

Background

You are no doubt aware that the expression 'the Holy Trinity' does not occur in the Bible. But this should not frighten us; neither do such words as 'substitution, sovereignty, providence or incarnation' – or the word 'Bible' for that matter. The important thing is to be sure that the doctrines conveyed by these words are scriptural. We must first ask, 'What do we mean when we say that we believe in the Holy Trinity?', and then satisfy ourselves that this meaning is in full accord with God's word.

Basically, we mean three things. We believe :

- (a) In the unity of the Godhead. That is, that there is one God, not three!
- (b) In the deity of the Father and of the Son and of the Spirit. That is, that each of the Three can be correctly described as 'God' in the fullest sense of the word.
- (c) That the Father, the Son and the Spirit are personally distinct. That is, that the Father is neither the Son nor the Spirit, and the Son is not the Spirit.¹

This evening our subject is that of the deity of the Lord Jesus – that He can be spoken of, not as 'a god' but, in the fullest sense of the word, as 'God'. Ever since New Testament days this statement has been attacked and challenged. Yet the evidence is overwhelming. This evening we will briefly consider eight forms of evidence.

Summary

1. Passages which directly assert the deity of the Lord Jesus
2. Passages which indirectly assert the deity of the Lord Jesus
3. Passages where divine titles and descriptions are attributed to the Lord Jesus
4. Passages which speak of the Lord Jesus being worshipped
5. Passages which record thanksgiving or prayer being addressed to the Lord Jesus
6. Passages which ascribe doxologies to the Lord Jesus
7. Passages which ascribe divine functions to the Lord Jesus
8. Passages in which the attributes, functions or prerogatives of the Father and the Son overlap

1. Passages which directly assert the deity of the Lord Jesus

We sang,

'His name, His name shall be called Wonderful
His name, His name shall be called Counsellor
The mighty God - The everlasting Father
The Prince of peace to all eternity

'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 Counsellor, the Mighty God, the Everlasting Father (literally 'the Father of eternity', probably meaning simply 'Eternal'²), **the Prince of Peace**', *Isaiah 9. 6*

And there can be no doubt as to the significance of the title 'the mighty God' because Isaiah uses it again in the very next chapter – of the Lord God Himself: 'such as have escaped of the house of Jacob will ...depend on the Lord, the Holy One of Israel ...The remnant will return, the remnant of Jacob, to the Mighty God', *Isa. 10. 20-21*³. We turn next to the commencement and the climax of John's gospel.

'In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God', *John 1. 1*

Without wishing to be technical, the sentence simply follows a regular rule of Greek grammar. The absence of the Greek definite article before the word 'God is required if the sentence is to read 'the word was God' – and not 'God was the word'.⁴

'He said to Thomas, Reach your finger here, and look at my hands; and reach your hand here, and put it into my side. Do not be unbelieving, but believing'. And Thomas (the concluding witness in the main section of the gospel) answered and said to Him, My Lord and my God!', *John 20. 27-28*⁵.

John has now gone full circle and brings us back to what he said in the opening of his gospel. There can be no doubt that these words of Thomas were addressed directly to Jesus. Thomas used both titles to express his understanding of Christ's deity and lordship – and Jesus did not rebuke Thomas for blasphemy. Instead, He accepted both titles.

'My brethren, my kinsmen according to the flesh ... whose are the fathers, and of whom as concerning the flesh Christ came, who is over all, God blessed forever. Amen', Romans 9. 3-5

And this is the only accurate translation. The phrase 'who is' is only used by Paul elsewhere to refer back to someone who has been mentioned in the preceding context. We can consider, for example, the very similar construction, 'The God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, *who is blessed forever*, knows that I am not lying', 2 Cor. 11. 31. And, from the same letter as our verse, note the similar construction in Romans 1. 25; they 'exchanged the truth of God for the lie, and worshipped and served the creature rather than the Creator, *who is blessed forever*. Amen'.

Back in chapter 1 the apostle had made the point that the Lord Jesus was descended from David 'according to the flesh', but that, in His higher nature, He is 'the Son of God' ... here he makes the point that the Lord Jesus was descended from the patriarchs 'according to the flesh', but that, in His higher nature, He is God over all, blessed forever.⁶

'Looking for the blessed hope and glorious appearing of our great God⁷ and Saviour Jesus Christ, who gave Himself for us, that He might redeem us', Titus 2. 13-14⁸.

Both Demetrius, a silversmith at Ephesus, and the Town Clerk there spoke of the Ephesians having a 'great goddess'; 'not only is this trade of ours in danger of falling into disrepute, but also the temple of the great goddess Diana may be despised and her magnificence destroyed ... Men of Ephesus, what man is there who does not know that the city of the Ephesians is temple guardian of the great goddess Diana', Acts 19. 27, 35. Yet the 'great goddess' of Ephesus (Diana; alias Artemis) had no real existence. But we *do* have a 'great God' – 'Jesus Christ'.

'Simon Peter, a bondservant and apostle of Jesus Christ, to those who have obtained like precious faith with us by the righteousness of our God and Saviour Jesus Christ', 2 Pet. 1. 1⁹

That is, Paul, Peter and John sing from the same sheet – uniting in calling Jesus 'God'.

2. Passages which indirectly assert the deity of the Lord Jesus

He began to rebuke the cities in which most of His mighty works had been done ... Woe to you, Chorazin! Woe to you, Bethsaida! For if the mighty works which were done in you had been done in Tyre and Sidon, they *would* have repented long ago in sackcloth and ashes ... And you, Capernaum, who are exalted to heaven, will be brought down to Hades; for if the mighty works which were done in you had been done in Sodom, it *would* have remained until this day', Matthew 11. 20-23

I note that the Lord Jesus *knew* that the acts of power which He had performed in the villages and towns of Galilee *would* have brought Tyre, Sidon and even Sodom to their knees in repentance; 'if the mighty works which were done in you had been done in Tyre and Sidon, *they would have repented* long ago in sackcloth and ashes ... if the mighty works which were done in you had been done in Sodom, *it would have remained until this day*', Matt. 11. 20-24. Our Lord does not say, 'If ... they *might* have', or 'if ... they *probably would* have', but 'If ... they *would* have'. Only God can say 'If' a certain thing happens then such and such will certainly follow. Do you remember the occasion in 1 Samuel 23 when 'Saul called all the people together for war, to go down to Keilah to besiege David and his men. When David knew that Saul plotted evil against him, he said to Abiathar the priest, Bring the ephod here. Then David said, O Lord God of Israel, your servant has certainly heard that Saul seeks to come to Keilah to destroy the city for my sake ... Will Saul come down, as your servant has heard? ... And the Lord said, He will come down. Then David said, Will the men of Keilah deliver me and my men into the hand of Saul? And the Lord said, They will deliver you. So David and his men, about six hundred, arose and departed from Keilah', 1 Sam. 23. 8-13. David never gave them the chance to betray him. We mere mortals can only guess what would happen 'if'. But Jesus wasn't guessing. This knowledge of Jesus surely speaks volumes about His divine status and identity.

'The Jews said to Him, You are not yet fifty years old, and have you seen Abraham? Jesus said to them, Most assuredly, I say to you, before Abraham was, I am'. Then they took up stones to throw at Him', John 8. 57-58

To have said, 'before Abraham, I was' would have been a claim to *pre-existence* – a claim such as the angel Gabriel could have made. Jesus, in fact, asserted His *eternal existence*; He is the great 'I am', Exod. 3. 14.¹⁰

'He said to him ... Simon, son of Jonah, do you love Me? He said to Him, Yes, Lord; you know that I love you. He said to him, Shepherd *my sheep*', John 21. 17, with, 'Shepherd *the flock of God* which is among you, serving as overseers, not by compulsion but willingly', 1 Pet. 5. 2

Those who Jesus describes as 'my sheep' to Peter, Peter calls 'the flock of God', 1 Pet. 5. 2.

‘Let this mind be in you which was also in Christ Jesus, who, being¹¹ in *the form of God*, did not consider it robbery to be equal with God’, *Philippians 2. 5-6*

The word translated ‘form’ here indicates *the characteristics, qualities and features which make something what it is*. That is, the ‘form’ of something corresponds to the inner nature and essence of something.¹²

That this is the sense in our verse is confirmed by the parallel expression in verse 7, ‘the form of a bond-servant’. Clearly those words mean, not that our Lord took on Him and assumed the outward appearance or shape of a bond-servant, but that He actually took on Him the attributes and characteristics of a bond-servant. He became what a bond-servant was – hence the subsequent mention of His ‘obedience’. Used here, in the immediate context of verse 7, the expression ‘form of God’ must therefore mean those qualities and attributes which distinguish God from all other beings – those qualities and attributes which make God to be God, and without which He would not be God.¹³

In other words, Paul is saying, the Lord Jesus was truly God, possessing all the essential characteristics and qualities which make God to be God.

‘In Him dwells *all the fullness of the Godhead* bodily’, *Colossians 2. 9*¹⁴

The very essence of God – the whole glorious total of all God is – Godhead in its absolute sense – abode in our Lord’s bodily form throughout His earthly life (for He gave up nothing of His deity when He became a man), and it continues in His present resurrected and glorified bodily form. That is, the fullness of deity permanently resides in Him.

‘Jesus Christ is *the same yesterday, today, and forever*’, *Hebrews 13. 8*

Separately, we might also think of **the authority** with which He spoke.¹⁵ It is almost impossible to exaggerate the change in tone and atmosphere between the last book of the OT and the first in the NT – from the prophecy of Malachi – in which – within the space of just four chapters – the prophet declared his ‘Thus says *the Lord*’ *no less than 25 times* – to the gospel of Matthew in which Jesus alone declared His distinctive ‘I say unto you’ *over 55 times*. Make no mistake: the prophets spoke *for* God, but He spoke *as* God.¹⁶

3. Passages where divine titles and descriptions are attributed to the Lord Jesus

In the time available, we can afford a ‘taster’ only. But, in each case, there can be no doubt about whom the verse or section speaks.

Old Testament

The Lord (Jehovah) :

Psalm 34. 8 with 1 Peter 2. 3-4

Psalm 68. 18 with Ephesians 4. 8

First, Psa. 68. 17-18. ‘The chariots of God are twenty thousand, even thousands of thousands; the Lord is among them as in Sinai, in the Holy Place. You have ascended on high, you have led captivity captive; you have received gifts among men’.

Now, Eph. 4. 7-9 – ‘to each one of us grace was given according to the measure of Christ’s gift. Therefore He says: When He ascended on high, He led captivity captive, And gave gifts to men’ – and there can be no doubt about whom it is speaking for Paul immediately adds, ‘Now this, He ascended, what does it mean but that He also first descended into the lower parts of the earth? He who descended is also the One who ascended far above all the heavens’.

Psalm 97. 7 with Hebrews 1. 6

Psalm 102. 25-27 with Hebrews 1. 10-12

First, Psalm 102 – which opens with David’s words, ‘To you, O Lord, I will sing praises’, v. 1. Verses 25 to 27 read, ‘Of old you laid the foundation of the earth, and the heavens are the work of your hands. 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.

But you are the same, and your years will have no end', Psa. 102. 25-27. Well, there can be no doubt to whom those words are addressed.

But now listen to the writer to the Hebrews, 'of the angels He says: Who makes His angels spirits and His ministers a flame of fire. But to the Son He says ... 'You, Lord, in the beginning laid the foundation of the earth, and the heavens are the work of your hands. They will perish, but you remain. And they will all grow old like a garment; like a cloak you will fold them up, and they will be changed. But you are the same, and your years will not fail', Heb. 1. 7-8, 10-12. It hits you between the eyes, doesn't it. Angels are 'made', but the Son makes!

Isaiah 40. 3 and Malachi 3. 1 with Matthew 3. 3 and Mark 1. 1-3

First, 'Comfort, yes, comfort my people!, says your God ... The voice of one crying in the wilderness: Prepare the way of the Lord; make straight in the desert a highway for our God', Isa. 40. 1, 3.

Now, 'The beginning of the gospel of Jesus Christ, the Son of God. As it is written in the Prophets: Behold, I send my messenger before your face, who will prepare your way before you. The voice of one crying in the wilderness: Prepare the way of the Lord; make *His paths straight*', *Mark 1. 1-3*. There is no missing the point is there!

Isaiah 45. 23 with Phil. 2. 10-11

First, 'I am the Lord, and there is no other, besides me there is no God ... I am the Lord, and there is no other ... There is no other God ... there is no other god besides me, a righteous God and a Saviour; there is none besides me ... I am God, and there is no other. By myself I have sworn ... To me every knee shall bow, every tongue shall swear', Isa. 45. 6, 6, 14, 21-23. You can hardly miss the point! There is no other god! And to the Lord, the only God, every knee is to bow and every tongue to swear allegiance.

Listen now to Phil. 2. 9-10, 'God also has highly exalted Him and given Him the name which is above every name, that in the name of Jesus every knee should bow ... and every tongue should confess (acknowledge) that Jesus Christ is Lord'.

Jeremiah 17. 10 with Revelation 2. 23

First, 'The heart is deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked: who can know it? I the Lord search the heart, I try the reins, even to give every man according to his ways, and according to the fruit of his doings', Jer. 17. 9-10.

Now the words of 'the Son of God' to the church at Thyatira, 'all the churches shall know that I am he which searches the reins and hearts: and I will give unto every one of you according to your works', Rev. 2. 23.

Joel 2. 32 with Romans 10. 13 (with verse 9¹⁷)

God (Elohim) : *Psalm 45. 6-7 with Hebrews 1. 8-9¹⁸*

The Lord of hosts :

Isaiah 6. 1-3, 9-10 with John 12. 37-41

First, Isaiah 6. 'In the year that King Uzziah died, I saw the (sovereign) Lord sitting on a throne, high and lifted up, and the train of His robe filled the temple. Above it stood seraphim; each one had six wings: with two he covered his face, with two he covered his feet, and with two he flew. And one cried to another and said: Holy, holy, holy is the Lord of hosts; the whole earth is full of His glory! ... And I heard the voice of the Lord, saying: Whom shall I send, And who will go for us (note that 'us!)? Then I (Isaiah) said, Here am I! Send me. And He said, Go ... make the heart of this people dull ... lest they see with their eyes ... and understand with their heart, and return and be healed', Isa. 6. 1-10.

Then, John 12. 'These things Jesus spoke ... but although He had done so many signs before them, they did not believe in Him, that the word of Isaiah the prophet might be fulfilled, which he spoke ... 'He has blinded their eyes and hardened their hearts, Lest they should see with their eyes, Lest they should understand with their hearts and turn, So that I should heal them', John 12. 36-40. Well, that is clear enough. But then John adds, 'These things Isaiah said when he saw *His* glory (the glory of the 'Jesus' who had 'done so many signs') and spoke of *Him* (the Lord Jesus', v. 41. In other words, John identifies the Lord of hosts who Isaiah had seen on His lofty throne, arrayed in His heavenly robe, as none other than the One now known as Jesus. Just think – when the Lord of hosts came

into our world to be the Man of Sorrows, He exchanged that lofty throne for an animals' dirty feeding trough and exchanged that royal robe for swaddling clothes!

Isaiah 8. 12-13 with 1 Peter 3. 14-15, and Isaiah 8. 14 with 1 Peter 2. 7-8

First, Isaiah 8. 'Fear not their fear, and do not dread. Sanctify the Lord of hosts (set Him apart, give Him His right place); and let Him be your fear, and let Him be your dread. And He will be for ... a stone of stumbling, and for a rock of offence', Isa. 8. 12-14.

Now, 1 Peter – starting with chapter 3 verses 14 and 15, 'be not afraid of their fear, neither be troubled; but sanctify Christ as Lord in your hearts' – and then going back to chapter 2 verses 7 and 8, 'to you who believe, He (the Lord Jesus) is precious; but to those who disbelieve ... a stone of stumbling and a rock of offence'. No doubt there either, the Lord of hosts of Isaiah 8 is the Lord Jesus Christ of 1 Peter.

The First and the Last : *Isaiah 41. 4; 44. 6 and 48. 12 with Revelation 1. 17; 2. 8 and 22. 13*

The Lord God is called 'the First and the Last' three times in the Old Testament – always in Isaiah – and the Lord Jesus is called 'the First and the Last' three times in the New Testament – always in the book of the Revelation. So, for example, Isaiah 44. 6 reads, 'Thus says the Lord, the King of Israel, and his Redeemer, the Lord of hosts: 'I am the First and I am the Last; besides me there is no God', and Rev. 1. 17, 'Fear not; I am the First and the Last, the living one, and I became dead, and behold, I am alive for evermore'.

The Ancient of days : *Daniel 7. 9 with Revelation 1. 13-15*

The Same' : *Psalm 102. 27 with Hebrews 1. 12¹⁹*

The Rock : *Deuteronomy 32. 4, 15, 18, 30, 31 with 1 Corinthians 10. 4*

In 1 Corinthians 10. 4, Paul wrote that, during the nation of Israel's wandering in the wilderness, they 'all drank the same spiritual drink. For they drank of that spiritual Rock that followed them, and that Rock was Christ'. In that verse, Paul was giving the word 'rock' a double meaning. There can be no doubt that, in part, he had in mind the fact that the water which God gave Israel to drink had (on at least two occasions) come quite literally from a rock, Exod. 17. 1-7; Num. 20. 1-13. But, by playing on the word, he switched the meaning *from a literal rock to a well-known title of God Himself – 'the Rock'*. And it is worth noting that this particular title of God occurs no less than five times in Deuteronomy 32. I suggest that 'the Rock' was a particularly appropriate divine title for God to reveal Himself by in the wilderness – conveying, as it did, ideas of stability, immutability and faithfulness, and standing in stark contrast to Israel's own fickleness and faithlessness at the time. It was Christ, Paul asserted, who accompanied Israel through the wilderness. It was, Paul was clearly saying, Christ who constantly provided them with water to drink ... it was Christ who was their true source of refreshment for 40 years. Such a passage speaks volumes about Paul's convictions concerning the deity of the Lord Jesus.

Let us turn for a few moments to the **New Testament**

Alpha and Omega : *Revelation 1. 8 and 21. 6 with Revelation 22. 13*

First, Revelation 1. 8. 'I am the Alpha and the Omega, says the Lord God, who is and who was and who is to come, the Almighty'. And then Revelation 21. 5-7, 'He who sat upon the throne said, Behold, I make all things new ... I am the Alpha and the Omega, the Beginning and the End ... he who overcomes shall inherit all things, and I will be his God'. But in the very next chapter we read, 'Behold, I am coming quickly, and my reward is with me²⁰, to give to every one according to his work. I am the Alpha and the Omega, the Beginning and the End', Rev. 22. 12-13. And there can be no doubt as to the identity of the One who 'is coming quickly', for verse 20 reads, 'He who testifies to these things says, Surely I am coming quickly. Amen'. To which John's immediate response is, 'Even so, come, Lord Jesus!'

This title expresses the eternal nature of God - the source and goal of all creation. No created being could ever assume this title for himself.

King of Kings and Lord of Lords : *1 Timothy 6. 15 with Revelation 17. 14 and 19. 16*

4. Passages which speak of the Lord Jesus being worshipped – which worship he never rejected!

'The eleven disciples went away into Galilee, to the mountain which Jesus had appointed for them. When they saw Him, they worshipped Him', Matthew 28. 16-17

It is interesting to note the use of the word 'worship' in Luke's gospel; it only occurs in Luke 4. 7, 8 and 24. 52 :

'Jesus answered and said to him, "Get behind Me, Satan! For it is written, 'You shall worship the Lord your God, and Him only you shall serve', Luke 4. 7-8, with 'While He blessed them, that He was parted from them and carried up into heaven. And they worshiped Him, and returned to Jerusalem with great joy', Luke 24. 51-52

'When He again brings the firstborn into the world, He says: Let all the angels of God worship Him', Hebrews 1. 6, with 'I fell down to worship before the feet of the angel who showed me these things. Then he said to me, See that you do not do that. For I am your fellow servant ... worship God', Revelation 22. 8-9

Revelation 22. 8-9 was the second time that John had attempted to worship an angel. We read in chapter 19 how that when he there fell at the feet of an angel to worship him, the angel responded in similar words, 'See that you do not do that! I am your fellow servant, and of your brethren who have the testimony of Jesus. Worship God!' Angels are not *worshipped*; they *worship*. And the words of Hebrews 1 are reasonably clear – that at our Lord's second advent, all God's angels will be commanded to pay Him worship.

Note the sevenfold ascription of praise by the angels to the Lamb, Revelation 5. 11-12, no less than their ascription of praise to God, Revelation 7. 11-12

Let us take chapter 7 first. 'All the angels stood around the throne and the elders and the four living creatures, and fell on their faces before the throne and worshipped God, saying: Amen! Blessing and glory and wisdom, thanksgiving and honour and power and strength, be to our God forever and ever. Amen', Rev. 7. 11-12. You will note the seven elements to their worship – to their 'full and perfect' praise. But back in chapter 5 we read, 'I heard the voice of many angels around the throne and the living creatures and the elders ...saying with a loud voice: Worthy is the Lamb who was slain to receive power and riches and wisdom, and strength and honour and glory and blessing!', Rev. 5. 11-12. Again seven elements to their thunderous worship. What does this say about the angel's esteem for the Lamb. The more so given that they are in no doubt who can and who cannot be worshipped!

And I note that, following the angel's outburst in verses 11-12, we read, 'every creature which is in heaven and on the earth and under the earth and such as are in the sea, and all that are in them, I heard saying: Blessing and honour and glory and power be to Him who sits on the throne and to the Lamb, forever and ever!' Did you catch that phrase 'and every creature'? Every created being joins in the worship – 'Him who sits on the throne and to the Lamb'!²¹ Certainly then the Lamb is no 'creature'.

5. Passages which record thanksgiving or prayer being addressed to the Lord Jesus²²

I don't need to say much about this. The passages largely speak for themselves.

'I thank Christ Jesus our Lord who has enabled me, because He counted me faithful, putting me into the ministry, although I was formerly a blasphemer, a persecutor, and an insolent man; but I obtained mercy because I did it ignorantly in unbelief', 1 Timothy 1. 12-13

'They stoned Stephen, calling, and saying, Lord Jesus, receive my spirit. And he kneeled down, and cried with a loud voice, Lord, lay not this sin to their charge', Acts 7. 59-60

Did Stephen have in mind the Lord Jesus' own prayers when He was about to die? – 'Then Jesus said, Father, *forgive them*, for they do not know what they do', and 'when Jesus had cried out with a loud voice, He said, Father, 'into your hands *I commit My spirit*', Luke 23. 34, 46.

'A thorn in the flesh was given to me, a messenger of Satan to buffet me, lest I be exalted above measure. Concerning this thing I pleaded with *the Lord* three times that it might depart from me. And He said to me, My grace is sufficient for you, for *my power* is made perfect in weakness. Therefore most gladly I will rather boast in my infirmities, that *the power of Christ* may rest upon me', 2 Corinthians 12. 7-9

I note that 'the Lord' to whom Paul prayed must have been Jesus because His 'my power' is described by Paul as 'the power of Christ'.

'Now may our God and Father Himself, and our Lord Jesus Christ, direct our way to you. And may the Lord make you increase and abound in love to one another and to all', 1 Thessalonians 3. 11-12

'Now may the Lord direct your hearts into the love of God ... Now may the Lord of peace Himself give you peace always in every way', 2 Thessalonians 3. 5, 16²³

6. Passages which ascribe doxologies to the Lord Jesus

A 'doxology' is a formula of praise to God. One well-known example would be : 'Now to the King eternal, immortal, invisible, the only God, be honour and glory for ever and ever. Amen', 1 Tim. 1. 17.

But as you can see, the apostles Paul, Peter and John were happy to assign doxologies, not only to God the Father, but to the Lord Jesus.

'And the Lord will deliver me from every evil work and preserve me for His heavenly kingdom. To Him be glory forever and ever. Amen!', 2 Timothy 4. 18

'Grow in the grace and knowledge of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ. To Him be the glory both now and forever. Amen', 2 Peter 3. 18

'To Him who loved us and washed us from our sins in His own blood, and has made us a kingdom and priests to His God and Father, to Him be glory and dominion forever and ever. Amen', Revelation 1. 5-6

7. Passages which attribute divine functions to the Lord Jesus

I do not refer to our Lord's miracles, because any man can perform miracles with divinely communicated power.

I refer to such works as belong exclusively to God – such as :

(a) creation, John 1. 3; Colossians. 1. 16; Hebrews 1. 2

'He is the image of the invisible God, the firstborn over all creation. Because in Him (that is, 'in the power of His person') all things were created, in heaven and on earth, visible and invisible, whether thrones, or lordships, or principalities, or authorities. All things were created through Him and for Him' Col. 1. 17.

We need to be clear that, when Paul says of our Lord that He is 'the firstborn of all creation', he does not mean that our Lord is first in time or rank *among* created beings. Apart from any other factors, that should be clear because of how Paul expands on the statement – 'Because in Him all things were created ... all things were created through Him and for Him'.

The word translated 'firstborn' has several shades of meaning. As you can imagine, its original meaning was 'first to be born'.²⁴ But, because the eldest son in the house was given the first place, it took on the meaning 'first in place or honour'; see Gen. 27. 1; 43. 33. For this reason, Jews were forbidden to give the 'right of the firstborn' and to make 'firstborn' any subsequent sons, Deut. 21. 16-17.

Ideas of birth and priority of time are often absent from the word altogether. For example, Job 18. 13 speaks of the 'firstborn of death' – describing the most destructive and fatal of diseases – a disease which excels all others. Isaiah 14. 30 speaks of the 'firstborn of the poor' – meaning the poorest of men, those who are preeminent in poverty. When Israel/Ephraim is spoken of as God's 'firstborn', Exod. 4. 22; Jer. 31. 9, this denotes Israel's privileged and special position among the nations.

In many contexts therefore any reference to birth is overshadowed by the idea of that which excels, of preeminence and special position – of superiority and priority rather than origin or birth. The word is used, for example, of Messiah; 'I will make him my firstborn', God says, 'the highest of the kings of the earth', Psa. 89. 27.²⁵ Paul is telling us that our Lord stands supreme and sovereign over all creation – the One to whom belongs the right and dignity of the 'firstborn' in relation to every creature. The following verse provides the justification for His position and title.²⁶ He is the Creator!

As the apostle John wrote, 'All things were made through Him, and without Him nothing was made that was made', John 1. 3. That is comprehensive enough.

(b) providence and preservation, Colossians. 1. 17; Hebrews 1. 3

Scripture says that, 'He is before all things, and in Him all things consist', Col. 1. 17, and 'upholding all things by the word of His power', Heb. 1. 3.

Our Lord is responsible for all order, unity and cohesion in the universe. He makes it a cosmos and keeps it from becoming a chaos! He sustains and upholds it all – every last star. He holds it all together. Apart from Him it would simply disintegrate and sink into oblivion.

(c) knowing and trying ‘the reins and hearts’ of men, John 2. 24-25 and Revelation 2. 23 (with 2 Chronicles 6. 30 and Jeremiah 11. 20)

First, the prayer of Solomon at the dedication of the Temple, ‘Hear from heaven your dwelling place, and forgive, and give to everyone according to all his ways, whose heart you know - for you alone know the hearts of the sons of men’, 2 Chron. 6. 30 – note that ‘you alone know’.

Then hear what John says at the close of chapter 2 of his gospel, ‘Jesus did not commit Himself to them, because He knew all men, and had no need that anyone should testify of man, for He knew what was in man’, John 2. 24-25.

Again, as we noted earlier, we can hear the words of Jeremiah 11. 20, ‘You, O Lord of hosts, judge righteously, who tries the reins and the heart’.

And then listen to the Lord Jesus in Revelation 2. 23, ‘all the churches shall know that I am He who searches the reins and the hearts’.

and

(d) the final raising of the dead and settling of men’s eternal destinies, John 5. 21-29

‘As the Father raises the dead and gives life to them, even so the Son gives life to whom He will. For the Father judges no one, but has committed all judgment to the Son, that all should honour the Son just as they honour the Father. He who does not honour the Son does not honour the Father who sent Him. Most assuredly, I say to you, he who hears my word and believes Him who sent me has everlasting life, and shall not come into judgment, but has passed from death into life ... the Father ... has given (the Son) authority to execute judgment also, because He is the Son of Man ... the hour is coming in which all who are in the graves will hear His voice and come forth’, John 5. 21-29.

I might add divine prerogatives such as *forgiving sins*. I recall the words of God Himself through Isaiah, ‘I, even I, am He who blots out your transgressions for my own sake; And I will not remember your sins’, Isa. 43. 25, and ‘I have blotted out, like a thick cloud, your transgressions, and like a cloud, your sins’, Isa. 44. 22. and then I read in Mark 2, ‘When Jesus saw their faith, He said to the paralytic, Son, your sins are forgiven you. And some of the scribes were sitting there and reasoning in their hearts, Why does this Man speak blasphemies like this? Who can forgive sins but God alone?’, Mark 2. 5-7.

Josh McDowell wrote, ‘One day in a philosophy class, answering a question about the deity of Christ, I quoted the verses from Mark 2. A graduate assistant challenged my conclusion that Christ’s forgiveness demonstrated His deity. He said that he could forgive someone, but that wouldn’t demonstrate he was claiming to be God. As I thought about what the graduate assistant was saying, it struck me why the religious leaders reacted against Christ. Yes, one can say, “I forgive you”, but that *can be done only by the person who was sinned against*. In other words, if you sin against me, I can say, “I forgive you”. But that wasn’t what Christ was doing. The paralytic had sinned against God ... and ... Jesus ... said, “Your sins are forgiven”. Certainly we can forgive injuries committed against us, but in no way can anyone forgive sins committed against God except God Himself. But that is what Jesus did’.

8. Passages in which the attributes, functions or prerogatives of the Father and the Son overlap

This is a sample only.

- **Eleven of Paul’s thirteen letters open with *salutations* which speak of God the Father and the Lord Jesus as the joint source of ‘grace and peace’, e.g. Romans 1. 7, or of ‘grace, mercy and peace’, e.g. 1 Timothy 1. 2. •Paul attributes his *apostolic commission* to both the Father and the Lord Jesus, Galatians 1. 1, and regards himself and his associates as *bondservants* of both God, Titus 1. 1, and of The Lord Jesus, Philippians 1. 1. And he *charges* Timothy in the sight of God the Father and the Lord Jesus to fulfill his ministry, e.g. 1 Timothy 5. 21.**
- **The apostle uses a number of *the same titles* for both the Father and the Lord Jesus. The Father is the God of peace; the Lord Jesus is the Lord of peace, 1 Thessalonians 5. 23; 2 Thessalonians 3. 16. The Father is the God of hope, Romans 15. 13; Christ Jesus is our hope, 1 Timothy 1. 1. Both God and the Lord Jesus are spoken of as ‘Saviour’, e.g. 1 Timothy 2. 3; 2 Timothy 1. 10.**
- **The object of the Christian’s faith is said to be God the Father, e.g. Romans 4. 5, and the Lord Jesus, e.g. Romans 9. 33. Believers are beloved by God, 1 Thessalonians 1. 4, and by the Lord Jesus, 2 Thessalonians 2. 13.**
- **Paul identifies the Thessalonian church as ‘in God the Father and the Lord Jesus Christ’, 1 Thessalonians 1. 1. He speaks of ‘the churches of God’, 1 Corinthians 11. 16, and of ‘the churches of Christ’, Romans 16. 16.**

- **We read of 'the kingdom of God and Christ', *Ephesians 5. 5*. Eternal encouragement and good hope are attributed mutually to the Lord Jesus Christ and to God the Father, *2 Thessalonians 2. 16*.**
- **The Lord Jesus taught that the honour due to the Father is due to Him equally, *John 5. 22-23*, and linked Himself with the Father in an intimate 'we' when speaking of coming and abiding with any one who loved Him and kept His word, *John 14. 23*.**
- **Scripture speaks of 'the throne (singular) of God and of the Lamb', *Revelation 22. 3*.**

Endnotes

¹ Matt. 28.18-20 provides a good starting point because the concise statement of verse 19 provides us with our Lord's own authority for all three claims. We overhear Him giving marching orders to His disciples. He speaks of the authority ('power') that is His and of the task that is theirs ('Go ye therefore, and'). Happily for them He links the two with the promise that 'I (who have the power) am with you (who have the task)'. He speaks concerning the duty to baptize all disciples 'in the name'. This meant that converts were enlisted into the service of the Triune God. The Jews circumcised their children and proselytes 'in the name of the covenant'; that is, they were brought under the control of the covenant. 'Baptized unto Moses', 1 Cor. 10.2, means baptized to the leadership of Moses. Christian converts therefore came under the control of, and became the property of, the Holy Trinity.

Let us consider what Jesus meant by 'the name'. An Israelite did not regard a name as a mere label or means of identification. A name expressed the innermost being of its bearer. It stood for the person himself - see 1 Sam. 25.25, 'as his name is, so is he'. ('Nabal' means 'folly'). For this reason the O.T. frequently draws attention to the significance of names - e.g. Gen. 3.20 (Eve = living), 4.1 (Cain = gotten), 5.29 (Noah = rest, comfort), 17.17-19 (Isaac = laughter). A name signified not so much who a person was as what he was. The Being of God likewise found expression in His Name. Often 'the Name' stood for God Himself; see Prov. 18.10 and Isa. 30.27. Preeminently 'the Name' signified 'Jehovah': 'this glorious and fearful name, Jehovah thy God', Deut. 28.58. In the later Hellenistic period (when Jews ceased to use the word 'Jehovah', out of a curious mixture of reverence and superstition) 'the Name' became one of the popular substitutes. When Jesus said 'I have manifested Thy name', John 17.6, He meant much the same as 'he hath declared him', John 1.18.

There is no mistaking the implication of His words in Matt. 20.19.

- (a) It is 'the name' - not 'the names'. The one Name embraces the Three Persons. This emphasizes the divine unity. There are not three separate Beings.
- (b) 'Of the Father ...'. All Three are combined within the bounds of the one divine Name. The Three can be correctly described by the single 'name'; which was the equivalent of God.
- (c) The repeated definite article - 'the' - emphasizes the distinction of the Persons. The Three are not passing phases or modes of one Person. There are Three.

The Lord therefore must be understood as enlarging the name YHWH into that of 'the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit'. YHWH was now to be known by this new Name. Jesus identified the Lord God of Israel with the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit, and, in so doing ascribed a Threefold personality to YHWH.

A gospel which more-or-less commences with a manifestation of the Trinity (at the banks of Jordan, Matt, 3.16,17), closes with a clear statement of the doctrine of the Trinity.

We find references to the Holy Trinity scattered throughout the N.T. The very first Christian sermon was climaxed by reference to the name of Jesus, the gift of the Holy Spirit, and the call of the Lord God, Acts 2.38,39.

We find :

- | | | |
|-----------------------------------|--------------------|---|
| (a) <i>A salutation.</i> | Rev. 1.4,5. | 'Him which is ... the seven Spirits ... Jesus Christ'. |
| (b) <i>A greeting.</i> | 1 Pet.1.2. | 'foreknowledge of God the Father ... sanctification of the Spirit ... blood of Jesus Christ'. |
| (c) <i>A thanksgiving.</i> | 2. Thess. 2.13,14. | 'God chose ... sanctification of the Spirit ... glory of our Lord Jesus Christ'. |
| (d) <i>A prayer.</i> | Eph. 3.14-17. | 'the Father ... power through his Spirit ... Christ dwell'. |
| Doctrines :- | | |
| (e) <i>Salvation announced.</i> | Heb. 2.3,4. | 'The Lord ... God also ... gifts of the Holy Spirit'. |
| (f) <i>Salvation experienced.</i> | Tit. 3.4-6. | 'kindness and love of God ... renewing of the Holy Spirit ... through Jesus Christ'. |
| (g) <i>Salvation enjoyed.</i> | Rom.5.5, 6. | 'love of God ... through the Holy Spirit ... Christ died'. |
| (h) <i>Access.</i> | Eph.2.12. | 'through him (Christ)... one Spirit ... to the Father'. |
| (i) <i>Apostasy.</i> | Heb. 6.4-6. | 'partakers of Holy Spirit ... word of God ... crucify the Son of God'. |
| (j) <i>Unity.</i> | Eph.4.4-6. | 'one Spirit ... one Lord ... one God and Father'. |
| (k) <i>Spiritual Gifts.</i> | 1 Cor.12.4-6. | 'one Spirit ... one Lord ... one God'. |
| (l) <i>Practical exhortation.</i> | Jude 20,21. | 'Praying in the Holy Spirit ... love of God ... mercy of our Lord Jesus Christ'. |
| (m) <i>A doxology.</i> | 2 Cor,13,14. | 'the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, the love of God ... the fellowship of the Holy Spirit'. |

Note also the structure of sections of scripture:

(n) Eph.1.3-14. This passage is divided into three by the expression 'praise of (his) glory'. We find election and acceptance by the Father in verses 3-6 – redemption and forgiveness through Christ in verses 7-12 – and the seal and earnest of the Spirit in verses 13-14.

(o) In Heb. 1.5 God speaks; in Heb.2.12 the Son speaks; in Heb. 3.7 the Spirit speaks.

(p) Rom.1.1-3.20 deals with the wrath of God; Rom. 3.21-7.24 with the work of Christ and 8.1-39 with the witness of the Spirit and life in the Spirit.

Note:

(i) the variety of authors covered by (a) to (p).

(ii) the unstudied and natural way in which the threefold pattern is introduced.

(iii) the varying sequence e.g. (n) follows Matt.28.19 but (k) reverses the order. (m) puts the Son before the Father than the Spirit but (l) reverses this. (a) puts the Father before the Spirit then Christ but (h) reverses this. That is, the N.T. offers examples of every possible combination. The apostolic writers clearly did not feel compelled to follow the order 'Father Son and Spirit'. In their Being all Three Persons are co-equal.

Consider the many things affirmed of the Triune God:

	Father	Son	Spirit
Glory (Acts 7.2)	Eph.1.17	1 Cor.2.8	1 Pet.4.14
Love	John 16.27	Eph.3.19	Rom.15.30
Will	1 Tim.2.4	John 17.24	1 Cor.12.11
Invitation	Isa. 1.18	Matt. 11.28	Rev. 22.17
	(Come ... reason)	(Come ... rest)	(Come ... refresh)
Quickening	1 Tim.6.13	John 5.21	2 Cor.3.6
Justifying	Rom. 8.33	Acts 13.39	1 Cor. 6.11
Sanctifying	Jude 1 (by)	1 Cor.1.2(in)	1 Pet.1.2(of)
Indwelling	2 Cor.6.16	Eph. 3.17	John 14.17
The source of joy	Rom. 5.11	Phil. 4.1	1 Thess.1.6
Known by Christians	1 John 2.13	1 John 2.3	1 John 4.6
Shedding	Tit.3.6	Matt.26.28	Rom. 5.5

Clearly the N.T. is permeated by Trinitarian teaching.

10. What about the Old Testament? We do not find such a full revelation of the Holy Trinity in the O.T. Nevertheless we can confidently assert two things :

(a) At no time is the O.T. inconsistent with the later full-orbed teaching of the N.T. For example, Deut.6.4 used a Hebrew word for 'one' which can (and often does) include the idea of plurality in unity. See e.g. Gen. 2.24, Ezk.37.17, Judges 21.6, Numb.13.23. The idea can be that of 'one made up of more than one'.

(b) There are several clear anticipations of the doctrine. Apart from indications of the deity of the Messiah (Isa. 9.6; Zech. 13.7; Mic. 5.2) and the Spirit (2 Sam 23.2,3; Psa. 139.7; Job 26.13; Psa. 104.30), there are phenomena such as the famous 'us' passages (Gen. 1.26; 3.22; 11.7; Isa. 6.8) and texts such as Isa. 48.16.

Too early a declaration of the Triune divine Being would have been fraught with danger. Israel manifested a constant tendency to idolatry and polytheism. It was essential therefore to fix in their minds first that there was no true God except one before the full revelation of the Trinity could be given safely - without it being open to misunderstanding and misinterpretation.

² Compare other names formed with word 'father': *Abi-albon*, 'father of strength' = 'strong' (2 Sam. 23. 31); *Abiasaph*, 'father of gathering' = 'gatherer' (Ex. 6. 24); *Abigail*, a woman's name(!), 'father of exultation' = 'exulting' (1 Chron. 2. 16).

³ Indeed, the title 'the Mighty God' ('*El gibbor*') was a common title for God; Deut. 10. 17; Neh. 9. 32; Psa. 24. 8; Jer. 32. 18.

⁴ The final clause of the opening verse of John's gospel provides us with an example of what is known in grammar as a predicate nominative construction. That is, we have a noun, the subject of the clause – 'the Word'. We have an 'equative' verb – 'was'. And we have another noun, in the same case or form as the subject, which is called the nominative case – 'God'.

In Greek the order in which words appear is not nearly as important as it is in English. The Greeks had no problem putting the subject of a sentence, or its main verb, further down the sentence than we would. Just because one word comes before another in Greek does not necessarily have any significance.

If we followed the order of the Greek words, we would render the final clause 'God was the Word'. But in English, we put the subject first, and the predicate nominative later. The Greeks used the article to communicate to us which word is the subject, and which is the predicate. If one of the two nouns has the article, it is the subject. The noun in the predicate carried no article – it was 'anarthrous'. In John 1. 1, 'Word' has the article, even though it comes after 'God', and is therefore the subject. That is why the last phrase is translated 'the Word was God' rather than 'God was the Word'.

If both of the nouns in a predicate nominative construction like this one have the article, or if both lack the article, the two nouns become interchangeable. That is, John would be saying both that 'God was the Word' and 'the Word was God'. That is, he would be equating all of God with all of the Word. 'God' and 'Word' would be interchangeable and equal terms – and John would have saying that the Word was completely identical with God, which is, of course, not so – for the Word was also 'with God'.

In brief, if John had placed the article before 'God', he would have been making 'God' and the 'Word' equal and interchangeable terms. But since 'Word' has the article preceding it, it is clearly marked out as the subject. The sentence simply follows a regular rule of Greek grammar, and the absence of the definite article merely indicates that 'God' is the predicate rather than the subject of the sentence.

Other passages using the Greek word for 'God' without the definite article in a similar construction are always rendered 'God': e.g. Mark 12 .27; Luke 20. 38; John 3. 2; 13. 3; Phil. 2. 13; Heb. 9. 14. If anyone asserts that anarthrous nouns must be indefinite and translated with an indefinite article, they must translate as 'a god' the other 282 passages where 'God' appears anarthrously.

Indeed, in John's gospel the word 'God' is found several times without an article For various other grammatical reasons the word 'God' also lacks the definite article at other places in this opening section of the chapter, such as verse 6 ('There was a man sent from God'), verse 12 ('authority to become children of God'), verse 13 ('but of God'), and verse 18 ('No one has ever seen God').

If the Jehovah's Witnesses were consistent with their argument about the absence of the definite article in verse 1, they ought to translate all of these 'a god' – but they translate 'God' in every case.; see verses 6 ('there was a man sent from a god?'), 12 ('children of a god?'), 13, and 18.

In his first epistle, John writes, 'God is love', 1 John 4. 8, 16 ('God' being the subject and 'love' the predicate) – but had he also put the article before the noun 'love' he would have been saying 'love is God' as well. Or if in John 1. 14, he had put the article before the noun 'flesh', he would have been saying, not only that 'the word became flesh' but that 'flesh became the word'.

The late Bruce Metzger, no mean student of the Greek language, relates a study of the Greek definite article done by Dr. Ernest Cadman Colwell of the University of Chicago. Colwell writes: 'A definite predicate nominative has the article when it follows the verb; it does not have the article when it precedes the verb. . . The opening verse of John's Gospel contains one of the many passages where this rule suggests the translation of a predicate as a definite noun. The absence of the article (before 'God') does *not* make the predicate indefinite or qualitative when it precedes the verb; it is indefinite in this position only when the context demands it. The context makes no such demand in the Gospel of John.'

This rule (called 'Colwell's rule') is covered as early as chapter 6 of a standard introductory Greek grammar: See John Wenham, *The Elements of New Testament Greek* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1965), page 35. The rule is simply that in sentences with the linking verb 'to be', a definite predicate noun will usually drop the definite article when it precedes the verb, but the subject of the sentence, if definite, will retain the definite article. So if John wanted to say, 'The Word was God' the construction in John 1. 1 is exactly how he would say it.

⁵ Compare Rev. 4.11, where the better text reads, 'Worthy are you, *our Lord and God*', using the very same construction in the plural ('our') instead of the singular ('my') as in John 20. 28.

⁶ Both in the Greek New Testament and in the Septuagint, the word 'blessed' always comes before the word 'God' where it forms a complete sentence – as it would here if the verse was rendered (as it is by some), 'God who is over all be blessed for ever'. But here in Romans 9. 5 the word 'blessed' follows, indicating that the 'blessed' refers back to the One mentioned immediately before – that is, to 'Christ'. God Himself is not mentioned in the context. And, again, the words 'according to the flesh' are, as in chapter 1 verses 3-4, calling out for a contrast. There seems no reason to say that Christ, as far as He was a man, was descended from the Jews, unless this leads to the point that He was far more than a man – and that there was therefore a sense in which He was *not* descended from them.

⁷ For the title 'great God' in the Old Testament, see Deut. 10. 17; Ezra 5. 8; Neh. 8. 6; Psa. 95. 3; Prov. 26. 10; Dan 2. 45.

⁸ The KJV translation is badly defective here. The context itself focuses on our Lord's Self-sacrifice, and, since He gave Himself to ransom and cleanse us, it is plainly His coming which we eagerly wait. There is no reason to introduce a joint 'appearing' of God the Father and the Lord Jesus.

Again, the combination of 'God' and Saviour', used of just one Person', is fairly common in the so-called Pastoral letters; 1 Tim. 1. 1; 2. 3; Tit. 1. 3; 2. 10; 3. 4. Compare the references to the Lord Jesus as 'Saviour' there; 2 Tim. 1. 10; Tit. 1. 4; 2. 13; 3. 6.

Apart from which, grammatical considerations are decisive. This is what is known as a 'Granville Sharpe construction'. As simply as I can think of expressing it, when a New Testament writer used a particular construction of 'definite article (the word 'the'), followed by a substantive (a noun), followed by the conjunction 'and', followed by another substantive' – and when the personal nouns involved were singular and not proper names, the personal nouns always referred to the same person. That is, the single definite article covers both nouns (in this case 'God' and 'Saviour', with the Greek conjunction ('and') coupling these together inseparably. This means that 'Jesus Christ' is described as both God and Saviour.

(For the Granville Sharp rule, see 'Sharp Redivivus? A Re-examination of the Granville Sharp Rule', by Daniel B. Wallace (www.bible.org/page.php?page_id=1496), and 'Granville Sharp: A Model of Evangelical Scholarship and Social Activism' by Wallace in the Journal of the Evangelical Theological Society: December 1998: pages 591-613. Granville Sharp's original paper can be found under 'The Trinity' on the 'biblecentre.net' website; see especially his 'Rule 1'.)

'In many of the passages in which God and the Lord Jesus are mentioned, with one article in Greek, it may possibly unite them, only in the subject matter of the sentence. Hence, although I think they prove a great deal as to the identification of God and the Lord Jesus, I do not quote them as simply proving, in an absolute way, the divinity of Christ. But the force of the passage in Titus is apparent', J. N. Darby.

⁹ Again, the KJV translation is badly defective here. (See the note above.) And, again, the 'Granville Sharpe construction' is relevant. Indeed, the Greek construction of 2 Peter 1. 1 is identical in every respect to that in 2 Peter 1. 11; 2. 20 and 3. 18 – save that, in this verse, Peter speaks of 'our *God* and Saviour', whereas on the later occasions he speaks of 'our *Lord* and Saviour. Apart from any other considerations, consistency requires that, if in each of the other references, the construction is rendered 'our Lord and Saviour', here it ought to be rendered 'our God and Saviour'.

¹⁰ Note the contrast between Abraham who 'was' (who 'became') and Christ who 'is'. This is the same contrast as in John 1 between the Word who 'was' and all that 'became'.

¹¹ 'The 'being' clearly stands in marked contrast to the word 'become' in verses 7 and 8 – where Paul says that, in 'making Himself nothing' He '*became* in the likeness of men', and, in humbling Himself, He '*became* obedient'. The point is that He most certainly didn't '*become*' in the form of God – He '*existed*' in that. It is much the same point as is made by John in the opening of His gospel. 'In the beginning *was* the Word', in contrast to everyone and everything else which '*became*' - 'all things *became* through him ... there *became* a man sent from God, whose name was John ... the world *became* through him ... the right to *become* children of God'. John wants us to know that He didn't '*become*' – He '*was*!' In a similar way, Paul wants us to know that He didn't '*become*' in the form of God – He had always *been* in that!

¹² It 'truly and fully expresses the being which underlies it' – it is that 'form which truly and fully expresses the being which underlies it', Moulton and Milligan, '*The Vocabulary of the Greek Testament*', page 417. Also 'form' ('μορφή') always signifies a form which truly and fully expresses the being which underlies it', H.A.A. Kennedy, Philippians in the *Expositor's Greek Testament*. (Someone is quoting someone!)

¹³ That is, to put it at its simplest, the expression signifies 'who was by nature God'.

¹⁴ That is, Godhead in its absolute sense dwelt – and dwells – in Him in a bodily form. This fullness was present in Christ's bodily form during His earthly ministry (for He did not give up His deity when He became a man). And it continues in His resurrected bodily form. In Christ the fullness of deity permanently resides. The very essence of God—the whole glorious total of what God is.

¹⁵ From the close of Matthew 7, we learn, on the one hand, that His was an authority which exceeded that of the scribes – 'when Jesus had ended these sayings, the people were astonished at His teaching, for He taught them as One having authority, and not as the scribes', Matt. 7. 28-29 – 'the scribes' who relied on the supposed wisdom and teaching of the past – who droned on and on, quoting rabbi after rabbi, rattling off precedent after precedent,

tradition after tradition – such as, ‘Rabbi Jose ben Jehuda said ...’, ‘Rabbi Jose ben Hanina said ...’. I suspect that the teaching of the scribes added a whole new meaning to the word ‘boring’!

But, on the other hand, from the account of the Mount of the Transfiguration we learn that our Lord’s authority exceeded – not only that of the scribes – but even that of Moses and Elijah – both of whom represented the line of genuine prophets of God – who, in contrast to the scribes, mounted the platform to thunder their characteristic, ‘Thus says *the Lord*’. I say ‘characteristic’ – not only because we encounter the expression some 360 times in OT – but, in particular, with my eye on how James described them in James 5. 10 – ‘Take as an example of suffering and of longsuffering, my brethren, the prophets *who spoke in the name of the Lord*’.

But *the Lord Jesus* was neither scribe nor mere prophet. He was the Son of God – and as such used neither formula – He had His own. And in marked contrast to both, He stood up and simply announced, ‘I say to you’. He affirmed, for example, in Matthew 5. 38-39, ‘You have heard that it was said, An eye for an eye and a tooth for a tooth. But *I say to you* not to resist the evil person. But whoever slaps you on your right cheek, turn the other to him also’.

¹⁶ Hence the voice out of the bright cloud on what Peter calls the Holy Mount ... ‘*This is My beloved Son ... hear Him*’. It was time for the great prophets Moses and Elijah to step down – leaving ‘Jesus only’.

¹⁷ The repeated ‘for’ in the passage identifies the ‘Lord’ of Rom. 10. 12-13 as the ‘Lord Jesus’ of verse 9.

¹⁸ ‘Your throne, O God, is forever and ever; a sceptre of righteousness is the sceptre of Your kingdom. You love righteousness and hate wickedness (We could say that the Lord Jesus *lived* for what He loved – righteousness – and *died* for what He hated – wickedness), Psa. 45. 6-7 and Heb. 1. 8-9. Psalm 45 is a royal wedding psalm in which God addresses the King by the title ‘God’ and is quoted in Hebrews 1 precisely for the sake of the address, ‘Your throne, O God’, spoken to the Lord Jesus.

¹⁹ ‘The Same’ is ‘the existing One who does not change’. See the footnote to J N Darby’s translation of Heb. 1. 12 – and compare his rendering of Deut. 33. 39; Neh. 9. 6; Psa. 44. 4 and Isa. 41. 4.

²⁰ An allusion to Isa. 40. 10 – and another incidental evidence for the deity of Christ.

²¹ Compare ‘they cry with a loud voice, saying, Salvation to our God who sits upon the throne, and to the Lamb ... the Lamb which is in the midst of the throne shall shepherd them, and shall lead them to fountains of waters of life’, Rev. 7. 10, 17. It isn’t plausible that a mere creature – no matter how exalted – should share God’s throne with Him!

²² See too ‘To the church of God which is at Corinth, to those who are sanctified in Christ Jesus, called to be saints, with all who in every place call on the name of Jesus Christ our Lord, both theirs and ours’, 1 Cor. 1. 2. The use of the identical expression in the Septuagint of Zech. 13. 9 strongly suggests that this involves actual prayer.

²³ For a detailed study of Paul’s practice of praying to the Lord Jesus as well as God the Father, see the two articles entitled ‘Paul’s Early Prayers’ in ‘*Precious Seed*’, volume 33, Number 6 and volume 34, number 1 (November-December 1982 and January-February 1983).

²⁴ See Luke 2. 7.

²⁵ In chronological order, the following passages speak of our Lord Jesus as ‘firstborn’ :

1. ‘Who is the image of the invisible God, the Firstborn of all creation’, Col. 1. 15.
2. ‘And He is the Head of the body, the Church; who is the beginning, the Firstborn from the dead; that in all things He might have the preeminence’, Col. 1. 18.
3. ‘Jesus Christ, the faithful witness, the Firstborn of the dead, and the ruler of the kings of the earth’, Rev. 1. 5.
4. ‘For whom He foreknew, He also foreordained to be conformed to the image of His Son, that He might be the Firstborn among many brethren’, Rom. 8. 29.
5. ‘And when He again brings in the Firstborn into the world He says, And let all the angels of God worship Him’, Heb. 1. 6.
6. ‘I will make Him my Firstborn, the highest of the kings of the earth’, Psa. 89. 27.

²⁶ In Revelation 3. 14, we read the words of our Lord to the church at Laodicea, ‘These things says the Amen, the Faithful and True Witness, the Beginning of the creation of God’. We know that Paul’s letter to the Colossians was to be read at Laodicea; ‘when this epistle is read among you, see that it is read also in the church of the Laodiceans’, Col. 4. 16. The believers at Laodicea would have understood the word ‘beginning’ in the sense of ‘first cause’ and understood our Lord to be speaking of Himself as the origin of all creation.