

“The God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ”

Trinitarians believe that God is revealed in three Persons who are co-equal, co-eternal, and consubstantial (of the same essence) - God the Father, God the Son, and the Holy Spirit. In this sense, no one Person of the Trinity could be said to be below another, although it is possible (through the trinitarian doctrine of kenosis) that Jesus Christ could rightfully have said to be subject to the other Persons of the Trinity between His birth and resurrection. However, after the resurrection of Christ, He returned to His co-equal position within the Trinity, according to trinitarian theology. If Christ is not co-equal with God the Father and the Holy Spirit, then He cannot be consubstantial either (as that would make Him, with the Father, fully divine). With this in mind, it is highly significant that the Father is still referred to as the God of Jesus Christ after His resurrection.

Jesus [said] to her, “Miriam!” Now, being turned, she [said] to Him in Hebrew, “Rabboni!” which is the term for “Teacher.” Jesus [said] to her, “Do not touch Me, for not as yet have I ascended to My Father. Now go to My brethren, and say to them that I said, ‘Lo! I am ascending to My Father and your Father, and **My God and your God.**’” (John 20:16-17, CLT)

This passage affirms that, even after Jesus’ resurrection, He still considered the Father to be His God. Moreover, by identifying the Father with the God of Miriam as well, He demonstrated that the Father is to be identified with YHWH, who (as any good Jew such as Miriam would know) is the only one to be worshiped as the God of gods (Deut. 10:17). As Jesus identified His God as the Father alone, He also identifies *the Father alone* as being one and the same with YHWH, whom Israel is to have no gods before (Exod. 20:3). Otherwise, the trinitarian is put into the difficult position of having to argue how YHWH (the Father) can be God to YHWH (the Son). Thus, this passage not only demonstrates that the Trinity cannot be co-equal and thus consubstantial, but also shows that the Father alone is to be identified with YHWH.

This truth, that the Father is in fact the God of Jesus Christ, which by nature puts Him as a higher authority than the Son, is repeated many times throughout the New Testament.

Now may the God of endurance and consolation grant you to be mutually disposed to one another, according to Christ Jesus, that, with one accord, with one mouth, you may be glorifying **the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ**. (Rom. 15:5-6, CLT)

Blessed is **the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ**, the Father of pities and God of all consolation (2 Cor. 1:3, CLT)

If I must boast, I will be boasting in that which is of my weakness. **The God and Father of the Lord Jesus**, Who is blessed for the eons, is aware that I am not lying. (2 Cor. 11:30-31, CLT)

Blessed be **the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ**, Who blesses us with every spiritual blessing (Eph. 1:3, CLT)

Therefore, I also, on hearing of this faith of yours in the Lord Jesus, and that for all the saints, do not cease giving thanks for you, making mention in my prayers that **the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of glory**, may be giving you a spirit of wisdom and revelation in the realization of Him (Eph. 1:15-17, CLT)

We are thanking **the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ**, always praying concerning you (Col. 1:3, CLT)

Blessed be **the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ**, Who, according to His vast mercy, regenerates us into a living expectation, through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from among the dead (1 Pet. 1:3, CLT)

John, to the seven ecclesias which are in the province of Asia: Grace to you and peace from Him Who is and Who was and Who is coming, and from the seven spirits which are before His throne, and from Jesus Christ, the Faithful Witness, the Firstborn of the dead, and the Suzerain of the kings of the earth. To Him Who is loving us and looses us from our sins by His blood and makes us a kingdom and priests to **His God and Father**, to Him be glory and might for the eons of the eons! Amen! (Rev. 1:4-6, CLT)

All of these passages come from *after* the resurrection of Jesus Christ, and show that even after He was exalted, the Father was (and is) still considered to be in a higher position than Him, and even said to be His God. This shows that, at the very least, the co-equality of the Trinity cannot be true, and thus the consubstantiality of the Trinity must also be doubted.

“One God, the Father... and one Lord, Jesus Christ”

Having been taught that the Trinity is clearly shown in the Bible, many Christians are surprised to learn that our Lord Jesus Christ is repeatedly and emphatically distinguished from the one true God (ο Θεός) throughout the New Testament. This can be most clearly seen in the four passages quoted below, although this distinction is continually present.

These things speaks Jesus, and lifting His eyes to heaven, He said, "Father, come has the hour. Glorify Thy Son, that Thy Son should be glorifying Thee, according as Thou givest Him authority over all flesh, that everything which Thou hast given to Him, He should be giving it to them, even life eonian. Now it is eonian life that they may know **Thee, the only true God, and Him Whom Thou dost commission, Jesus Christ**. (Jn. 17:1-3, CLT)

Then, concerning the feeding on the idol sacrifices: We are aware that an idol is nothing in the world, and that there is no other God except One. For even if so be that there are those being termed gods, whether in heaven or on earth, **even as there are many gods and many lords**, nevertheless **for us there is one God, the Father**, out of Whom all is, and we for Him, **and one Lord, Jesus Christ**, through Whom all is, and we through Him. (1 Cor. 8:4-6, CLT)

I am entreating you, then, I, the prisoner in the Lord, to walk worthily of the calling with which you were called, with all humility and meekness, with patience, bearing with one another in love, endeavoring to keep the unity of the spirit with the tie of peace: one body and one spirit, according as you were called also with one expectation of your calling; **one Lord**, one faith, one baptism, **one God and Father of all**, Who is over all and through all and in all. (Eph. 4:1-6, CLT)

For there is **one God**, and **one Mediator of God and mankind, a Man, Christ Jesus**, Who is giving Himself a correspondent Ransom for all (the testimony in its own eras), for which I was appointed a herald and an apostle (I am telling the truth, I am not lying), a teacher of the nations in knowledge and truth. (1 Tim. 2:5-7, CLT)

Although some unitarian theologians have suggested that these passages demonstrate that the title of ‘God’ cannot be applied to Jesus Christ, this is not a proper understanding; interpreting scripture with scripture, we can see that the title ‘God’ is indeed applied to Christ (Jn. 20:28; Ti. 2:13; Heb. 1:8; 2 Pet. 1:1). The main significance of these passages is that the Father is repeatedly associated with the one true God, whereas Christ is repeatedly dissociated from this title and presented as an entirely separate Entity. If the Trinity were a biblical reality understood by Paul, then 1 Cor. 8:6 would have been a perfect opportunity to refute the pagan idea of polytheism by stating that there is “one God, the Father, Son and Holy Spirit, out of Whom and through Whom all is”; the fact that he did not do this is a powerful argument against the reality of the Trinity. (Granted, this is an argument from silence, but there is much other biblical evidence against trinitarianism as well.)

In fact, throughout the New Testament, the one true God (ο Θεος) is distinguished from Jesus Christ dozens of times. There are too many verses to be fully quoted here, but the references are listed below for the reader’s further research: Matt. 4:9-10; 9:8; 19:17; Mk. 9:18; 16:19; Lk. 1:68-69; 3:7-8; 18:19; 22:69; Jn. 1:18; 3:16-17; 34; 6:29; 7:16-18; 13:3; 16:27-28; 17:3; Acts 2:22; 24; 33-36; 3:13-15; 26; 4:10; 5:30-32; 7:55; 10:38-42; 13:30; 37; 17:31; Rom. 3:24-25; 8:3; 34; 15:6; 1 Cor. 3:23; 8:6; 11:3; 15:15; 24; 2 Cor. 1:2-3; Gal. 4:4; Eph. 1:3; 17; 20; 4:4-6; Col. 1:3; 2:12; 3:1; 1 Thess. 3:11; 2 Thess. 2:16; 1 Tim. 2:5; 6:13; 2 Tim. 4:1; Heb. 2:8-10; 9:14; 12:2; 23-24; 1 Pet. 1:3; 2:4; 3:21-22; 1 Jn. 3:9; Rev. 1:6; 3:2; 3:12; 7:10; 12:10; 14:4. It is clear from these verses that it was considered a well-established fact that the One called God was considered separate from our Lord Jesus Christ. Moreover, and perhaps even more significant, the Father is almost always associated with God in each of these verses, whereas Christ is always dissociated, as noted from the four passages quoted above.

Therefore, these passages absolutely refute the idea of the consubstantiality of God; even if God is revealed in three Persons as trinitarianism suggests, these Persons cannot be of the same substance, as they are fully distinguished from one another throughout scripture.

‘God the Son’ or “the Son of God”?

Although Christians have been taught to believe that the above two descriptors mean the same thing, the fact is that they do not: to be ‘God the Son’ is to claim equality and

consubstantiality with the one true God, which as seen above, cannot be true, whereas to be the “Son of God” is not to claim to be God, but rather to be His begotten Son. Although this fact should be fairly obvious, unfortunately many have been indoctrinated into believing otherwise. In actuality, the term ‘God the Son’ is not to be found anywhere in either the Old or New Testament, whereas the term “Son of God” is applied to Jesus Christ (and only Him) over fifty times. The truth is that Jesus is “the Christ, the Son of the living God” (Matt. 16:16), and therefore He cannot be the same as the living God; rather the Father alone is to be identified with “the living and true God” (1 Thess. 1:9-10).

The doctrine that Jesus is the Son of God the Father, and yet is also somehow God and is co-eternal and consubstantial with the Father, results in the confusing and unbiblical idea that Christ has been ‘eternally begotten’ of the Father. This idea will not be found anywhere in the Bible, and in fact it is entirely *refuted* by Psalm 2:7, which, referring to Jesus Christ, says that “my Son are You; I, **today**, have begotten You”. In keeping with the natural meaning of the word ‘begotten’ (γεννᾶω), when applied to Christ, it also refers to a singular event in time in which something or Someone is created. To say that Christ has been ‘eternally begotten’ of the Father is as illogical as it would be to say that someone could be as old as, or older than, their own parents. Instead, scripture says that our Lord was begotten (given life) only twice in history: at His birth and at His resurrection.

Now Jesus Christ's birth was thus: At the espousal of His mother, Mary, to Joseph, ere their coming together, she was found pregnant by Holy Spirit. Now Joseph, her husband, being just and not willing to hold her up to infamy, intended covertly to dismiss her. Now at his brooding over these things, lo! a messenger of the Lord appeared to him in a trance, saying, “Joseph, son of David, you may not be afraid to accept Miriam, your wife, for **that which is being generated (γεννηθῆν, ‘begotten’) in her** is of Holy Spirit. Now she shall be bringing forth a Son, and you shall be calling His name Jesus, for He shall be saving His people from their sins.” (Matt. 1:18-21, CLT)

Yet Miriam said to the messenger, “How shall this be, since I know not a man?” And answering, the messenger said to her, “Holy spirit shall be coming on you, and the power of the Most High shall be overshadowing you; **wherefore also the holy One Who is being generated (γεννώμενον, ‘begotten’) shall be called the Son of God.**” (Lk. 1:34-35, CLT)

Note: In the first of these examples, the word ‘begotten’ is in the aorist tense, showing that it refers to the actual conception of Jesus Christ which occurred at a single point in time. Whereas, in the second example, it is in the present tense, referring to the ongoing process of Jesus’ ‘generation’ in Miriam’s womb.

“And we are bringing to you the evangel which comes to be a promise to the fathers, that God has fully fulfilled this for our children **in raising Jesus, as it is written in the second psalm** also, ‘My Son art Thou; I, today, have begotten Thee.’ Now, **seeing that He raises Him from among the dead**, by no means longer about to return to decay, He

has thus declared that, ‘I shall be giving you the faithful benignities of David.’” (Acts 13:32-34, CLT)

These passages all show that the verb ‘begotten’, when applied to Jesus Christ, refers to one of two events: His conception and generation within the womb of His mother Miriam, and His resurrection from among the dead. With this in mind, any notion of ‘eternal begetting’ of Christ must be dispensed with as unbiblical and without logic if our theology is to be based on scripture alone rather than the traditions of men (Mk. 7:8). Thus, the third and last pillar of trinitarian theology, the co-eternality of the three Persons, is just as false as the first two. Our Lord Jesus Christ is indeed the Son of God, but to worship Him as ‘God the Son’ borders on idolatry, according to His own words (Matt. 4:10; Jn. 4:23).

“All dost Thou subject under His feet”

Having refuted the three pillars of trinitarian theology - the co-equality, co-eternality, and consubstantiality of the Father, Son and Holy Spirit - it must now be asked in what sense our Lord Jesus Christ can be referred to as ‘God’, as he occasionally is throughout the New Testament, and how, if He was begotten first as a Man (Lk. 1:35; 1 Tim. 2:5), He could be the Ruler and Sustainer of all things. Although trinitarian theologians would say that this is because Christ is naturally God the Son, and therefore by nature is Ruler of all, this is actually an *unscriptural* answer, and according to the Bible, the opposite is true. As Paul says in his epistle to the Ephesian church,

Therefore, I also, on hearing of this faith of yours in **the Lord Jesus**, and that for all the saints, do not cease giving thanks for you, making mention in my prayers that **the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of glory**, may be giving you a spirit of wisdom and revelation in the realization of **Him**, the eyes of your heart having been enlightened, for you to perceive what is the expectation of **His** calling, and what the riches of the glory of the enjoyment of **His** allotment among the saints, and what the transcendent greatness of **His** power for us who are believing, in accord with the operation of the might of **His** strength, which is operative in **the Christ**, rousing **Him** from among the dead and seating **Him** at **His** right hand among the celestials, up over every sovereignty and authority and power and lordship, and every name that is named, not only in this eon, but also in that which is impending: and subjects all under **His** feet, and gives **Him**, as Head over all, to the ecclesia [Church] which is **His** body, the complement of the One completing the all in all. (Eph. 1:15-23, CLT)

Throughout this rather lengthy passage, there are very many pronouns for which the referent is not immediately visible, and so for clarity each pronoun is color-coded, red pronouns referring to God the Father and blue pronouns referring to the Lord Jesus Christ. According to Paul, Jesus Christ was roused by God and so seated in the heavens at His right hand, and given authority over all things, thus making Him King of kings and Lord of lords (1 Tim. 6:15; Rev. 17:14; 19:16). He is not inherently the Ruler of all, but was exalted to that position by God Himself after His death and resurrection. This idea is paralleled elsewhere in the Greek scriptures:

For let this disposition be in you, which is in Christ Jesus also, Who, being inherently in the form of God, deems it not pillaging to be equal with God, nevertheless empties Himself, taking the form of a slave, coming to be in the likeness of humanity, and, being found in fashion as a human, He humbles Himself, becoming obedient unto death, even the death of the cross. **Wherefore, also, God highly exalts Him, and graces Him with the name that is above every name**, that in the name of Jesus every knee should be bowing, celestial and terrestrial and subterranean, and every tongue should be acclaiming that **Jesus Christ is Lord, for the glory of God, the Father**. (Php. 2:5-11, CLT)

According to this passage, after humbling Himself in servitude to God to the point of death on the cross, Jesus was *exalted by God* to become Lord over all. It is not, as trinitarian theologians suggest, that Christ was originally exalted and humbled Himself, after which He was exalted again, but instead it is *because of* (διου) His humbling that He was exalted; it is not inherent to His nature as part of a triune God.

Moreover, by stating that through Jesus God will become ‘the all in all’, Paul is echoing an idea which he had stated in his first epistle to the Corinthian church. Here, he says:

For He [Christ] subjects all under His feet. Now whenever He may be saying that all is subject, it is evident that it is outside of **Him Who subjects all to Him**. Now, whenever all may be subjected to Him, then the Son Himself also shall be subjected to Him Who subjects all to Him, that **God may be All in all**. (1 Cor. 15:27-28, CLT)

Almost as an aside to Paul’s main subject in this chapter, which is the resurrection and vivification, he describes Christ’s ultimate subjection of all things. Through this, he mentions the One who has subjected all things to Christ - God the Father. If Christ is ultimately a supreme deity together with the Father, then He would naturally be Ruler and Subjector of all things; however, this is not what is revealed in scripture. Instead, the Father who *is* the only true God is said to have subjected all things to His Son for His own glory.

In conclusion, according to scripture, the reason that Jesus Christ can be considered King of kings, Lord of lords, and Ruler of all is not because He is part of a triune God, but because God the Father has subjected all to Him and *made* Him Ruler over all. Through His ultimate faith, servitude, and humbling of Himself, to the point of death, He has purchased our salvation through His blood (Eph. 1:7; Col. 1:14), which makes Him worthy of our worship and praise (Rev. 5:9-14). No, He is not the only true God, YHWH, but He is our Lord and our God, second only to the Father, and worthy of glory, honor, and praise.

The Word of God

Having reviewed the scriptural support for non-trinitarianism, specifically a form of Socinianism, the evidence for the Trinity must now be examined. When researching the Trinity, I expected that with such strong evidence for non-trinitarianism (literally dozens and dozens of verses), there would be equally strong or stronger evidence for trinitarianism, given

that this doctrine has been prevalent for so much of church history. However, I was surprised (and not a bit disappointed) to find that there are actually very few verses which can be interpreted to support the Trinity. By far the most important of these verses is John 1:1, which is often considered the ‘be-all and end-all’ of the trinitarian debate.

In the beginning was the word, and the word was toward God, and God was the word. This was in the beginning toward God... All came into being through it, and apart from it not even one thing came into being which has come into being. In it was life, and the life was the light of men. And the light is appearing in the darkness, and the darkness grasped it not. (Jn. 1:1-5, CLT)

Trinitarians interpret this verse as follows: Jesus Christ is called the Word of God (Rev. 19:13), and the Word was both God and with (or ‘toward’) God in the beginning, hence the Trinity. Unfortunately, this verse is not nearly as simply interpreted as that. As always, scripture must be interpreted with scripture, and so this passage should be compared with its parallel passage from John’s first epistle:

That which was from the beginning, which we have heard, which we have seen with our eyes, at which we gaze and our hands handle, is concerned with **the word of life**. And the life was manifested, and we have seen and are testifying and reporting to you the life eonian which **was toward the Father** and was manifested to us. (1 Jn. 1:1-2, CLT)

According to these verses, the word was not merely with (or ‘toward’) God, but more specifically with (or ‘toward’) the Father who must be associated with ο Θεός of Jn. 1:1. Therefore, if the word Θεός maintains the same consistent meaning throughout the verse, as trinitarians suggest, and the ‘word’ is to be associated with Jesus Christ, it would be understood as: “In the beginning was Jesus Christ, and Jesus Christ was toward the Father, and Jesus Christ was the Father”. This would be an affirmation of Sabellianism, the heresy that Jesus Christ is the same Being as the Father, which goes clearly against the scriptures. Therefore, even if the wording of Jn. 1:1 is the same as proposed by trinitarianism, it does not affirm the Trinity.

However, the fact is that the ‘word’ in Jn. 1:1 is almost certainly *not* the same as Jesus Christ, and even further, part of this verse seems to have been mistranslated. The phrase ‘word of God’ is used in forty-three other verses in the New Testament, and only once (Rev. 19:13) is it applied as a title to Jesus Christ; in every other case, it is used to mean the literal spoken or written word of God. In fact, in the context, this meaning of the ‘word’ makes more sense: by the word of YHWH were the heavens and earth created (Gen. 1; Ps. 33:6), not by a personal abstraction of the expression of God, but by His literal spoken word. In what sense, then, did the word become flesh in Jesus Christ (Jn. 1:14)? Because the Messiah had been prophesied since the fall of humanity (Gen. 3:15) in both God’s written and spoken word, this word was manifested in Jesus Christ; the “word became flesh”.

Although this sounds rather odd to our modern understanding, this was actually a very common idea in ancient Jewish reasoning called ‘notional preexistence’. Because God knew

everything that would happen before the world began, several of the most important things in creation were considered to have ‘existed’ with Him in a sense before the beginning. The Babylonian Talmud, composed around the same time as Jesus’ ministry, wrote that seven things existed prior to creation: the Torah, repentance, the Garden of Eden, Gehenna, the throne of glory, the house of the sanctuary, and, significantly, the name of Messiah. Obviously, none of these things could actually have been in existence prior to the creation of the world, but they existed in God’s foreknowledge. Likewise, in the New Testament, this same idea is applied to Christ as well: He was “foreknown, indeed, before the disruption of the world” (1 Pet. 1:20) and “slain from the disruption of the world” (Rev. 13:8).

For those still having trouble understanding this idea of ‘notional preexistence’, consider the following analogy. Suppose that a renter has discovered that their toilet is broken, and calls the landlord to ask for repairs. The landlord gives his word that the toilet will be fixed within twenty-four hours. The next day, a plumber shows up and fixes the toilet; the landlord’s word has become flesh. This analogy, though crude, is an accurate portrayal of the way in which ancient Jewish culture viewed foreknowledge and notional preexistence, and it is in this way that Jn. 1:14 must be understood.

Furthermore, the actual translation of Jn. 1:1 is rather suspect. The first phrase translated as ‘God’ is Θεov with the definite article, therefore referring to the only true and living God. However, the word translated ‘God’ in the third clause lacks the definite article. The Bible translation of the Jehovah’s Witnesses (a modern-day cult with an Arian flavor) takes this too far, by stating that “the Word was *a* god”, which is not inherent to the text. However, as is occasionally recognized, by omitting the definite article, the word Θεος thus becomes an adjective describing the word, simply ‘divine’ rather than God. This is confirmed by the fact that both Θεος and λογος in this clause are in the nominative case, rather than one being in the accusative. The New English Bible (NEB) accounts for this fact by translating the clause as “what God was, the word was”; that is, the written and spoken word of God is divine in nature, but not the same as the only true and living God.

In conclusion, the trinitarian interpretation of John 1:1 is entirely unsupported by the text. First of all, even if the wording and meaning of the text is the same as trinitarian theologians believe (which is a major concession), it would merely demonstrate Sabellianism (that the Son is the same as the Father), not trinitarianism. Moreover, the “word of God” in this context is not to be understood as a reference to Jesus Christ as in Rev. 19:13, but rather as the literal written and spoken word of God. The ‘word’ is only the same as Jesus Christ in Jn. 1:14 insofar as the prophetic word of God regarding the Messiah found its perfect manifestation in Jesus, the Son of God, and should be understood proleptically per the Jewish idea of notional preexistence. Finally, the third clause of John 1:1 (“God was the word”) is not saying that the ‘word’ is inherently the same as the one true God, but rather that it is divine in nature.

“I am”

The second strongest piece of evidence for the absolute deity of Christ is the multiple times in which He says “I am”, εγω ειμι, in the Gospel of John. This is often taken as an oblique reference to Exodus 3:14, in which God identifies Himself as the “I AM”. However, εγω ειμι is actually *not* a proper quotation of Exod. 3:14, in either the Hebrew Masoretic text

or the Greek Septuagint. In Hebrew, the phrase ‘ehyeh-asher-ehyeh’ is often translated as “I AM WHO I AM”, but ‘ehyeh’ is actually simply an incomplete verb that can describe either past, present, or future. The double emphasis on the verb is often taken to mean that it should be read in both the present and future tense, that is, “I am what I will be” or “I will be what I am”, an expression of God’s eternity and unchanging nature. Moreover, in the Septuagint (which is the Greek translation that both Jesus’ listeners and John would have been most familiar with), this verse is translated as:

And God spoke to Moses, saying, I am THE BEING [ἐγώ εἰμι ὁ ὢν]; and he said,
Thus shall ye say to the children of Israel, THE BEING [ὁ ὢν] has sent me to you.
(Exod. 3:14, LXX)

In the Greek, ἐγώ εἰμι is neither the full version or the shortened version of God’s name, which is ὁ ὢν (‘the Being’). Moreover, whenever YHWH appears in the Hebrew, the LXX renders it as ΙΑΩ or ΚΥΠΙΟΣ. Therefore, ἐγώ εἰμι cannot be taken as a reference to the name of God in the Old Testament.

How, then, should it be translated? Well, in John 9:9, this exact phrase is used by a blind beggar that Jesus had healed, to identify himself to the townspeople; it is almost always translated as “I am *he*” or “I am *the man*”. Are we to assume that the beggar is making a divine claim? No, he is merely identifying himself. Likewise, an even more divine claim is made by Paul, if the trinitarian interpretation is to be believed, who identifies himself as “εἰμι ὁ εἰμι” (‘I am what I am’) in 1 Corinthians 15:10! Instead of this absurdity which is not based in any reality of Greek, the phrase ἐγώ εἰμι should simply be translated as “I am he”, a simple identifier - in fact, this is how Jesus uses the phrase elsewhere, in Mk. 14:62 and Jn. 18:5, in response to a question about his identity.

Trinitarian theologians often fall back on one of the most quoted passages in the debate over the Trinity, John 8:58, to show that ἐγώ εἰμι cannot have been used merely as an identifier. In this verse, Jesus states that “Ere Abraham came into being, I am [ἐγώ εἰμι]”, at which point the Jews took up stones to throw at Him. Because the Jews tried to kill Jesus for this claim, it is said that He must have been identifying Himself as God, at which point He was nearly stoned for blasphemy.

However, this is actually not a proper translation of the Greek syntax of Jesus’ words in Jn. 8:58. As any translator should know, sentences are not structured in Greek by their word order, but rather by the case endings of nouns and pronouns within the sentence. When translating from Greek to English, this issue is fixed by moving the subject to the front of the sentence. However, this was inexplicably not done in Jn. 8:58. ‘Εγώ’ is the subject of the sentence, in the accusative case, meaning that the verse should have been properly translated into English as “I am *He* before Abraham’s coming”; although this alteration of the word order may seem arbitrary and unsupported, this is what is *always* done in Koine Greek translation, with John 8:58 being one of very few exceptions to the rule. To see what Jesus had in mind by this statement, the context of the verse must be looked at:

“Abraham, your father, exults that he may become acquainted with My day, and he was acquainted with it and rejoiced.” The Jews, then, said to Him, “You have not as yet

lived fifty years, and you have seen Abraham!” Jesus said to them, “Verily, verily, I am saying to you, ~~Ere Abraham came into being, I am~~ I am *He* before Abraham’s coming.” They pick up stones, then, that they should be casting them at Him. Yet Jesus was hid and came out of the sanctuary. And passing through the midst of them, He went and thus passed by. (Jn. 8:56-59, CLT)

Jesus says that Abraham exalted to see His day, which, interpreting scripture with scripture, refers to Abraham’s exaltation that through His Seed, Jesus Christ, the resurrection would come (Rom. 4:17-18). The Jews are confused as to how Abraham could have seen Jesus’ day, not understanding that He refers to the prophetic revelation given to Abraham about the Messiah. Jesus responds that He is the promised Seed who will bring about the resurrection - “I am He before Abraham’s coming” - and is nearly stoned for His Messianic claims. At the very most, this verse demonstrates Christ’s preexistence, but likely it does not even show that.

Trinitarians often state that to claim to be the Messiah was not considered to be a crime in Jesus’ day, and He was killed because He claimed to be God. However, this is patently false; the rabbi Bar Kochba was said to have been killed in the second century because of his claim to be Messiah. Moreover, in the Gospel of Mark, it is explicitly said that Jesus was killed because He claimed to be the Christ and the Son of God (Mk. 14:61-64). If the Jewish leaders had believed that Jesus was blaspheming by claiming to be God Himself, they would have asked Him as much, but instead they asked if He was the Christ and King of the Jews. This is highly significant, and goes against the trinitarian claim that Jesus was killed for the claim that He was God.

“I and the Father are one”

The third biblical objection to unitarianism is the claim made by Jesus that He is one with the Father, and various other similar claims made throughout the New Testament. The most clear statement can be found in John 10:30:

“My sheep are hearing My voice, and I know them, and they are following Me. And I am giving them life eonian, and they should by no means be perishing for the eon, and no one shall be snatching them out of My hand. My Father, Who has given them to Me, is greater than all, and no one is able to be snatching them out of My Father’s hand. **I and the Father, We are one.**” Again, then, the Jews bear stones that they should be stoning Him. Jesus answered them, “Many ideal acts I show you from My Father. Because of what act of them are you stoning Me?” The Jews answered Him, “For an ideal act we are not stoning you, but for blasphemy, and that you, being a man, are making yourself God.” Jesus answered them, “Is it not written in your law, that ‘I say you are gods’? If He said those were gods, to whom the word of God came (and the scripture can not be annulled), are you saying to Him Whom the Father hallows and dispatches into the world that ‘You are blaspheming,’ seeing that I said, ‘Son of God am I’?” (Jn. 10:27-36, CLT)

Although at first it seems that the statement “I and my Father, We are one” is a clear demonstration of the Shema unity between these two Persons of the Trinity, the context actually makes it clear that this is one of the most *unitarian* passages in the Gospel of John. When Jesus elaborates on what He said, it is obvious that the Jews are not stoning Him because He is actually claiming to be God, but because he claims to be the Son of God. Moreover, by paralleling this statement with Ps. 82:6, Jesus is saying that God has *made* Him divine and the Son of God, and that He is not inherently divine, which is confirmed when He states that the Father has ‘hallowed’ Him.

In what sense then can Christ be called one with the Father? This exact phrase is used once elsewhere in the Bible, in 1 Corinthians 3:8, in which Paul says that “he who is planting [Paul] and he who is irrigating [Apollos] are *for one thing*”. Although it is translated as ‘for one thing’ in this context, it is the exact same phrase as in John 10:30. Are we to suppose that Paul and Apollos are one in essence, their own trinity of sorts? No, but the context shows that Paul and Apollos are one in their purpose and goal. Similarly, the context of John 10:30 demonstrates that Jesus is saying that He and the Father are one in their purpose and goal of giving their ‘sheep’ salvation. In the same way, believers are also ‘one’ with Jesus and God, according to John 17:21-22. Likewise, because Jesus’ goals are the same as God the Father, and His actions are perfectly in line with those goals, anyone who sees (or ‘recognizes’) Jesus will also see (or ‘recognize’) the Father (Matt. 11:27); otherwise that verse and others like it would be promoting a form of Sabellianism.

If this is the case, then why did the Jews try to stone Him when He claimed that He and the Father were one? Contrary to what most modern translations show, it was not because He was claiming to be the only true God (τον Θεον), but instead because He was making Himself to be ‘a god’ or ‘divine’ (Θεον without the definite article) by claiming God as His Father.

“Thy throne, O God”

Finally, the last argument for trinitarianism is the fact that Jesus was called ‘God’, or even ‘the God’ (ο Θεος), several times in the New Testament. There are four main passages adduced to support this claim:

And after eight days His disciples were again within, and Thomas was with them. The doors having been locked, Jesus is coming and stood in the midst and said, “Peace to you!” Thereafter He is saying to Thomas, “Bring your finger here and perceive My hands, and bring your hand and thrust it into My side, and do not become unbelieving, but believing.” And Thomas answered and said to Him, “My Lord and **my God** [ο Θεος μου]!” (Jn. 20:26-28, CLT)

anticipating that happy expectation, even the advent of the glory of the great God and our Saviour Jesus Christ (Titus 2:13, CLT)

And, indeed, to the messengers He is saying, “Who is making His messengers blasts, And His ministers a flame of fire.” Yet to the Son: “Thy throne, **O God**, is for the eon of the eon, And a scepter of rectitude is the scepter of Thy kingdom.” (Heb. 1:8, CLT)

Simeon Peter, a slave and an apostle of Jesus Christ, to those who are chancing upon an equally precious faith with us, in the righteousness of our God, and the Saviour, Jesus Christ (2 Pet. 1:1, CLT)

Two of these verses (Titus 2:13 and 2 Pet. 1:1) and two others sometimes quoted (1 Tim. 5:21; 2 Tim. 4:1) rely on what is called the ‘Granville Sharp rule’ of Greek syntax, which argues that two nouns, when not separated by a definite article, must refer to the same object. Hence, ‘the God’ in these verses would refer to our Savior Jesus Christ. This rule has many exceptions in the New Testament, and is virtually exclusively applied to the verses mentioned above, and so it actually begs the question of whether Christ can be equated with God. However, as argued below, this actually has no bearing on the issue of the Trinity even if these verses are translated properly.

According to Hebrews 1:8, the Son is given the title of God (ο Θεος). However, the context of this verse shows that Christ is not the only true God, because He is not inherently God, but was rather exalted with this title by the Father. Heb. 1:9 continues the quotation of Ps. 45 by stating that “Thou lovest righteousness and hatest injustice; **Therefore Thou art anointed by God, Thy God**, with the oil of exultation beyond Thy partners.” Here we see that Jesus can indeed accurately be called God following His post-resurrection exaltation, but only because He was *anointed* to this position by God the Father. Moreover, as seen earlier, the Father is described as the God of Christ, which again refutes the notion of co-equality between the Father and the Son.

(Interestingly, the quoted passage in Psalm 45 refers to both the Father and the Son as Elohim: “You love righteousness and hate wickedness, Therefore **Elohim Your Elohim** has anointed You With the oil of elation beyond Your partners” (Ps. 45:7, CLT). This demonstrates that the plural term Elohim cannot be understood as referring to multiple Persons within a Trinity, as trinitarians believe, but instead as simply the majestic plural. Thus, the many times within the Old Testament where YHWH Elohim uses the pronouns ‘us’, ‘we’, and ‘our’ to refer to Himself are not evidence for a Trinity, but rather demonstrate the ultimate majesty and royalty of God.)

Earlier in the epistle to the Hebrews, the anonymous author describes Christ as “the radiance of the glory of God and the exact imprint of His nature” (Heb. 1:3, ESV), but being the exact imprint of God’s nature is a far cry from being consubstantial with God. In fact, the very idea that Christ could be an *imprint* of God demonstrates that He is not the same *as* God. So yes, our Lord Jesus Christ can indeed be called God as He is several times in the New Testament, but He is not the same as the only true God - rather, He is the exact imprint of God in that He does the work of God and fulfills His will perfectly - and He has been exalted to this position.

Another series of passages said to prove that Jesus Christ is the only true God are Philippians 2:5-11 and Colossians 2:8-9:

For let this disposition be in you, which is in Christ Jesus also, Who, **being inherently in the form of God, deems it not pillaging to be equal with God**, nevertheless empties Himself, taking the form of a slave, coming to be in the likeness of humanity,

and, being found in fashion as a human, He humbles Himself, becoming obedient unto death, even the death of the cross. Wherefore, also, God highly exalts Him, and graces Him with the name that is above every name, that in the name of Jesus every knee should be bowing, celestial and terrestrial and subterranean, and every tongue should be acclaiming that Jesus Christ is Lord, for the glory of God, the Father. (Php. 2:5-11, CLT)

Beware that no one shall be despoiling you through philosophy and empty seduction, in accord with human tradition, in accord with the elements of the world, and not in accord with Christ, for **in Him the entire complement [or ‘fullness’] of the Deity is dwelling bodily**. (Col. 2:8-9, CLT)

According to these passages, the Lord Jesus Christ is inherently in the ‘form of God’ with the ‘fullness of the Deity’ dwelling within Him. This is interpreted by trinitarians as saying that Jesus is Himself the only true God. However, this interpretation goes against the many passages already considered which show that Jesus cannot be the only true God, who is the Father; moreover, as noted previously, to be ‘in the form of God’ does not make one God, but rather Someone *similar to* God, just as the author of Hebrews states that Jesus was made the ‘imprint of [God’s] nature’.

In what sense can Jesus Christ be said to be ‘equal with God’? As always, interpreting scripture with scripture, we must go back to John 5:18. According to this verse, after Jesus told the Jews that God was His Father, they “sought the more to kill Him, for He not only annulled the sabbath, but **said His own Father also is God, making Himself equal to God.**” Based on this passage, Jesus is not equal to God in the sense that He is one and the same with the only true God, but because He is the Son of God. He “deems it not pillaging” because He chose not to use His power as Son of God selfishly, but instead to serve others with it (Matt. 20:28; Mk. 10:45).

Finally, Colossians 2:9 states that the fullness of God (or literally θεοτης, ‘Deity’) dwells bodily in Christ. This does not mean that He is fully the only true God, who is the Father, as context shows. Col. 1:19 states that “For it was the Father’s good pleasure for all the fullness to dwell in Him” (NASB); that is, the fullness of God did not dwell in Him because He was God by nature, but because the Father chose Him.

Now a narrative from the Gospel of Mark will be considered which is often said to demonstrate that Jesus is the same as the one true God. As the story goes, Jesus was in Capernaum preaching to a large crowd within a house. A paralytic was brought to Him, lowered through the roof, in the hope that He might heal him. Instead, however, Jesus pardoned the paralytic of his sins. The Jewish scribes, watching on, were outraged and said, “‘What is this man, speaking thus? Blaspheming is he! Who is able to pardon sins except One -- God?’” (Mk. 2:7, CLT). To show that He had the power to forgive sins on earth, Jesus then miraculously healed the paralytic, who walked off with the pallet on which he had been lowered.

Trinitarians argue that, because God is the only One who can forgive sins, and Jesus forgave the sins of the paralytic, He must be God. However, this interpretation blatantly contradicts the parallel passage in the Gospel of Matthew. According to Matthew, after the

paralytic walked out of the house, “the multitudes saw it... and glorified God, **who had given such power to men**” (Matt. 9:8, NKJV). Rather than demonstrating that Jesus is God, this verse shows that Jesus was actually a Man who was given authority to forgive sins *by God*! Trinitarians would say that this is not an argument against the Trinity, because Jesus was fully God and fully man, and emptied Himself of the independent use of His powers at His incarnation; however, even though this passage does not *refute* trinitarianism, it certainly does not *prove* trinitarianism either.

Why is this important to the Gospel?

This argument is often given both ways - trinitarians believe that the notion that Jesus is not God is impossible to reconcile with the Gospel, and therefore those who believe it are not saved, and nontrinitarians believe that the notion that Jesus is God goes against the Gospel, and (occasionally) that those who believe it are not saved either. Both of these positions will be considered here.

According to trinitarians, Jesus’ statement in John 8:24 is incompatible with nontrinitarianism, and shows that those who do not believe He is God are not saved.

For if ever you should not be believing Me that I am [ἐγώ εἰμι], you shall be dying in your sins. (CLT)

Taking ἐγώ εἰμι as a reference to the divine name YHWH, trinitarians interpret this verse as saying that those who do not believe that Jesus is the God of the Old Testament will die in their sins. However, as noted before, ἐγώ εἰμι is not the full or shortened version of the divine name, and should instead be understood as it is elsewhere, “I am *He*”. This also fits with the question that the Jews ask Him in the next verse, “Who are you?” Per Matt. 16:16, we are to believe that He is “the Christ, the Son of the living God”, which both trinitarians and nontrinitarians agree upon; therefore, neither group would ‘die in their sins’ according to this verse.

Another argument is sometimes made that nontrinitarianism threatens the message of the Gospel, for two different reasons. First, it is said that if Jesus is not God, He could not have been a perfect sacrifice for our sins; second, that a human Jesus might still have the ability to sin, in which case if He did sin our salvation would be in jeopardy. The first assertion is simply false, as the Bible is clear that Jesus’ sacrifice was not redeeming because of His divinity, but because of His sinlessness (2 Cor. 5:21; 1 Pet. 1:19). In fact, in a way, trinitarianism trivializes this part of the Gospel, because if Jesus is God, He would be logically unable to sin at all (Hab. 1:13; Titus 1:2; Heb. 6:18). A Jesus who was tempted in all the same points that we are, and yet was unable to sin, is not nearly as impressive nor important as a Jesus who was tempted in all the same points that we are and *chose* not to sin (Heb. 4:12). Moreover, because God cannot be tempted (Jas. 1:13), it would have been *impossible* for Jesus to have been tempted in the same points we are, as the Bible says, if He were the one true God.

The second assertion, that Jesus although glorified might still have the ability to sin, and therefore our salvation is never secure, is likewise false. First of all, the scriptures prophetically tell us that our salvation is secure and will be revealed at the second coming of

Jesus (Rev. 20:4-6), and so we know that our salvation is secure and that Jesus will never sin regardless of whether He has the capability to do so. Second, since Jesus was raised in a glorified body per 1 Corinthians 15, He would now be incorruptible (αφθαρσία; 1 Cor. 15:53), which almost certainly means that He can no longer sin, and by extension neither will we after our resurrection. Therefore, whether under trinitarianism or nontrinitarianism, believers have no reason to worry that either Jesus' perfection or our salvation is currently in jeopardy.

Finally, some nontrinitarians also assert that those who believe in the Trinity are not saved under Paul's gospel. The argument for this is rather complex, and will be fleshed out in the following paragraphs. Paul states that to be saved under his Gospel, one must believe that "Christ died for our sins... and that He was entombed, and that He has been roused the third day" (1 Cor. 15:3-4, CLT). Because we must believe that Christ died, and God is said to be immortal (literally αθανασία, 'non-death'; 1 Tim. 6:16) and incorruptible (Rom. 1:23; 1 Tim. 1:17), some argue that the beliefs that Jesus is God and that He died for our sins are incompatible.

For some, the argument that nontrinitarians are not saved under Paul's gospel goes even deeper than this. As argued in an earlier article of mine ("Death in the Bible"), those who die have no consciousness or soul, as the soul is the union of a body and spirit (Gen. 2:7) and the body and spirit separate at death (Ecc. 12:7). To believe that Jesus truly died, then, we must believe that He (His consciousness or ego) ceased to exist at His death; and since God cannot cease to exist, trinitarians cannot logically believe that Jesus died nor that He was a proper sacrifice for our sins. Moreover, as Paul says that we must believe that Jesus was entombed (not His body, but He Himself), a few nontrinitarians argue that belief in soul sleep is necessary for salvation, or else one must believe that Jesus' disembodied soul followed His body to the tomb for some odd reason. If soul sleep is not true, why would Paul have included this odd fact that Jesus' disembodied soul entered His tomb, and why is believing in this necessary for our salvation?

However, I disagree with these nontrinitarians who say that trinitarianism is incompatible with Paul's gospel. Although it is certainly *illogical* and possibly *unbiblical* to believe both that Jesus is the one true God and that Paul's gospel is true, it is still possible to believe this. Every trinitarian I have met agrees that Jesus died for our sins and was entombed, even if they do not realize the full implications of that statement, their beliefs still fall under Paul's gospel, and therefore they are saved. However, it is important to note that the three main heresies in the Christian church today each deny part of the Gospel when brought to their logical conclusion: trinitarianism ("Christ died"), eternal torment ("for our sins"), and the immortality of the soul ("He was entombed"). One might note that the unbiblical idea of materialism, that matter is all that exists, is also growing in popularity today and has even caused some former Christians to deny the fourth part of Paul's gospel, that Christ was roused on the third day.

Conclusion

Our doctrine should always be based on scripture alone and not on the traditions of men (Mk. 7:8). For this reason, rather than taking our presuppositions and seeing whether the Bible can be made to fit them, we should always go to the scriptures first and derive our

doctrine solely from there. Taking a holistic view of scripture, it can be clearly seen that the one true God is always considered to be *one* in nature (never three), and is almost always associated with 'the Father', and distinguished from the Lord Jesus Christ. The idea of the trinity, that the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit are all co-equal, co-eternal and consubstantial, cannot be found to be explicitly stated anywhere in the Bible, nor even inferred; likewise, the absolute deity of Christ is never explicitly mentioned, and can only be found when a presuppositional framework of the Trinity is placed on the Bible. Jesus, rather than being inherently God, was glorified by the one true God, the Father, to be Lord, Christ, and even God over all, with the exception of the one true God Himself (1 Cor. 15:27). Although trinitarianism is not harmful to one's salvation by itself, when taken to its logical conclusion, it denies the most basic fact of Paul's gospel: that Jesus died. Therefore, the idea of the Trinity should be rejected as heretical, and biblical unitarianism embraced instead.