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A NOTE ON THE FOLLOWING ARTICLE (THE GODHEAD Elder David Mattingly)

It is a pleasure to be able to present the next article, written by Elder David K. Mattingly of Indianapolis, Indiana, to our readers. In this day of apostasy, the enemies of the truth attack, twist, and deny every Bible doctrine. That of the Godhead—God the Father, God the Son, and God the Holy Spirit—is certainly no exception.

Nowadays, the enemies of our God call into question the use of the terms "Father" and "He," substituting such foolish notions as a "Father-Mother God," or even denying that God is a personal Being. They deny Son's effectual work. They reduce the Holy Spirit to an "it" or an "influence."

Elder Mattingly's article is lengthy, so it must be published in two or more installments. Consider this a blessing, because the author was blessed to thoroughly address most of the major issues involved in the doctrine of our God; and his treatment of the subject being spread over more than one issue of *The Remnant* will give our readers more time to consider this weighty subject, if the Lord is pleased to bless them to that end.

THE GODHEAD
By Elder David K Mattingly

Article 1 of the Statement of Principles of *The Remnant* states the following: "The eternal existence, sovereignty, immutability, omnipotence, and perfections of Jehovah God; He has revealed Himself as the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit, and these sacred Three are One; Jesus Christ was

and is God manifest in the flesh, and in Him dwelleth all the fullness of the Godhead bodily.”

There is only One Jehovah God. He is revealed as Father, Son, and Spirit. The Son, Jesus Christ, is God. These are some of the details that are found in the Statement of Faith that the publisher/editor of this paper acknowledges. There may be some who call themselves Old School Baptists who will not be in full agreement with the above stated Article I. However, it is an expression that is supported by the vast majority of Primitive Baptists, and language similar to this statement will be found in the Articles of Faith of most of our churches.

Some may object to calling this belief the Doctrine of the Trinity. They point out this term is nowhere to be found in the Bible. That is true, but a lot of expressions we feel comfortable in using are not found in the Bible. Try to find these terms in the scriptures: Original Sin, Total Depravity, Particular Redemption, Sovereign Grace, Absolute Predestination. Do I need to continue?

We do not mind using such expressions that we think define the positions that are articulated in the Bible. So it is with the Trinity. Everyone may have a slightly different idea what the Trinity is, but as I understand the term I believe it is taught in the Bible. Yet, I do not mind the objection to the term. I prefer myself simply to speak of the Godhead. On the surface our stated views make little sense. How can anyone come up with the idea there is but One True and Living God; yet we call Him Father, Son, and Spirit? Isn't that three? And how can the Son be the same as the Father? If you see a man and his son walking down the street without even giving any thought to the matter you know there are two, not one, person in your view. You also know the son is less than the father in at least two respects. He is less in rank. It is expected he is to be in subjection to his father. He is also less in age. A son is never older than his dad. He is not

even equal in age to his dad. So, how can the Son of God in fact be God? These have been the questions raised by **Arians**. These are folk named after **Arius**, the man who gave rise to the doctrine the Son is not of the same substance as Jehovah God, but He was created by Jehovah; and is therefore, less than the eternal God. In their view He is literally the Son of God, but not God. Yet, the Bible speaks of Christ as God.

There are also the Unitarians. I am not necessarily speaking about the denomination given that name. Rather, I am speaking about folk who believe the Deity exists only in One Being, without making any substantial difference between Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. After all, Jesus said, "I and my Father are one (John 10.30)." Yet, I'm sorry to point this out, but, in Jesus' own words there is a distinction made. He uses the first person, singular pronoun, "I" when He spoke of Himself but He uses the noun, "Father" to describe the One with whom He identified. That makes two. Therefore, it creates a problem to run the Three so completely together into one so that no distinctions are made between the Father, the Son, and the Spirit.

The subject of the Godhead is an immense subject. Let me give the reader some advice. You will need to see the full picture of the Godhead that is laid out in the revelation of Scripture in order to come close to understanding how He, the One God, is revealed as Father, Son, and Spirit. When you do this you will be able to bring together particular verses to see how they coordinate to describe what revelation tells us about God. If your starting point is a verse here, and a verse there, you will only find verses that seem to contradict the verses you have used as your starting point. I believe our brethren have rightly seen the more complete picture of the Godhead when they spoke of the One God seen as Father, Son, and Spirit. I believe they rightly acknowledge the Son is God. But there is no single chapter or verse in the Bible that brings together everything we hold. It is only as we examine what is said about God from

Genesis through Revelation that we can cite the various scriptures to show how they integrate into the doctrine we hold.

I believe the Bible makes three major points concerning the Godhead.

I. ONE GOD

The first point is there is but One True and Living God. Many gods may be claimed by many different religions, but there is but One. The Hebrew children were made to focus upon this One God. Moses declared: "Hear, O Israel: the LORD our God is one LORD," and He was the only One whom Israel was commanded to love (Deuteronomy 6.4-5). This is the God who had appeared of old unto Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob; and He as well is the One God that is known to Christian believers. So, Paul told the believers at Corinth "we know that an idol is nothing in the world, and that there is none other God but one (1 Corinthians 8.4)."

Simple as it is, this is a fundamental truth. No professor of the religion of Christ should question it. Believers are not called to worship and serve several or many gods. The saints do not credit one god for some things and another god for other things as the ancient Greek and Latin worshippers did. The people of God are not polytheistic. They confess there is but One God.

More space could be given to quote more verses than the two already used, but it really is not required. Since it is so readily accepted that there is only One True and Living God the two verses already quoted should be sufficient.

II. THE THREE PERSONS

The second point is the One God, Jehovah, is manifested in Three Persons: Father, Son, and Spirit. The Son is in the Person of Jesus Christ,

and He is also referred to as the Word. The principle names for the Spirit are the Holy Spirit, or, as referred to frequently in our English Bibles, the Holy Ghost.

Although the delineation of the Persons in the Godhead are more fully disclosed in the New Testament, the Old Testament in a remarkable way foreshadows the plurality in the Godhead. This is shown from the very beginning of the Bible in one of the words that is used to speak of God. Even though the Hebrew people were taught there was but One True and Living God, they used a word for God that is in the plural.

The word, Elohim is correctly translated "Gods." This is the Hebrew name used most of the time in referring to God throughout the book of Genesis. It is the only word for God found in the first chapter. Literally, Genesis 1.1 should read, "In the beginning Gods." However, the English translators rightly understood that more than One God was not intended so they put the word in the English to indicate a single Being.

Consistent with the Hebrew, verse 26 states, "And God said, Let us make man in our image, after our likeness." The English translators cannot be faulted for using poor grammar. Technically, the use of the singular noun for God would require the singular pronouns so the text would read, "let me make man in my image, after my likeness"; but instead they kept the name of God, Elohim, in the singular in translation but gave the literal translation of the pronouns in the plural persons.

In the next verse, however, they again translated "Elohim" in the singular but also translated the text literally as it is found in the Hebrew. In the Hebrew even the inspired writer had the pronouns in the singular. The text reads: "So God created man in his own image, in the likeness of God created he him; male and female created he them." The fact the children of Israel were commanded to focus upon just One God but widely used a name

for God that was in the plural form foreshadows the doctrine of the plurality within the one essence of the Godhead.

The plurality of the numbers is more clearly established in the New Testament. Because there are numerous texts that mention the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, and because the Bible student is well aware of this fact, I shall at this point quote only a couple of verses to prove the point.

The first verse I cite is the word of Christ when He commanded His disciples to baptize "in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost (Matthew 28.19)."

The second verse is from John's epistle. He said: "For there are three that bear record in heaven, the Father, the Word, and the Holy Ghost: and these three are one (1 John 5.7)."

More scriptures will be cited later when an examination is made concerning the distinctiveness of each Person. However, I acknowledge it is not enough to show there are Three Persons called the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. It also must be shown that each of these Three Persons make up the Godhead.

A. THE FATHER

As it is true believers require little to prove there is but One God, it is also true little is required to show that He that is repeatedly referred to in the Bible as the Father is, in fact, God. There is an abundance of scriptural evidence to support this truth. It is a truth so ingrained in the soul of the child of God that it is embraced without the necessity of a lot of proof. Those who demand evidence that the Son is God have absolutely no problem confessing the Father is God. For this reason only a few verses will be cited to show He is God. Phrases connecting God and Father are

frequently used in the New Testament. Here are some of the references from the various New Testament writers. Paul greeted the saints at Rome: "Grace to you and peace from God our Father, and the Lord Jesus Christ (Romans 1.7)." James said: "Therewith bless we God, even the Father (James 3.9)." Peter wrote: "Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ (I Peter 1.3)." John also greeted "the elect lady and her children" with the words: "Grace be with you, mercy, and peace, from God the Father (2 John 1,3)." Jude addressed "them that are sanctified by God the Father (Jude 1.1)." It is not necessary to go further with this. Each of these inspired writers spoke of God as the Father. To state that the Father is God is to set forth apostolic doctrine. Since this is the case it is also unnecessary to examine fully what the Bible states about the character of the Father, such as the fact He is the eternal, omnipotent, immutable, omnipresent, all-wise, and the all-knowing God. If I were writing a book, I should want to show the evidence He has these attributes; but since I am simply writing an article, I will not delve further into these things. Since it has already been proven the Father is God it should be evident He has the full nature attributed to the Godhead.

Before leaving this subject it should be noted that God is Father both in His relationship to His people and in His relationship to His Son, Jesus Christ. When Paul spoke of Him as "God our Father" he was speaking of Him as what He is to us. He is our Father. We are His people. Thus, Jesus taught the disciples to pray, "Our Father which art in heaven (Matthew 6.9)." When Peter spoke of Him as "the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ," he was speaking of Him as what He is to Jesus Christ. If we are to understand that Christ is manifested as the Son, we must understand also by simple reasoning that He has a Father. He that is Jesus' Father is the same one that is Father to the saints. This two-fold relationship is powerfully shown when Jesus told Mary shortly after His resurrection, "I ascend unto my Father, and your Father, and to my God, and your God (John 20.17)."

B. THE SON

The primary controversies concerning the Godhead have centered upon the Son of God. Arians have long contended the Son is not Jehovah. Since it is not a contested issue whether or not the Father is God, I spent little time and provided only a few Bible verses to prove He is God; but due to the historic battles that have raged in the past over whether or not Jesus Christ, in fact, is Deity, I must take more time, and cite more scriptures to prove He too is God. It has already been shown the various inspired writers frequently used the phrase "God the Father." Believers often speak in like manner concerning "God the Son." However, nowhere does the Bible ever use the expression "God the Son." Although the Bible does not use this exact expression, the Bible does refer to Christ as God. To prove He is God, verses stating this fact will be presented. I will also show He is God by noting what the Bible teaches concerning His nature, work, and office.

John 1.1 declares He is God: "In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God." This verse is quite clear. The phrase, "God the Son," is not needed when there is a text that plainly states He is God. There can be no question the Word is the same One who is the Son of God. Notice verse 14: "And the Word was made flesh, and dwelt among us, (and we beheld his glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father,) full of grace and truth." Who was it that became flesh? It was Jesus Christ. If He was the "only begotten of the Father," then He must be the Son. Language cannot be any clearer than this.

Those who oppose the doctrine the Son is God have a different interpretation of this text. They point out the Greek language has no word for the article "a." Consequently, they argue in translation from the Greek to the English it is appropriate in this case to supply the article. They would have the passage read, "and the Word was a god." What's wrong with this interpretation? The problem is they disregard a basic knowledge of

arithmetic. They pay no attention to the fact that one plus one equals two. If this verse is teaching the Son of God is a god but not Jehovah God, then there are two gods. There is really no room to maneuver on this point. If the verse teaches Christ is a god, one that is less than Jehovah, but nonetheless a god; then very plainly there are two gods. Both Moses and Paul and all others who confessed there was but One God, were wrong. This interpretation leads nowhere else but to polytheism. It is no different than the beliefs of the Greek and Roman worshippers. The Greeks had Zeus and the lesser gods, and the Romans had Jupiter and the lesser gods. Both religions were polytheistic. If the Word is a god but not Jehovah God, then Christian worshippers also have a God who is considered supreme while at the same time they have a lesser God who is called Jesus. In this case Christians too would be polytheists. For this reason it is quite clear why our English translators did not insert the article "a" in front of the word "God" when they translated this verse from the Greek into the English language.

A pause is needed to more fully look at this verse. As clear as the text may be that the Word, the blessed Son of God, is God, the verse is also notably written in a very unusual way. To say He is with God and at the same time to say He is God sounds tantamount to saying God is with God. Why would John word the sentence in such a strange way? Please consider this explanation. It may not only help the reader to understand this particular verse but it also may help the reader to understand other scriptures that deal with the Godhead.

There are three rules that govern the meaning of scriptures when the subject of the Godhead is discussed. **The first rule** is that *God has inspired the writers of the Bible to use language that shows there is an order of rank among the Three Divine Personalities.* There is a Head. That Head is the Father. Holy men neither came up on their own with the term, "God the Father," nor did they invent the term, "the Son of God." These expressions were given by inspiration. Now, consider that in relationships between

fathers and sons here on earth, it is understood fathers have the greater honor. So, it should not be surprising to find that when the relationship between the Father and the Son is identified in scripture, Christ is under subjection to the Father. A few verses may be cited to show this truth. Jesus said: "For I came down from heaven, not to do mine own will, but the will of him that sent me. And this is the Father's will which hath sent me, that of all which he hath given me I should lose nothing, but should raise it up again at the last day (John 6.38-39)." Jesus told the disciples, "My meat is to do the will of him that sent me, and to finish his work (John 4.34)." Jesus prayed: "O my Father, if it be possible, let this cup pass from me: nevertheless not as I will, but as thou wilt (Matthew 26.39)." Likewise, in identifying the relationship between the Father and the Spirit, the Spirit is often shown to be someone in the Father's hands to accomplish His will. So, Peter taught the saints, "Elect, according to the foreknowledge of God the Father, through sanctification of the Spirit (1 Peter 1.2)." In this verse it is shown the Father directed the Spirit to sanctify the elect. Headship belongs to the Father. It has already been pointed out there are various verses that use the phrase, "God the Father," but there are none that use the phrase, "God the Son." Likewise, there are no verses that use the phrase, "God the Holy Spirit." Why is this? I submit it is because God directs His saints to think of the One who has Headship. This is the Father.

The second rule is, *when Deity is unidentified in scripture as to Person, it is apt to have reference to the Father.* Try this out for yourself and see if it is not true. I will cite just a few verses to establish the point, but by checking out other verses you will find over and over again that what I have just said is true. Here is one example. Jesus said to the Jews: "This is the work of God, that ye believe on him whom he hath sent (John 6.29)." Of whom was He speaking when Christ spoke of God? Since it has already been shown from John 6.38-39 that the One who sent Jesus was the Father, it should be clear that by the term "God," Christ was referring to the Father. Here is another example. When Mark spoke of Christ's ascension,

saying, "He was received up into heaven, and sat on the right hand of God (Mark 16.20)," God is not specified as to Person; but He is when Paul spoke of the action of "the Father of glory" and said He "set him at his own right hand in the heavenly places (Ephesians 1.17, 20)."

I will cite one more text to prove the point. At the beginning of Hebrews the Scriptures say: "God, who at sundry times and in divers manners spake in time past unto the fathers by the prophets, Hath in these last days spoken unto us by his Son (Hebrews 1.1-2)." The subject of these verses is God, but the writer did not in the first verse identify Him as to Person. However, from verse 2 it is evident that he is referring to God the Father. This is clear from the fact God spoke through His Son. If He has a Son, He must be a Father. Through passages such as these it should be clear that when reference is made to the Deity, it is often the Father that is intended. Now, examine 1 Corinthians 11.3. By applying these two rules this verse should be quite plain as to its meaning. After Paul pointed out to the Church that Christ has Headship over every man, and that the man has headship over the woman, he said, "and the head of Christ is God." This text plainly teaches Christ is in subjection to God. This text does not specify God as to Person but it should be clear from the fact seen in other passages that the Son submits to the authority of His Father. As this is the case it should be plain it is the Father of whom Paul is speaking when he said God was Christ's Head. Due to the order of rank, the scriptures assign to the Father more frequent entitlement to the term, "God" than they do to the Son and to the Holy Spirit.

The third rule is, *when the scriptures show either the Son or the Holy Spirit to be God, they do so by having them viewed in their own stead, apart from the Father.* This way there is no issue of rank.

I hope these three rules are plain enough for the reader to understand. If not, review them again until the meaning is clear. It will go a

long way in helping the Bible student to both understand and explain passages of scripture that relate to the Deity; especially those passages that interrelate the Personalities of the Godhead.

Now, return to John 1.1, and let's apply these three rules. By the words, "In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God," John is applying the first two rules concerning the Godhead. Since the Father is the Head, John is simply identifying Him as God. It is the same as if John had said that in the beginning the Word was with God, the Father. Test this, and see if this is not consistent with the prayer Jesus made shortly before His death. There, Jesus prayed: "And now, O Father, glorify thou me with thine own self with the glory which I had with thee before the world was (John 17.5)." The "beginning" in John 1.1 is the same as "before the world was" in John 17.5, and by comparing these two verses it is clear the One the Word was with was God the Father. By the words, "and the Word was God," John is applying the third rule concerning the Godhead. Here, in the last part of John 1.1, John is viewing Christ in His own stead, apart from the Father, and he states He is God. In other words, the first part of the text connects the Son to His Father, and in this case the Father is God; but the second part of the text views the Son separately, and in this case He is God. By applying these three rules to this verse the strangeness of the language disappears, and the verse fits into the whole scheme of things that is presented throughout the Bible.

The opening verse of the Gospel written by John is not the only verse that proves the Son is God. There are other passages that declare the same truth. In the book of Isaiah there are two clear prophecies concerning the Incarnation of Christ. In 7.14 the Lord declared: "Behold, a virgin shall conceive, and bear a son, and shall call his name Immanuel." To show this prophesy was fulfilled in the birth of Jesus, Matthew quoted the text from Isaiah to prove Mary was the virgin, and Jesus was the son, and the gospel writer further provided the meaning of Immanuel (or Emmanuel) by adding,

“which being interpreted is, God with us (Matthew 1.23).” The other text that clearly prophesied of Christ’s birth is found in 9.6-7: “For unto us a child is born, unto us a son is given: and the government shall be upon his shoulder: and his name shall be called...**The mighty God.**” Thus, in both of these passages Christ is spoken of as “God.” Another verse is found in Thomas’ words after Jesus had given full proof to him that He was alive from the grave. Thomas’ exclamation was: “My Lord and my God (John 20.28).” These words might be quickly discounted, and considered exaggerated terms by Thomas were it not for the fact the Lord did not respond with a rebuke but rather replied: “Thomas, because thou hast seen me, thou hast believed: blessed are they that have not seen, and yet have believed (John 20.29).” What did Thomas’ exclamation show that he believed? He believed his Lord and his God had come forth out of the grave. I will cite another scripture. Paul told Timothy: “And without controversy great is the mystery of godliness: God was manifest in the flesh, justified in the Spirit, seen of angels, preached unto the Gentiles, believed on in the world, received up into glory (1 Timothy 3.16).”

The subject of this verse is God, but who was it that became flesh, that the Spirit justified, that the Gentiles heard about through preaching, that men believed, and that ascended into heaven? It was Christ Jesus, but He is identified as God.

I will cite one more scripture. Paul wrote to Titus: “Looking for that blessed hope, and the glorious appearing of the great God and our Saviour Jesus Christ; Who gave himself for us, that he might redeem us from all iniquity, and purify unto himself a peculiar people, zealous of good works (Titus 2.13-14).” This language is peculiar to what the saints hope for in the Son of God. He is the One who will appear when He returns to receive His own people, and He is the One who redeemed them by giving Himself for them. This person is referred to as both God and Savior. The fact the Scriptures declare the Son to be God proves He is Jehovah.

Repeatedly, throughout the earthly ministry of Christ, He was the object of worship, as in the case of the leper who asked Jesus to heal him, and "kneeling down to him (Mark 1.40)," "worshipped him (Matthew 8.2)." Although the Law forbade worshiping any except Jehovah God, there was neither this man nor any other who ever bowed before the Lord Jesus was rebuked. Contrast this with Cornelius, who fell down at Peter's feet and worshipped him, only to be lifted up by Peter, and commanded: "Stand up; I myself also am a man (Acts 10.25-26)." Since, during His temptations in the wilderness Christ told Satan: "Thou shalt worship the Lord thy God, and him only shalt thou serve (Matthew 4.10)," can it not be surmised that He is God who is rightfully to be worshipped? Beside all this, Paul said that after Christ's suffering, God "hath highly exalted him, and given him a name which is above every name: That at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, of things in heaven, and things in earth, and things under the earth; And that every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father (Philippians 2.9-11)."

The fact the Son is set forth as one who is to be worshipped proves He is God.

The Scriptures also prove the Son is Deity by what they say concerning His nature. No part of creation is equal to God. It either lacks His qualities altogether or else it fails to reach His fullness. The Bible ascribes to the Word the excellent nature of Jehovah. The only conclusion that can be drawn from what is declared of the Son is that He is God. One of the unequal qualities of God is that He is eternal. Genesis 21.33 said: "And Abraham planted a grove in Beersheba, and called there on the name of the LORD (Jehovah), the **everlasting** God."

In the absolute sense only God possesses this quality. Everything else had a beginning. When the prophet Micah spoke of the site where the Lord

would be born, he also ascribed this characteristic to the Son: "But thou, Bethlehem Ephratah, though thou be little among the thousands of Judah, yet out of thee shall he come forth unto me that is to be ruler in Israel: whose goings forth have been from of old, from **everlasting** (Micah 5.2)." The margin of my Bible rightly identifies this expression as "the days of eternity." There can be no doubt this is a prophecy of the Lord. The content of the text itself is clear enough, but one only has to look into the New Testament to see that it was this verse that was cited by the scribes, of whom Herod inquired to find out where the Christ should be born (Matthew 2.1-6).

Before moving on to another part of the Son's nature, another pause is needed to examine an issue that arises from the relationship between Father and Son. It has already been noted that the Scripture's use of the terms, Father and Son, suggests a subjection of the Son to the Father. When the Bible speaks of the Son apart from the Father He has full equality, but when it speaks of His relationship to the Father He is subject to the Father's will. When speaking of the Two together, there is another area in which it can be said the Son does not have equality with the Father. As has already been pointed out, in nature, a son is neither as old as his father, nor is he ever equal in age to his father. True to the relationship between the Father and Son, the Lord is spoken of as having been begotten. Out of the Psalms the Son speaks: "the LORD (Jehovah) hath said unto me, Thou art my Son; this day have I begotten thee (Psalm 2.7)." Consistent with the terms of the relationship, the Son is begotten. This makes Jehovah the Father of His Son. Likewise, John had spoken of the Word as "the only begotten of the Father (John 1.14)." Simple logic suggests the Son cannot have existed as long as the Father, Jehovah.

This has been one of the chief arguments made by the Arians against the Doctrine of the Godhead. The fact Jesus Christ, the Word, the blessed Son of God, is the Son suggests He is less than Jehovah, the One of whom

He was begotten. How then can He be everlasting as described by Micah? How can He not be younger than Jehovah? The answer to Psalm 2.7 is quite simple. The New Testament provides the answer. When Paul preached the Death, Burial, and Resurrection of Christ to the Jews (Acts 13.28-30), he made the following statement to them in verse 33: "God hath fulfilled the same unto us their children, in that he hath raised up Jesus again; as it is also written in the second psalm, Thou art my Son, this day have I begotten thee." In other words, Psalm 2.7 is not speaking of Jehovah creating the Son. Rather, by being begotten, it is speaking of Him on this certain day being raised from the grave.

So, in Colossians 1.18 He is referred to as "the firstborn from the dead," and in Revelation 1.4 as "the first begotten of the dead." I hold there is a different answer to John 1.14. In this text the subject is not the *resurrection* but the *incarnation*: "And the Word was made flesh, and dwelt among us, (and we beheld his glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father,) full of grace and truth." Here, He is not the "first begotten," but the "only begotten."

With regard to the resurrection, Christ's uniqueness is the fact that He is the first to come forth from the grave in a glorified body. The elect that God foreknew, called, justified, and glorified were ones "predestinated to be conformed to the image of his Son, that he might be the first-born among many brethren (Romans 8.29-30)." In other words, Christ was first; God's elect were to follow. However, with regard to the Incarnation, Christ's uniqueness is the fact He is the Father's Son in a way belonging to no other. The saints may be His children. Christ's relationship to the Father is different. No man was ever conceived as He was. The inspired writers used the terms, Father and Son. Therefore, it is to be expected the language would be consistent with the terms and indicate the Son was not around all the while the Father was, but when the Son is spoken of as apart from the Father He is "from everlasting."

Another attribute of God's nature is His self-existence. In this not only is He seen to be eternal, but immutable as well. By virtue of His immutability it is shown that His perfect nature has always been and always shall be. When the Lord told Moses he was being called to bring forth the Israelites out of Egyptian bondage Moses asked for God's name. He desired to be able to tell the people who it was that had commanded their deliverance. The Lord replied: "I AM THAT I AM." The Hebrew is "Eheyeh asher eheyeh." The Lord continued: "Thus shalt thou say unto the children of Israel, I AM hath sent me unto you (Exodus 3.14)." He is the great Jehovah.

A parent often has a problem answering his child's inquiry, "but Dad, where did God come from?" It is a reasonable question to ask. After all, everything else has come from something outside of itself. But in the case of God, He did not come forth from something else, and as He is, He has always been, and always will be. He is the basis for His own existence.

Now, look at Jesus' dialogue with the Jews. Abraham and the prophets were being discussed. The Jews said to Christ: "Abraham is dead, and the prophets; and thou sayest, If a man keep my saying, he shall never taste death. Art thou greater than our father Abraham, which is dead? and the prophets are dead: whom makest thou thyself?" In other words, the Jews thought Jesus was overstating His own case by making Himself greater than Abraham and the prophets. After all, they were dead; yet He was promising His people life.

Jesus further upset the Jews by telling them: "Your father Abraham rejoiced to see my day: and he saw it, and was glad." They responded, "Thou art not yet fifty years old, and hast thou seen Abraham?" In short, they are asking, "how can a man not yet age fifty be seen by Abraham who had been dead for many generations?" To this, the Lord replied by identifying Himself in the same way the great Jehovah had identified Himself

to Moses: "Verily, verily, I say unto you, Before Abraham was, I am." The Jews understood what He was saying. They knew He not only was identifying with the name but also the very attributes of God, so they took "up stones to cast at him (John 8.52-53, 56-59)." By these words it should be proven the Son is God.

Another proof that the Son is God is found in Jeremiah 23. 5-6. In these verses it is shown not only that He has God's name but He also has God's righteousness to impute to His people. The text says: "Behold, the days come, saith the LORD, that I will raise unto David a righteous Branch, and a King shall reign and prosper, and shall execute judgment and justice in the earth. In his days Judah shall be saved, and Israel shall dwell safely: and this is his name whereby he shall be called, THE LORD OUR RIGHTEOUSNESS." It should go without saying this prophesy concerns Christ. That Christ is the Branch raised unto David is clear from many passages. Matthew, in the Gospel, calls Him "the son of David" (Matthew 1.1).

That He is righteous is likewise plain from many verses. In Hebrews, He is described as being "holy, harmless, undefiled, separate from sinners, and made higher than the heavens (Hebrews 7.26)."

That He is righteous not only in Himself but that He is our righteousness is also shown many places in scripture as in Paul's words: "But of him are ye in Christ Jesus, who of God is made unto us...righteousness (1 Corinthians 1.30)." That He is a King is proven by the fact He is the "King of the Jews" as well as the fact He is "Lord of lords and King of kings" (Matthew 27.11; Revelation 17.14). The prophetic language of Jeremiah fits the New Testament's words concerning the Son of God. Yet, He also carries the name of God. According to the Hebrew text He is called "Jehovah our righteousness." By these words it is also proven the Son is God.

Only a few more attributes will be noted to prove the Word is God:

One, God is immutable. In Malachi it is written: "For I am the LORD (Jehovah), I change not; therefore ye sons of Jacob are not consumed (Malachi 3.6)." The Hebrew writer found this same attribute in Christ's nature when he wrote: "Jesus Christ the same yesterday, and to day, and for ever (Hebrews 13.)"

Two, God is Almighty. Jehovah identified Himself to Abram. When Abram was ninety-nine years old the LORD appeared unto him, saying, "I am the Almighty God; walk before me, and be thou perfect (Genesis 17.1)." Christ declared His absolute power when He told the disciples, "All power is given unto me in heaven and in earth (Matthew 28.18)." This was not a power given unto Him by delegation; it was a power given unto Him by right of nature. Thus, John, in the Revelation speaks of Christ as "the Almighty" (Revelation 1. Some have tried to argue this name belongs only to God the Father. However, this argument cannot hold up. The subject from verse 5 through verse 8 definitely identifies the Son of God. He is Jesus Christ, the Faithful Witness, the First Begotten of the Dead, the Prince of the kings, the One who loved and washed His people from their sins by His blood, the One who made the saints kings and priests to God, and the One who will come in the clouds so that every eye will see Him; even those who pierced Him. Can there be any doubt this language identifies the Son of God? Then, verse 8 says: "I am Alpha and Omega, the beginning and the ending, saith the Lord, which is, and which was, and which is to come, the Almighty." Should more scripture be needed to prove the point, turn to Revelation 22.11-12: "Behold, I come quickly, and my reward is with me, to give every man according as his work shall be. I am Alpha and Omega, the beginning and the end, the first and the last." As in chapter 1, He speaks of Himself as the "Alpha and Omega." To whom is it the people of God are called upon to look for a quick coming? Is it not Christ? By the very use of words the One called the Almighty can be none other than the blessed Son of God.

Three, to God is attributed perfect knowledge so James declared: "Known unto God are all his works from the beginning of the world (Acts 15.18)." Simon Peter confessed this same truth of Christ when he, in frustration, after Christ persisted in asking him about his love, exclaimed: "Lord, thou knowest all things; thou knowest that I love thee (John 21.17)." This could be passed off as an idle, exaggerated statement by the apostle were it not for the fact the Lord did not give him the slightest rebuke for having made such a remark. He is the God of all knowledge.

Christ's nature proves He is God.

The Scriptures also prove the Son is Deity by what they say concerning His offices and His works.

Nothing is more plainly taught in the Bible than the teaching God is the Creator of all things. Indeed, the first thing revealed about God in the very first verse of the Bible is: "In the beginning God created the heaven and the earth." Remember, the word for God here is Elohim. This word is the plural of the Hebrew word "Eloah." That the Son is manifested as the Creator is clear from various verses of scripture. John wrote: "All things were made by him; and without him was not any thing made that was made," and "He was in the world, and the world was made by him, and the world knew him not (John 1.3, 10)." In Hebrews the writer refers to the Son by whom God spoke by quoting Psalm 102.25: "And, Thou, Lord, in the beginning hast laid the foundation of the earth; and the heavens are the works of thine hands (Hebrews 1.10)." Thus, it is shown by virtue of the fact He created all things that He is God.

It is equally plainly taught in the Bible that God is a Savior. Mary, the mother of Jesus, declared her spirit "hath rejoiced in God my Saviour (Luke 1.47)." Thus, salvation is attributed to God. In the Old Testament, Jehovah

tells Israel: "For I am the LORD thy God, the Holy One of Israel, thy Saviour" and "I, even I, am the LORD; and beside me there is no saviour (Isaiah 43.3, 11)." Is it true that there is no Savior but Jehovah God? If the Lord Jesus Christ is not the same as Jehovah God, then there must be more than one Savior because Christ is definitely set forth as a Savior in the New Testament. Joseph was told, "he shall save his people from their sins (Matthew 1.21)." The angel of God told the shepherds: "For unto you is born this day in the city of David a Saviour, which is Christ the Lord (Luke 2.11)." Paul spoke to Timothy about God, "Who hath saved us, and called us with an holy calling, not according to our works, but according to his own purpose and grace, which was given us in Christ Jesus before the world began, But is now made manifest by the appearing of our Saviour Jesus Christ, who hath abolished death, and hath brought life and immortality to light through the gospel (1 Timothy 1.9-10)." John said: "And we have seen and do testify that the Father sent the Son to be the Saviour of the world (1 John 4.14)." Can anything be clearer than the fact the blessed Son of God fills the role of the only Savior?

Consistent with His role as a Savior, it is through the blessed Son of God that sins are forgiven. When Jesus said to the man sick of the palsy who was brought to Him while He was in Capernaum, "Son, thy sins be forgiven thee," the scribes who heard this pronouncement thought He spoke blasphemies as they reasoned "who can forgive sins but God only?" Believers cannot fault the scribes for their question. Clearly, forgiveness is attributed to God alone. Only the one offended can provide forgiveness. If someone commits an evil against my neighbor, I cannot be the one who forgives the offender for what he has done to the guy next door. In this case forgiveness must come from my neighbor.

Likewise, since sin is committed against God, God alone has the right to forgive the transgressor. What fault the scribes had is seen in the fact they failed to recognize who Christ was. Jesus replied to the scribes,

“Whether is it easier to say to the sick of the palsy, Thy sins be forgiven thee; or to say, Arise, and take up thy bed, and walk? But that ye may know that the Son of man hath power on earth to forgive sins, (he saith to the sick of the palsy,) I say unto thee, Arise, and take up thy bed, and go thy way into thine house.” When the man immediately took up his bed and walked, Christ had not only demonstrated He could heal but that He also had power to forgive sins (Mark 2.1-12). Paul taught it is in this beloved Son that the saints “have redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of sins, according to the riches of his grace (Ephesians 1.6-7).” The fact Christ has the power to forgive sins should be another evidence He is God.

Consider a couple of other roles attributed to God. Jehovah is a shepherd. The most quoted of all of David’s psalms states: “The LORD is my shepherd; I shall not want (Psalm 23.1).” Christ answers to this when He said, “I am the good shepherd; the good shepherd giveth his life for the sheep (John 10.11).” Also, Jehovah is Israel’s King. He declared: “I am the LORD, your Holy One, the creator of Israel, your King (Isaiah 43.15).” Christ answers to this designation as well. When Pilate asked the Lord, “Art thou the King of the Jews,” Jesus replied, “Thou sayest (Matthew 27.11).” This reply is a Jewish idiom that essentially stands as a confirmation of what had previously been asked. In other words, He is agreeing He is the King of the Jews. Thus, in this statement the Son is shown to be Jehovah, Israel’s King.

Although more scriptures and evidences can be presented, I will at this point take leave of providing further proofs that the Word is God. He is declared to be God. He is shown to have the nature of God. And by both His offices and works He is proven to be God. If these will not convince the reader that He is God, nothing further that I can present will do so. Well did Paul write of Him that He is “the image of the invisible God,” and “in him dwelleth all the fullness of the Godhead bodily (Colossians 1.15; 2.9).”

C. THE HOLY SPIRIT

I have no idea how much opposition there is to the view the Holy Spirit is God. The battleground has historically been fought on the issue of the Son of God. So much effort is made trying to prove or disprove Christ Jesus is God that it appears both sides are exhausted by the time the subject of the Holy Spirit is brought up. I would not be too surprised to find that a lot of people who use the phrase, "God the Father, God the Son, and God the Holy Spirit" do so without giving a lot of thought to what they are saying. Based upon the Headship of the Father, I confess the Spirit is often set forth as One who accomplishes certain designs of the Father, but I totally reject the notion the Spirit is no more than a "thing" that is in the Father's hands to do with "it" as He sees fit. However, it would not surprise me to find this is the way many people think of the Spirit. Yet, whether or not the matter is given much thought, as most Old School Baptists believe the Word is God, so do most also confess the Holy Spirit is God. Since there is more lack of thought on the subject than there is real debate, I will not spend as much time proving the Holy Spirit is God; but, due to a general lack of thought on the subject, some texts need to be examined to show the Spirit is, in fact, God.

There are a couple of places in the book of Acts that plainly teach the Holy Spirit is Deity. First, when Ananias and Sapphira did not lay at the apostles' feet the total portion of the price of land they had sold, but contrary to their agreement, they kept a portion for themselves, Peter asked Ananias, "why hath Satan filled thine heart to lie to the Holy Ghost?" and to Sapphira he asked, "How is it that ye have agreed together to tempt the Spirit of the Lord?" Yet, in confronting Ananias with his lie, Peter declared, "thou hast not lied unto men, but unto God (Acts 5. 3, 4, 9)." Second, when Paul was confronted by unbelievers among the Jews he quoted from the Old Testament prophet and said: "Well spake the Holy Ghost by Esaias the prophet unto the fathers, Saying, Go unto this people, and say, Hearing ye shall hear, and shall not understand; and seeing ye shall see, and not perceive: For the heart of this people is waxed gross, and their ears are dull of hearing, and their eyes have they closed; lest they should see with their

eyes, and hear with their ears, and understand with their heart, and should be converted, and I should heal them (Acts 28. 25-27).” This quote is taken from Isaiah, chapter 6, and by comparing the two places it will be evident it is the Lord Jehovah that spoke the words that Paul attributed to the Spirit. So, from these texts it is clear God, the Holy Ghost, heard the lying tongue; and He who was identified in the words of the prophet as the Lord Jehovah is identified by the apostle as the Holy Ghost.

From the verses quoted in Acts it should also be quite plain the Spirit is not a “thing.” Lies are told to Him. He was tempted. He Himself prophesied. I admit there are a few places in the scriptures that speak of the Spirit using the pronoun “it,” as though He is a “thing.” For example, there is the verse: “The Spirit itself beareth witness with our spirit, that we are the children of God (Romans 8.16).” There is a simple reason for this. The word “spirit” in the Greek language is a neuter noun. This word is not exclusively used with reference to the Spirit of God. For example, the Bible often speaks of the spirit that is in man. In such cases the spirit is appropriately described as an “it.” Likewise, consistent with the noun, the pronoun “it” will sometimes be used, even when the Spirit of God is under consideration. However, many passages that speak of the Spirit will rise above the neuter and speak of Him rightfully in the masculine gender.

Other verses show He is not a “thing.” He speaks, and calls His ministers, and sends them out (Acts 13. 1-4). He can be blasphemed (Matthew 12.31-32). Saints are admonished not to grieve Him (Ephesians 4.30). He quickens (John 6.63). He testifies of Christ (John 15.26). He searches the hearts of the saints and helps them in their infirmities by making intercession for them when prayers are made (Romans 8.26-27). Then, there is the powerful statement of Christ: “Howbeit when he, the Spirit of truth, is come, he will guide you into all truth: for he shall not speak of himself; but whatsoever he shall hear, that shall he speak: and he will shew you things to come. He shall glorify me: for he shall receive of mine,

and shall shew it unto you. All things that the Father hath are mine: therefore said I, that he shall take of mine, and shall shew it unto you (John 16. 13-15).” He guides, He speaks, He hears, He shows, He glorifies, and He receives. In short, saints are to think of Him as something other than an “it.”

As Paul’s reference to the Holy Spirit when he quoted from Isaiah, chapter 6 proves the Spirit and God are one and the same, so also do the words of Simon Peter. Repeatedly, throughout the prophets they prefaced their words with “the word of the LORD came unto me, saying,” as in Ezekiel 3.16; or “Thus saith the LORD,” as in Amos 3. 11. But Peter showed plainly that the “holy men of God spake as they were moved by the Holy Ghost (2 Peter 1. 21).” So, whether it is said that Jehovah moved them to speak or it was the Spirit that moved them to speak there is no contradiction as the two are the same.

By an examination of the Holy Spirit’s nature it should be clear He is God. Indeed, Jesus taught the very essence of God is Spirit when He told the Samaritan Woman, “God is a Spirit” (John 4.24). Consider also Jehovah is holy. Saints readily embrace the words of Hannah when she prayed, “There is none holy as the LORD” (1 Samuel 2.2); and consistent with God’s nature, repeatedly, throughout the New Testament the Spirit has adjoined to Him the adjective “holy.” He is the “Holy Ghost” as in Matthew 28.19. Further, one of God’s attributes is, He is eternal. So, Moses declared, “The eternal God is thy refuge, and underneath are the everlasting arms (Deuteronomy 33.27).” The Spirit of God has this attribute. In Hebrews 9.14, He is referred to as “the eternal Spirit.” Also, omnipresence is attributed to God. David showed this was the nature of the Spirit when he wrote in the Psalms: “Whither shall I go from thy spirit? Or whither shall I flee from thy presence? If I ascend up into heaven, thou art there: if I make my bed in hell, behold, thou art there. If I take the wings of the morning, and dwell in the uttermost parts of the sea; Even there shall thy hand lead me, and thy right hand shall hold me (Psalm 139.7-9).” In all of these ways He is shown to be Deity.

I shall not tarry further on this matter. Hopefully, not only will the reader be convinced the Holy Spirit is not a mere "thing" to be employed as an instrument, but, He is in fact, Jehovah God.

III. THE DISTINCTIONS BETWEEN THE THREE PERSONS

The third point is the Three Persons of the Godhead are distinct from one another. By this I mean in manifestation the Father is not the Son or the Holy Spirit; the Son is not the Father or the Holy Spirit; and the Holy Spirit is not the Father or the Son. In the essence each Person is God, but in the revealing of the Three each has a different identity.

A. DEFENSE OF THE USE OF THE TERM "PERSONS": Some object to the use of the term "Person" when speaking of the Godhead. For my part I have no problem with the word. Our English translators took the meaning of the Greek word "hupostasis" used in Hebrews 1.3 to be "person." There, in speaking of the Son being a reflection of Deity the text says: "Who being the brightness of his glory, and the express image of his person." There are many places in the scriptures where God is pictured as a Person. Although Moses could not behold the face of God the scripture infers God has a face when it says: "And the LORD spake unto Moses face to face, as a man speaketh unto his friend." There, the Deity is even compared to a man. Further, Jehovah tells Moses, "Thou canst not see my face: for there shall no man see me, and live." Still further, God says: "And it shall come to pass, while my glory passeth by, that I will put thee in a clift of the rock, and will cover thee with my hand while I pass by: And I will take away mine hand, and thou shalt see my back parts: but my face shall not be seen (Exodus 33.11, 20, 22-23)." So, God is presented as having a face, a hand, and a back part. He is also presented as having eyes: "For the ways of man are before the eyes of the Lord (Proverbs 5.21)." Further, in Psalm 18, He is presented as having ears, nostrils, a mouth, and feet. David, in distress,

said, "my cry came before him, even into his ears (verse 6)"; and: "There went up a smoke out of his nostrils, and fire out of his mouth devoured (verse 8)"; and: "He bowed the heavens also, and came down: and darkness was under his feet (verse 9)."

There is more. The prophet speaks of His arm in Isaiah 53.1: "Who hath believed our report? And to whom is the arm of the LORD revealed?" Add to these things the fact that in the Godhead there are both the Father and the Son. In human experience a father is a person and so is a son. Consistent with the language of the Bible, it should be easy to think of both the Father and Son as Persons.

It has already been proven the Spirit is a someone; not a "thing." Should it be pointed out the Bible is simply using anthropomorphic language when it speaks of the various body parts of God, and when it uses masculine pronouns to speak of God, I have no objection. However, that being the case, it appears to me completely consistent with anthropomorphic expressions to speak of the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit as Persons. Human language may often be found weak as a vehicle in describing God but the Lord has revealed some things about Himself in the written word, and if He is pleased to describe Himself sometimes like a man we ought not to object to using language that is in line with that description.

I realize the London Confession of Faith does not have the weight of authority that the Bible does, but the term was acceptable to our Baptist forefathers when they spoke of the Son of God as "the second person in the Holy Trinity" (Chapter 8, section 2). This suggests to me they also recognized a First Person as well as a Third Person. But anyone who continues to object to the term, I say use what words you will; only this do I require: be sure to distinguish between the three different manifestations. Because God so clearly manifests Himself differently when He presents Himself as the Father than He does when He presents Himself as the Son,

and when He presents Himself as the Holy Spirit, it is easy to see how Arians fall prey to their error; but to mix the Three into some indistinguishable lot as Unitarians do makes absolutely no sense at all in light of what the scriptures teach. To conclude from such passages as "I and my Father are one (John 10.30)" and "He that hath seen me hath seen the Father (John 14.9)" that there is no difference between the Father and the Son is to fail to see that even in the Oneness stated in these passages there is also a distinction made between two separate Personalities: the Son who spoke the words and the Father of whom He spoke. The Arians may need a lesson in basic arithmetic for inserting the article "a" before God in John 1.1, but the Unitarians need the same lesson if they cannot see that the Father is One Person and the Son is Another Person. One plus one equals two. And if there is no difference one wonders why Jesus did not simply command His disciples to immerse in the name of God rather than in the separate names of Father, Son, and Holy Ghost when He told them to baptize (Matthew 28.19). If Unitarians believe there are no differences in manifestation they ought to stop trying to support their position with scriptures that clearly teach the opposite. For my part it makes more sense to explain the Godhead in this manner: He is One God who has revealed Himself in Three distinct Personalities. Again, this position is consistent with what our earlier Baptist brethren set forth in the London Confession of Faith. In chapter 2, section 3, they spoke of the "three subsistences" as being "distinguished by several peculiar relative properties and personal relations."

B. GENERAL DISTINCTIONS BETWEEN THE THREE PERSONS: Let me now note several places in the scriptures where the Persons of the Godhead are plainly distinguished from each other. First, concerning the time of the Lord's baptism, the scripture says: "And Jesus, when he was baptized, went up straightway out of the water: and, lo, the heavens were opened unto him, and he saw the Spirit of God descending like a dove, and lighting upon him: And lo a voice from heaven, saying, This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased (Matthew 3.16-17)." Christ, the Son of God, is distinctly the

One who was baptized. Neither the Father nor the Spirit went down into or came up out of the water. Distinct from the others, the Father was not seen but His voice commended His Son. It was not the voice of the Spirit. Distinct from the others, the Spirit descended like a dove and lit upon the Son. It was not the Father that lit upon Christ. When Jesus was baptized each had His own distinct role.

Second, concerning Christ's words to His disciples, the scripture says: "And I will pray the Father, and he shall give you another Comforter, that he may abide with you for ever; Even the Spirit of truth (John 14.16-17)." It is Jesus, the Son, who said He would pray. The speaker is not the Father or the Holy Spirit. The Son does not say He will pray to Himself. He will pray outside Himself to His Father. The prayer concerns not the giving of the Father or the Son but the giving of the Holy Spirit. Again, in this text, each Person has His own identity.

Third, concerning the subject of blasphemy, Jesus draws a distinction between Himself and the Holy Spirit when He said: "whosoever speaketh a word against the Son of man, it shall be forgiven him: but whosoever speaketh against the Holy Ghost, it shall not be forgiven him, neither in this world, neither in the world to come (Matthew 12.32)." So it is that there is a provision made for pardon for speaking out against Christ, as the Jews often did, but there is none made for speaking out against the Holy Spirit.

I can go on and on with examples of this sort, but I hope these are sufficient to show that each Person in the Godhead is separate from the others. These are the words of the Bible, and we should have no problem acknowledging the differences between the Three.

At this time I may need to make another pause. I want to be sure that the doctrine I have presented is one that makes sense. I hope that at each step along the way what has been said has been shown to be consistent with

the scriptures. The first point has been to show there is but One God. The second point has been to show that although there is but One God, He is manifested in Three Persons. The third point has been to show these Three Persons are revealed differently from each other. Yet, I realize, as plain as this may have seemed as I have laid out the case for each point, if you take a step back and look rationally at all of the points together, you may be saying to yourself, "this does not make any sense." How can God be but One and yet Three? And if each Person is distinct from the others, isn't this tantamount to saying God is different from God? At first, what I have put together may sound like mumbo jumbo. Well, let me try to take the senselessness out of all of this. I shall do so with a simple example. It is something that we know about through daily contact. Yet, when the one thing appears to us in its various forms it is so common we do not consider it to be strange. I have reference to the chemical compound, H₂O. We come into contact with water all the time. We know it to be in three different forms. It sometimes appears to us as a liquid. At other times it appears to us as a solid. Still, at other times, it appears to us as a gas. It does not matter what form it is in. It is no more and it is no less of the same, one essence, no matter what form it takes. Yet, we have no trouble at all making distinctions between each of the forms. When we see it in a bucket in a frozen state we call it "ice." When we see it in a glass in a liquid state we call it "water." When we see it rising in the air above a pan of boiling water we call it "steam." Even though there is but one essence, our minds readily separate between the three different forms. It does not even come into our minds to think this does not make sense. Now, substitute the same principles of water and apply them to the Godhead and you should see there is nothing gibberish about the case that I have made.