

How is God One?: On the Nature of God and Jesus Christ*

Part One

ANONYMOUS

One of the foundational pillars of Christianity is belief in the one true God of the Bible. Yet with religious fervor and ostensibly a divine mandate, Christians have persecuted, stigmatized, ostracized and in some cases martyred each other over the question “How is God one?” No other question has solicited more controversy, discord, confusion and bloodshed.

H.G. Wells, who wrote *The Outline of History*, said: “By the fourth century of the Christian Era we find all the Christian communities so agitated and exasperated by tortuous and elusive arguments about the nature of God as to be largely negligent of the simpler teachings of charity, service, and brotherhood that Jesus had inculcated.”

In historical summary, the all-encompassing question remains the same: Is God a unipersonal being (unitarianism), a multipersonal being (binitarianism and Trinitarianism), a multifaceted being (modalism) or one family of two or more beings (ditheism and polytheism)?

Theologically speaking, Judaism and Islam embrace the belief in a unipersonal God, the purest form of monotheism. The adherents of these two religions haven’t had to go through the quandary of trying to juxtaposition Father, Son and Holy Spirit in a way that somehow makes them one God.

* Reprinted from *The Journal: News of the Churches of God*, Vol. 33, No. 1, January 31, 1999. The article was one of a series presenting differing views from the *Journal’s* readers. The author is an elder and former pastor in the Worldwide Church of God, now serving with the United Church of God. He is not affiliated with the COG:GC of Morrow, GA.

In the minds of Jews and Muslims, God is simply Yahweh and Allah, respectively.

Did the God of Israel give a progressive revelation of Himself that was meant to conceal His multiplicity? Is God's oneness as outlined in the Bible really this confusing, mysterious and indeterminable? Or have men brought to the reading of the Scriptures predetermined conclusions that impede them from seeing the truth in this matter?

Ambiguity Through Amphiboly

The apostle Paul wrote to the congregation in Corinth: "For God is not *the author* of confusion but of peace, as in all the churches of the saints" (1 Cor. 14:33, KJV, italics original).

Yet confusion is exactly the description of the theological explanations men have come up with to explain the oneness of God. Consider these words of an orthodox bishop of the Church of England in the 17th century:

We are to consider the order of those persons in the Trinity described in the words before us in Matthew 28:19. First the Father and then the Son and then the Holy Ghost; every one of which is truly God. This is a mystery which we are all bound to believe, but yet must exercise great care in how we speak of it, it being both easy and dangerous to err in expressing so great a truth as this is.

If we think of it, how hard it is to imagine one numerically divine nature in more than one and the same divine person. Or three divine persons in no more than one and the same divine nature. If we speak of it, how hard it is to find out words to express it.

If I say, the Father, Son and Holy Ghost be three, and every one distinctly God, it is true. But if I say, they be three, and each a distinct God, it is false.

I may say, God the Father is one God, and the Son is one God, and the Holy Ghost is one God, but I cannot say that the Father is one God and the Son is another God and the Holy Ghost is a third God.

I may say that the Father begat another who is God; yet I cannot say that He begat another God.

I may say that from the Father and Son there proceeds another who is God; yet I cannot say that from the Father and Son there proceeds another God.

For though their nature be the same their persons are distinct; and though their persons distinct, yet still their nature is the same. So that, though the Father be the first person in the Godhead, the Son

the second and the Holy Ghost the third, yet the Father is not the first, the Son the second and the Holy Ghost a third God.

So hard a thing is it to word so great a mystery aright; or to fit so high a truth with expressions suitable and proper to it, without going one way or another from it.¹

Nowhere in Scripture does God tell us He is two or three persons or distinctions in one being. Such ideas are simply the extrabiblical constructs of theologians who see them implied in Scripture.

When pressed by skeptics, these same theologians waffle on the meaning of the words in their formula — as one can see when reading the aforementioned discussion of the relationship between Father, Son and Holy Spirit.

When quizzed about the meaning of the word person in the Trinity formula, theologians are guilty of amphiboly (giving words two conflicting meanings at the same time). If you ask them if the Father, Son and Holy Spirit are persons each having will and personality, they will answer that, no, they are more like “distinctions” — not wanting to convey the idea of three Gods (tritheism). Yet they will insist that each is “personal.”

To break free of such ambiguity, one must phrase the question another way: Is Jesus someone other than the Father, the Father someone other than the Son and the Holy Spirit someone other than the Father or Son?

This question puts Trinitarians in an awkward position. If they answer affirmatively, they are guilty of tritheism. If they answer negatively, they deny the reality of each, and the three become impersonal and surreal.

The New Testament shows clearly that the Father is someone other than the Son and vice versa. In his own words Jesus reveals more than distinction between himself and the Father; he shows separateness of being: “My Father has been working until now, and I have been working” (John 5:17). “It is also written in your law that the testimony of two men is true. I am one who bears witness of myself, and the Father who sent me bears witness of me” (John 8:17, 18). Praying to his Father before his crucifixion (an act of separateness in itself), Jesus says: “O my Father, if it is possible, let this cup pass from me; nevertheless not as I will, but as you will” (Matt. 26:39). Jesus also proclaims: “My Father loves me” (John 10:17) and “I love the Father” (John 14:31). Each works, witnesses, has his own will, converses with the other and loves the other.

The apostles continue to emphasize this separateness of being between the resurrected Jesus and the Father. Paul writes of Jesus as mediator (1 Tim.

¹ Bishop Beverage, *Private Thoughts*, Part 2, 4,849.

2:5) and intercessor between God and men. He proclaims to the Athenians that God will judge the world through Jesus (Acts 17:31), a reference to the Millennium, when Jesus will rule on earth while his Father is in heaven. Mediating, interceding, judging and ruling are all acts of independent mind and will, illustrating that there is more than just “distinction” between the Father and the Son; there is separateness of being.

The apostle John warned: “He is antichrist who denies the Father and the Son. Whoever denies the Son does not have the Father either; he who acknowledges the Son has the Father also” (1 John 2:22-23).

John is telling us that true Christians must acknowledge that the Father and the Son are real, thinking, sentient beings.

Is the Holy Spirit Someone Other Than the Father or Son?

The Hebrew word for “spirit” (*ruach*) literally means breath, air or wind and is often translated as such. It is “breath” in Psalm 33:6, “air” in Job 41:16 and “wind” in Genesis 8:1.

“Spirit” is the figurative translation of *ruach*. God is invisible and powerful like breath, air and wind. Therefore *ruach* was an appropriate Hebrew word to use in reference to God’s interaction with man and the cosmos because His Spirit was like a powerful invisible force carrying His presence everywhere.

In the Jewish perspective, the Holy Spirit is not another person within God any more than man’s spirit is another person within man (Job 32:8).

Here is a list that shows how often spirit appears in the possessive form in Scripture in relation to God and man:

- The Spirit of God: 28 times.
- The spirit of man: 5 times.
- My (God’s) Spirit: 17 times.
- My (man’s) spirit: 28 times.
- Your (God’s) Spirit: 4 times.
- Your (man’s) spirit: 10 times.
- His Holy Spirit: 3 times.
- His (God’s) Spirit: 14 times.
- His (man’s) spirit: 15 times.

Considering these statistics without any preconceived ideas, no one would conclude that there is any different relationship between God and His Spirit, on the one hand, and man and the spirit in man, on the other. Yet some theologians want us to believe just that, by embracing belief in the Holy Spirit as another person in or with God.

Consider these words of Jewish theologian Michael Lodahl:

I believe that the concept of “spirit” originally and best refers not to a distinct hypostasis either beside God or within the Godhead, mediating between God and the world, but to God’s own personal presence and activity in the world. I believe it was an unfortunate development when Christian reflection moved toward a Philosophically Substantive Trinitarianism that understood Spirit as “The Holy Spirit,” in the sense of a Third Hypostasis who (or which, as the early theological confusions make unclear) derived his or its identity and mission from the Son.²

In his letter to the Corinthians, Paul writes: “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 Cor. 2:11).

Of this passage author Lodahl writes: “Here the Spirit is no more a separate hypostasis than is a human being’s own self-consciousness an entity distinct from himself or herself. Rather the Spirit is God’s own deepest self, searching ‘even the depths of God.’”³

Nothing in the writings of the apostles indicates a shift in their paradigm of the Holy Spirit away from their Jewish heritage and toward Trinitarian pneumatology. In fact, a careful reading of both testaments shows continuity of teaching on this matter.

King David writes: “Where can I go from your Spirit? Or where can I flee from your presence?” (Psalm 139:7). Here God’s Spirit is equated with His presence. This verse is what is known in hermeneutics as a doublet. The second part of the verse is a rephrasing of the first, a common occurrence in the Psalms. David in this passage is not contrasting the omnipresence of the Holy Spirit with that of God. He is saying through two rhetorical questions that he understands that it is impossible to flee from the presence of the one God, who is present in the human realm through His Spirit.

This perspective on the Holy Spirit is continued in the New Testament by Jesus: “And I will pray the Father, and he will give you another comforter [Jesus was the first], that he may abide with you forever, even the Spirit of truth” (John 14:16-17). Jesus is saying that through God’s Spirit God

² *Shekhinah Spirit: Divine Presence in Jewish and Christian Religion*, Michael E. Lodahl, 41-42.

³ *Shekhinah Spirit*.

Himself would abide (be present with) them forever as “the God of all comfort” (2 Cor. 1:3).

When Peter equates Ananias’ lie to the Holy Spirit with a lie to God (Acts 5:3-4), some theologians see this as an indication that Peter now recognizes the Holy Spirit as another person in the Godhead. In actuality, it only deepens the continuity of the teaching we’ve already discussed, for Peter is saying that lying to the Holy Spirit is lying to God because the Holy Spirit is God’s presence and interaction in our lives.

In both Testaments God’s Spirit is equated with power (Isa. 11:2; 1 Kings 1:35; 24:49).

Much of the confusion over the “personal” nature of the Holy Spirit can be defused by seeing God interacting with us through His Spirit rather than seeing another person in God.

As we read about the Holy Spirit in Scripture, we don’t find any of the separateness of being that we find between the Father and the Son. The Holy Spirit never converses with the Father or the Son — as they do with each other. There is no expression of love by the Holy Spirit towards Father or Son — as they clearly express for one another. The Holy Spirit is never worshiped or prayed to and bears no personal name. It is never included as a third party along with the Father and Son in any of the greetings from the apostles in their letters to the churches.

One theologian writes:

To ask whether in the New Testament the Spirit is a person in the modern sense of the word would be like asking whether the spirit of Elijah is a person. The Spirit of God is of course personal; it is God’s *dunamis* [power] in action. But the Holy Spirit is not a person, existing independently of God; it is a way of speaking about God’s personally acting in history, or of the risen Christ’s personally acting in the life of the Church. The New Testament (and indeed Patristic thought generally) nowhere represents the Spirit, any more than the wisdom of God, as having independent personality.⁴

Who Is the God of the Old Testament?

When Moses encountered God at the burning bush, he was given these instructions: “Thus you shall say to the children of Israel: ‘The LORD God of your fathers, the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob,

⁴ *The Theology of the New Testament*, “Introduction,” Richardson.

has sent me to you. This is my name forever, and this is my memorial to all generations” (Ex. 3:15).

Having seen the biblical evidence that the Father and Son are each independent beings and that the Holy Spirit is not, our next logical question to ask is, Did the Father or the Son say these words to Moses? The simplest way to answer this question is to search the Scriptures for such titles as “The God of our Fathers,” “The God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob,” and “The God of Israel” and see whether they are applied to the Father or the Son.

In Acts we find Peter making a couple of such references: “The God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, the God of our fathers, glorified his servant Jesus” (Acts 3:13). Here Peter makes it clear that Jesus was not the God of the Old Testament but that Jesus was glorified by the God of the Old Testament, whom corroborating texts show was the Father (John 13:31-32; 17:5).

Peter also said, “The God of our Fathers raised up Jesus whom you murdered by hanging on a tree” (Acts 5:30). Here, also, Peter shows his understanding that Jesus was not the God of the Old Testament but that Jesus was raised by the God of the Old Testament, whom other texts show was the Father (see Gal. 1:1 and Acts 2:24).

Paul corroborates Peter’s words: “The God of this people Israel . . . raised up for Israel a Savior — Jesus” (Acts 13:17, 23). Here Paul shows that he understood that the God of the Old Testament was someone other than Jesus, who was “raised up” by Him. John says that the Father was the one who sent the Son as Savior (1 John 4:14), thus “the God of this people Israel” must have been the Father.

Luke records Zacharias as saying: “Blessed is the Lord God of Israel, for he has visited and redeemed his people, and has raised up a horn of salvation [Jesus] for us in the house of his servant David” (Luke 1:68-69). Again we find a reference to Jesus being “raised up” (this time a reference to his birth) by the Lord God of Israel: someone other than himself. This, too, is clearly a reference to the Father (Psalm 89:19-27).

Jesus himself implied that it was his Father who was the God of the Old Testament when he said to the Jews: “If I honor myself, my honor is nothing. It is my Father who honors me, of whom you say that he is your God” (John 8:54). “But concerning the resurrection of the dead, have you not read what was spoken to you by God saying, ‘I am the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob’? God is not the God of the dead, but of the living” (Matt. 22:31-32). At no time did Jesus imply that he was the God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob: the God of Israel.

The above texts reveal that Jesus was not the God of the Old Testament, but was commissioned, raised up and glorified by his Father, who was.

We read in the book of Hebrews a statement that further confirms that the Father was the God of the Old Testament: “When God made a promise to Abraham [Gen. 22:16-17], because he could swear by no one greater, he swore by himself” (Heb. 6:13). This passage cannot be speaking of Jesus, for Jesus himself said, “My Father is greater than I” (John 14:28).

The Rock That Followed

Those who believe that Jesus was the God of the Old Testament like to cite these words of Paul to the church at Corinth: “Moreover, brethren, I do not want you to be unaware that our fathers were under the cloud, all passed through the sea, all were baptized into Moses in the cloud and in the sea, all ate the same spiritual food, and all drank the same spiritual drink. For they drank of that spiritual Rock that followed them, and that Rock was Christ” (1 Cor. 10:1-4).

This belief is well summarized in the following statement:

It is argued from this text that Christ personally accompanied the people of Israel as they journeyed through the wilderness to the promised land. To lend support to this theme, Deuteronomy 32:4 and Psalm 18:2 are cited because Yahweh (God) is there described as a Rock. It is reasoned that since God is the Rock and Christ is also the Rock who accompanied Israel, Christ must therefore be Yahweh or the God of the Old Testament.⁵

But a look at the context shows something different. Paul is contrasting the salvific acts of God in the history of Israel with Israel’s corresponding disobedience and disloyalty, a literary pattern he borrows from the Old Testament. Of this text one commentary says: “Chapter 10:1-5 is a midrashic elaboration of God’s gracious acts for Israel connected with the Exodus and the sojourn in the desert. Similar elaborations of the Exodus miracles (the cloud-pillar, the Red Sea crossing, the manna, and the water from the rock) are also found in Psalm 78; 106; Nehemiah 9:9-21; Wisdom of Solomon 11-19; and apocalyptic literature” (*Harper’s Bible Commentary*).

Paul’s summary statement in verse 11 of this discourse shows that he was speaking figuratively: “These things happened to them as prefigurative

⁵ “That Rock Was Christ,” John Cunningham, Restoration Fellowship, 1981.

historical events, and they were written down as a warning to us who are living in the last times” (1 Cor. 10:11, Jewish New Testament).

The Israelites’ passage through the Red Sea was a figure of baptism. The “spiritual food” of verse three was a reference to the manna and quail miraculously provided by God the Father for Israel, which was figurative of Christ (John 6:30-35).

The “spiritual drink” of verse four was a reference to the rock at Horeb, through which God the Father poured out water for Israel to drink, which was figurative of Christ, through whom God the Father poured out “living water” (the Holy Spirit; John 4:10-14; 7:37-39).

In all, three figures — physical objects and events — are mentioned by Paul as foreshadowing baptism and Christ: “That the food and drink in the wilderness are called spiritual (vs. 3-4) means that these physical objects were to be a means of grace to God’s people. They were typical of Christ — the true bread and drink to come” (*Expositor’s Bible Commentary*).

Paul’s “spiritual rock” is clearly to be found in the context of Israel’s wilderness journey. After the miracles of parting the Red Sea and feeding manna and quail to Israel came the miraculous quenching of Israel’s thirst through the rock at Horeb, a literal rock.

Remember that Paul is using the Midrashic elaboration of these events found in Psalm 78 and Nehemiah 9:9-21. In those texts the rock at Horeb is the third correlate. In an allegory the correlates must be consistent. The Red Sea, the manna and quail and the rock at Horeb are all physical objects figurative of spiritual things (that is, baptism and salvation through Jesus). It is inconsistent to say that the “spiritual rock” the Israelites drank from was a figurative title for the God of Israel that prefigured Christ. That would turn the whole allegory around.

The confusion surrounding this text comes from the phrase “for they drank of that spiritual Rock that followed them, and that Rock was Christ.”

The word “them,” as the Companion Bible points out, is not in the original Greek text. The word followed (Greek *akoloutheo*) usually implies accompaniment by another, such as a companion, and seems to indicate that Christ was the one following Israel through the wilderness.

Thus the translators capitalize “Rock,” correlating it with the Rock of Israel. But as we have seen this is an inconsistent correlation. In the book of Revelation we find that the word *akoloutheo* doesn’t always imply a person-to-person companionship: “And I looked, and behold a pale horse. And the name of him who sat on it was Death, and Hades followed [*akoloutheo*] with

him” (Rev. 6:8). In this case Hades accompanies Death, joining together destructive forces symbolized by a pale horse and its rider.

The Greek word *akoloutheo* literally means a union (*a*) in the road (*koloutheo*). In the Midrash discourse of 1 Corinthians 10, Paul uses *akoloutheo* to join together not people but events: the miraculous interventions of God on “the road” of Israel’s journeys. A clearer amplified translation of the text would be as follows: “For they drank of that spiritual rock (at Horeb) that followed (accompanied) and that rock (at Horeb, which was a conduit for pouring out water to Israel) was (figurative of) Christ (who was a conduit for the pouring out of the Holy Spirit).”

As we have already seen, the Father was the God of Israel, not Jesus. Four major texts in the Old Testament refer to God as “the Rock”: Deuteronomy 32:1-31; 2 Samuel 22:1-23:3; Psalm 18:1-46; and Psalm 78:1-35. In all four of these texts we find that the Rock or the Rock of Israel is also the Highest or the Most High. Jesus is nowhere in Scripture referred to as the Highest or the Most High. On the contrary, Luke tells us that Jesus is “the son of the Highest” (Luke 1:32, 35) and the “prophet of the Highest” (verse 76).

A Messianic prophecy recorded by Isaiah refers to Jesus as a stone (Greek *ehben*, a masonry stone; for example, see Dan. 2:45), not a Rock like God the Father (Greek *fsuwr*, rock or boulder; for example, Deut. 32:4): “Therefore thus says the Lord God: Behold I [the Rock of Israel] lay in Zion a stone [Jesus Messiah] for a foundation, a tried stone, a precious cornerstone, a sure foundation” (Isa. 28:16). The apostles Paul and Peter confirm that Jesus was this “stone” that God the Father laid in Zion (Rom. 9:33; 1 Peter 2:6-8).

In summary, Paul is not using this discourse to teach the Corinthians that Jesus was the God of the Old Testament, as some have tried to pull out of this context. Instead, it is clear that Paul was using a common Jewish literary device called a midrash, found in the Scriptures noted above, providing spiritual equivalents to baptism and Christ.

What is Said of God, and by God about Himself, in the Old Testament

Most people have never taken the time to identify and analyze the biblical texts referring to God. Yet this process — which is as easy as reading through the Bible and marking the texts in which God is spoken of or is speaking of Himself — will truly enlighten the reader. You will soon discover that much is said of God and by God that flies in the face of orthodox theology.

For instance, God the Father, the Rock of Israel, the God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob, 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'" (Exod. 3:14). Notice the singular pronouns used throughout this revelation to Moses. God does not say "WE ARE WHO WE ARE" or "I AM WHO WE ARE."

It's important to note that throughout the Bible God is referred to and refers to Himself in the singular more than 10,000 times! It's worth it to take the time to document this by highlighting such singular pronouns and statements.

Note the wording of the First Commandment: "And God spoke all these words saying, 'I am the LORD your God, who brought you out of the land of Egypt, out of the house of bondage. You shall have no other gods before Me'" (Exod. 20:1-3).

Speaking of God the Father, Moses says to the people of Israel: "Therefore know this day, and consider it in your heart, the Lord Himself is God in heaven above and on the earth beneath there is no other" (Deut. 4:39).

In the 32nd chapter of Deuteronomy, the Rock of Israel says of Himself: "Now see that I, even I, am He, and there is no God besides Me" (Deut. 32:39).

Throughout the book of Isaiah, God the Father speaks repeatedly of His singularity of being:

· "Understand that I am He: before Me there was no God formed, nor shall there be after Me. I, even I, am the LORD and besides me there is no Savior" (Isa. 43:10-11).

· "I am the first, and I am the last; beside me there is no God" (Isa. 44:6).

· "Is there a God besides me? Indeed there is no other Rock; I know not one" (Isa. 44:8).

· "I am the LORD who makes all things, who stretches out the heavens all alone, who spreads abroad the earth by Myself" (Isa. 44:24).

· "I am the LORD, and there is no other; there is no other God besides Me" (Isa. 45:5).

These are but a few of the oneness statements made of God or by God in the Old Testament. Does God the Father really mean it when He says He is alone, that besides Him there is no other God in heaven or on earth?

Haven't we been told that there are two or three who have always been God? Theologians would have us believe that God's revelation of Himself was progressive and that in the New Testament He would reveal there was more to Him than He had revealed to Israel. But two points must be considered if this is true:

· If God is indeed multipersonal, multifaceted or a family of two or more beings, then He was deceptive and disingenuous in the statements listed above that He made to Israel.

· We would not expect to find such statements of singularity of being to continue to be made in the New Testament about God or by God. Yet we do!

What is Said of God and by God about Himself in the New Testament?

Mark records the incident of a scribe asking Jesus “What is the first commandment of all?” Jesus answered him, “The first of all the commandments is ‘Hear, O Israel, the Lord our God, the Lord is one’” (Mark 12:28-29). The account continues with Jesus telling the scribe of the importance of loving God and neighbor. The scribe answers Jesus in verse 32: “Well said, Teacher. You have spoken the truth, for there is one God and there is no other but He” (a quote from Deut. 4:39). The scribe adds that loving God is more important than giving sacrifices. Jesus’ reaction to the man was positive: “So when Jesus saw that he answered wisely, He said to him, ‘You are not far from the Kingdom of God’” (Mark 12:32).

If God really is multipersonal, multifaceted or an eternal family of two (or more) beings, then why didn’t Jesus use this opportunity to complete this man’s understanding (and ours) of the “oneness of God”?

The fact is that such theological concepts of the oneness of God are not discussed by Jesus or his disciples anywhere in the New Testament. History shows that such ideas developed in later centuries through church councils.

Three times in the Gospel of John Jesus reinforces the Old Testament teaching that his Father is God alone:

· “How can you believe if you accept praise that comes from the only God?” (John 5:44).

· “And this is eternal life, that they may know you, the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom you have sent” (John 17:3).

· “I ascend unto my Father, and your Father, and to my God and your God” (John 20:17).

Paul continues this unbroken chain of creedal statements about the uniqueness of the Father as the one true God:

· “To the only wise God, through Jesus Christ, be the glory forever” (Rom. 16:27).

· “We know that an idol is nothing at all in the world and that there is no God but one . . . Yet for us there is but one God, the Father, and there is but one Lord Jesus Christ” (1 Cor. 8:4-7).

· “There is one body, . . . one Lord, one faith . . . one God and Father of all” (Eph. 4:4-6).

· “You turned to God from idols to serve the living and true God, and to wait for His Son . . .” (1 Thess. 1:9-10).

· “For there is one God, and one mediator also between God and men, the man Jesus Christ” (1 Tim. 2:5).

When we read about Jesus as the only begotten Son of God (John 1:14, 18; 3:18), no one questions the exclusivity of the statement; it’s universally accepted that Jesus is the one and only begotten Son of God. Therefore, when we see Jesus and the apostles using analogous phraseology (“the only God”) in reference to the Father, we should also accept the exclusivity of the Father as the only true God.

Jesus conveyed a sharp distinction between himself and the Father when he said: “For as the Father has life in himself so he has granted the Son to have life in himself” (John 5:26). “As the living Father sent me, and I live because of the Father, so he who feeds on me will live because of me” (John 6:57).

Paul corroborates this distinction, demonstrating that he understood the exclusiveness of the Father:

“God . . . who alone has immortality, dwelling in unapproachable light, whom no man has seen or can see, to whom be honor and everlasting power” (1 Tim. 6:13-16).

The consistency of these creedal statements in both Testaments — establishing and reinforcing the fundamental teaching that the Father is the only true God — must be the lens through which we view Christology and pneumatology.