

# **PREEMINENT ROLE OF GOD THE FATHER IN THE TRINITY: WHAT ABOUT THE COUNCIL OF NICEA AND THE NICENE CREED? - PART 1**

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The Purpose of Part 1 of this Two-Part Paper. Part 1 serves to introduce this topic and to mention earlier papers that are relevant to this paper and to give several excerpts from those papers.

All quotations were taken from the New American Standard Bible, 1995 edition, unless otherwise noted. Sometimes I make comments in the middle of quotations using brackets [ ] or [[ ]] to make them more obvious. I am using straight quotation marks ("), hyphens (-) instead of dashes, and a few other things like this because some of the internet sites where I post these articles require it. Also they don't allow footnotes. Cf., e.g., means "compare, for example."

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MOST OF THE EXCERPTS AND COMMENTS THAT FOLLOW TO THE END OF THIS PAPER ARE RELEVANT TO THE MEANING OF "HOMOOUSIOS" IN THE NICENE CREED OF AD 325. I believe this is very important! Large numbers of Christians believe the Nicene Creed proves that God the Son cannot be eternally subordinate to God the Father in His role, but it seems clear that at least most of those who signed the Nicene Creed, in agreement with the pre-Nicene Christian Fathers (and, much more important, in agreement with the Bible), believed that God the Son is eternally subordinate to God the Father in His role, but not in a way that denies the full deity of the Son.

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INTRODUCTION AND CONCLUSION. I believe it is quite important for us to know that the Bible teaches the preeminent role of God the Father in the Trinity. It is an important doctrine and quite relevant to many aspects of our Christian lives, very much including prayer and worship. For one thing, we should typically pray to the Father (see my paper "Who Do We Pray To?" on my internet site [Google to Karl Kemp Teaching]), and we should worship Him first and foremost (see my paper "Who Do We Worship?"). What the New Testament has to say about the respective roles of God the Father and God the Son before the incarnation confirms the preeminent role of God the Father. And everything that the Old Testament says about the preincarnate Son of God (the Angel/Messenger of Yahweh and the man dressed in linen of Ezek. 9:2, 3, 11; 10:2, 6 and Dan. 10:5; 12:7) fits perfectly with the preeminent role of God the Father and the subordinate role of God the Son. All agree that the Son was subordinate to the Father during the brief time He lived on the earth as a man, the God-man. What the Bible has to say about the respective roles of God the Father and God the Son during this present age, and on into the eternal state that follows the millennial kingdom, also confirms the preeminent role of God the Father. The Son boasts in the preeminent role of the Father. Probably more than anything else the Son wants to see, He wants to see the Father's will fully accomplished and the Father glorified to the max. For one thing, it is probably

beyond our ability to comprehend the level of love and respect that the Son has for the Father, and the Father for the Son.

I appreciate the fact that those who deny any eternal subordination of the Son to the Father are concerned that we don't deny the full deity of the Son. His deity has been repeatedly attacked by the devil and those who listen to him. However, I am totally convinced that we are not denying the full deity of the Son by speaking of the eternal preeminent role of God the Father (the eternal subordinate role of God the Son). We need the balanced truth of what the Bible teaches.

Since I became a born-again Christian in 1964, I have always believed in the FULL deity of the Son of God and (as far as I can remember) that He has a role eternally subordinate to the Father in the Trinity. I was taught the deity of the Son, and I believe it is clearly taught in the Bible. I don't know that I was taught that the Son has a role eternally subordinate to the Father. I believe I learned that mostly through my study of the Bible. I have discussed many of the relevant passages of the Bible in earlier papers that deal with the Trinity. See below here in Part 1 of this present paper.

Section 1 of the 29 sections that are included in Part 2 of this paper (see the Contents of Part 2 of this paper), which is the article by Wayne Grudem, lists many of the Biblical passages that speak of the eternally subordinate role of the Son to the Father. I'll include a six-paragraph excerpt from section 1 of Part 2 this paper: "On page 226 Grudem makes it clear that he is speaking of a 'relational subordination' that accompanies equality in being or essence ["ontological equality"],' and that he is speaking of a 'submission that is not oppressive but is pure and holy.' Based on what I have read, I believe that Grudem, based on his understanding of the "ontological equality" of the three Persons, would agree with Athanasius (AD296-373) and Kevin Giles (we'll speak quite a bit about both of them in this paper) that the Son shares an identical, same-substance (oneness, but not modalism) unity with the Father that cannot be divided. It is significant, however, that Grudem makes it clear that he doesn't agree with Athanasius and Giles (and many others) that (because of this identical, same-substance [oneness, but not modalism] unity that cannot be divided) the Son cannot be, and is not, eternally subordinate to the Father in His role. And Grudem doesn't agree that there is only one center of consciousness in the Trinity, with one will and one mind.

I admit I don't know enough to fully understand or define the Trinity, but the Full deity of the Son is clear to me, along with His eternal subordination to the Father in His role, and I cannot agree that there is only one center of consciousness with one will and one mind in the Trinity. IF it were true, as Athanasius and Giles have taught/teach, that the Son's sharing the identical, same-substance (oneness, but not modalism) unity that cannot be

divided rules out any eternal subordination of the Son to the Father, and requires us to believe that there is only one center of consciousness in the Trinity, with one will and one mind, then I would have to say that the Son does not share that unity (that unity as understood by Athanasius and Giles).

I believe it is possible that Giles is right to say that Grudem cannot legitimately believe in the identical, same-substance (oneness, but not modalism) unity of the Son with the Father that cannot be divided and also believe that the Son is subordinate to the Father in His role, or believe in three centers of consciousness in the Trinity with three wills and three minds. I'm not going to try to directly or fully answer this question in this paper (but I'll deal with this topic quite a bit, including in the next paragraph); it's over my head; but I am satisfied to be able to say that I believe the Bible clearly teaches the eternal preeminent role of God the Father (and eternal subordinate role of God the Son), and that the Bible does not teach that there is one center of consciousness with one will and one mind in the Trinity. Furthermore, as we discuss quite a bit in this paper, it is significant that the pre-Nicene Christians and most of the Christians gathered to Nicea in AD 325 DID NOT AGREE WITH ATHANASIOS (OR GILES) THAT THERE IS AN IDENTICAL, SAME-SUBSTANCE (ONENESS, BUT NOT MODALISM) UNITY OF THE THREE PERSONS THAT CANNOT BE DIVIDED, OR ON THE ONE CENTER OF CONSCIOUSNESS OF THE THREE PERSONS, WITH ONE WILL AND ONE MIND, AND THEY CLEARLY BELIEVED IN THE ETERNAL SUBORDINATE ROLE OF GOD THE SON.

As we discuss in this paper, we don't want to overstate or put too much emphasis on the oneness/unity of the being, substance, essence of the Trinity (it seems that this has happened a lot), which is a topic that we learn very little about from the Bible (which leaves a lot of room for philosophic speculation); we don't really have a need to know much about those details. The Bible speaks mostly regarding the words, actions, and relationships of the three Persons as they interact with one another and with the world they created (especially with the people of God). The Bible puts all the emphasis on the three Persons, but guards against the idea of three Gods.

I need to point out that Athanasius and Giles (and it's not just them) are speaking of the three Persons SHARING the identical, one, same substance, essence, nature, being that cannot be divided. (They are not speaking of three Persons each having the same divine substance, essence, nature that goes with each of them being deity/God, but of them SHARING that ONE substance, essence, nature, being that cannot be divided.) Significantly, based on what I have read, this was a new viewpoint that wasn't promoted until after the Council of Nicea. As we will discuss, it wasn't promoted at the Council of Nicea. Athanasius could have been the first Christian to promote this new viewpoint; if

not, he was one of the first. And it is significant that this new viewpoint wasn't needed to refute the heretical teaching of Arius. The Council of Nicea was convened for the most part to deal with the controversy regarding Arius and those who followed his teaching.

If you push the new viewpoint a little, as Athanasius and Giles did/do, it is rather easy to come up with new ideas like there is no way that one of the three Persons who share the identical, one, same-substance, essence, nature, being that cannot be divided can have authority over the other Persons, and that there can only be one center of consciousness with one will and one mind in the Trinity. I clearly have to reject the ideas that the Son is not subordinate to the Father in His role and that there is one center of consciousness with one will and one mind in the Trinity, ideas that are held by many Christians. Anyway, it is totally clear that one way, or another, the Son is of the substance of the Father (He was not created out of nothing as Arius said) and He is deity with the Father in a totally full sense." (This is the end of the six-paragraph excerpt.)

Section 2 of Part 2 this paper, which discusses Phil. 2:5-11, is quite important. In Phil. 2:1-11 the apostle Paul was exhorting his readers with the need to be humble: If the Lord Jesus, God the Son, could GREATLY humble Himself to do the Father's will, which involved great condescension and suffering, we certainly need to humble ourselves before God and one another. Of key importance for the topic of this paper, I believe Phil. 2:6 speaks of the fact that the Son did not grasp after equality with God (an equality that He did not have) at a time before He became a man, the God-man. I quote from a Greek scholar who confirms this interpretation of Phil. 2:6 and gets into the details of the Greek to show why we should understand Phil. 2:6 this way. This scholar, Denny Burk, wrote "Christ's Functional Subordination in Philippians 2:6," which is chapter 2 in "The New Evangelical Subordinationism?" and he has written a book that deals with the specific details of Greek grammar that apply here, "Articular Infinitives in the Greek of the New Testament."

One reason this is so important is that many, including Augustine, use Phil. 2:6 as a, or the, key verse to try to show that the Son had equality with the Father before His incarnation. It is true, of course, that God the Son was always equal with God the Father in the sense that He was God/deity with God the Father, but He has also had a role subordinate to that of the Father. In Phil. 2:6 the apostle Paul was denying that the Son was grasping for a status where He would be equal with the Father and no longer be subordinate to Him. The Son did the exact opposite of that: He humbled Himself to do the Father's will. First He humbled Himself to become a man, the God-man. I don't believe we are able to begin to comprehend what a drastic change that meant for Him. Then He humbled Himself further, in submission to the Father's will, to become the

Lamb of God. Again, I don't believe we are able to begin to comprehend how very difficult that assignment was.

(As we continue, I'll mention several things that were discussed in the six-paragraph excerpt that I included above, but these things are important enough to bear some repetition. We desperately need the balanced truth of what the Bible teaches.) All twenty-nine sections of Part 2 of this paper are quite relevant to the topic of this paper, but some are more important than others. I believe the evidence is overwhelming that the Son of God is eternally subordinate to God the Father. The primary evidence is what the Bible has to say on this topic, but it is quite significant that the pre-Nicene Christians (before the Council of Nicea in AD 325) agreed with this viewpoint, and it is quite significant that most of the bishops who signed the Nicene Creed also agreed with this viewpoint. I discuss this last point a lot in this paper because this information (this important information) is rather new to me, and I believe it will be new to many of my readers. Based on what I have read recently, many Christians, probably the majority, wrongly believe that the Council of Nicea gave us a creed that rules out any eternal subordination of the Son to the Father.

I was surprised a few years ago (and in doing the research to write this paper) when I began to see how many Christians, including quite a few evangelicals, don't believe that the Son is eternally subordinate to the Father in His role. Kevin Giles is a key leader motivated to argue against the eternal subordination of the Son to the Father. He has an article in the book, "The New Evangelical Subordinationism?" I'll quote a little from that article as we continue in this "Introduction and Conclusion," but I don't have a separate section to deal with that article in this paper; however, in sections 28 and 29 I interact with two of his books that deal with this topic. Giles calls himself an evangelical (see page 265 of his article); he might even consider himself a conservative evangelical theologian (but I doubt it); however I am sure that he doesn't consider himself to be as conservative as the "conservative evangelical theologians" that he strongly criticizes in his article and in his books.

Kevin has done his homework, and he makes some important points. It seems clear, for example, that he can rightly claim that he is saying what key Christian leaders like Athanasius (AD296-373) and Augustine (AD354-430) have said on this topic, and what the Athanasian Creed says. However, I have to strongly disagree when he says that Christians who believe in the eternal subordination of the Son are holding a heretical viewpoint. He uses some strong language.

I'll quote what Giles says (on page 278 of his article in "The New Evangelical Subordinationism?") about the Bible and the idea of the eternal subordination of the Son

to the Father: "To quote to me...John 14:28, 1 Cor. 11:3 and 15:28, texts my debating opponents think eternally subordinate the Son to the Father, causes me little concern. Along with Athanasius, the Cappadocians, Augustine, and Calvin I see my challenge as explaining how these seemingly exceptional scriptural comments, and possibly a few others [It is a lot more than a "possibly a few others," as this paper shows.], can be reconciled and harmonized with what is primary in Scripture, namely the full divinity and omnipotence of the Son." I believe his "debating opponents" believe in "the full divinity and omnipotence of the Son." The fact that there is some eternal subordination of the Son to the Father in His role does not lessen the fact that the Son is deity with the Father in a totally full sense. THE SON IS NOT SUPPOSED TO BE THE FATHER, OR A BROTHER OF THE FATHER, OR AN IDENTICAL DUPLICATE (A CLONE) OF THE FATHER: HE IS GOD THE SON! AND THAT PERFECTLY! On page 282 Giles says, "...the Scriptures do not teach the eternal subordination in being or authority of the Son to the Father. The Son is co-equal without any caveats."

It is significant that Giles agrees that the pre-Nicene Fathers believed in the eternal subordination of the Son to the Father (see section 28 in this paper). It is clear, however, that he is sure they were wrong. I am confident that they were right, while admitting that there are places where they overstated the eternal subordination of the Son. Where did they get what they believed for the most part? From the Bible and the apostles, who were sent by God to lay the foundation for Christianity, which included giving us the all-important New Testament.

Giles consistently makes it clear that he believes the Nicene Creed totally supports his viewpoint. Before doing this study I hadn't thought much about or studied the Nicene Creed. When I started getting into the details of the Council of Nicea, I could see that the evidence strongly supports the idea that the original intent of the Nicene Creed doesn't offer any support for Giles viewpoint. The primary intent of the creed was to refute the teaching of Arius that the Son was created out of nothing; that He did not always exist; that He was not deity with the Father. It is true though that later, through the influence of Athanasius, the Cappadocians, and Augustine, many began to interpret (actually reinterpret) the Nicene Creed to include ideas like the Son cannot be eternally subordinate to the Father because of their overstated and/or overly strong emphasis on the same-substance unity of the three Persons of the Trinity.

The evidence strongly supports the viewpoint that an identical, same-substance (oneness, but not modalism) unity of the three Persons that cannot be divided was not included in the Nicene Creed. Several scholars I quote in this paper point out that that much fuller meaning was something new to the history of Christianity. Many, including Giles, believe that "something new" represents the truth. I believe it has led to some

substantial errors in understanding the Trinity. I admit, however, that we do need to emphasize the unity of the three Persons of the Trinity (we don't believe in three Gods), but in a way where we do not overstate and/or overemphasize that unity to come up with new ideas that don't line up with the Bible. Giles and many others say that the Bible argues against the eternal subordination of the Son. I don't see how! Full deity of the Son, Yes! Eternally subordinate to the Father in His role, Yes!

Many of the sections of this paper deal with the intent of the Council of Nicea and the Nicene Creed (especially see sections 10, 11, 12, 14, 15, 21, 23, 24, 25, and 26). Keep in mind that the pre-Nicene fathers believed in the eternal subordination of the Son to the Father (Giles agrees). How is he so sure that most of the bishops at Nicea would be ready to accept a new teaching that included a denial of the eternal subordination of the Son to the Father. I haven't seen any evidence that anyone was promoting that new teaching until quite a few years after the Council of Nicea, even if some (including Athanasius) may have believed that controversial new teaching at the time of the Council of Nicea. Furthermore, and significantly, that new teaching wasn't needed to refute Arius and his followers at Nicea. By the way, the fact that some scholars make the point that this was a new teaching in the history of the church doesn't mean that they all think the new teaching was/is wrong. I, in agreement with many in our day, especially large numbers of evangelicals, believe it was wrong to deny the eternal subordination of the Son to the Father, for one thing.

This is the end of the Introduction and Conclusion of this paper. I believe that if you read this entire paper you will have enough information to come to a solid, rather balanced understanding of the subordination of the Son to the Father. But again, we don't have the information or ability to fully understand the triune God, and especially not before we are glorified. It's easy to speak of all the details about the Trinity, and it's easy to be wrong too. We need to stay humble before God and one another. I'll try to heed this important advice in this paper. Anyway, I believe it is clear that the Son of God is subordinate to God the Father in His role as Son, and I believe it is quite important for us to know this. It is very relevant information (important doctrine) that will significantly affect our lives as Christians, very much including our prayer and worship.

EARLIER PAPERS THAT DEAL WITH THE TOPIC OF THIS PAPER TO SOME EXTENT. I have dealt with the Trinity, including the preeminent role of God the Father in earlier papers. I won't repeat much of that information in this present paper, so if you want the full picture you should read those articles first. These papers/articles are all available on my internet site (Google to Karl Kemp Teaching). The first paper was "Who Do We Worship? (Oneness/Jesus-only Worship Songs)," published in 2007 and slightly

revised in 2009 and 2011, 20 pages. The primary point I try to make in the first paper is that we should worship God the Father first and foremost because He has the preeminent role in the Trinity. Yes, we must worship the Son of God (and the Holy Spirit), but I believe something is wrong when most of the worship (including the words of the worship songs) is directed to the Son, the Lord Jesus, which often happens in our day in many places. I deal with the fact that much of this has come from the influence of oneness Christians, who don't believe God the Father, God the Son, and God the Holy Spirit exist as distinct Persons; they believe there is only one Person, Jesus. For one thing, as I document in this paper, many of the popular worship songs used by those who believe in the Trinity were written by oneness Christians. You cannot expect them to write songs to worship God the Father, when they don't believe He exists as a distinct Person.

I'll quote two paragraphs from the Introduction of the first paper: It is super-important for us to believe the balanced truth of what the Bible teaches on every topic, but some topics are more important than others, and what the Bible teaches about God is certainly one of the most important topics. All of us Christians need to humble ourselves before God and seek Him for the balanced truth of what the Bible teaches. It's unbelievable how many different opinions we have on essentially every topic, and (amazingly) just about everybody knows that somehow they and their group already have the balanced truth, even if nobody else does. Much theology has been done in the flesh, which includes pride, and there is a strong demonic input. We desperately need the balanced truth! Every error damages the body of Christ - some errors cause great damage - and robs God of glory, glory we owe Him. Things wrong in the body of Christ also make it more difficult for people to come to know God and His truth and salvation through the church.

It's a great blessing to learn that we have been believing and/or doing something wrong. Then we have an opportunity to make the necessary corrections, which will work for the glory of God and for our great good. We certainly don't want to learn after this life is over that we were believing and/or doing things wrong.

The third paper that I wrote on this topic (but I'll list it second) is "Who Do We Pray To?" (published in July, 2011, 33 pages). I'll quote the first six pages, which serve to introduce the topic of the paper:

This paper can stand by itself, but it was written to supplement, and to help confirm, two of my papers that have already been written, "Who Do We Worship? (Oneness/Jesus-only Worship Songs)" and "The Name Yahweh and God the Father and God the Son:

The Name Yahweh and Listing of Some of the Large Number of Passages in the Hebrew Old Testament Where We Can See God the Son Along with God the Father." (We'll look at that paper next.) The information contained in those papers also supplements and confirms what is written in this paper. Also, after working on this paper, I decided that I need to write another companion paper, "More on the Trinity: Some Key Passages from the New Testament Where We See the Full Deity and Preexistence of God the Son with God the Father and Some Key Bible Passages Used to Teach a Oneness View of God." (We will discuss that paper as we continue.)

An understanding of God the Father and God the Son (and the Trinity) is extremely important. We are dealing with a topic at the very heart of Christianity. This topic is also controversial. ((I had a footnote: "For one thing, the devil does everything he can do to confuse our understanding of Christianity, very much including what it teaches about the triune God, God the Father, God the Son, and God the Holy Spirit. We must humble our hearts and seek God for the balanced truth of what the Bible teaches on this super-important topic. We have to be very careful who we listen to.")) It seems to me that the Bible, though it doesn't answer every question, clearly teaches the Trinity. And this has been the orthodox view of Christianity from the beginning. (This is not to say that the early orthodox Christian writers agreed on every detail.) The Trinity was not clearly revealed in the Old Testament, but when we read the Old Testament in the light of the New Testament, we can see God the Son many places throughout the Old Testament. See the paper that is listed next: "The Name Yahweh and God the Father and God the Son." That paper and this present paper are for the most part limited to the Persons of God the Father and God the Son, but I fully agree that the Bible (especially the New Testament) teaches the full deity of the Person of the Holy Spirit.

We must have a *biblical* understanding of the Trinity. We cannot define the Trinity to fit our ideas, as it often happens in our day. I'm often amazed when Christians tell me what they think the Trinity means. We must avoid the idea of three Gods, for one thing, but we must also understand that the Bible (especially the New Testament) clearly teaches three distinct Persons who speak to one another, and about one another, and interact with one another in various ways. All three Persons always existed (before our world and time were created), and they always will exist. God the Son and God the Holy Spirit are fully deity with God the Father, not having been created. Each of the three Persons has different roles, and God the Father is clearly preeminent in His role, as this paper [and all of these papers] demonstrate. For one thing, the Lord Jesus and the Holy Spirit both intercede for us before God the Father. What a blessing!

When I speak of God the Father being eternally preeminent in His role, I mean the same thing as when I speak of God the Son being eternally subordinate to God the

Father in His role. For the Lord Jesus to be eternally subordinate in His role does not mean that He is inferior. The fact that God the Son and God the Holy Spirit are eternally subordinate to God the Father in their roles helps explain why Christians don't think in terms of three Gods. Three Persons, Yes! Three Gods, No! The preeminent role of God the Father is strongly emphasized in some verses. See, for example, John 14:28; 17:1-5; Rom. 16:26, 27; 1 Cor. 8:4-6; 11:3; 15:27, 28; Eph. 4:4-6; Phil. 2:5-11; 1 Tim. 1:17; 2:5; 6:13-16; and Jude 1:24, 25. These passages (and there are quite a few more similar passages) are all quoted in this paper. In 1 Tim. 1:17, for example, God the Father is called "the only God." The apostle Paul is not denying the full deity of the Lord Jesus Christ (or the Holy Spirit) in 1 Tim. 1:17, but he is emphasizing the eternal preeminent role of God the Father, as he (and other writers of the New Testament) does on occasion. We don't have to deny the eternal preeminent role of God the Father to believe in the full deity of God the Son (and the Holy Spirit). We desperately need the balanced truth of what the Bible teaches!

It is important for the reader to understand (to believe) that I am not writing this paper to attack anyone. Quite the opposite! I very much want this paper to be a blessing to all the people of God. I'm praying that many (as many as possible) will be blessed by this paper and (anywhere it is required) will come to a more balanced view of what the Bible teaches on this super-important topic. It is a great blessing to come to a more balanced view of what the Bible teaches on every topic. For one thing, it is far better for God to correct us now than when we stand before Him at the end of this age. We desperately need the balanced truth of what the Bible teaches on every topic, and the topic of this paper is very important. For some, this paper will serve to confirm what they believe already. First and foremost I want this paper to please God and to accomplish His purposes, by His grace, and for His glory. In Jesus' name! Thanks be to God the Father, God the Son, and God the Holy Spirit! Anywhere I am missing the balanced truth I want to be corrected.

The New Testament teaches, as I will demonstrate in this paper, that Christians should typically pray to God the Father in the name of Jesus. The primary reason we should typically pray to God the Father is because of His eternal preeminent role in the Trinity. We are exhorted to look to God the Father for everything we need, including our asking for things in prayer, through our saving union with God the Son, in and by the indwelling Spirit of God. Even when we don't say the words "in the name of Jesus," and that is very common in the New Testament, it must be understood that our relationship with God the Father and our access to Him as His born-again children has come to us, and is maintained for us, through the Lord Jesus Christ and His atoning death. Of course, there could not have been an atoning death if not for the salvation plan of God the Father and the incarnation of God the Son through the virgin Mary and by the Holy

Spirit. Our salvation also required His resurrection, His ascension to the right hand of God the Father, His receiving from the Father the promised Holy Spirit, and His pouring forth the Spirit, starting on the Day of Pentecost (see Acts 2:33, for example).

We desperately need unity in the body of Christ (which embraces all true Christians), but it must be unity in the truth. We cannot unite to any significant or satisfactory extent unless we unite in the balanced truth of what the Bible teaches on the basic doctrines of Christianity. I am not saying, however, that we should remain aloof from other Christians until we fully agree regarding the Trinity, for example. But the Trinity is a very important topic because our God is a very important topic. Many (or most) of us Christians need to humble ourselves and seek God for the balanced truth of what the Bible teaches. I have observed over the years that many (or most) Christians have the mistaken idea that they already are holding the balanced truth on all the basic Christian doctrines, and they have closed their minds. We should not assume we have it right because we have been taught a certain view and we have a few verses that seem to back up what we believe on a topic. We could be misinterpreting those verses (that often happens with true Christians), and we desperately need the BALANCED truth of ALL that the Bible teaches on each topic. Furthermore, we should not assume that we have everything right just because God has blessed us and used us. He is merciful, for one thing.

One reason I decided to write this paper is that I see more and more Christians praying to Jesus most of the time, if not all of the time. And I'm speaking in large part about Christians who would say they believe in the Trinity. Does it make any difference who we pray to? (Does it make any difference who we direct our worship to?) Does it really make any difference what the New Testament has to say on this topic? Based on what the New Testament teaches, I have to believe it makes a very significant difference. We should typically pray to God the Father because this is the pattern established in the New Testament, as I demonstrate in this paper. And, significantly, this pattern is based (at least to some significant extent) on the fact that (even though the full deity of God the Son and God the Spirit is clearly taught in the Bible), God the Father has an obvious preeminent role in the Trinity, according to the Bible (very much including the New Testament).

This paper strongly confirms what I said in my paper, "Who Do We Worship? (Oneness/Jesus-only Worship Songs)." This present paper, by itself, should suffice to demonstrate that God the Father and God the Son (and the Holy Spirit) are distinct Persons in the Trinity and that God the Father has the preeminent role. (For one thing, in most of the passages that are quoted in this study, God the Father and the Lord Jesus Christ are mentioned as distinct Persons.) It seems clear to me that the Bible shows that, even as we should typically pray to God the Father, we should worship God

the Father first and foremost, including in our worship songs. The more we are in divine order, the more God (and His Son and the Holy Spirit) will be glorified and His will will be accomplished in us and through us.

I am not suggesting that if we don't make it a top priority to deal with this problem that everything is going to fall apart, but I believe this is a serious problem that we need to HUMBLY and PRAYERFULLY deal with. For one thing, this problem seems to be getting worse all the time. We have to start somewhere. I am not the judge, and I didn't write this paper (or any of my papers) to attack any Christians, including Christians who deny the Trinity (and who say, for example, that Jesus [one Person] is the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit). I wrote this paper to exhort every true Christian, and especially ministers, to seriously consider the balanced truth of what the Bible teaches on these super-important things.

Clearly this topic is controversial, but we cannot afford to ignore such important topics. We aren't competent to fully understand the Trinity, and especially not during this present age before we are glorified, but there is no excuse for the large amounts of error, confusion, and controversy that exist in our day among true Christians. All of us, and especially ministers, need to humble ourselves and seek God for the balanced truth of what His Word teaches on this topic, and on every topic.

This article is limited, for the most part, to what the New Testament teaches regarding "Who Do We Pray To?" My procedure was to read through the New Testament (most of it twice) and list the passages that seemed relevant to the topic. I didn't list every passage that mentions prayer addressed to God the Father, but I listed most of them, except for in the Gospels and the book of Revelation. I don't believe I missed any passages where prayer was addressed to the Lord Jesus. (If I missed any it was not on purpose.) For this study, I'm using the word prayer in a full sense that includes addressing thanks or praise or glory directly to God the Father or God the Son.

I skipped many of the prayers in the Gospels for this study. Many of those prayers are prayers of Jesus to God the Father, and apart from the glorious words of the apostle Thomas to the resurrected Christ in John 20:28, "My Lord and my God," there aren't any prayers addressed to Jesus in the Gospels. Also, I didn't include any passages from the book of Revelation. I didn't notice any passages that are especially relevant to this study. For one thing, so much of the worship in the book of Revelation addressed to God the Father, and sometimes to God the Son, comes from the four living creatures, the twenty-four elders (who are high-level angelic beings), multitudes of angels, etc.

In this paper I'll typically quote the passages I list, often with some discussion, always aiming for the balanced truth of what the New Testament teaches. You might argue about my interpretation for a few of the passages I listed, but most of the passages are so clear that I don't think there is much room to argue. The New Testament is quite clear on this topic, for which I am thankful.

This study confirms that it is biblical to pray to Jesus (which serves as a very strong confirmation of His deity), but that most of our prayers should be addressed to God the Father. I found five prayers addressed to the Lord Jesus in the New Testament, and two prayers that were addressed to both God the Father and the Lord Jesus, for a total of seven prayers addressed to the Lord Jesus. (Actually, as I'll explain below, I found eight prayers addressed to the Lord Jesus, but since two of those prayers are different because of the context I'll just count them as one prayer for the purposes of this study.) Seven prayers is ten percent of the total number of prayers I listed (sixty-eight). Sixty one of the prayers, ninety percent of the total number of prayers, are addressed to God the Father. It really isn't very important for this study whether eighty-seven percent, or ninety percent, or ninety-three percent of the prayers are addressed to God the Father. I am not looking for scientific precision in this study. (If I counted eight prayers addressed to the Lord Jesus that would yield twelve percent of the prayers being addressed to Him.)

Five of the prayers that are addressed to Jesus are found in Paul's epistles to the Thessalonians, and significantly, both of those epistles confirm the eternal preeminent role of God the Father. Another prayer addressed to Jesus is found in a brief, but important, doxology in 2 Tim. 4:18. I also included the prayer that Stephen prayed to the glorified Lord Jesus, who appeared to him in a vision while he was being stoned to death (in Acts 7:54-60). And I included the glorious words that Thomas spoke to the resurrected Lord Jesus in John 20:28, which can be considered a type of prayer, using the word prayer in a broad sense. Because the resurrected Jesus appeared to Stephen and to Thomas it was very natural that they would pray to Him, rather than to God the Father, I thought it would be reasonable to count those two prayers as one prayer for the purposes of this study.

The results of this study are about what we should expect since the Bible makes it clear that the Lord Jesus Christ is eternally subordinate to God the Father in His role as Son; in His role as the One through whom God the Father created all matter, beings, and things; in His role as our great high priest at the right hand of God the Father, etc. As I mentioned, this paper also confirms that God the Father and God the Son (and God the Holy Spirit) are distinct Persons in the Trinity. And we can learn a lot about prayer from the passages that are quoted in this paper.

A comment on the Use of the Words "God" and "Jesus" in the New Testament: The name Jesus is used 911 times in the New Testament. The name is always used of God the Son. (The name Jesus is used for another man in Col. 4:11.) It is never used for God the Father, or the Holy Spirit, or the Trinity. The Greek noun "theos" is translated God or God's 1,294 times in the New Testament. Out of all those uses there are some five to ten uses (depending on how a few verses are interpreted) where the word is used of the Lord Jesus Christ, the God-man. We are very thankful for those few verses that powerfully demonstrate the deity of the Lord Jesus Christ. We should also be thankful for the fact that those verses typically make it clear that He is a Person distinct from God the Father. (Maybe there is a better word to use than Person, but I don't know of any better word to use.)

I'll also quote three paragraphs from "Some Concluding Summarizing Comments": I don't believe we would have any problem if ten percent of the prayers in our day were being addressed to the Lord Jesus Christ, or probably not even if it were twenty percent. We do have a problem, however, when most of the prayers, if not all of the prayers, in many circles are being addressed to the Lord Jesus. We can't do better than follow the pattern established by the Word of God, which is based (at least to some significant extent) on the rather strongly emphasized preeminent role of God the Father taught in the Bible. I should also mention that if we should pray to God the Father first and foremost, which we should, we should also worship Him first and foremost too. God the Father has an eternal preeminent role in the Trinity, and I am totally convinced that the Lord Jesus Christ and the Holy Spirit say Amen! to that.

I suspect that the Lord Jesus Christ Himself is the Person most concerned about His being in the spotlight that God the Father should be in. And although God the Father is certainly concerned for the glory of His unique Son, I am sure that He cannot be satisfied when things are out of divine order.

I am very thankful for the verses that demonstrate that it is biblical for us to pray to Jesus. For one thing, as I mentioned, those verses serve to further confirm the super-important deity of the Lord Jesus Christ, which is so often challenged by the devil and those who listen to him in our day, and throughout the history of Christianity. This is the end of what I'll say here regarding my paper "Who Do We Pray To." I recommend you read the paper, and all of the papers on the super-important topic of God.

Now we will consider my article "The Name Yahweh and God the Father and God the Son: The Name 'Yahweh' and a Listing of Some of the Large Number of Passages in

the Hebrew Old Testament Where We Can See God the Son along with God the Father (published in September, 2009; expanded August, 2011, 9 pages).

At the beginning of this article (covering one and one-half pages) I discuss the meaning of the Hebrew noun "Yahweh." We get into the details of the Hebrew. I'll just quote the first paragraph here (Although the name is very important, and interesting, I don't believe the name in itself helps us understand the Trinity.): THE NAME "YAHWEH." By taking this very significant and glorious name for Himself, God (the God of creation, the God of the Bible, the God of Abraham, the God of Israel) was boldly declaring, for one thing, that He, and He alone, is God. (That bold declaration didn't go over well in the ancient world where essentially all the people believed in many gods. They didn't want to hear that Yahweh, and He alone, is God any more than the people of the world today want to be told that the only way to be saved is through the Lord Jesus Christ.) By taking that name God was also declaring His eternal existence, that He always was and always will be. The name Yahweh applies first and foremost to God the Father, but like with the word "God" in the New Testament, it is used quite a few times for God the Son, as I will demonstrate in this article. The fact that the name can be used for the Son strongly confirms His deity.

Most of this article is devoted to looking at passages in the Old Testament where we - with light from the New Testament - can see God the Son along with God the Father. I'll quote a paragraph from page 2: Many more such passages could be listed than those I list in this article. It is significant that many of these passages demonstrate that God the Son existed with God the Father and that He was very active in the years before His incarnation. (I had a lengthy footnote dealing with oneness/modalism that I won't include here.) Some of them show that He is deity and always existed with God the Father, but those super-important facts weren't all that clear in Old Testament days, without the light from the first coming of the Lord Jesus Christ and the New Testament. We know that this other Person is God the Son (in His preincarnate state) mostly because of the New Testament. But it is clear in the Old Testament that this Person is a Person distinct from the One we typically call God the Father (who was very often called Yahweh in the Old Testament), and it is quite significant that the deity of this Person often shines through in the Old Testament, as I will demonstrate in this article. Several places He is called Yahweh, for example, but not in a way that confuses Him with the Person of God the Father. Essentially all of these passages show that the Son has a role subordinate to the Father, but the Bible (and especially the New Testament) makes it clear that He is fully deity with the Father (and the Spirit).

My fourth relevant paper on this topic is titled, "More on the Trinity: Some Key Passages from the New Testament Where We See the Full Deity and Preexistence of God the

Son with God the Father and Some Key Bible Passages Used to Teach a Oneness View of God" (published in 2015), 33 pages). There are two headings in this paper. The first one is "Some Key Passages from the New Testament where We See the Full Deity and Preexistence of God the Son as a Person Distinct from God the Father." The passages quoted and discussed under this heading are: JOHN 1:1-18 (six pages); JOHN 8:58 (with 8:57, 59); JOHN 17:1-5; PHILIPPIANS 2:5-11; COLOSSIANS 1:15-17; and HEBREWS 1:1-3. The second heading in this paper is "Some Key Bible Passages Used to Teach a Oneness View of God." The passages quoted and discussed under this heading are: DEUTERONOMY 6:4 (three pages); ISAIAH 9:6; JOHN 10:30; 12:44, 45; and 14:7, 9-11; First I'll list some verses from this Gospel (John's) that show that God the Father and God the Son are distinct Persons (I quote many of these verses and discuss some of them); I'll also list some verses from the Gospel of John that explain what Jesus meant when He said that He and the Father are one, and that He who has seen Him has seen the Father, and similar expressions (It is clear that He didn't mean that they were the same Person; I quote many of these verses and discuss some of them); ACTS 2:38 (with Acts 2:36-42; Acts 8:16; 10:48; 19:5; 1 Cor. 1:13 and Matt. 28:19); 1 CORINTHIANS 8:4 (with 8:5, 6); and COLOSSIANS 2:8-10.

I'll just quote the section on Deut. 6:4 here (We know that the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit are not three independent Gods; they are three Persons, each one of them being deity in the full sense of this word, harmoniously united in love, with each Person perfectly fulfilling their roles, and with the Father having the preeminent role. However, based on what I have observed, it seems that many overstate the oneness of God. As we discuss in this excerpt, this verse, and similar verses, apparently just deal with the one Person of God who is clearly revealed in the Old Testament, God the Father. Assuming this is the correct viewpoint, Deut. 6:4 doesn't have anything to say about the Trinity, which isn't fully revealed until the days of the New Testament.

Deuteronomy 6:4. **"Hear, O Israel! The LORD [Yahweh] is our God, the LORD [Yahweh] is one."** I'll quote a sentence from what J. A. Thompson says here ("Deuteronomy" [Inter-Varsity Press, 1974], page 121). "This small section (Deut. 6:4-9) has been known to the Jews for many centuries as the 'Shema' (Hebrew, 'Hear' ["Shema" is the Hebrew word translated "Hear" at the beginning of Deut. 6:4.]) and has been recited along with 11:13-21 and Numbers 15:37-41 as a daily prayer."

Based on what I have heard and read, Deut. 6:4 is the number one verse used (sincerely used) by Christians who deny the Trinity to argue for a oneness view of God. I am quite sure, however, that this verse was written for the sole purpose of declaring that the God of Israel (the God of creation, the God of the Bible, the God of Abraham) is the only true God. Some of the gods of the nations existed all right, but they were evil

beings under Satan, and they were far from being in the class of the only true God, the One who had created every being and everything that exists. (God didn't create Satan or any of the angels evil, but Satan rebelled against God through pride, and a third of the angels followed him in his rebellion.)

For one thing, it was totally necessary for the people of Israel to understand what a serious sin it was for them to worship the gods which all of the peoples apart from Israel were worshipping in the ancient world, and had been worshipping for a long time. All too often many of the people of Israel succumbed to the temptation to worship the gods of the nations. That sin went directly against the first commandment of the Ten Commandments. See Ex. 20:1-5; Deut. 5:6-10; and 6:5.

Deuteronomy 6:4 was not written to deny the Trinity that God progressively revealed, starting in the Old Testament, including in the five books of Moses. As my paper titled "The Name Yahweh and God the Father and God the Son: The Name Yahweh and a Listing of Some of the Large Number of Passages in the Hebrew Old Testament where We Can See God the Son Along with God the Father" demonstrates, there are a large number of passages in the Old Testament where we can see the Person of God the Son. It is true, however, that we needed the light of the New Testament to adequately understand that glorious Person and the Trinity

Verses like Deut. 4:35, 39 communicate the same message as Deut. 6:4 with the words, "To you it was shown that you might know that the LORD [Yahweh], He is God; there is no other besides Him" and "Know therefore today, and take it to your heart, that the LORD [Yahweh], He is God in heaven above and on the earth below; there is no other." There is only one God! We eventually learn of the Trinity.

I'll quote a few sentences from what Earl S. Calland says here ("Expositor's Bible Commentary," Vol. 3 [Zondervan, 1992], page 65) to show that the Hebrew word ("echad") that is translated "one" in Deut. 6:4 was sometimes used of a oneness that consisted of more than one part, "To the Jews verse 4 is not only an assertion of monotheism, it is also an assertion of the numerical oneness of God contradictory to the Christian view of the Trinity of the Godhead. This kind of oneness, however, runs contrary to the use of "echad" in the sense of a unity made up of several parts. In Exod. 25:6, 11, the fifty gold clasps are used to hold the curtains together so that the tent would be a unit ("echad"). ...."

I'll quote several sentences from page 2 of the 14 page article titled, "The Historic Case for the Trinity" by K. Dayton Hartman ([www.answering-islam.org](http://www.answering-islam.org)). He is discussing Deut. 6:4 and making the point that the Jews left a lot of room to see some plurality in

their one God before the arrival of Christianity. "The possibility of plurality existing in a monotheistic Godhead was an active topic in pre-Christian Jewish theology (See especially, Larry Hurtado, 'One God, One Lord: Early Christian Devotion and Ancient Jewish Monotheism' [Fortress Press, 1988]). A text that inspired much of this debate is found within Daniel's book of prophecy. In Daniel 7:9, a plurality of thrones exists in heaven, all of which, the text proposes, belong to Yahweh. The text reads, 'I kept looking until the thrones were set up, and the Ancient of Days took His seat...'. In the passage there are multiple seats of power (thrones), yet a single being of power (the king). [For the record, Dan. 7:18, 22, and 27 show that the saints will be reigning too; the thrones are for the saints (also see Rev. 20:4-6).] N. T. Wright, commenting on pre-Christian Judaism, points out that, 'Within the most fiercely monotheistic of Jewish circles...there is no suggestion that "monotheism" or praying the "Shema," had anything to do with the numerical analysis of the inner being of Israel's God Himself ('The New Testament and the People of God' [Fortress Press, 1996], page 259). ... After reviewing the evidence N. T. Wright concludes that: 'The oneness of Israel's God, the creator, was never an analysis of God's inner existence, but always a polemical doctrine over against paganism and dualism. It was only with the rise of Christianity...that Jews in the second and third centuries reinterpreted "monotheism" and the numerical oneness of the divine being' (same as the preceding footnote)."

A Better Way to Interpret Deuteronomy 6:4. After further study and prayerfully considering this verse, I have come to the opinion that the proper way to understand this verse (the way intended by the ultimate Author of the Bible) is to see that the name Yahweh refers to God the Father here, as it typically does throughout the Old Testament, not to the Trinity. This applies to Deut. 4:35, 39 and to many similar verses in the Old Testament (including Isa. 43:10, 11; 44:6, 8; 45:6, 21, 22; and 46:9). In most of the verses dealt with in my paper titled, "The Name Yahweh and God the Father and God the Son: The Name Yahweh and a Listing of Some of the Large Number of Passages from the Hebrew Old Testament where We Can See God the Son Along with God the Father," for example, the name Yahweh typically refers the God the Father. The Old Testament was written in the years before God wanted to fully reveal the Person of His Son and the Trinity.

When Jesus first came to Israel, having been born of the virgin, none of the people of Israel understood that the Messiah would be deity. ((We will never understand the Trinity until we see that God the Son was to become the God-man and the promised Messiah, and that the Messiah would, therefore, be deity. The deity of the Messiah took the promised new-covenant salvation to a whole new level. To be united with the Messiah is to be united with God the Son, the One who brings us to the Father.)) The apostles didn't understand His deity until after His resurrection. They didn't even believe

in His resurrection until after He was resurrected, even though He had told them that He would be resurrected on the third day.

God's revelation, which includes His opening the eyes of His people to understand the Scriptures, is progressive (see, for example, Luke 24:25-27, 44-49). The name Yahweh typically refers to God the Father in the Old Testament, even as the word God typically refers to God the Father in the New Testament. And the New Testament has quite a few passages like John 17:3 ("This is eternal life, that they may know You, **THE ONLY TRUE GOD** [my emphasis; referring to God the Father], and Jesus Christ whom You have sent."); Rom. 16:26, 27 (I'll quote verse 27, "to **THE ONLY WISE GOD** [God the Father], through Jesus Christ, be the glory forever. Amen!"); 1 Cor. 8:4-6 ("Therefore concerning the eating of things sacrificed to idols, we know that there is no such thing as an idol in the world, and that **THERE IS NO GOD BUT ONE** [referring to God the Father]. (5) For even if there are so-called gods whether in heaven or on earth, as indeed there are many gods and many lords, (6) yet **FOR US THERE IS *BUT ONE* GOD, THE FATHER**, from whom are all things and we *exist* for Him, and one Lord, Jesus Christ, by whom are all things [These words would be better translated "through whom are all things." God the Father created all things through God the Son.], and we *exist* through Him."); 1 Cor. 15:27, 28 (I won't quote these verses here, but these verses strongly emphasize the preeminent role of God the Father.); Eph. 4:4-6 ("*There is one body and one Spirit* [the Holy Spirit], just as you were called in one hope of your calling; (5) one Lord [the Lord Jesus], one faith, one baptism, (6) **ONE GOD AND FATHER OF ALL WHO IS OVER ALL AND THROUGH ALL AND IN ALL.**"); 1 Tim. 1:17 ("Now to the King eternal, immortal, invisible, **THE ONLY GOD** [referring to God the Father], be honor and glory forever and ever. Amen."); 1 Tim. 2:5 ("For **THERE IS ONE GOD**, *and* one mediator also between God and men, *the* man Christ Jesus...."); 1 Tim. 6:13-16 ("I charge you in the presence of God [God the Father], who gives life to all things, and of Christ Jesus, who testified the good confession before Pontius Pilate, (14) that you keep the commandment without stain or reproach until the appearing of our Lord Jesus Christ, (15) which He [God the Father] will bring about at the proper time - **HE WHO IS THE BLESSED AND ONLY SOVEREIGN**, the King of kings and Lord of lords, (16) who alone possesses immortality and dwells in inapproachable light, whom no man has seen or can see. To Him be honor and eternal dominion! Amen."); and Jude 1:24, 25 ("Now to Him [God the Father] who is able to keep you from stumbling and to make you stand in the presence of His glory blameless with great joy, (25) **TO THE ONLY GOD OUR SAVIOR** [referring to God the Father], through Jesus Christ our Lord, *be* glory, majesty, dominion and authority, before all time and now and forever. Amen.")

Verses like the ones I just quoted from the New Testament that greatly exalt God the Father and His preeminent role (calling Him "the only God" and such expressions) do not diminish the fact that the Bible (and especially the New Testament) clearly teaches the full deity of God the Son (and the Holy Spirit). For one thing (as I have pointed out in the three companion articles to this article), the name Yahweh is used on occasion for God the Son in the Old Testament and the word God is used for Him several times in the New Testament, which strongly teaches His full deity. We desperately need the balanced truth of what the Bible teaches. I am convinced, by the way, that God the Son (and God the Holy Spirit) loves the verses that greatly exalt God the Father.

After we receive the full revelation regarding the Lord Jesus Christ (and the Holy Spirit) through the New Testament, we can clearly see the full deity of the Lord Jesus in the Old Testament, but I don't believe we have to try to see Him typically included when the name Yahweh is used in the Old Testament. I'm quite sure that wasn't God's intention, and it confuses the issue. For one thing, if we overstate the oneness of God based (to some significant extent) on a misinterpretation of Deut. 6:4, we certainly confuse the issue. It's proper to speak of one God, three Persons, but we don't want to overstate that oneness - the Bible doesn't. We desperately need the balanced truth of what the Bible teaches. We also confuse the issue if we don't take seriously what the Bible, very much including the New Testament, says about the subordinate role of God the Son (and the Holy Spirit). Full deity, Yes! Subordinate to God the Father in His role, Yes!

The fifth and last paper that is relevant to the topic of this present paper is my paper "Harlot of Babylon According to Irvin Baxter; Trinity and Oneness" (January, 2016, 107 pages). I'll reference the sections of the paper that are relevant to the topic of this present paper that deals with the preeminent role of God the Father in the Trinity. Pages 7 and 8 deal with verses like Deut. 6:4 that fit the preeminent role of God the Father but certainly do not deny the subsequent full revelation of the Trinity. The Nicene Creed, which is quite relevant to this topic, is quoted on page 25. I believe we can see the preeminent role of God the Father in this creed. We will discuss this creed later in this paper [referring to my "Harlot of Babylon..." paper; and we discuss the Council of Nicea and the Nicene Creed quite a bit in this present paper, "The Preeminent Role of God the Father in the Trinity"]. The section that starts with the last paragraph on page 27 and ends on page 35 is relevant. The last five pages of this section that deal with Deut. 6:4 were quoted above, under my paper "More on the Trinity." The section that starts with the last paragraph on page 87 to the top of page 92 is quite relevant. For one thing, I quote from Wayne Grudem in this section. And, finally, Rev. 4:1-5:13 is discussed on pages 92-105. I believe this interesting and important passage from the book of Revelation (two chapters) effectively demonstrates the preeminent role of God the Father and the full deity of the Lord Jesus.

This is the end of Part 1 of this paper.

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