup>24</sup> Therefore, just as the church is subject to Christ, so let the wives be to their own husbands in everything.

<sup>25</sup> Husbands, love your wives, just as Christ also loved the church and gave Himself for her, <sup>26</sup> that He might sanctify and cleanse her with the washing of water by the word, <sup>27</sup> that He might present her to Himself a glorious church, not having spot or wrinkle or any such thing, but that she should be holy and without blemish. (Ephesians 5:22-27, NKJV, OSB)

Another reason to make humans male and female was to make it possible, though with physical distinctions in this life, for couples to be glorified together with Jesus (Romans 8:16-17). Working together (Genesis 1:28; Ecclesiastes 4:9-12) and even suffering together in this life was also part of the plan (Romans 8:16-17) for male-female couples.

Let's also see some lessons from history:

<sup>30</sup> By faith the walls of Jericho fell down after they were encircled for seven days. <sup>31</sup> By faith the harlot Rahab did not perish with those who did not believe, when she had received the spies with peace. <sup>32</sup> And what more shall I say? For the time would fail me to tell of Gideon and Barak and Samson and Jephthah, also of David and Samuel and the prophets: <sup>33</sup> who through faith subdued kingdoms, worked righteousness, obtained promises, stopped the mouths of lions, <sup>34</sup> quenched the violence of fire,

escaped the edge of the sword, out of weakness were made strong, became valiant in battle, turned to flight the armies of the aliens.<sup>35</sup> Women received their dead raised to life again. Others were tortured, not accepting deliverance, that they might obtain a better resurrection.<sup>36</sup> Still others had trial of mockings and scourgings, yes, and of chains and imprisonment.<sup>37</sup> They were stoned, they were sawn in two, were tempted, were slain with the sword. They wandered about in sheepskins and goatskins, being destitute, afflicted, tormented —<sup>38</sup> of whom the world was not worthy. They wandered in deserts and mountains, in dens and caves of the earth.<sup>39</sup> And all these, having obtained a good testimony through faith, did not receive the promise,<sup>40</sup> God having provided something better for us, that they should not **be made perfect** apart from us. (Hebrews 11:30-40, NKJV/OSB)

Both men and women had faith and were heirs to the promises—equally. And both men and women are to be made perfect. And this will be better for all.

And how will this be better for all?

To give Godly love to all in a unique way throughout all eternity is the plan.

As the Apostle Paul wrote to Christians (and not just married couples):

<sup>12</sup> And may the Lord make you **increase and abound in love to one another and to all** ... (1 Thessalonians 3:12, NKJV, OSB)

Whether male or female, humans are intended to give love. Increasing love to all will make eternity better.

## Early Church Writers

Early church writers had some understanding of the mysteries of God and gave clues about the purpose of the mystery of God's plan.

In the second century (A.D.) Polycarp of Smyrna, who was ordained by one or more of the original apostles, wrote:

Let us be zealous in the pursuit of that which is good (Polycarp's Letter to the Philippians, Chapter 6)

He {Jesus} teaches ... for the fruit of the eternal reward. (Polycarp, Fragments from Victor of Capua, section 4)

Similarly, Melito of Sardis, who was a later successor to Polycarp, wrote:

He has given thee a mind endowed with freedom; He has set before thee objects in great number, that thou on thy part mayest distinguish the nature of each thing and choose for thyself that which is good; (Melito. A Discourse Which Was in the Presence of Antoninus Caesar. In Ante-Nicene Fathers by Roberts and Donaldson, Volume 8, 1885. Hendrickson Publishers, Peabody (MA), printing 1999, p. 755)

Learning to do good (by God's standards) builds character. When we choose to do what is good, we help to make things better.

Melito understood that God gave humans freedom of choice, and we are to choose what is good. Despite Adam and Eve choosing to transgress, which in essence brought slavery (cf. Romans 6:16-17), Melito explained:

But man, who is by nature capable of receiving good and evil as soil of the earth is capable of receiving seeds from both sides, welcomed the hostile and greedy counselor, and by having touched that tree transgressed the command, and disobeyed God. (Melito. The Homily On the Passover by Melito, line 48)

Melito also understood that Jesus was part of the plan to deliver us from the slavery of sin:

The mystery of the passover is new and old, eternal and temporal, corruptible and incorruptible, mortal and immortal ... Well, the truth of the matter is the mystery of the Lord is both old and new ... For it was through the voice of prophecy that the mystery of the Lord was proclaimed. ... This is the one who delivered us from slavery into freedom, from darkness into light, from death into life, from tyranny into an eternal

kingdom, and who made us a new priesthood, and a special people forever. (Melito. The Homily On the Passover by Melito, lines 2,58,61,68)

Yes, the final kingdom is forever, for eternity. And it was through the mystery of prophecy—prophecies that were not understood as well as they should have been by religious leaders of Jesus’ time—that Jesus was prophesied before He came (for hundreds of those prophecies, check out the free book, online at [www.ccog.org](http://www.ccog.org) titled: *Proof Jesus is the Messiah*). Another mystery associated with the Passover spoken of by Melito is that Jesus broke bread and gave each of the disciples a unique piece (cf. Luke 24:30), which, for those who properly keep the Christian Passover (which is sometimes called the Eucharist) today, helps show that God has something unique for each of us and we are all special people.

Irenaeus of Lyon claimed to have been taught by Polycarp of Smyrna. Irenaeus wrote that Christians have “the hope of the resurrection to eternity” (Irenaeus. Against Heresies, Book IV, Chapter 18, para 5). And yes, resurrected Christians will live for eternity.

The Psalms teach:

<sup>20</sup> You, who have shown me great and severe troubles, Shall revive me again, And bring me up again from the depths of the earth. <sup>21</sup> You shall increase my greatness, And comfort me on every side. (Psalm 71:20-21, NKJV)

After the resurrection (also referred to as reviving again) God will increase the greatness of His servants.

How much will God increase the greatness of His servants?

Jesus cited the “you are Gods” (John 10:34) portion of Psalm 82:6 which is a teaching related to ultimate deification to those who are willing to live God’s way.

Irenaeus also taught about diefication:

... there is none other called God by the Scriptures except the Father of all, and the Son, **and those who possess the adoption** (Irenaeus. Adversus haereses, Book IV, Preface, Verse 4)

“I said, You are all the sons of the Highest, and gods; but you shall die like men.” He speaks undoubtedly these words to those who have not received the gift of adoption, but who despise the incarnation of the pure generation of the Word of God, defraud human nature of promotion into God, and prove themselves ungrateful to the Word of God, who became flesh for them. For it was for this end that the Word of God was made man, and He who was the Son of God became the Son of man, that man, having been taken into the Word, and receiving the adoption, might become the son of God. For by no other means could we have attained to incorruptibility and immortality, unless we had been united to incorruptibility and immortality. Irenaeus. Adversus haereses, Book III, Chapter 19, Verse 1).

The Apostle John wrote:

<sup>2</sup> Beloved, now are we children of God, and what we shall be has not yet been manifested; we know that if it is manifested we shall be like him, for we shall see him as he is. (1 John 3:2, Darby Bible Translation)

Because Jesus has not yet returned, Christians have not yet changed to be like Him—but being so changed is part of the plan (cf. 1 Corinthians 15:50-53). There is still some mystery as far as how we will look (1 Corinthians 13:12), but God’s plan involves deification (Romans 8:29; Acts 17:29; Matthew 5:48; Ephesians 3:14-19; Malachi 2:15).

The Apostle Paul wrote:

<sup>10</sup> For it was fitting for Him, for whom are all things and by whom are all things, in bringing many sons to glory, to make the captain of their salvation perfect through sufferings. (Hebrews 2:10, NKJV/OSB)

Notice that Jesus suffered. And He did so in order that we will be granted salvation and brought to glory--that glory is deification

## Humans are to Attain the Unity of God

What is the biblical unity of God?

The Bible teaches:

<sup>15</sup> ... He seeks godly offspring. (Malachi 2:15, NKJV)

<sup>34</sup> Jesus answered them, "Is it not written in your law, 'I said, "You are gods"'? (John 10:34, NKJV, OSB)

<sup>10</sup> And all Mine are Yours, and Yours are Mine, and I am glorified in them.  
<sup>11</sup> Now I am no longer in the world, but these are in the world, and I come to You. Holy Father, keep through Your name those whom You have given Me, that they may be one as We are. (John 17:10-11, NKJV, OSB)

<sup>5</sup> For if we have been united together in the likeness of His death, certainly we also shall be in the likeness of His resurrection. (Romans 6:5, NKJV, OSB)

<sup>11</sup> Now if the Spirit of Him Who raised Jesus from the dead is dwelling within you, He Who raised Christ from the dead will also quicken your mortal bodies because of His Spirit that dwells within you. (Roman 8:11, AFV)

Note that Christians are to attain unity with Jesus, who now truly is God. When we are resurrected, we are to be deified.

Notice something from the old Worldwide Church of God:

Why has Satan palmed off the doctrine of the Trinity on the world? Because he doesn't want YOU to rule in his place. Satan was originally created to carry out God's rule on earth. He rebelled and refused to serve the Creator and was cast out of his position of responsibility (Ezek. 28:11-19 and Isa. 14:12-14). A third of the angels united with Lucifer in that rebellion and were CAST DOWN TO THIS EARTH WITH HIM — having

forever DISQUALIFIED themselves and Satan from ruling in the Government of God.

Since they are disqualified, they don't want anyone else to take what had once been their place. They have tried for nearly 6000 years now to hide from all the world the breathtaking TRUTH OF GOD. If they can make 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 ever imagine that YOU were created to be born into the GOD FAMILY and actually share in ruling this universe!

Satan wants you to think that God is a limited Trinity and not a growing family or Kingdom into which we may enter. If we look upon the Godhead as being a closed unit, we won't WORK and STRIVE to qualify for that family.

Anyway you want to look at it. the Trinity idea is a false and inadequate view of God. If anyone wants to say that the Trinity is merely three aspects or manifestations of one God, he is taking personhood away from Christ. But if the Holy Spirit is a person. it (or he) could not be placed as the character and the seed of God into many different human beings to beget and bring each of them individually to birth as "many sons." And if someone would argue that this could occur — on the ground that with God anything is possible — this is actually making the Holy Spirit to be the Father, which is once more, equivalent to making the Holy Spirit not a separate person. ...

God's family isn't closed to mankind as Satan would have you believe. IT'S WIDE OPEN to you, your family and all mankind. If you just accept the truth of God and obey Him, YOU can be made in the exact likeness of God at Christ's return. God wants it. (Just What Is The Holy Spirit? Ambassador College Production, 1983)

The trinitarian position opposes true unity with God.

The Apostle Paul wrote:

<sup>15</sup> How can Christ come to an agreement with Beliar and what sharing can there be between a believer and an unbeliever?

<sup>16</sup> The temple of God cannot compromise with false gods, and that is what we are -- the temple of the living God. We have God's word for it: I shall fix my home among them and live among them; I will be their God and they will be my people.

<sup>17</sup> Get away from them, purify yourselves, says the Lord. Do not touch anything unclean, and then I shall welcome you.

<sup>18</sup> I shall be father to you, and you will be sons and daughters to me, says the almighty Lord. (2 Corinthians 6:15-18, NJB)

Those who separate from false religion and do not touch the unclean are to be welcomed by God as sons and daughters in His family. They will, therefore, be deified.

In the 2<sup>nd</sup> century, Ignatius of Antioch taught deification and that such was the ultimate unity of God:

For it is not my desire to act towards you as a man-pleaser, but as pleasing God, even as also you please Him. For neither shall I ever have such [another] opportunity of attaining to God ... entitled to the honour of a better work ... It is good to set from the world unto God, that I may rise again to Him. ... Suffer me to become food for the wild beasts, through whose instrumentality it will be granted me to attain to God ... I desire the drink of God, namely His blood, which is incorruptible love and eternal life. (Ignatius. Letter to the Romans, Chapters 2,4).

He is the door of the Father, by which enter in Abraham, and Isaac, and Jacob, and the prophets, and the apostles, and the Church. All these have for their object the attaining to the unity of God. (Ignatius. Letter to the Romans, Chapter 9)

Ignatius taught that the goal for God's people was deification—and that was the unity of God. He also taught it is so we can do a better, eternal, work.



Yet, understand that Greco-Roman Catholics seem to consider that the doctrine of the trinity, as adopted at an Imperial Council in 381 (as well as defined at the Council of Chalcedon in 451 A.D.), is the expression of the unity of God:

Three Persons are that One Omnipotent God in whom the Apostles believed. Indeed the unity of God is so fundamental (Joyce G.H. The Blessed Trinity. The Catholic Encyclopedia, Volume XV Copyright © 1912 by Robert Appleton Company).

The Unity and Trinity of God ... The numerical unity or identity of the divine nature in the Three Persons is indicated in the trinitarian formulas (Ott L. Fundamentals of Catholic Dogma. Nihil Obstat: Jeremiah J. O'Sullivan. Imprimatur: +Cornelius Ep. Corgagiensis ei Ap. Amd. Rossensis, 7 October 1954. Reprint TAN Books, Rockford (IL), 1974, pp. 58-59).

Furthermore, the Greco-Roman Catholics tend to feel that the Antichrist and those associated with him will be opposed to the adopted concept of the trinity being the unity of God. Here is something from a Roman Catholic writing:

*Jeanne le Royer (Sister of the Nativity--died 1798). "When the reign of Antichrist draws near, a false religion will appear which will deny the unity of God and will oppose the Church. Errors will cause ravages as never before ..." (Dupont, p.58).*

As far as ravages go, other Greco-Roman Catholic prophecies warn that their end time faith will be hit by heretics (like those people who truly believe the Bible), and this will cause problems, but between signs and wonders and government power, the Greco-Roman Catholics will (for a time) win. Many Greco-Roman Catholics teach that the Trinity is essentially the expression of the "unity of God."

One of the reasons, the original Catholics of the 5<sup>th</sup>-6<sup>th</sup> century, who were called Paulicians by the Romans, were persecuted was because they denied the trinitarian "unity of God" (Gibbon E. The History of the Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire, Volume 4. BF French, 1830, pp. 5,28,29). This looks to be a reason some may cite for future persecution.

The fact that we in the *Continuing* Church of God do not teach Theodosius' trinity, we have been, and will be, called a heretical cult. This is despite the fact that, by definition, those who hold to the original faith are *not* heretics.

Furthermore, notice the following Roman Catholic prophecy that was written between 1810 and 1830:

*Nursing Nun of Bellay ...* Once again, the madmen seem to gain the upper hand! ... their books and their doctrines are swamping the world. But the day of justice will come. ... the Great Monarch ascends the throne of his ancestors. ... All these things shall come to pass once the wicked have succeeded in circulating large numbers of bad books. (Dupont Y. Catholic Prophecy: The Coming Chastisement. TAN Books, Rockford (IL), 1973, p. 51)

Recall, that “madmen” was a term used by Emperor Theodosius for those who refused to accept his trinitarian position. Hence, the above seems to be saying that when books come out that his doctrinal supporters do not like, this will cause the Church of Rome problems but lead to the rise of the Great Monarch. As far as the “throne of his ancestors” goes, this may be a reference to the Habsburgs (Culleton, *The Prophets and Our Times*, p. 195) and a resurrected final “Holy Roman Empire” (cf. Revelation 13:1-4) that other Greco-Roman Catholic private prophecies have pointed to. So, again it looks like calling the faithful “madmen” is still part of Satan's plan.

### **Immortality and Deification**

In the late second century, Bishop/Overseer Theophilus of Antioch wrote:

To those who by patient continuance in well-doing seek immortality, He will give life everlasting, joy, peace, rest, and abundance of good things, which neither has eye seen, nor ear heard, nor has it entered into the heart of man to conceive. (Theophilus. *To Autolytus*, Book I, Chapter 14)

Wherefore also, when man had been formed in this world, it is mystically written in Genesis, as if he had been twice placed in Paradise; so that the one was fulfilled when he was placed there, and the second will be

fulfilled after the resurrection and judgment. For just as a vessel, when on being fashioned it has some flaw, is remoulded or remade, that it may become new and entire; so also it happens to man by death. For somehow or other he is broken up, that he may rise in the resurrection whole; I mean spotless, and righteous, and immortal. ...

For if He had made him immortal from the beginning, He would have made him God ... so that if he should incline to the things of immortality, keeping the commandment of God, **he should receive as reward from Him immortality, and should become God** ... For God has given us a law and holy commandments; and every one who keeps these can be saved, and, obtaining the resurrection, can inherit incorruption (Theophilus of Antioch. To Autolycus, Book 2, Chapters 26, 27, p. 105).

he who acts righteously shall escape the eternal punishments, and be thought worthy of the eternal life from God. ... One can see how consistently and harmoniously all the prophets spoke, having given utterance through one and the same spirit concerning the unity of God, and the creation of the world, and the formation of man. (Theophilus. To Autolycus, Book II, Chapters 34, 35)

But those who worship the eternal God, They shall inherit everlasting life, (Theophilus. To Autolycus, Book II, Chapter 36)

And we have learned a holy law; but we have as lawgiver Him who is really God, who teaches us to act righteously, and to be pious, and to do good. (Theophilus. To Autolycus, Book III, Chapter 9)

So, Theophilus taught immortality as a reward, deification (becoming God), the unity of God with humans, and doing good for those who were real Christians.

In the third century, the Roman Catholic saint and Bishop Hippolytus of Rome wrote:

The Father of immortality sent the immortal Son and Word into the world, who came to man in order to wash him with water and the Spirit; and He, begetting us again to incorruption of soul and body, breathed

into us the breath (spirit) of life, and endued us with an incorruptible panoply. If, therefore, man has become immortal, he will also be God. And if he is made God by water and the Holy Spirit after the regeneration of the layer he is found to be also joint-heir with Christ after the resurrection from the dead (Hippolytus. The Discourse on the Holy Theophany, Chapter 8).

For, by progressing in virtue, and attaining to better things, “reaching forth to those things which are before,” {Philippians 3:13, KJV} according to the word of the blessed Paul, we rise ever to the higher beauty. I mean, however, of course, spiritual beauty, so that to us too it may be said hereafter, “The King greatly desired your beauty.” (Hippolytus. Fragments from the Scriptural Commentaries of Hippolytus)

Thus, Hippolytus taught deification and that Christians, by progressing in virtue, attain better things.

In the 4<sup>th</sup> century, the Greco-Roman saint and Bishop Ambrose of Milan taught:

Then a Virgin conceived, and the Word became flesh that flesh might become God (Ambrose of Milan. Concerning Virginity (Book I, Chapter 11).

In the 4<sup>th</sup> century, the Greco-Orthodox saint and Bishop John Chrysostom wrote:

... the man can become God, and a child of God. For we read, “I have said, You are gods, and all of you are children of the Most High” (John Chrysostom. Homily 32 on the Acts of the Apostles).

Deification was understood to be a goal for humans since at least the time of Jesus.

Notice something that the late Herbert W. Armstrong wrote:

WHY did the Creator God put MAN on the earth? For God's ultimate supreme purpose of reproducing himself--of recreating himself, as it were, by the supreme objective of creating the righteous divine character

ultimately in millions unnumbered begotten and born children who shall become God beings, members of the God family. Man was to improve the physical earth as God gave it to him, finishing its creation (which sinning angels had deliberately refused to do) and, in so doing, to RESTORE the GOVERNMENT OF GOD, with God's WAY of life; and further, in this very process FINISHING THE CREATION OF MAN by the development of God's holy, righteous CHARACTER, with man's own assent. Once this perfect and righteous character is instilled in man, and man converted from mortal flesh to immortal spirit, then is to come the INCREDIBLE HUMAN POTENTIAL--man being BORN INTO the divine FAMILY of God, restoring the government of God to the earth, and then participating in the completion of the CREATION over the entire endless expanse of the UNIVERSE! ... God shall have reproduced HIMSELF untold millions of times over! So, on the sixth day of that re-creation week, God (Elohim) said, "Let us make man in our image, after our likeness" (Gen. 1:26). Man was made to have (with his assent) a special relationship with his Maker! He was made in the form and shape of God. He was given a spirit (essence in form) to make the relationship possible (Armstrong HW. *Mystery of the Ages*. Dodd Mead, 1985, pp. 102-103).

The purpose of building character is to be better and to be able to serve better.

How do we build character?

Well, the best way is by obeying Him.

And that is for our good.

### **Why?**

God has always existed. God is love (1 John 4:16).

Because of God is love, everything He does is based on love.

The reason our loving God made what He did was so that eternity would be better.

Jesus, Himself, has made a place for each of us (cf. John 14:2) as God fashions us individually (Psalm 33:15) to perfect us (Psalm 138:8). He will complete the work He began in each of us who are willing (Philippians 1:6), so you can count on the love of God.

The billions of us are all different and have different ways to give. Our ultimate role is to make eternity better--this means that yes, YOU will have a unique way of giving. Unless you ultimately refuse to support God's Kingdom, you will have your part in making eternity better for each and every one of at least 40 billion others and then even more (cf. 1 Corinthians 12:26; Job 14:15; Galatians 6:10)!

The Bible teaches that we are to "esteem others better than" ourselves (Philippians 2:3). Therefore, consider that nearly everyone you ever encountered will one day help make eternity better for you (and you for them). Everyone you misjudged, been prejudiced against, had wrong thoughts about, perhaps cut-off in traffic, and mistreated, as well as those you have been kind to, you may actually have to work for or at least with. So, try to "be kind to one another, tenderhearted, forgiving one another, even as God in Christ forgave you" (Ephesians 4:32). "As much as depends on you, live peaceably with all" (Romans 12:18).

Consider, further, that the Bible teaches that all people—including those that you may not care much for—have the potential to be filled with all the fullness of God:

<sup>14</sup> For this reason I bow my knees to the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, <sup>15</sup> from whom the whole family in heaven and earth is named, <sup>16</sup> that He would grant you, according to the riches of His glory, to be strengthened with might through His Spirit in the inner man, <sup>17</sup> that Christ may dwell in your hearts through faith; that you, being rooted and grounded in love, <sup>18</sup> may be able to comprehend with all the saints what is the width and length and depth and height — <sup>19</sup> to know the love of Christ which passes knowledge; **that you may be filled with all the fullness of God.** (Ephesians 3:14-19, OSB/NKJV).

We are to learn, and then to learn more (2 Peter 3:18).

More knowledge was prophesied for the time of the end (Daniel 12:4), including the restoration of things that were lost (Matthew 17:11).

It seems that the knowledge of why God made all that He did is something that needed to be more fully restored.

How does God do that?

<sup>9</sup>“Whom will he teach knowledge? And whom will he make to understand the message? Those just weaned from milk? Those just drawn from the breasts? <sup>10</sup>For precept must be upon precept, precept upon precept, Line upon line, line upon line, Here a little, there a little.” (Isaiah 28:9-10, NKJV)

<sup>10</sup> But God has revealed them to us through His Spirit. For the Spirit searches all things, yes, the deep things of God. (1 Corinthians 2:10, NKJV/OSB)

So, by looking at various scriptures, we can learn doctrine. And if we are led by God’s Spirit we can understand even more. If you wonder if God is calling you, check out our free booklet, online at [ccog.org](http://ccog.org), titled: *Is God Calling You?*

And how should individual Christians react when faced with new theological knowledge, which can also include knowledge that contradicts our current beliefs?

Praying to God for understanding as Job mentioned is one step to take:

<sup>24</sup> Teach me, and I will hold my tongue; Cause me to understand wherein I have erred. (Job 6:24, NKJV)

In the New Testament, the Bereans set a noble example:

<sup>10</sup> Then the brethren immediately sent Paul and Silas away by night to Berea. When they arrived, they went into the synagogue of the Jews. <sup>11</sup> These were more fair-minded {noble, KJV} than those in Thessalonica, in that they received the word with all readiness, and searched the

Scriptures daily to find out whether these things were so. (Acts 17:10-11, NKJV, OSB)

Part of the purpose of this book has been to give scriptures so that all who are willing to can see that these things are so. Part of my purpose in writing it was to share some mysteries of God's truths to all who may have open ears.



# ***Continuing Church of God***

The USA office of the *Continuing Church of God* is located at: 1036 W. Grand Avenue, Grover Beach, California, 93433 USA.

## ***Continuing Church of God (CCOG) Websites***

**CCOG.AFRICA** This site is targeted towards those in Africa.

**CCOG.ASIA** This site has focus on Asia.

**CCOG.IN** This site is targeted towards those of Indian heritage.

**CCOG.EU** This site is targeted toward Europe. It has materials in multiple European languages.

**CCOG.NZ** This site is targeted towards New Zealand and others with a British-descended background.

**CCOG.ORG** This is the main website of the *Continuing Church of God*. It serves people on all continents with literature and sermon videos.

**CCOGCANADA.CA** This site is targeted towards those in Canada.

**CDLIDD.ES** La Continuación de la Iglesia de Dios. This is the Spanish language website for the *Continuing Church of God*.

**CG7.ORG** This is a website for those interested in the Sabbath and churches that observe the seventh day Sabbath.

**PNIND.PH** Patuloy na Iglesia ng Diyos. This is the Philippines website with information in English and Tagalog.

## ***News and History Websites***

**COGWRITER.COM** This website is a major proclamation tool and has news, doctrine, historical articles, videos, and prophetic updates.

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(Back cover)

What Did Jesus Look Like?



*Oldest known pictures claimed to be of Jesus*

The original Catholic Church of God believed:

- <sup>16</sup> All scripture, inspired of God, is profitable to teach, to reprove, to correct, to instruct in justice, <sup>17</sup> That the man of God may be perfect, furnished to every good work. (2 Timothy 3:16-17, DRB) <sup>1</sup> Let Philadelphia continue (Hebrews 13:1, literal) <sup>14</sup> ... I bow my knees to the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, <sup>15</sup> from whom the whole family in heaven and earth is named ... <sup>19</sup> to know the love of Christ which passes knowledge; that you may be filled with all the fullness of God. (Ephesians 3:14-15,19, OSB).

- <sup>7</sup> There are many deceivers at large in the world, refusing to acknowledge Jesus Christ as coming in human nature. They are the Deceiver; they are the Antichrist. (2 John 7, NJB) <sup>17</sup> Wherefore, Go out from among them, and be ye separate, saith the Lord, and touch not the unclean thing: (2 Corinthians 6:17, DRB)
- <sup>36</sup> Mine is not a kingdom of this world; if my kingdom were of this world, my men would have fought ... As it is, my kingdom does not belong here. (John 18:36, NJB) <sup>14</sup> And this gospel of the kingdom, shall be preached in the whole world, for a testimony to all nations, and then shall the consummation come. (Matthew 24:14, DRB)