

The Trinity & the Old Testament; The Trinity and the New Testament

Next we will look at the issue of the trinity biblically, in terms of the Old Testament and the New Testament. From the previous discussion, I hope you have at least some sense of the difficulties that the early church was going through with that lack of a framework. People were basically all over the place. Who is Jesus? How does He relate to the Father? Oftentimes the Holy Spirit did not even enter the conversation until very late, and some of the things we would do, and just think of as natural, were not even on the scope yet, and we need to appreciate that. Again, orthodoxy just did not fall out of the sky. It has to be won. It has to be beaten out, and then quite frankly, it has to be protected as well.

We should not come to the text of the Old Testament with the expectation of finding a fully articulated doctrine of the trinity expressed within its pages. As a matter of fact, we do not find a full-fledged doctrine of the trinity even in the New Testament, much less the Old. And given the nature of progressive revelation, it is going to be natural for us to expect that we are going to find more in the New Testament than the Old. After all, in the New Testament, we have the incarnation. In the New Testament, we have Pentecost. Until those events, it is going to be very difficult to reveal much about the second and third persons of the trinity in any way that is comprehensible to the recipients of the revelation. I am going to suggest that we may expect to find hints in the Old Testament, hints of a plurality within God, hints which go beyond simple monotheism, simple oneness. To put it another way, we might expect to find some small evidence for complexity within God in the Old Testament.

The divine name of *elohim* suggests that God is both singular, *el*, and complex, *-ohim*, at the same time. Other passages contain this point, but we will look primarily at Genesis 1:26. In that text, God says, "Let us make man in our image." The question is, who is the 'us,' who is the 'our'? If we answer that we may have some insight into *elohim* as well. To whom does 'us' refer? What are the options? I have listed a whole bunch of options in your study guide. It has been very common to deal with *elohim* as a plural of majesty (*elohim* is the plural; it could be translated even as 'gods'). This position says that what is implied in *elohim* and what we have in this text, is a plural of majesty, as in the queen saying, "We are not amused." But the plural of majesty, in an earthly king, is a representational 'we.' The monarch takes on the plural pronoun as the locus of collective will and power within the realm. In effect, when the sovereign says, "We have decided," he is in effect saying, "As the representative of the people, I have decided," or even, "The people have decided." But the fact is, we have no precedent for this kind of articulation in the Old Testament, and it is difficult to imagine an analogue to God here. I cannot imagine God saying, "As the representative of 'X,' I have decided." It seems to me there is a violation of God's sovereignty with that. Thus, I am going to suggest that the plural of majesty is not a good way of making sense of what is going on here.

A second option is that some people, primarily from a rather critical point of view, would say that what we have here is an original polytheistic reference. *Elohim*, as one of the deities, is saying, "Hey you other gods, let us make man in our image." And of course, that proposal takes a rather dim view of biblical inspiration and truthfulness. And I think it misses the anti-mythological, anti-polytheistic thrust of Genesis 1. If you read Genesis 1 in the Hebrew text, it takes up many of the names of the gods in the Ancient Near East and it relativizes them. There is a very anti-mythological thrust there.

A third option is that God is speaking to the heavenly courts, or the angelic hosts. This is probably the most common interpretation today, and in fact, it was the interpretation that was favored in Jewish circles around the time of the first century, the time of Philo of Alexandria. Donald Gowan, in his theological commentary on Genesis, argues from Genesis 3:22, where we have a similar statement of "man has become like us, knowing good and evil," that 1:26 is an obvious reference to the angels, that

God is going to create a creature who bears similarities to both God and the members of the angelic court. Gowan there cites 1 Kings 22:19-22 and Job 1:6-2:6 as examples of God consulting the angelic court. Many Old Testament exegetes, however, would claim that there is no angelic counsel anywhere in the Old Testament. I mention those two texts to you so that you can turn there yourself and come to your own conclusion. Some people are insistent that no such counsel takes place in Scripture, and that neither the 1 Kings 22 text or the Job 1 text indicate any agreement between God and the angelic host. Thus, the Bible does not depict the angels as fulfilling an advisory role. What angels do throughout Scripture is receive and mediate, and we may have an opportunity before the semester is out to look at the angels. If we have the time, we will look at them. So the argument here is that the angels do not advise. What they do is they receive revelation and the mediate revelation. I think that is a good argument and I would add others.

The possessive 'our' in verse 26, as in "our image," should refer to the same person as the 'us,' "let us." If *elohim* says, "Let us make man in our image," both the pronouns 'us' and 'our' should refer to the same reality. Well, man is created in God's image, not in the image of God and the heavenly hosts. There is no biblical material anywhere which suggests that we were made in the angelic image.

Only God is the subject of all uses of the Hebrew verbs 'make' (*asah*) and 'create' (*bara*) in the account of creation. And again God says, "let us make." If the angels are making, it seems to violate the reality of God as the subject of those verbs elsewhere.

In Genesis 11:7 God says, "Let us go down and confuse." We have a very similar construction "let us" but only God is said to go down. We do not have an angelic host going down and confusing people. So I think our third option here, a heavenly court, or an angelic host, has some problems.

A fourth option, is that we have a statement here of self-deliberation, a statement of self-exhortation or self-encouragement. As you lay in bed in the morning you might say to yourself, "Okay, let us get out of bed." It is a self-encouragement or a self-deliberation. But John Wenham notes that neither the idea of a heavenly court nor the idea of self-deliberation is compatible with Hebrew monotheism. Both lack sufficient parallels within the biblical materials to compel agreement. Both of them are possible but there is nothing really compelling. And he says this is especially true of the latter, the idea of self-deliberation, suggesting that it should be accepted only as a last resort. If all your other options fail, you might want to come back to this one as a possibility.

Fifth is Wenham's own suggestion. His own thesis is really close to the heavenly court idea, but with a slight difference. Genesis 1:26 is not advisory, it is proclamatory. The statement is a divine announcement to the angels, drawing the attention of the angelic host to the masterstroke of creation. The problem is the syntax does not make sense that way. He does use Job 38:4, 7 as a parallel here. "When I laid the foundation of the earth, all the sons of God shouted for joy." That is the idea of proclamation.

Traditionally, in the longest history in the church, the idea is that we have a trinitarian reference here. All would agree that the human author did not intend, was not cognizant of, anything approaching what we would, after Tertullian, call the trinity. I hope we can admit that right up front. I can say that because, if Moses was cognizant of the trinity, if he meant the trinity when he wrote this, then he should have and would have declared it. I take it on principle that the biblical authors were not in the business of hiding truth, they were in the business of revealing truth, the truth as it was revealed to them.

So we come finally to our suggestion. I think the best approach is finally that from the perspective of the biblical author, something like self-deliberation is in view here. I say “like” because there seems to be something more than “let us get out of bed.” But fortunately, we do not have to make such a decision. Even though it is fair to ask the question, and important to ask the question, we do not have to answer finally what Moses meant in his original context. Ultimately, we want to read Genesis 1 in a Christian context, in the context of New Testament revelation. We want to read in light of the larger realities of the biblical text, the text at the level of what is called the ‘fuller sense,’ the text of the Old Testament informed by the New Testament. The *elohim* of Genesis 1:26 is a plural. It is the declaration of a complex reality. And what I say here about *elohim* also holds for the plural pronouns of Genesis 1:26 and following. The Father is addressing the Spirit who hovers upon the face of the waters. The Father is addressing the Son who was equally active in creation, and I take that from John 1:1-3. But clearly, that is beyond the horizon of the writer. That is only understood in the context of the entirety of Scripture.

H.C. Leupold said it well: “The doctrine of the trinity is not intended or taught in Genesis 1. But finally, it is only the reality of the trinitarian God which satisfies and explains the text.” Or as Luther would put it many years before, “What is first presented more or less stark, difficult, or obscure, Christ has all made manifest and clearly commanded us to preach.” And B.B. Warfield put this in an helpful analogy: “When you turn on a light in a dark room after you have been stumbling around, and you see the furniture for the first time, it does not mean that the furniture was not there before, but now when the lights are on, you can make sense of what you have been bumping into in the dark.” It is only going to be in the context of the New Testament that these hints are something more than hints. On their own terms, they may be just hints.

Let us look very quickly at the other texts that are related here. Genesis 3:22 says, “And the Lord God said, ‘The man has become like one of us....’” This text is interesting like the Genesis 1 text because both of these were texts that the Hebrew commentaries discussed—the book of Jubilees, the Jerusalem Talmud, and others. Philo of Alexandria and many others discussed them. And what is interesting about them is that either they get omitted or they get retranslated so that they are singulars. The pronouns are singular all of a sudden. The verbs are singular. And all of that suggests that the rabbis, just before the time of Christ, were embarrassed by the hinted plurality of God in these sorts of texts. They did not know what to do with them, so they intentionally tried to clean them up. They intentionally tried to rehabilitate them towards what they would consider acceptable monotheism.

Many more examples of this plurality are found in the Old Testament. A third text, Genesis 11:7, we have already mentioned. “God says, ‘Let us go down and confuse their language.’” And again, only God goes down. In Genesis 18 we find Abraham and three men at Mamre. Yahweh appeared to Abraham at Mamre, but when Abraham looks up, he sees three men; when he speaks, he addresses all three of them as “my Yahweh.” It is interesting in that text that there is an alternation between plural pronouns and singular pronouns, and it is altogether confusing whether there is one or three. In Genesis 19 two angels appear to Lot, and he calls them Yahweh in the singular. In Isaiah 6:8 there is another veiled reference when God says, “Whom shall I send and who will go for us?” We have something of a redounding back to Genesis 1. Does all that add up to anything? No, they are hints and nothing more. By the way, I am not trying to create an accumulative case here. I do not think that ‘hint plus hint plus hint’ equals trinity. I think ‘hint plus hint plus hint’ equals ‘hint.’

The angel of the Lord is referred to over 50 times in the Old Testament, but oftentimes, the angel of the Lord is a very confusing and ambiguous reference. Oftentimes, there appears to be a virtual identification of the angel of the Lord and Yahweh. Other times, there is a very clear distinction between them. God speaks of the angel of the Lord in Exodus 23 and in Exodus 32. He speaks to him in 2

Samuel 24 and 1 Chronicles 21. The angel speaks to God in Zechariah 12:1. But at other places, there seems to be confusion. For instance, in Genesis 31:11-13 the angel says, "I am the God of Bethel." In Genesis 32:24-30, Jacob wrestles with one who is identified as the angel of the Lord, and then says at the end of this event, "I have seen God face to face." In Genesis 48:15-16, the angel was identified with God in the action of redemption. There is a lot of ambiguity here. One more example is Judges 6:11-14 where the angel says in verse 12, "The Lord is with you, mighty warrior," indicating that the Lord is not the angel. But then in verses 14-15, Gideon refers to the angel as Yahweh. So it is ambiguous right there within the texts.

Now since the third century, it has been common within the church to think of the angel of the Lord as a pre-incarnate Christophany, that is to say, an appearance of Christ before the incarnation. If that is true, it is inferential. It seems to me the evidence for such a conclusion is sketchy and somewhat inferential. But it is certainly possible. Many people have simply reasoned backwards from John 1:18 which says, "No one has seen God, but God the one and only has made Him known." And the idea from that text is that one of the fundamental ministries of the Son is to manifest the Father. So if we have a visible presentation of God, then we have a Christophany. As a deduction that makes good sense, but in terms of what the Old Testament actually does with the angel of the Lord, the whole thing is rather ambiguous.

What does it mean to say God is one? We would not be wrong to say that the Hebraic religion, or the Old Testament religion, was strongly monotheistic. The Hebrews were warned over and over that they were to have no other gods besides Yahweh. See, of course, Exodus 20:3, the first commandment. Millard Erickson has recently asked regarding this commandment whether it should be taken as an ontological statement, that is to say, a statement that there is only one God, or as no more than a command that Israel not share her confessional allegiances between Yahweh and anyone else. Noting the recurrent synergistic tendency in Israel to go running after other gods, Erickson suggests the first commandment should not be understood as an ontological statement, but rather as a commandment against syncretism. In other words, it should not be over-exegeted into a statement of absolute oneness. He says, "This command does not tell us anything about the nature or makeup of God." You will see where Erickson is going in a minute here. He is not a polytheist.

Surely the *shema*, Deuteronomy 6:4-5, constitutes a clear claim of monotheism: "Hear, O Israel, the Lord our God, the Lord is one. Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your strength." From that text, we might conclude that Israel is not to divide her confessional allegiance between God and other deities because there are no other deities. Yahweh is the only God. Yes, Erickson replies, but just what is the nature of this oneness? He points out the fact that there are two words in Hebrew for 'one.' 'One' is *yachid*. This is a word which means 'unique, the one and only,' and it is often used in the context of an only child, such as Proverb 4:3, Amos 8:10, Zechariah 12:10. This is oneness in the sense of the one spoken of as the only member of its class, the unique singular one and only. The other word is *echad*, and it is also a typical word for 'one,' but rather than 'unique,' it really means something more like 'unified.' It is derived from a verb which has the idea of collecting one's thoughts, of unifying one's thoughts. When we derive a numerical, a number, from *echad*, we do not get so much a singularity, 'one,' as we would with *yachid*, but we get a unity, a complex one. This is the word that is used, for example, in Genesis 2:24, "A man will leave his father and mother and be united to his wife and they will become one flesh." *Echad* is "one flesh" here. Unity as it is spoken of here, is not a uniqueness. It is rather a unified reality, one flesh, union rather than aloneness. Erickson points out that it is *echad* that we have in the *shema* of Deuteronomy 6:4-5.

Does this mean that Yahweh is a unified complexity rather than the only one in His class? No. For as Erickson himself points out, both words for oneness are employed in Zechariah 4:9, which says, "On

that day, there will be one (*echad*) Lord (Yahweh) and His name will be only one (*yachid*).” So think your way through that. Right there you have the two together. The fact is, these kinds of discussions can be far overdone and you have to look at the context rather than simply saying, “This word always means ‘X,’” because it is almost never the case that this word always means ‘X.’ Whenever people say that to you regarding Greek and biblical terms, always be suspicious. That approach to biblical languages is today understood to be very problematic. You have to look at the context. How are words used?

The Old Testament often speaks of the extension of God’s power or character into creation in terms of personification. In the Wisdom literature—Psalms, Proverbs, Ecclesiastes—God’s wisdom is sometimes spoken of almost as if it were a person, as someone other than God, someone who has an existence apart from yet is dependent upon God. Thus the divine wisdom is active in creation. We are even told in Proverbs 1 that wisdom fashions the world. And God’s Word or discourse also takes on that same kind of personification. Even though it is dependent upon God, it almost becomes something other than, something independent of Him, even though it originates from Him. The Word of God is portrayed as going forth into the world, confronting men and women with the will and purpose of God, bringing guidance, judgment, and salvation. See Psalm 119:89 and Psalm 147:15-20.

The Old Testament uses the phrase the Spirit of God to refer to God’s presence and power within the creation. The Spirit is portrayed as being present in the expected Messiah in Isaiah 42, and as being the agent of the new creation in Ezekiel 36. The Spirit is also used in terms of God empowering people for service. Judges 6 speaks of the Spirit donning Gideon, almost as you might put on clothing. And elsewhere we hear the Spirit rushing upon Samson in Judges 14, and rushing upon Saul in 1 Samuel 10. There is this indication that this Spirit is somehow God yet not God.

What do we make of these personifications? Do these add up to a Trinity? Aside from the Spirit, no they do not. At least they do not add up to a trinity in the context of the Old Testament revelation taken by itself. The biblical notion of a person is not merely a person in the abstract. A biblical person is a person with all of his powers, all of his extensions into the world, including his words, his works, and all the rest belonging to the person. In a very real sense, the power of God is God, and the Word of God is God. It cannot be separated from Him. It is only in terms of the New Testament that things like God’s wisdom, God’s Word, and God’s Spirit will then be relevant to the trinitarian question. But we need to notice that those three do not line up with the Father, the Son, and the Spirit. The Word does align with the Son, but both the wisdom and the Spirit align with the Spirit.

What do we make of these lines of evidence? Do they add up to trinitarianism? They do not in any explicit way. You cannot get there with the materials that we have looked at. The evidence is too vague, too ambiguous, too anecdotal, and too occasional. You have to read it in. It would be just plain eisegesis. If it is not trinitarianism, is it unitarianism? If there is not a three-part God, is there a one-part God? Is there a simple one-dimensional understanding of God? No, that is not the case either. What is hinted at here is that the Old Testament understanding of God is probably too dynamic for a unitarian view. But just how much more beyond unitarianism, it does not tell us. Again, we have a suggestive, provocative series of hints. Maybe the most one can get from the Old Testament materials is the provocative suggestion of a complex monotheism, a One who can also be more than merely one. And this complex monotheism will be further explicated in the history of redemption as God moves toward the crisis events of the incarnation of the second person and the Pentecost event of the Holy Spirit.

The New Testament material concerning the trinity is clearer and more direct than that of the Old Testament. If it was not, we should not be talking about trinity in any way, shape, or form. On the other hand, we must admit that we still do not get a nice, neat, clear-cut statement on the trinity. There is little

along the lines of a reflection upon the trinity as such, even in the New Testament. Rather, it appears that a trinitarian understanding of God is nearly assumed, almost as if it had always been the case. What I am suggesting is that there does not seem to be any place where the New Testament says, “Hey, God is a trinity!” followed by an explanation of the Father, Son, and the Spirit. It merely appears to be assumed, and this assumption itself appears to be older than, more primitive than the writing of the New Testament materials. After all, the New Testament will pick up creed-like statements, creed-like slogans, which align the Father, the Son, and the Spirit in short, catchy statements, which suggest that these have been around even before Paul, even before the writers of the Gospels, and they are now included as being part and parcel of the early Christian consciousness.

Let us look at some of these trinitarian formulas. I just want to read you a few of them. Matthew 28:19 says, “Go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit.” I am not going to exegete these. You can do it yourself. With these kinds of associations, when the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit are put in this kind of relationship with one another, what is being said? What is being intimated? What is true of the Father is somehow true of the Son. And what is true of the Father and the Son is also true of the Spirit. There is that kind of verbal association here.

2 Thessalonians 2:13-14 says, “But we ought always to thank God for you, brothers, loved of the Lord because from the beginning God chose you to be saved through the sanctifying work of the Spirit and through belief in the truth. He called you to this through our gospel, that you might share in the glory of our Lord Jesus Christ.” 1 Corinthians 12:4-6 says, “There are different kinds of gifts, but the same Spirit. There are different kinds of service, but the same Lord. There are different kinds of workings, but the same God works all of them in all men.” There is interesting parallelism in this text. You will notice that gifts, service, and working are all kind of synonymous terms. And with that same kind of closeness, that kind of association, we have Spirit, the Lord (i.e. Jesus), and God. I am not going to read you any others. But there are actually many of these trinitarian formulas in the New Testament materials.

One way to speak of the deity of Christ is to look at the things that He does and note that He does God things. But we want to start with the fact that He is spoken of in God terms. He carries or bears divine names. The first one we want to look at is the name ‘Lord.’ Now, I could overemphasize this right here by drawing associations between Yahweh in the Old Testament, and how that gets turned into *adonai*, which gets turned into *kurios*. But we do not have to do any of that because the word ‘Lord,’ *kurios*, was a very common term. It meant no more than ‘sir.’ You might call your boss *kurios*. As your teacher, you might call me *kurios*. It was a term of politeness. It was a term you might use of a superior in the workplace. So it is no big deal, because there are lots of lords. The question is, lord over what? To what does one’s lordship extend? When the authors of the New Testament spoke of Jesus as Lord, that was a crucial statement to make about Him. They were saying He was Lord of all. He is Lord of history. He is Lord of creation. He is Lord of the nations. In other words, when we say Jesus is Lord, we mean it in the same sense that Yahweh is Lord. And when we say that Yahweh is Lord, we mean that He is the only Lord. He is the only one to whom we owe loyalty.

God’s lordship, Yahweh’s lordship, Jesus’ lordship, calls up the first commandment: have no other gods. Have no other loyalties. Thus Jesus exercises an authority and sovereignty, which is appropriate only to God. I am just going to read one passage here. Philippians 2:10-11 says in talking about the *eschaton*, “Then at the name of Jesus, every knee should bow on heaven and on the earth and under the earth and every tongue confess that Jesus is Lord to the glory of God above.” Many uses of the word *kurios* do not mean anything like that kind of weight, even sometimes when they are applied to Jesus. But certainly

here in the Philippians text, and many others, we are talking about a kind of lordship which is a lordship like unto that of Yahweh, a lordship over all reality.

The second divine name is 'Son of Man.' Matthew 26:64 is one passage that contains it. In Psalm 8, 'son of man' is applied to any human being: "What is man...and the son of man?" But in Daniel 7:13, the phrase refers to a heavenly man, to the heavenly person, an ideal covenant representative, one who will come at the end of the age, full of power and authority. It is the coming Messiah. As it is used in the Gospel record, by Jesus Himself, to refer to Himself, it follows the use of Daniel, for by the first century, the phrase 'Son of Man' was something of a standard reference for the Messiah. And it was actually Jesus' favorite self-designation. He will call Himself the Son of Man. You will see that particularly in the synoptic record.

Third is 'God.' John 1:1, "In the beginning was the Word and the Word was with God and the Word was God." If you have any friends or acquaintances who are Jehovah's Witnesses or other cultists, they might make the point that what we have in John 1:1 is not a statement about the Word (Jesus) being God. Jehovah's Witnesses will put it this way: "The word was 'a god,' right?" But what is interesting here is that John in his Gospel will often leave out the definite article in reference to what is called a definite noun like God. Go to verse 6. Try reading verse 6 as "a god" or verse 12 or verse 13 or verse 18; in all of these John uses *theos* without an article. Quite frankly, the argument is absurd. The Jehovah's Witness argument that there are many gods and Jesus is one has to be read into the text in the first place. It does not read out that way, especially in the context of any kind of commitment to Hebrew monotheism. So the Jehovah's Witness argument is very much a convenience. The Greek text does not need the definite article in order to refer to a single reality, and you see that because it is common for John to do that. He does not always include the definite article (again, see verses 6, 12, 13, 18, among many others). If you start reading those texts with the Jehovah's Witness idea, they actually become really absurd.

Another verse where the name 'God' is given to Jesus is John 1:18, which says, "No man has seen God, but God the one and only (the *monogenes*, the unique one, the natural son) has made him known." John 20:28 is Thomas' confession, where Jesus comes in and Thomas says, "My Lord and my God."

Our fourth title is 'the Son of God.' This title for Jesus is used by the heavenly voice at His baptism in Mark 1. It is used at the transfiguration in Mark 9. It is used by Peter in Peter's confession in Matthew 16:16. And it is after that confession that Jesus replies that on this 'rock' (which I take to mean, on this confession that He is the Son of God), Jesus will build His church. It is used by the demons in Mark 5 and it is used by the centurion in Mark 15. It is interesting that in John's Gospel, only Jesus is the Son of God. Only Jesus is, using his term, *monogenes*. The old King James translated that 'only begotten,' 'the only one.' A good English term for this one would be unique, or the natural Son. Our sonship comes to us by way of regeneration, by way of adoption. We are the children of God, yes, but by adoption. Jesus is the Son of God by way of natural relationship, by way of natural sonship.

Not only do we have divine names applied to Jesus, we also see that Jesus possesses the characteristics or attributes of God. He possesses grace, truth, and glory, as we see in John 1:14,17. John 1:14 says, "The Word become flesh and dwelt among us, and we beheld His glory, the glory of the one and only (there is *monogenes* again) who came from the Father, full of grace and truth." The Son possesses eternity, as seen in Hebrews 1, Colossians 1, and John 1. Remember the issue of Hebrews is that Jesus is superior to everything, so the introduction there is going to be rather important. A third attribute of Jesus is immutability, found in Hebrews 1:11-12. Now the Hebrews text is interesting because it is not a statement about immutability per se. Remember our discussion of that attribute. It is an introduction of

Christ's sovereignty, His constancy and His faithfulness. Remember the text: Jesus is the same yesterday, today, and forever. However, it is legitimate to contend that there must be an ontological condition for a moral characteristic. So if He is constant, if He is trustworthy, if He is faithful, if He never changes, if that is what is being said, then we can extend that, carefully but I think legitimately, into a statement of immutability.

Jesus also does the work of God. There are acts that only God can perform. There are things that only God can do. Go back to Athanasius' soteriological principle: only God can save, and since Jesus saves, Jesus is God. Since Jesus performs the works of God, He is God. Some texts I could give you are John 1:3-12, Colossians 1:14-20, and Hebrews 1:2-10. He does the work of creation, which John 1:3 tells us. He is involved in the providence of God. He is the Redeemer. And He is even the consummator.

Jesus received the worship that is due God. Only God is to be worshipped. Again, this goes right back to Athanasius. Scripture is clear that only God is worthy of worship. If you worship Jesus, pay attention to what you are saying, for you are claiming His deity. The angels worshipped His birth. The blind man, Thomas, and others worshipped Him in His earthly ministry. And all will bow and worship Him in the *eschaton*. Look at Philippians 2:10-11.

Before we end this lecture I would like to at least get a start on the deity of the Holy Spirit. First we need to talk about the difficulties in studying the Spirit. Early Christians did not know what to do with the Holy Spirit. It is not going to be until the Council of Constantinople in A.D. 381 that the Spirit receives any real significance, theologically. Even then people like Athanasius and Basil of Caesarea, when they turn their attention to the Spirit, did not do much more than cite the trinitarian formulas. They would say, whatever is true of the Son is also true of the Spirit. And by and large that was the method in the early church. Their debate was over who Jesus is and how He relates to the Father. Once they figured that out, they just said, "Oh, yeah, and the Spirit too." Whatever is true of Jesus, *vis a vis* God, is also true of the Spirit. So the Spirit's identity was not the battlefield.

Christian writers were even hesitant to speak of Him as God. You can see that on the statement on the doctrine of the trinity that came out of Constantinople. In that document, the Holy Spirit was described this way: "The Lord and Giver of life, who proceeds from the Father, and is worshipped and glorified with the Father and the Son." Certainly, it is very clear that the Spirit is to be given the same dignity as the Father and the Son, but notice that the word 'God' is not used in reference to the Spirit. Even orthodox theologians, people like Irenaeus of Lyon, who was in other ways very much the champion of orthodoxy, is at a loss for words when he comes to the Spirit. He will use trinitarian formulas, but whenever he speaks directly of the Spirit, he will tend to speak of Him as being somewhat impersonal. His favorite phrase for the Spirit is the Divine Wisdom. Why were things so difficult for the early church's reflection concerning the Holy Spirit? We can cite a number of reasons.

First, we have far less revelation in the Bible regarding the person and the work of the Spirit, than we have of either the Father or the Son, and that is largely due to the nature of the Spirit's work. He is the member of the trinity through whom God lives in us. After all, the Spirit indwells us. Even though He is the member of the trinity that brings God's power and person to bear upon us, His primary work is not about Him. His primary work is to apply and complete the work of the Father and the Son. During the present era, the Spirit performs the ministry of serving the Father and the Son and carrying out their will. In John 14:26, Jesus tells us that the Father will send the Spirit in Jesus' name. There is a kind of subordination that we see in the trinity, but it is not an ontological subordination, the kind of thing we saw in Origen. We do see subordination, but it is an historical subordination. The Father sends the Son and the Son then sends the Spirit. What we will talk about later is that there is a voluntary subordination

among the members of the trinity. In John 14, we are reminded of the Son's earthly ministry, one which is subordinate to the Father. The Father sends the Son to effect redemption, the redemption promised by the Father, and the Son comes and does the will of the Father. Just so, the Son now sends the Spirit to complete and apply the redemption won by the Son. All of this is meant to suggest, or is meant to make the point, that the ministry of the Spirit is to declare and glorify Jesus, as in John 16:14. I can put it this way: the Spirit does not draw attention to Himself. His ministry is to draw attention to Jesus and that is the reason Sinclair Ferguson in his book, speaks of the Spirit as the shy member of the trinity.

Another difficulty is the problem of the absence of concrete imagery for the term 'spirit.' We know what fathers and sons are. We have analogues that tell us. When you call someone a son, you know what he is. When you call someone a father, you know what he is. But what is a spirit? And what is a Holy Spirit? We do not have the analogues. We do not have a nice, neat image to tell us. And to complicate this, a lot of traditional translations and some people still call him the Holy Ghost.

Since the 1960's, the doctrine of the Spirit has been somewhat controversial. It is not that people have denied the doctrine of the Spirit, but rather some people have so emphasized the Spirit, almost out of proportion of His biblical revelation that it has moved others to respond or react in certain ways. We are talking about the charismatic revival, and the way that some charismatics have talked about the Spirit. I am not demeaning them at all. I think it is a reaction problem. The way they have spoken about the Spirit has caused some other folks to respond in such a way that if we talk about the Spirit too much, people might confuse us for charismatics and they do not want to be thought of as charismatics. Again that is not a charismatic problem. Rather, that is more of an anti-charismatic problem. There is a kind of stigma that has come along with that.

There are three necessary tasks in talking about a doctrine of the Holy Spirit. Like we did for the Son, we must talk about His works and His deity, as well as about His personhood. We do not have a problem with the personhood of Jesus. He could be touched. He could be felt. He could be talked to. He could be reported. But from the very beginning of the church, people have spoken of the Spirit in impersonal terms. For many, He was an impersonal force, an endowment of power or blessing. He was the Divine Blessing, the Divine Grace. And such impersonal constructions would militate automatically against thinking of Him as God. So the first thing we have to do is to think of Him as a person. We must establish the Holy Spirit as a person before we can speak of Him as deity. I have to admit that much of this talk about the Spirit's personhood is inferential. The Spirit is not about the business of drawing attention to Himself. His very job is to stand in the background. I am somewhat arguing against some of the things that have gone on in the charismatic tradition. For instance, it does seem to me that we have very few warrants for praying to the Spirit. Jesus Himself tells us to pray to the Father. I think praying to the Father is not alienating the Spirit at all because we pray to the Father by the power of the Spirit, by means of the Spirit. But His job is to wear a sign that says, "Look at Jesus." So much of this is inferential.

For example, we have passages in the New Testament in which the Spirit's work is closely associated with various other persons. It is done in such a way that since it is natural to think of those persons as persons, it is also natural to think of Him as personal. As a first example, we have the issue of the paraclete. The word *parakletos* can be translated a number of ways: counselor, advocate, helper, advisor, or defender. This word is applied to the Holy Spirit in John 14:16, John 15:26, and John 16:7. In each of these texts, it is obvious that something other than an abstract, impersonal influence is referred to. Jesus is referred to as the paraclete in John 2:1. But most significantly, Jesus says in John 14:16 that the Father will give the disciples "another paraclete" after Jesus ascends to the Father. He actually says, "*allon parakleton*," "another paraclete." *Allon* means another of the same kind. Jesus is saying, "The Father

will send another One like Me.” In view of Jesus’ statements linking the Spirit’s coming to His going, I think it is clear that the Spirit will come as the presence and power of God within Jesus’ disciples. And thus the Spirit is going to come to fulfill the role of completing and applying the ministry of Jesus after Jesus ascends to the Father.

In John 17:4, Jesus tells us that during His earthly ministry, He glorified the Father. Similarly, in 16:14, He tells us that the Spirit will glorify Him “for He will take what is mine and declare it to you.” Again, notice the very typical ministry of the Spirit. His job is to point to Christ.

There are texts in which the Holy Spirit is linked with both the Father and the Son. I want to go back to those trinitarian formulas, but just to make a point, just as the Father is personal and the Son is personal, when we have the Spirit put in together with them, it is natural to think of Him personally as well. Best known here is the baptismal formulation of Matthew 28:19 and the benediction of 2 Corinthians 3:14. But we could add all the other three-part formulas. The point is that all of these texts associate the Spirit with the Father and the Son in ministry. That is why I think that as we think of the Father as personal, and the Son as personal, it is only natural to think of the Spirit as personal. In fact, it would be unnatural to think of the Spirit in any other way. We can also consider John’s baptism of Jesus in Matthew 3:16, where you have the Father, Son, and Spirit all in attendance in close association.

There are passages that link the Spirit not with God, not with the Father and the Son, but with human beings. And in these passages too, as it is natural to think of human beings as persons, it is also natural to think of the Spirit personally. One example is from the letter from the apostles and elders at Jerusalem to the church at Antioch. It contained this expression, found in Acts 28:15, “It seemed good to the Holy Spirit and to us to lay upon you no greater burden than these necessary things.” This coordination of the Holy Spirit’s work with the Christian leaders seems to make sense in the assumption that He is a person. Put a different way, it seems to make little sense on the assumption that He is not a person. It would seem almost to be incoherent.

He possesses characteristics that only a person has. The Holy Spirit possesses intelligence. The Holy Spirit possesses knowledge. In John 14:26, the Spirit will teach the disciples and remind them of Jesus’ words. In John 16:13, He will guide the disciples into truth. He will speak to them. In John 15:26-27, the Spirit will testify concerning Jesus. And then 1 Corinthians 2:10-11, the Spirit knows Jesus and reveals Him. Interestingly, ‘knowing’ in Scripture is never the mere possession and retention of data. The biblical writers do not think in terms of computers like we do. Knowledge is always an intimate, personal function. It is always a relationship.

The Holy Spirit has a will. In 1 Corinthians 12:11, He bestows spiritual gifts on people as He determines. He also has emotions. In Ephesians 4:30, Paul warns believers against their sins, which grieve the Holy Spirit. And He can be affected as a person is affected. He has personal responses, such as in Acts 5:3-4 in which Ananias and Sapphira lie to the Spirit. Lying to the Spirit is lying to God. Paul also speaks of our sin that quenches the Spirit. In Acts 7:51, Stephen accuses his adversaries of resisting the Spirit.

Finally, the Spirit engages in moral actions and ministries that can be performed only by a person. Teaching, regenerating, searching, speaking, interceding, commanding, testifying, guiding, illuminating, revealing, and, as Paul puts it in Romans 8, praying—the Spirit prays for believers—are some of the examples of the Holy Spirit’s moral actions. We might also cite John 16:8 where John tells us the Spirit convicts the world of sin, righteousness, and judgment.