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Samples, Gil L. Greek texts and English translations of the Bible: a comparison and contrast of the Textus Receptus Greek New Testament of the 16th century and the Alexandrian text of Westcott and Hort (19th century) and Aland and Metzger (20th century) concerning variant texts that pertain to the orthodox Christology of the Council of Nicea, A.D. 325. Master of Arts (History), December 2002, 155 pp., 149 titles.

The argument of this paper is that certain salient passages in the New Testament concerning Christology, as it was defined in the Nicene creed in A.D. 325, reflect such orthodoxy better in the Textus Receptus Greek texts and the English translations made from them than do the Alexandrian texts. Arian theology, which was condemned as heretical at Nicea, is examined. Patristic quotations, historical texts, and arguments of the scholars are cited and traced, along with a comparison of Christological verses.
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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

In A.D. 325 the Emperor Constantine assembled the first ecumenical Church council in the city of Nicea. In seeking to have unity in the Church and throughout the Roman empire, Constantine, himself a new convert to Christianity, desired that the bishops reach a doctrinal consensus concerning the relationship of the Son to the Father. A major controversy had begun a few years earlier when Arius, a presbyter in Alexandria, Egypt, challenged Bishop Alexander on his teaching about the subject of Christological Trinitarianism. Whereas Alexander believed that the members of the Trinity were co-equal and co-eternal, Arius rejected this idea, holding that Jesus, the Son, had been created by the Father, who alone was God. The majority of those at the Nicene council voted in favor of a creed which expressed the views of Alexander and condemned as heresy the doctrine of Arianism. Alexander’s opinion was decreed as orthodox Christianity.

My purposes in writing this paper are twofold. First, in chapters two through five, I trace the history of the Council of Nicea and the Christological decision that was formulated into a creed that survives to this day. In doing this, I analyze the various arguments and Scriptural citations and interpretations used by both Arians and anti-Arians, Ante-Nicene and Post-Nicene Church fathers, and theologians from the Reformation to today. Second, in chapters six through eight, I trace the history of the
two Greek texts of the New Testament. I note how various salient verses dealing with Christology, the Trinity, and Christ’s Deity, as they are found in the Textus Receptus, better substantiate the orthodox statements decreed at Nicea than do the same verses in the Alexandrian text, which tend to demonstrate the heretical teaching of Arius.

Fourth century letters and polemical tracts on the Arian controversy, such as those of Arius, Alexander, Eusebius of Caesarea, Eusebius of Nicomedia, and Athanasius, have survived to this today, and are cited in this paper. Arius and Eusebius of Nicomedia were the major defenders of the Arian position, while Alexander’s successor, Athanasius, became the champion of the orthodox position. In the fifth century, Augustine in the west and Chrysostom in the east both denounced Arianism and preached orthodox Trinitarianism. This is particularly evident in the Scriptural citations of Chrysostom which are analyzed in chapter five. I use these early texts to examine and determine what Arianism really was.

Chapter six details the history of Erasmus’ Greek New Testament and his five editions with annotations (1516-1535). His text, which was based on many Greek manuscripts of the New Testament and was compared with Biblical quotations of the Church fathers, was used by Robert Stephanus (1550), Theodore Beza (1598), and the Elzevir brothers (1633), and it is called the Textus Receptus (the “received text”). The Elzevir brothers were the first to call their Greek New Testament (in the Preface), “the Textus Receptus.” But because the editions of Erasmus, Stephanus, Beza, and the Elzevirs are almost identical, they are all, collectively, spoken of as the Textus Receptus. Any of their Greek New Testaments, as well as English translations made from them, like
that of William Tyndale, is referred to by scholars as the Textus Receptus. It was used by
Martin Luther for his German translation of the New Testament, William Tyndale for his
English translation, and by the King James translators for their English New Testament
of 1611.

Erasmus rejected readings from copies which he had of the Alexandrian Codex
Vaticanus in Rome in favor of the Receptus readings of the Greek manuscripts he had
and used. Erasmus used a few Greek manuscripts dating from the eleventh to the
fifteenth centuries for his first edition of the Greek New Testament. The reason for this
was that the majority of Greek manuscripts housed throughout Europe were all in
practically unanimous agreement. They read as the Textus Receptus and not as the
Alexandrian manuscripts. The Textus Receptus Greek New Testament was the standard
for over three hundred years (until Westcott and Hort) for New Testament translations,
and it was the basis for other Greek New Testaments. Citations of the Church fathers,
such as Ignatius, Tatian, Cyprian, Chrysostom, Augustine, and Gregory of Nyssa,
demonstrate that the Scriptures they had access to read as the Textus Receptus. Scores of
full and partial manuscripts of the Greek New Testament from the Middle Ages read as
the Receptus of Erasmus. Any one of these manuscripts, as well as copies and
translations made from them, may be called Textus Receptus manuscripts or texts. This
type of text has been traced by scholars back to Antioch of Syria in the first century. It
was used by Church fathers such as Ignatius, Tatian, Cyprian, and Chrysostom.

The history of the Alexandrian New Testament extends from Origen (third century)
and Eusebius of Caesarea (fourth century) to the British scholars, Westcott and Hort, and
their Greek text of 1881, which was based on two Alexandrian manuscripts that date back to the fourth century. Their text replaced the Textus Receptus as the standard, and was superceded by that of Eberhard Nestle in the first half of the twentieth century, also based on the Alexandrian manuscripts, and later, the Greek New Testament of Aland and Metzger, which is the main text used today for translation work. The Greek New Testaments cited in this paper are the Textus Receptus texts of Erasmus’ first and third editions, Stephanus’ 1550 edition, Beza’s 1598 edition, and the Alexandrian texts of Westcott and Hort’s 1885 edition, and Aland and Metzger’s edition of 1983. The English translations used for comparison are Wycliffe (1380), Tyndale (1534), Rheims (1582), the Great Bible (1540), the Geneva Bible (1562), the Bishops’ Bible (1602), the King James Authorized Version (1611 and 1873 editions), the Revised Version (1881), the New American Standard Bible (1963), the Catholic New American Bible (1970), the New International Version (1973), and Bruce Metzger’s New Revised Standard Version (1989).

Many Greek scholars and Bible theologians of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries have written at length for and against the Textus Receptus or the Alexandrian text. Much of this material involves the science of textual criticism, i.e., the study of manuscripts, texts, and patristic quotations to determine which variant reading of a verse is the most probable. This was advanced by Erasmus in his rejection of certain readings from Jerome’s Latin Vulgate based on his adaptation of Lorenzo Valla’s methodology and philology of the fifteenth century, as demonstrated in Valla’s Annotations. Erasmus discovered and published the Annotations early in the sixteenth century, and was greatly
impressed by Valla’s ability to use philological historical word studies to produce concrete results, such as Valla’s debunking of the *Donation of Constantine*. Erasmus spent much time observing how the fathers wrote about and quoted the New Testament. Comments of the Church fathers are noted in this paper, as well as recent arguments concerning the readings of the Receptus versus the Alexandrian readings, which reflect an Arian flavor.

In the nineteenth century, Greek scholars such as Greisbach, Lachman, Tregelles, Tischendorf, and most notably, Westcott and Hort, argued for the Alexandrian text. As noted in chapter seven, Westcott and Hort used it for their Greek New Testament, and as the basis for the English New Testament that would supplant the King James, the Revised Version of 1881. Dean John Burgon, an Oxford scholar, rejected the pro-Alexandrian theories of Westcott and Hort, and championed the Textus Receptus. Today the Dean Burgon Society, headed by Donald Waite, continues Burgon’s work and study. But the majority of scholars and translators that followed Westcott and Hort, like Aland and Metzger, used the Alexandrian text for their English translations. Their reason is that because the Alexandrian manuscripts available today are older than those used by Erasmus, who, supposedly, did not know of their existence, then they must be better. Because of the antiquity of the Alexandrian manuscripts, which are detailed in chapter six of this work, they are given preference over all Textus Receptus manuscripts and texts.

In the twentieth century, the Alexandrian text was advocated and used by D.A. Carson, F. F. Bruce, James R. White, and Bruce Metzger. The Receptus text has been
defended by Edward Hills, David Otis Fuller, William P. Grady, Jack Moorman, and Michael Maynard. Their arguments are explained in this work. Also noted are comments of Reformation writers such as Martin Luther, John Calvin, and William Tyndale.

There are salient Christological and Trinitarian passages in the New Testament. The Alexandrian readings reflect an Arian or semi-Arian doctrine, as demonstrated in chapter eight. The verses that are analyzed include:

1) I Timothy 3:16 - Receptus: “God was manifest in the flesh;” Alexandrian: “He was manifest in the flesh.”
2) I John 5:7 - Receptus: “For there are three that bear record in heaven, the Father, the Word, and the Holy Ghost: and these three are one;” Alexandrian text omits this verse.
3) Matthew 19:17 - Receptus: (Jesus speaking) “Why callest thou me good? there is none good but one, that is, God;” Alexandrian: “Why do you ask me about the good [or what is good]? There is only One who is good.”
4) Luke 23:42 - Receptus: “And he said unto Jesus, Lord, remember me when thou comest into thy Kingdom;” Alexandrian: “Then he said, Jesus, [the word Lord is omitted] remember me when you come into your kingdom.”
5) Matthew 1:25 - Receptus: “And [Joseph] knew her [Mary] not till she had brought forth her firstborn son: and he called his name Jesus;” Alexandrian: “And he knew her not till she had brought forth her son [the word ‘firstborn’ is omitted]: and he called his name Jesus.”

My argument is that the Receptus readings better substantiate and exemplify the orthodoxy that was established at Nicea concerning the person of Christ rather than the Alexandrian verses in the Greek text of Aland and Metzger. The same holds true of nearly every English translation of the late nineteenth century and the entire twentieth century, all of which were based on Westcott, Hort, Nestle, and particularly (in the last quarter of the twentieth century), Aland and Metzger.

The chapters are arranged so as to provide the reader with a history of the Arian
controversy, and the texts that were used in the debate, such as John 1:1 (“In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God”), Psalms 2:7 (“the LORD hath said unto me, Thou art my Son; this day have I begotten thee”), and Proverbs 8:22 (“the LORD possessed me in the beginning of his way, before his works of old”). The writings of Church fathers, Reformation theologians and translators, and commentators and scholars of the last two centuries are cited. I note what Church fathers before and after Nicea wrote about the Christological passages debated during the Nicene Council, and if different readings from various manuscripts were being quoted by the Arians. Citing the Reformers and modern scholars demonstrates the historiography of interpretations and manuscript transmissions of these verses. The arguments of contemporary scholars for various interpretations and/or readings are analyzed throughout the work.

In summary, this work consists of eight chapters, with chapters two through four dealing with the Arian heresy and the decisions of orthodoxy established at Nicea, while chapters five through eight examine the history of the two types of Greek New Testaments and the differences in verses and readings that pertain to Trinitarian Christology and Nicene orthodoxy. Chapter two is an examination of the Arian controversy that arose over a dispute between Arius and Alexander concerning the doctrine of the Trinity. Chapter three is a description of the Council of Nicea, followed by a review of the major passages used in the Nicene debate and thereafter in chapter four. The reader is presented in chapter five with an account of the life and teachings of John Chrysostom, a Church father of the late fourth century who constantly preached
Nicene orthodoxy and attempted to demonstrate from the Bible the errors of Arianism. The specific verses that he cited, along with his explanations, are examined and compared with other fathers, the Reformers, and present-day theologians. The purpose of this is to note their arguments as they have been advanced and reworked through the centuries.

Chapter six details the work of Erasmus in his production of five editions of the Greek New Testament with annotations. The history of this Textus Receptus type of text is compared with that of the Alexandrian text. Various criticisms that were levelled against Erasmus’ production then and now are noted. The English productions of the New Testament which were made by John Wycliffe and William Tyndale in the fourteenth and sixteenth centuries are examined in chapter seven, with particular emphasis on Tyndale’s version as it was translated from Erasmus’ Greek Textus Receptus of the New Testament. Chapter eight advances the five Scripture passages listed earlier, noting the difference in the orthodox Receptus readings in Greek and English, and the Alexandrian readings which present a more Arian type of text. The arguments of scholars for both sets of readings are examined.
CHAPTER 2

THE ARIAN CONTROVERSY

In A.D. 325, at Nicea, the Emperor Constantine convened the first ecumenical council of bishops ever to be held in the history of Christendom. Jacob Burckhardt noted that the “chief purpose” of this assembly was to discuss, debate, and decide upon the Arian conflicts, the Church, having recently received official status as the religion of the Roman empire and its emperor, who had converted in 312, was “wholly consumed in strenuous conflict over the relations of the three Persons of the Trinity.” At this council the emperor saw to it that a creed was enstated that made the views of the anti-Arians such as Alexander and Athanasius of Alexandria official Church doctrine. Arianism was condemned as a heresy, and Arius was publicly anathematized and banished to Illyria. J.N.D. Kelly called this situation “the Nicene Crisis.”

Events which led to Nicea

In A.D. 311, one year before Constantine’s conversion to Christianity and his victory over Maxentius at the Milvian bridge, Arius, an ascetic from Libya, was ordained as a presbyter in Alexandria, Egypt. In 318 Arius began establishing himself as an opponent of heresies. One such heresy was a doctrine that had been espoused by Sabellius, hence called Sabellianism. At times it was also referred to as Monarchianism, Modalism, Oneness doctrine, and Patripassionism. The editors of Christian History, in their issue on Heresy in the Early Church, gave this definition: “Modalists, a.k.a.
Sabellians: God’s name (Father, Son, Holy Spirit) changes with his roles or ‘modes of being’ (like a chameleon). When God is the Son, he is not the Father. There is no permanent distinction between the three ‘persons’ of the Trinity, otherwise you have three gods. Key texts: Ex. 20:3: ‘you shall have no other gods before me’ and John 10:30: ‘I and the Father are one.’

Church fathers of the second and third centuries wrote on the doctrine of the Trinity, including Tertullian, who was the first theologian to use the Latin word *trinitas*. Tertullian accused the Patripassionists of teaching that it was the Father who suffered on the cross of Calvary. Sabellius, the anti-Trinitarian from whose name the word “Sabellianism” was derived, taught that the modalistic Trinity is simply a trinity of manifestations of the one monotheistic God. He can reveal himself as Father, or Son, or Holy Spirit, but these are merely different titles for the one being. Sabellius believed that a trinitarian teaching, such as that of Tertullian, would lead to a doctrine of three separate gods. Thus he advocated that there exists a single God who changes names (Father, Son, or Holy Spirit) according to his changing roles or modes. For this Sabellius was excommunicated in Alexandria in 261.

Arius Versus Alexander

Alexander, the bishop in Alexandria, began teaching a series of lessons on the Trinity. Arius accused Alexander of proclaiming and endorsing the heresy of Sabellanism. The Church historian, Robert Payne, noted that in his attempt to combat Alexander, Arius “fell into a new heresy, for he announced, ‘If the Father begat the Son, then he who was begotten had a beginning in existence, and from this it follows there was
a time when the Son was not.’ Here, at some time in 319, the cry of the Arians - ‘There was a time when the Son was not’ - was first heard. The words . . . split the church in two.”

Harold O.J. Brown, in his history, Heresies: From the Apostles to the Present, observed: “Arius . . . soon began to teach explicitly that the Son, far from being another mode of the Father, was of a different nature, a created being. Alexander excommunicated him in 321 . . . . When the Bible speaks of the Father ‘begetting’ the Son [as in Psalms 2:7, Hebrews 1:5, John 1:18 and 3:16], Arius calls it a synonym for ‘creating.’”

Whereas Alexander taught that the Son was eternally begotten, Arius exclaimed that the Son was begotten in eternity. While Alexander claimed that Christ was begotten, Arius said that He was created “out of nothing;” in Latin, “ex nihilo;” in Greek, “ex ouk onton.” Alexander dubbed Arius and his followers “Exukontians,” and accused them of apostasy for having fallen away from the true faith. A council of Egyptian and Libyan bishops at Alexandria, in 312, excommunicated the Arians, accusing them of denying the deity of Jesus Christ.

Arius’ Supporters

Arius had many influential friends and sympathizers, including Eusebius of Nicomedia and the noted Church historian of the fourth century, Eusebius of Caesarea. After being deposed and excommunicated, Arius wrote scores of letters defending his position, being aided in this effort by Eusebius of Nicomedia, who wrote extensively on behalf of the Arian doctrine. Although he had been banished from Alexandria, Arius, believing that he had the support of the Eastern bishops, returned to Alexandria and
resumed teaching the parishioners without the approval of Alexander. About this time Constantine became sole Emperor. Peter Brown, an historian of the early middle ages, noted that at the time “Arius enjoyed the tacit support of cultivated bishops, such as the elder statesman, Eusebius of Caesarea,” who was a friend and advisor of Constantine. Arius spread his doctrine throughout North Africa, Palestine, and Nicomedia, through his work entitled *Thalia* (“The Banquet”); this statement of his doctrine was refuted later by Athanasius.

In *Thalia* Arius stated: “The Father is alien in being to the Son, and he has no origin.” The “unbegotten” God brought the Son into existence, for the Son (the Wisdom and Word of God) did not always exist. He “had a beginning to his created (out of nothing) existence . . . the substances (ousiai) of Father, Son, and Holy Spirit are . . . foreign to each other . . . the Word . . . is quite other than the Father.” According to the historian, Richard E. Rubenstein, Arius turned his *Thalia* into a chant with a “rhythmic meter ordinarily used for popular ballads. It was . . . chanted in port cities all around the eastern Mediterranean. Popular songs, like grain and news, traveled quickly by sea.”

Arius stated that when God created the Son, He “established the Son as the beginning of all creatures . . . having fathered such a one, he bore him as a son for himself . . . he is not equal to God, nor yet is he of the same substance (*homoousios*).” In this Arius taught his own idea of adoptionism. Athanasius later pointed this out when he wrote that the Arians “‘taught that the Unbegun made the Son ‘a beginning of things [and] originated and advanced Him as a Son to Himself by adoption.’”

A century earlier Paul of Samosota had taught that Jesus was a man who was
adopted by God and only became the Christ at his baptism by John the Baptist. But Arius’ doctrine of Christ’s adoption was “not that of earlier christology in which the man Jesus is adopted as Son at his baptism; rather the Word was adopted at his creation because of his future earthly life as flesh or as man . . . [therefore] he is named God [as in John 1:1] from the start in anticipation of his performance.” Based on this, Arius said that the Word is not “true God;” he may be called “God,” but he is not “true God,” for it is “only by participating in grace, like all others, that he too is called by the name ‘God.’” This was Arius’ interpretation of the opening of John’s Gospel, “In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God” (John 1:1).

Writing on the Nicene controversy, Alan Torrance noted that when the Bible speaks of the Son having been begotten by God the Father, as in Psalms 2:7, Arius defined “begotten” as “has come into being.” Arius held that Jesus, the Son, was not eternal and “thus could not be God . . . he argued that . . . the Son was created by him [the Father] . . . the Son was not God . . . the Son was a creature, albeit the ‘first creature’ (proton ktisma). Created first, he was the one through whom everything else was created.”

Arius also affirmed the Trinity as expressed by Christ in Matthew 28:19, in which Jesus, after His resurrection, commanded the apostles to baptize their converts in the “name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost.” However, for Arius, the members of the Trinity were not co-equal or co-eternal. Arius’ view was that “there exists a trinity (trias) in unequal glories . . . one is more glorious than another in infinite
degree

. . . the Father is other than the Son in substance (kat' ousian), because he is without beginning.”23 Arius wrote that he was being condemned for teaching that God alone is eternal while the Son had a beginning (arche).24

A Campaign of Letter-writing

In response to the teaching of Arius, Alexander addressed a letter to bishops throughout “the Catholic Church,” in which he referred to Arius and Eusebius of Nicomedia as apostates “which might be justly thought and called a forerunner to Antichrist.”25 Alexander explained that because Eusebius of Nicomedia was writing letters of approval concerning Arius’ doctrines, Alexander felt it necessary to issue a polemic response. Commenting on the extreme monotheism espoused by the Arians, Alexander wrote:

What they advance in opposition to the Scripture is this: The Word of God was not always, but originated from nothing; for God, who exists, created him, who was not, from that which did not exist [ex nihilo]. Therefore there was a time when he was not. For the Son is a creature, and was made. Nor is he like [homoousios] the Father with respect to his essence . . . he is one of his works and creatures . . . as he [God] created all things, he made the Son . . . . We, with the bishops of Egypt and Lybia, having met together, in number nearly a hundred, have excommunicated him [Arius] and his followers.26

Alexander continued his letter by citing Scriptures which he felt justified the condemning and anathematizing of Arius. The first of these was John 1:1,3, which states that Jesus, called “the Word,” was in the beginning with God, and “the Word was God,” and all things were made by the Word. Alexander asked: “Who, hearing in the gospel the words ‘only begotten Son,’ and ‘by him all things were made,’ will not abhor those who affirm that he is one of the creatures? How indeed can he be one of those who were
made by him?” Alexander made this observation based not only on John 1:1, 3, but also John 1:14 and 18, where the Apostle referred to Christ’s birth as the Word being “made flesh” and dwelling among us as the “only begotten of the Father,” for “No man hath seen God [the Father] at any time; the only begotten Son (monogenes huios), which is in the bosom of the Father, he hath declared him.”

The Arians answered Alexander by saying that the Son was created by God before Genesis 1:1. He was then elevated to the state of divine godhood and empowered supernaturally by the Father to create the universe and everything in it. Rubenstein stated: “Arius argued that Jesus was God’s ‘Word’ metaphorically, not literally, and that any supernatural powers bestowed upon him were powers granted [delegated] by the Father to the Son, that is, by a superior to a subordinate.”

Alexander closed his letter by quoting Paul’s statement to Timothy about two apostates of their day who (like the Arians) were teaching heresy (II Timothy 2:17-18: “And their word will eat as doth a canker: of whom is Hymenaeus and Philetus; who concerning the truth have erred . . . and over throw the faith of some”) and I Timothy 4:1-2: “In the latter times some shall depart from the faith, giving heed to seducing spirits and doctrines of devils; Speaking lies in hypocrisy; having their conscience seared with a hot iron.”

Arius wrote a letter of explanation to Eusebius, bishop of Nicomedia. He stated that he and his followers had been “expelled” by “Pope Alexander” because they affirmed that “God, who is without a beginning, existed before the Son . . . that the Son is not unbegotten . . . and that he existed not before he was begotten, or created . . . .
are persecuted because we have said that the Son has a beginning. But God is without a beginning . . . . Thus we have said, because he [the Son] is not part of God.”

It should be observed that Arius referred to the Son as “begotten or created,” showing that Arius’ definition of “begotten” was “to be created [out of nothing].” Arius made no connection between God begatting a Son and Mary begatting Jesus (a physical birth on earth in time). St. Paul noted in Hebrews 1:5-6 that God begat His Son when Mary gave birth to Jesus. These verses are discussed in chapter four of this work, along with Psalms 2:7, which is quoted in the verses in Hebrews, and Proverbs 8:22-24, a popular Arian text.

Eusebius of Nicomedia, in turn, wrote a letter to Paulinus, bishop of Tyre, in which he attempted to explain from Scripture the position of the Arians. Eusebius stated that he had never “heard [in the Scriptures] . . . of two beings unbegotten, nor of one divided into two . . . we say this, not from our own reasonings, but instructed by the scriptures.” He spoke of Christ as having been “created and established, and begotten in the substance (gennatos ta ousia) . . . in the resemblance which he bears to his Maker.”

The major part of Eusebius’ argument came from a text in Proverbs 8:22-24, where “wisdom” is speaking (in the person of Christ according to Eusebius and Arius), and Eusebius read this as follows: “God created me in the beginning of his ways, and formed me before the world, and begat me before all the hills,” to which Eusebius commented: “If then he was from him, that is, of him, as it were a part of him, or an emanation of the substance, he could not then be said to have been created or established.”

Based on such a reading, Arius and Eusebius concluded that Wisdom [the Son, Jesus] was created as the beginning of God’s work, and the Son, a created creature of God, did not share the
Father’s divine essence.36

Like Philo, Clement of Alexandria, Origen, and Sabellius, Arius was influenced by Platonic philosophy. In his works *Phaedo* and *Timaeus*, Plato taught that there existed what he called “the Monas,” who was “unity” and, therefore, could not be divided into two or three persons. The attributes of Plato’s Monas were incommunicable, so they could not be shared with anyone outside of himself (or itself). Therefore, Plato held that there existed a Demiurge who, as creator, was a mediator between God and the world. This Demiurge was more powerful than other creatures, and he “created a host of smaller demigods to do his will.”37

Such ideas were reflected in the thinking of Arius. In a letter to Alexander, Arius wrote: “God is thus before all as a Monas and cause. Therefore he is also before the Son.”38 Arius applied Platonism to Christianity, for Plato said in *Phaedo*: “The Monas is the cause.”39 In his work, *Thalia*, Arius stated: “The Father is alien in being to the Son, and he has no origin. Know that the monad was, but the dyad was not, before it came into being.”40 Robert Morey, a Trinitarian scholar and historian, observed: “In Platonism, the Duas or Dynad [Dyad] was a demigod, i.e., he was not God nor was he like other creatures. He was a third kind of being. Thus, he was a demigod.”41 Noting that Arius applied this concept to Christ’s mediatorial work, Edmond J. Fortman wrote of Arius’ teachings: “God resolved to create the world, and so He created first a superior being, which we call the Son or Word, destined to be the instrument of creation. The Son occupies a place intermediate between God and the world, for he is neither God nor part of the world-system. He is before all creatures and the instrument of their creation.”42
This was the teaching of Arius, who remolded Christ into the image of Plato’s Demiurge. Cornelius Hagerty noted that “Arius taught that the Logos [Word] is a demiurge who produces out of nothing all other creatures, including the Holy Ghost.” Arius’ Christ was a version of Plato’s Demiurge, mediating between God and the universe and creating the angels to do his will.

Morey called both Sabellian modalism and Arianism “reactionary theologies, i.e., they arose in response to the orthodox doctrine of the Trinity. They both attempted to solve the Trinitarian riddle: How can God be Three and One at the same time . . . . Sabellianism arose in reaction to Trinitarianism, and Arianism arose in reaction to Sabellianism.” As a result of the Arian controversy, bishops rose up against each other. According to the Church historian Philip Schaff, the “zeal of the parties . . . transformed the Christian East into a theological battle-field.” Rubenstein characterized the situation: “Highly respected leaders of the Church had taken strongly opposed positions. Anathemas and decrees of excommunication were flying.” The culmination of this crisis was the intervention of Constantine and the Council of Nicea.
NOTES FOR CHAPTER 2


18. Williams, 102.


20. Haugaard, 256.


23. Williams, 102.

24. Williams, 97.


26. Alexander, 408.

27. Alexander, 409.


32. Eusebius of Nicomedia, 415.

34. Eusebius of Nicomedia, 415.

35. Williams, 100.


38. Morey, 472.


40. Grillmeier, 224.

41. More, 473.


43. Morey, 474.


45. Morey, 477-78.

46. Schaff, 621.

47. Rubenstein, 46.
CHAPTER 3

THE COUNCIL OF NICEA

When the news of the Arian schism reached the Emperor Constantine, he took counsel from the Spanish Hosius, bishop of Cordova. Robert Payne noted: “Like James I of England, Constantine regarded unity as ‘the mother of order,’ and he was not overmuch concerned with the theological truths at stake.”¹ Constantine dispatched Hosius with a letter addressed to Alexander and Arius, which exhorted the two to be reconciled. However they both remained inflexible and disputes became more frequent.²

Constantine’s letter began: “When I stopped recently in Nicomedia, my plan was to press on to the East at once. But while I was hurrying towards you and was already the greater part of the journey, the news of this business reversed my plan, so that I might not be forced to see with my eyes what I did not think possible ever to reach my hearing.”³ Constantine found it difficult to comprehend that his dream of a united empire under the banner of Christianity might be shattered by petty arguments of certain theologians. In his letter, Constantine stated that he understood the “origin of the present controversy” to center around Alexander, who had questioned his presbyters in “regard to a point of useless debate,” and Arius, who had “advanced that which should either not have entered into your mind at first, or after having gained admission, should have been locked up in silence . . . in consequence . . . the most holy people, rent into two factions, have departed from the harmonious union of the common body.”⁴
Referring to himself as God’s “servant,” Constantine wrote: “I beseech you to terminate this affair . . . you have one and the same faith . . . the topic which has excited animosity and division among you, since it belongs not to the essence and life of religion in general, should by no means produce discord and sedition among you.” Exhorting Alexander and Arius to put away “these most toiling matters,” the emperor pointed out that often “friendship is more pleasant when enmity is followed by reconciliation.” He pleaded with them to drop their debates and allow such “matter to remain in your thoughts, and be laid in the secret depths of the mind” because such would enable him to again “enjoy quiet days, and nights undisturbed by solicitude.” In his closing appeal, Constantine made this request: “Permit me, as speedily as possible, to behold you and all others of the people happy and rejoicing and to render, with you, due thanks to God for the common agreement and liberty to all.”

Because Alexander and his chief deacon and assistant, Athanasius, were convinced that Jesus Christ was and is “absolute God,” and not a lesser created god, they refused any kind of reconciliation with the Arians. Arius continued to hold that Jesus, the Word of God, was not coeternal with God. After conducting interviews in and around Alexandria and examining the facts, Hosius found himself in agreement with Alexander. As a bishop, Hosius held that discipline needed to be maintained over the lesser clergy, and therefore, Arius should repent of his error and submit himself to Alexander’s authority. As bishop of Alexandria, Alexander’s jurisdiction included all of Egypt and Libya.

Hosius sent a letter to Constantine in which he informed the emperor that no
compromise could be reached and that this doctrinal matter was of greater importance than anyone had realized. The Arians were spreading a heresy that could not be tolerated, but rather, it should be immediately suppressed. Hosius recommended that Constantine convene a council to deal with several pervading issues, the first and foremost of these being the Arian controversy.¹²

Constantine decided that such an “explosive issue had to be defused.”¹³ In 325, the twentieth year of Constantine’s reign, he called for a council to meet in Nicea, which was not far from Nicomedia in Asia Minor. Approximately three hundred bishops gathered together in that early summer in Nicea, a city “within easy reach of Constantinople, for what later would be known as the First Ecumenical - that is, universal- Council.”¹⁴ Constantine was fifty-one years of age, with somewhat long hair and a short-trimmed beard. He had summoned the bishops by a letter of invitation, and he used money from the treasury to cover their expenses while in Nicea. According to Philip Schaff, each bishop was “to bring with him two presbyters and three servants,” and, of the eighteen hundred bishops throughout the empire, about one sixth traveled to Nicea, more from the Eastern provinces than the Latin west, whose delegates included Hosius of Cordova, two delegates dispatched by Pope Sylvester I to represent Rome, and a Gothic bishop, Theophilus, the “forerunner and teacher of the Gothic Bible translator Ulfilas.”¹⁵

The Council of Nicea

After the assembly listened to a speech of welcome read by Eusebius of Caesarea, Constantine, who was dressed in “a purple silk robe blazing with jewels and gold embroidery,” opened the council by stating: “When I learned, contrary to all
expectations, that there were divisions among you, then I solemnly considered them, and praying that these discords might also be healed with my assistance, I summoned you here without delay.”\textsuperscript{16} Arius, who was in his sixties, was given the floor. He had put some of his ideas to music, writing “jingles which the common folk sang” or chanted.\textsuperscript{17} For his presentation to those at the council, Arius burst into song with the following lyrics: “The uncreated God has made the Son[, ] A beginning of things created, And by adoption has God made the Son Into an advancement of himself. Yet the Son’s substance is Removed from the substance of the Father: The Son is not equal to the Father, Nor does he share the same substance. God is the all-wise Father, And the Son is the teacher of his mysteries.

The members of the Holy Trinity share unequal glories.”\textsuperscript{18}

The anti-Arian bishops put their hands over their ears, being appalled by such blasphemy!\textsuperscript{19} It was rumored that a Gallic bishop named Nicholas, later known as the saint of Christmas celebrations, was so enraged by the heretical declarations of Arius that he slapped the face of the old man.\textsuperscript{20} The Arians were allowed to read a letter of Eusebius of Nicomedia (possibly the one cited earlier that was addressed to Paulinus of Tyre), as well as a confession of faith, both of which were “rent in pieces” by those who were “excited [by] indignation.”\textsuperscript{21}

The Need for a Creed

Bishop Hosius, Constantine’s chief advisor in Church matters, suggested that the problem be solved by drawing up a creed. Eusebius of Caesarea suggested one that he had learned as a child.\textsuperscript{22} The Church historian Kenneth Scott Latourette observed:
The Arians presented a statement of their position, but this aroused violent opposition. Eusebius of Caesarea, who took a middle position but was against any leaning towards Sabellianism, and hence was inclined to favour the Arians, suggested as a statement to which all might agree the creed which was in use in his own see and which he said had come down from his predecessors in the Caesarean episcopate and was taught catechumens and to which . . . assent was required at baptism. This seemed to win general assent, including the endorsement of the Emperor.23

However, the opponents of Arianism did not feel that the creed of Eusebius, as it stood, would resolve the conflict. They wanted a creed so worded “that the Arians would be forced to deny their essential tenets,” and therefore, a few subtractions and additions were put forth for discussion.24 Eusebius’ statement spoke of faith in “one God, the Father,” and in “one Lord Jesus Christ, the Logos [Word] of God, God from God, light from light, life from life, Son only begotten, first-begotten of all creation, begotten before all ages from the Father.”25 The Arians had little difficulty with the idea that the Son was begotten by the Father before time began. The phrase, “first-begotten of all creation,” seemed to imply “that, however unique Jesus may have been, he was part of the created order.”26 Subsequently, the line “first-begotten of all creation, begotten before all ages from the Father” was dropped.

By this time Constantine was turning against the Arians whom he had previously favored. Prior to the council, he had written in his letter to Alexander and Arius that after making “careful inquiry” into their theological differences, he had found them to be “of a truly insignificant character and quite unworthy of such fierce contention.”27 But due to the influence of bishops like Hosius, the emperor concluded that this was a matter of grave importance, and the issue must be settled on the side of the anti-Arians like Alexander and the young Athanasius, who had accompanied Alexander and would be his
successor as bishop of Alexandria and an express polemicist opponent of any form of Arianism.\textsuperscript{28}

\textit{Homoousios}

Robert Payne noted: “Constantine suggested that Christ be defined as homoousios - one in essence with the Father - and this definition should be included [added] in the creed.”\textsuperscript{29} Eusebius’ creed was then altered to conform with the emperor’s suggestion. The anti-Arian bishops of the council stated that “the Son alone was properly of the substance of the Father. This was peculiar to the only begotten and true Word of the Father, and therefore the expression ‘of the substance of the Father’ was employed.”\textsuperscript{30}

Certain Scriptures were advanced in defense of the position of these bishops. They cited John 1:1 (“the Word was with God [in the beginning], and the Word was God”), Philippians 2:5-6 (“Christ Jesus, Who being in the form of God, thought it not robbery to be equal with God”), and Hebrews 1:1-3, where St. Paul stated that Jesus, God’s Son, is the “brightness” of God’s glory and the “express image of his person” (as Paul also stated in II Corinthians 4:4, “Christ, who is the image of God”).\textsuperscript{31} Noting John 10:30, where Jesus declared, “I and my Father are one,” the bishops argued that “the Son was consubstantial [\textit{homoousios}] with the Father,” this word being “understood to signify that the Son was not only like the Father ['\textit{homoiusios},’ a term suggested by Eusebius of Caesarea as a middle of the road compromise\textsuperscript{32}] but so similar that he could be called with propriety the same.”\textsuperscript{33}

The Arians objected on the grounds that the word “consubstantial” was not found in the Scriptures. Boyle noted: “They demonstrated the injustice of their opponents in
objecting to this word on the pretense that it was not found in Scripture, when they themselves scrupled not to employ expressions which were not in the Sacred Writings, such as, that the Son of God was made from nothing and had not always existed.”

Although the minority group of Arians hated the word “homoousios,” and declared it to be unscriptural and Sabellian, they were overruled, and the word was inserted in the creed. On the nineteenth of June the final draft of the creed was announced by Hosius, and it read as follows:

We believe in one God, the Father Almighty, maker of all things visible and invisible. And in one Lord Jesus Christ, the Son of God, begotten of the Father, only begotten, that is, from the substance of the Father, God from God, Light from Light, very God from very God, begotten not made, of the same substance as the Father, through whom all things were made, both things in Heaven and things in earth; who for us men, and for our salvation, came down and was made flesh, was made man, suffered and rose again the third day, ascended into Heaven, and shall come to judge the quick and the dead. And in the Holy Ghost. And those who say ‘There was a time when he was not’ and ‘He did not exist before he was made’ and ‘He was made out of nothing’ or those who pretend that the Son of God is ‘of another hypostasis [essence] or substance’ or ‘created’ or ‘alterable’ or ‘mutable,’ the Catholic Church anathematizes.

In their response to the points made by Arius in his jingle concerning Christ, the main concern of the drafters of the Nicene document was to establish the doctrine of the Deity of the Son. The Church historian Henry C. Sheldon noted that the creed explicitly stated: “the Son is homoousion, or consubstantial, with the Father; not of an essence dissimilar to that of the Father [the Arian view], or even of an essence merely similar [the semi-Arian ‘homoiusios’ view], but of the same essence.” Of the anti-Arian phrases in the creed, Tony Lane wrote: “Arius interpreted the traditional phrase ‘begotten of the Father’ to mean that Jesus Christ was created by the Father out of nothing. Nicea excludes this interpretation by the explanatory clause ‘that is, from the substance of the
Father.’ Arius held, with Origen, that only the Father is ‘true God.’ Nicea responds by calling Jesus Christ ‘true God from true God.’ Therefore, Arius, along with two Arian bishops, Theonas and Secundus, refused to sign this ‘homoousios creed.’ They were deposed, excommunicated, and Arius was forbidden to return to Alexandria.

The Council of Nicea was concluded on the twenty-fifth of July with a banquet that was attended by the emperor. According to Harold O. J. Brown, the “orthodox” bishops welcomed the repressive measures against the Arians that were enacted by Constantine. Brown stated: “The mutual persecution of Christians by Christians, using the power of the state, had begun.” Both Sheldon and Jacob Burckhardt noted that at the conclusion of the council, Eusebius of Nicomedia and Theognis, Bishop of Nicea, were banished to Gaul for refusing to “sanction the sentence against Arius,” and Arius was “dispatched to Illyria” while Constantine proudly exclaimed in a letter he had sent to Alexandria: “What has pleased three hundred bishops is nothing other than the will of God.” Constantine held that the Nicene victory for orthodoxy was an example of Conciliar infallibility.

Thus ended the Council of Nicea. Arianism was decreed to be heretical, and the creed signed by the bishops was heralded as orthodox Christianity. Schaff noted that this was “the first instance of such signing of a document in the Christian Church.” The bishops believed they had formulated a creed which accurately reflected the teaching and faith of the Apostles. The doctrine of the eternal Deity of Jesus Christ would forever be affirmed as the orthodox view of the church, and this was reconfirmed at the Council of Constantinople in 381.
NOTES FOR CHAPTER 3


5. Constantine, 412.

6. Constantine, 413.

7. Constantine, 413.

8. Constantine, 413.


12. Rubenstein, 64.


14. Gonzalez, 162.


22. Payne, 17.


25. Rubenstein, 78.


27. Latourette, 153.


29. Payne, 18.

30. Boyle, 397.

31. Boyle, 397.


33. Boyle, 398.

34. Boyle, 399.

35. Schaff, 628.

36. Payne, 18.


40. Sheldon, 424.


42. Sheldon, 424-25.


44. Schaff, 629.

CHAPTER 4

PROBLEMATIC TEXTS IN THE ARIAN DEBATE

Various passages of Scripture were used by both Arians and non-Arians in their debate over the relation of the Son to the Father. Two major texts continually surfaced in this controversy, and both of these are found in the Old Testament, with one of them being quoted twice in the New Testament. The first of these is found in Psalms 2:7 and the second in Proverbs 8:22-24. In analyzing first the comments of Church fathers, and then contemporary theologians, conclusions can be drawn that the Bible supports the orthodoxy of the creed of Nicea. The polemicists cited numerous New Testament passages in their defense of orthodoxy.

Psalms 2:7: The Begotten Son

In Psalms 2:7 David penned a verse in which, according to the New Testament, the speaker is actually God’s Son: “I will declare the decree: the LORD [God the Father] hath said unto me, Thou art my Son; this day have I begotten thee.” Five interpretations have been advanced by theologians: 1) God is speaking to David’s son, Solomon (or to David as king of Israel), having “begotten” him when Solomon was anointed to be king over Israel in David’s stead as his father’s successor; 2) God is speaking to Jesus before the creation of Genesis 1:1, having “begotten” (created) Him and adopted Him to be His Son, making God “the Father” (Arianism); 3) God is speaking to Jesus before Genesis 1:1, and, though the Son is eternal like the Father, the Son is, in some sense, eternally
begotten by the Father (Athanasius); 4) God is speaking to Jesus at His physical earthly birth through the Virgin Mary, i.e., the “day” is a reference to the day Christ was physically born (“begotten”); 5) God is speaking to Jesus at His resurrection, i.e., when God raised Jesus physically from the dead after His crucifixion and death, God “begat” Jesus, His “Son,” on that day. My argument is that the fourth interpretation is correct.

Because this text contains references to an anointed king of Israel, John T. Willis noted that some scholars interpret Psalm 2:7 by stating that the word, “today,” is an implication “to the day of the king’s accession to the throne,” and Willis claimed that no New Testament writer applied this verse to “the physical conception or birth of Jesus.”¹ The argument can be made, however, that the author of the book of Hebrews, in chapter one, verses five and six, did apply the psalm to the birth of Christ.

New Testament Quotations

Psalms 2:7 is quoted two times in the New Testament. In Acts 13:33 the Apostle Paul, while speaking to a group of both Jews and Gentiles (mostly proselytes to Judaism), refers to this verse when making the point that Jesus Christ was God’s Son, i.e., He was the “Son” spoken of in Psalms 2:7. Although when David wrote the verse one thousand years before the birth of Christ, he penned it in the present tense (“this day have I begotten thee”), it was actually a prophecy of the coming Messiah. The begatting of God’s Son would take place in the future from David’s perspective.

Isaiah 57:15 states that God dwells in eternity. Because God is not confined to time like humans on earth, “past” and “future” are both in the “present” to God, who can “see” the past and “foresee,” and thus, “foreknow” the future. Therefore God had verses
inscripturated such as Psalms 2:7 long before the event took place, though the verse states the action in the present tense. This same phenomenon occurs in Psalms 22:1, 16, and 18, where David records Scriptures in the present tense. The Gospel writers clearly designate these verses as references to Christ’s crucifixion, where His “hands and feet were pierced,” His “garments” were stripped from Him and “parted” amongst the Roman soldiers, and He cried out, “My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?.” Though David wrote these verses in the first person, such events never took place in the life of David. These passages were, to David, prophetically pointing to the future, though they were recorded in the present tense.

Another example of a Scripture of this nature, and one which was used by non-Arians in noting the eternal Divinity of Christ, is found in Isaiah 9:6: “For unto us a child is born, unto us a son is given [stated in the present tense, though Christ was not born until some seven hundred years later] . . . and his name shall be [future tense] called Wonderful, Counselor, the mighty God [this child, this son will be Deity in flesh; He will be God manifest in the flesh, as Paul stated in I Timothy 3:16, and John wrote in John 1:1, 14, and 18], the everlasting Father [as Jesus stated in John 10:30, ‘I and my Father are one’], the Prince of Peace.” This verse was penned by Isaiah around 700 B.C., and yet it was not fulfilled until the birth of Jesus Christ, exactly like Psalms 2:7, which is quoted a second time in the New Testament in Hebrews 1:5-6: “For unto which of the angels said he [God] at any time, Thou art my Son, this day have I begotten thee? And again, I will be to him a Father, and he shall be to me a Son? And again, when he bringeth in the first begotten into the world, he saith, And let all the angels of God
worship him.”

Like Athanasius and Hilary of Poitiers, and later, Augustine and John Chrysostom, Arius was primarily concerned with Scriptural exposition and interpretation. Arius had several problems with Psalms 2:7, such as what does the word “begotten” mean, and when was the “day” in which God said this to His Son? According to the theologian Milliard J. Erickson, Arius held to the absoluteness and “‘singularity of God . . . affirming that God is without beginning and utterly one.’”² Analyzing the relationship of God and Jesus as one like a human father and son, Arius reasoned that “God the Father must antedate God the Son.”³ He concluded that Jesus, the Son, was the first “creature” which God created out of nothing; this was his interpretation of God begetting the Son “this day.” According to Arius, the Son was created directly by the Father prior to Genesis 1:1, and then the universe was brought into “being by the action of the Son.”⁴

Athanasius and Origen

Athanasius believed in the eternality of the three Persons of the Godhead, and he became the champion defender of the creed of Nicea. He seemed to think that Psalms 2:7, in some way, predated Genesis 1:1. Because Athanasius held that Jesus, God’s Son, had co-existed eternally with the Father, he attempted to explain Psalms 2:7 when he wrote: “It is entirely correct to call Him the Father’s eternal offspring . . . . It is characteristic of men . . . to beget in time; but God’s offspring is eternal.”⁵ J. N. D. Kelly, in his work, Early Christian Doctrines, noted that Athanasius believed and considered the Godhead as “eternally activating, expressing, and [the Son eternally] begotten.”⁶ Thus, by postulating and specifying this idea, Athanasius interpreted Psalm
2:7 the same way Origen, the great Neo-Platonist father, had one hundred years earlier.

The phrase, “eternally begotten,” conflicts with “This DAY have I begotten thee.” Therefore Origen and Athanasius present an obtuse explanation.

According to Origen, “God is Father for all eternity [Fatherdom is part of His essence] . . . . Eternal generation but also continual generation: the Father is begetting the Son at each instant, just as light is always emitting its radiance.”

Eusebius of Caesarea had suggested a somewhat Origenistic statement for the creed of Nicea which was not put in the final draft. Eusebius’ creed referred to Jesus as “begotten of the Father before all ages.” This can also be seen in the Thirty-Nine Articles of the Church of England (1571), which stated under the heading, “Of the Word or Son of God which was made very man,” that Jesus Christ, the Son, was “begotten from everlasting of the Father.”

The first time Psalms 2:7 is quoted in the New Testament is found in Acts 13:33-35, where Paul cited two verses from the Psalms:

God hath fulfilled the same unto us their children, in that he hath raised up Jesus again; as it is also written in the second psalm, Thou art my Son, this day have I begotten thee [quoting Psalms 2:7]. And as concerning that he raised him up from the dead, now no more to return to corruption, he said on this wise, I will give you the sure mercies of David [quoting Isaiah 55:3]. Wherefore he saith also in another psalm, Thou shalt not suffer thine Holy One to see corruption [Psalms 16:10].

Like other New Testament evangelists such as Simon Peter in Acts 2:22-32, Paul held that the references in Psalms and Isaiah referred not to the physical authors of these works, but rather to Christ. Because Paul emphasized the resurrection of Christ as God’s proof and evidence that Jesus was indeed the Messiah, some commentators have concluded that Psalms 2:7 is a reference to Christ’s physical resurrection from the dead.
three days after his crucifixion. Their interpretation of “this day have I begotten thee” is that God spoke this to Christ on the day that Jesus was raised from the dead, for the word “begotten” in Psalms is a reference to “resurrection,” i.e., being “birthed” from the grave.

In his work on the trinity, Robert Morey advanced this argument. He stated that Paul, in Acts 13:33, interpreted Psalms 2:7 as “the coronation process initiated by the resurrection of Christ when He was ‘begotten’ by the Father in the sense of giving Him life from the dead.” Morey further wrote that the “Messiah was not ‘begotten’ as ‘the first act of Jehovah’s creation’ as . . . Arians claim . . . [for one] to pretend that the word ‘begotten’ means ‘created’ is clearly contradicted by the New Testament’s inspired interpretation of the text. Jesus was ‘begotten’ of the Father in space/time history when He was raised from the dead.”

Chrysostom, in his homilies on the book of Acts, quoted Acts 13:33 without an explanation regarding Psalms 2:7. However in a footnote, George B. Stevens, commented that the “expression: ‘this day have I begotten thee’ refers evidently to the resurrection of Christ . . . . The resurrection is conceived as the solemn inauguration of Christ into his office as theocratic king represented under the figure of begetting.”

The twentieth century theologian Arthur W. Pink, arguing that Acts 13:33 is a reference to the physical earthly birth of Christ through Mary, whereas Acts 13:34-35 refers to Christ’s resurrection, presents the best arguments. Pink wrote: “Acts 13:33 has no reference to Christ’s resurrection, but relates to His incarnation and manifestation to Israel . . . . It was not until Acts 13:34, 35 that the apostle brought in His resurrection.” Acts 13:34-35 deals with the resurrection, which is not the subject matter of the text in
Psalms chapter two.

The second occurrence of Psalms 2:7 being quoted in the New Testament is found in Hebrews 1:5-8:

For unto which of the angels said he [God the Father, verse 1] at any time, Thou art my Son, this day have I begotten thee? And again, I will be to him a Father, and he shall be to me a Son? And again, when he bringeth in the first begotten into the world, he saith, And let all the angels of God worship him. And of the angels he saith, Who maketh his angels spirits, and his ministers a flame of fire. But unto the Son he saith, Thy throne, O God, is for ever and ever: a scepter of righteousness is the scepter of thy kingdom.

In this text Paul quoted the Psalms three times (Psalms 2:7, 104:4, and 45:6-7) in his arguing for the superiority of Jesus, God’s Son, over all the angels. According to St. Paul, God has never made the statement to an angel, “Thou art my Son, this day have I begotten thee.” When Christ, God’s “first begotten,” was brought into the world, having been born of Mary, all the angels were commanded to worship Him. This placed Christ on an equal footing with God. And when God made the statement that Christ’s throne would be for ever and ever, He addressed Christ as “God.” The most important thing about these verses in relation to Psalms 2:7 is that Hebrews 1:6 gives the interpretation of the Psalms passage. “Thou art my Son, this day have I begotten thee” is a reference to “when he [God] bringeth in the first begotten into the world.” According to Matthew 1:25, John 1:18, and John 3:16, this took place at the birth of Christ.

As the word “begat” in the Bible refers to a son being born to his father (Matthew 1:2, “Abraham begat Isaac; and Isaac begat Jacob”), so the verse in Psalms 2:7 (and Hebrews 1:5) is a reference to Christ being birthed through the Virgin Mary as God’s begotten Son. The writer of Hebrews was attempting to convince the Hebrews that Jesus
was the promised “Son” of Psalms 2:7. Arthur W. Pink stated “that the ‘This day have I
begotten Thee’ refers to the incarnation of Christ, [as expressed in] Luke 2:11 . . . ‘unto
you is born this day in the city of David a Saviour, which is Christ the Lord’ . . . ‘this
day’ . . . referred to the day of the Saviour’s birth . . . the virgin-birth of Christ.”14

John T. Willis disagreed with this interpretation, stating emphatically that no “New
Testament writer who clearly quotes or refers to Psalm 2 . . . applies v. 7 (or any part of
this psalm) to the physical conception or birth of Jesus. Rather, New Testament writers
apply it to Jesus’ ascension into heaven after his resurrection . . . or to . . . his second
coming.”15 I would argue that this is not the case because the writer of Hebrews does
quote and interpret Psalms 2:7 as referring to Christ’s physical birth. This is something
Arius and his followers failed to observe. Three times in his homilies on Hebrews 1:5-6
Chrysostom stated that in the phrase, “Thou art my Son, this day have I begotten Thee,”
the words “this day” are a reference to Jesus Christ, the “Word” of John 1:1, 14,
becoming flesh through Mary.16 Oliver Greene, a twentieth-century commentator and
teologian, also held this view of Hebrews 1:5. Greene wrote: “Paul quotes here [in
Hebrews 1:5] from Psalm 2:7. He first points out the Son’s superiority [over the angels]
in relationship to the Father: ‘For unto which of the ANGELS said He at any time, Thou
art my Son, this day have I begotten thee?’ This is God’s testimony that Jesus was His
Son, begotten of Him, thus setting forth the Deity in His virgin birth. (Angels are created,
not BORN).”17 In his exposition of the book of Hebrews, Luther advanced this
interpretation:

Secondly, because the Hebrew idiom expresses a definite and, so to speak, a
special time with the word ‘today,’ as their articles usually do among the Greeks.

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For in the Hebrew it has this meaning: ‘I on this day,’ or ‘on the first day’ (namely on some special and single day), ‘I have begotten Thee.’ This certainly was the day of Christ’s nativity . . . . Concerning Him [Jesus] He [God] now says: ‘Today I have begotten Thee,’ which means: ‘Even as man Thou art My Son, but a Son born of the Virgin.’

Servetus and Psalms 2:7

Michael Servetus, who was, unfortunately, burned at the stake in the days of Calvin because of his heretical views concerning the Trinity, did not believe that Psalms 2:7 had any application to Jesus. Rather he held that David was making an autobiographical statement, calling himself “the Son.” Servetus interpreted David’s words to mean that David, “when he escaped from his enemies is said to be born [begotten] this day.” It seems clear, however, that the writer of Hebrews (1:5-6) interpreted Psalms 2:7 to be a reference to the birth of Christ through Mary as her “firstborn son” according to Matthew 1:25. J. Daryl Charles supported this view in his comments on Hebrews 1:6:

The introduction of 1:6 combines the notions of apocalyptic and history. As the apocalyptic Son of Man, whose hidden identity is in time unveiled, so the Son, veiled from history (vs. 2), is brought into the inhabited world (oikoumene). The writer hereby has access to the Semitic mind of his readers. The eschatological expectation is not future, however, it has been realized in the Son. And one implication of the incarnation [Christ born through Mary] is that the angels have been brought to worship him.

Marcellus, who was bishop of Ancyra in 374, supported the homoousion idea of the Nicene Creed in a treatise. Of this work, J. N. D. Kelly noted: “All that can be said about the pre-existent Logos [Word of John 1:1] is that He was Logos; there can be no talk of His generation [His being eternally begotten, as taught by Origen, Athanasius, Augustine and Calvin], and Marcellus restricts the title ‘Son’ to the Incarnate.” Jesus was God’s “Son” when He was born through Mary as a man, i.e., the God-man. Before this He was,
according to orthodox Nicene theology, the second Person of the Godhead, eternal God
with the Father and the Holy Spirit. In the Old Testament He appeared to people
periodically as a man, that is, as the Angel of the Lord as noted by Eusebius of Caesarea
in his Ecclesiastical History.22

The Baptist theologian J. R. Graves (1820-93) postulated that the second Person
of the eternal Godhead did not become God’s Son until he was born through Mary.
Graves wrote that “the second person of the trinity became the Son of the first person.
The Son of God is literally begotten, for an eternal Son does not exist, only an eternal
member of the trinity.”23 Whether or not this is correct (designating Christ as “Son”
before His earthly birth), I do hold that Psalms 2:7 is a reference to Jesus Christ’s birth
(His being “begotten”) through the Virgin Mary. He was, therefore, both “the son of
God” and “the son of man.”

Proverbs 8:22-24

The other problematic passage for the Arians is found in Proverbs 8:22-24. Millard
J. Erickson, a present-day theologian, noted: “Texts which suggest the Son is a creature:
Proverbs 8:22, especially as rendered by the Septuagint [a Greek translation of the Old
Testament], ‘The LORD created me’ is the specific text that provoked Arius’
controversial thinking.”24 However the Hebrew Massoretic text reads as the King James
English translation: “The LORD possessed me in the beginning of his way [as in John
1:1: the Word was with God in the beginning], before his works of old. I was set up from
everlasting, from the beginning, or ever the earth was. When there were no depths, I was
brought forth.” This “bringing forth” does not refer to a “begetting” or “birthing” like
Psalms 2:7, nor an act of creation, but rather a manifestation similar to Christ appearing to people in the Old Testament as the Angel of the Lord. Eusebius of Nicomedia expressed the Arian interpretation when he wrote:

As we say this, not from our own reasonings, but instructed by the Scriptures. That he is created and established, and begotten in the substance \[gennatos ta ousia\] . . . in an immutable and inexplicable nature, and in the resemblance which he bears to his Maker, we learn from the very words of the Lord [identifying the speaker of Proverbs chapter eight, ‘Wisdom,’ as Christ], who says, ‘God created me in the beginning of his ways, and formed me before the world, and begat me before all the hills [Proverbs 8:22-24].’

The speaker in Proverbs 8:22-24 is “Wisdom,” and according to Henri Crouzel, most of the Church fathers, as well as modern commentators, believed Wisdom to represent the Son. Mark Noll, a Church historian, noted: “Even Arius’ use of Proverbs 8 received a sharp rebuke when the orthodox pointed to verse 30 and its assertion that Wisdom was ‘always’ with God [as stated in John 1:1 concerning the Word] in the work of creation [John 1:3].” The Church fathers, like Tertullian, argued that Proverbs 8:22-24 does not speak of Wisdom as a being created by God, nor does it have any connection whatsoever with Psalms 2:7.

Tertullian, born A.D. 160, was the western Church father who wrote at length on Trinitarian theology a century before the Council of Nicea. When he penned Against Hermogenes, he defended ex nihilo creationism, the belief that God created everything in the beginning out of nothing, and this was done through Christ, the Word. For this, Tertullian cited John 1:1-3: “In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. The same was in the beginning with God. All things were made by him; and without him was not anything made that was made.” He connected this with
Proverbs 8:22, translating the verse: “The LORD possessed [not ‘created’] me, the
beginning of His ways for the creation of His works.”28 Tertullian identified Wisdom,
the speaker of Proverbs, as God the eternal Son, as well as the creator of the universe.

The Proverbs passage states that God the Father and God the Son collaborated on
the creation of the heaven and the earth. Hilary (315-367), bishop of Poitiers, in writing
against the Arian interpretation of Proverbs 8:22-24, commented:

The Father, by His commands, is the Cause; the Son, by His execution of the
things commanded, sets in order. The distinction between the Persons is marked
by the work assigned to Each. When it says, *Let us make* [Genesis 1:26],
creation is identified with the word of command; but when it is written, *I was
with Him, setting in order* [Proverbs 8:29-30], God reveals that He did not do the
work in isolation . . . . Thus in the creation of the world there is no mere
soliloquy of an isolated Father; His Wisdom is His partner in the work, and
rejoices with Him when their conjoint labour ends [Proverbs 8:30-36].29

The Apostle Paul confirmed this interpretation in Colossians 1:16-17: “For by him
[Christ] were all things created, that are in heaven, and that are in earth . . . all things
were created by him, and for him: And he is before all things, and by him all things
consist.”

After Nicea, the Church fathers, Athanasius, Augustine, and Chrysostom, advanced
an interesting interpretation of Proverbs chapter eight. All three wrote on Proverbs 8:22-
24 as being a reference to Christ’s birth through Mary. Thus they equated the text with
Psalms 2:7, Matthew 1:25, and John 1:14, which states that “the Word was made flesh
and dwelt among us.”

Athanasius quoted Proverbs 8:22 in a similar fashion to Eusebius of Nicomedia,
“The Lord created me a beginning of His ways unto His works.” After articulating and
denouncing the Arian interpretation, Athanasius coupled this verse with Psalms 2:7 and
John 1:1-18, and said that Wisdom, the Son, was God’s “son” and not a created creature. He noted the meaning of the Proverbs text: “it is true to say that the Son was created too, but this took place when He became man . . . . He took on Himself a body from the Virgin Mary . . . . He took a body and said, ‘The Lord created me a beginning [as a man] of His ways unto His works . . . the Word was made flesh in order to offer up this body for all [at His crucifixion].’”

Augustine continued this line of thought. In his exegesis of Proverbs 8:22 and Psalms 2:7, he noted Paul’s statement about Christ, that He, “being in the form of God, thought it not robbery to be equal with God . . . took upon him the form of a servant, and was made in the likeness of men” (Philippians 2:5-7). Augustine wrote that Jesus “did this through His birth of [from] the Virgin . . . . taking the form of a servant in order that He might be created [Proverbs 8:22] Man in the beginning of His ways, the Word by whom all things were made [citing John 1:1-3].”

Chrysostom, in his exposition of Hebrews 1:5-8, stated that while angels were created, the Son was not created. Being born in flesh through the Virgin Mary, He was “brought in” to this world and deserved the worship of angels, for He was and is equal to God and therefore, merits worship. Chrysostom then compared these verses with Proverbs 8:22 (“The Lord created me”) and Acts 2:36 (“God hath made Jesus both Lord and Christ”), and he declared that all of these verses refer to Christ, the Word, coming in flesh. According to this view, Christ was “created” in the sense that He was supernaturally inseminated into the womb of Mary when the Holy Ghost came upon her and she conceived God’s Son (Luke 1:35). The Septuagint reading of Proverbs 8:22 was
accepted (“The Lord created me”), but the Arian interpretation was rejected.

Gregory of Nyssa

Perhaps the most lengthy commentary on Proverbs chapter eight was written by Gregory of Nyssa (335-394), brother of Basil and bishop of Nyssa. Three different places in his work, Against Eunomius, contain expositions of the Proverbs text. Gregory first noted that the Arians were using the phrase in Proverbs 8:22, “The Lord created me,” to prove that Christ, the speaker in the passage personified as Wisdom, was a creature that was created by God. He cited Eunomius’ explanation that “there is a Supreme and Absolute Being, and another Being existed by reason of the First, but after It though before all others; and a third Being [the Holy Spirit] not ranking with either of these, but inferior to the one, as to its cause, to the other, as to the energy which produced it” (the footnote calls Eunomius’ teaching a sort of Gnostic Arianism, “nothing but the last attempt of Gnosticism to force the doctrine of emanations into Christian theology”).

Gregory argued that the Arians could not demonstrate their “creation of the Son” theology by saying that the Hebrew word, “kanat,” has only one meaning, “created,” because “other translators have rendered it . . . [as] ‘possessed’ [‘The Lord possessed me,’ as found in the King James Bible] or ‘constituted.’” Gregory wrote in his polemic that the Hebrew text does not read “created,” and “we have ourselves read in more ancient copies ‘possessed,’ instead of ‘created.’” But if this text was going to be read in the Church as “created,” then Gregory stated that the expression “admits of an orthodox interpretation,” and he advanced the same one as Athanasius, Augustine, and Chrysostom, i.e., Christ was “created” when He “became Flesh and Man.” According to
the Scriptures, Christ’s body was created (“prepared”) for Him (Hebrews 10:5) in the womb of the Virgin Mary by the Holy Ghost, as Gabriel explained to Mary just before her miraculous conception (Luke 1:35), and this was noted by Gregory.

Going a step further, Gregory related this to a Christian’s conversion experience. He cited Paul’s letter to the Ephesians to note that when a person receives Christ as Saviour, they are born again, born anew, and therefore, they are “created” a new person by Christ, the One Who was “created” a new man through Mary (unlike Adam’s creation). Gregory quoted Paul’s admonition to the Ephesians (4:22-24): “That ye put off concerning the former conversation the old man [the fallen Adamic nature] which is corrupt according to the deceitful lusts; And be renewed in the spirit of your mind; And that ye put on the new man [Christ], which after God is created in righteousness and true holiness.”

After stating that Christians are saved by grace through faith, Paul wrote: “For we are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus unto good works, which God hath before ordained that we should walk in them” (Ephesians 2:10). Gregory claimed to be advancing a sort of allegorical interpretation of Proverbs chapter eight. By comparing scripture with scripture, he still arrived at the same conclusion as Athanasius.

For these men, Proverbs 8:22-36 taught and expressed the orthodoxy of Nicea as much as any other text in the Bible. This passage illustrates a case where the Arians were quoting from one manuscript to prove their point, while the orthodox cited a manuscript that gave a different reading/translation (or they interpreted the Septuagint in a non-Arian fashion) to bolster their arguments. Two different readings led to two different
theologies. This same problem surfaced later with certain Christological verses in the
Alexandrian manuscripts as compared to those found in the Textus Receptus, as noted in
chapter eight of this work.

After citing Proverbs 8:22-23, “The Lord possessed me at the beginning of his
work [or way], before his deeds of old; I was appointed from eternity, from the
beginning, before the world began,” Daniel H. Williams, a professor at Loyola
University, wrote:

The fact that . . . the Septuagint was regularly used and rendered 8:22 as ‘The
Lord created me’ was destined to cause controversy. By the fourth century, this
passage had become one of the chief scriptural battlefields upon which opposing
sides fought to defend their doctrine of the Trinity. Arius and those who shared
a similar theology continued the tradition that held that 8:22 referred to God’s
creation of the Son, which meant (they said) the same thing as begetting.
Convinced that such interpretation consigned the Son to an inferior position in
relation to the Father, Athanasius claimed that the term ‘created’ must refer to
the incarnation of the Son, not his preexistence . . . . This view eventually
became the new orthodoxy of the fourth century, an orthodoxy ostensibly
defined by the Nicene Creed and devoted to demonstrating the essential equality
of the Son with the Father.38

Conclusion

Arius and his followers misinterpreted the passages in Psalms 2:7 and Proverbs
8:22-24 which led to a flawed Christological theology. Their views were ruled as
heretical and Trinitarian doctrine as taught by Athanasius was decreed as orthodoxy.
This was followed by voluminous writings from polemicists like Athanasius and
Chrysostom in defense of Nicene Christianity. Isaac Boyle noted that “the faith
established at Nicea prevailed at length, and the consubstantiality of the Father and the
Son . . . has been unanimously received as a fundamental article of the Christian faith by
the consent of the Greek, the Latin, the Oriental, and the Protestant Churches.”39 The
anti-Arian, pro-Nicene views of both Chrysostom and Athanasius are examined in detail in the next chapter, along with the Biblical passages that they cited in their defense of Nicene orthodoxy.
NOTES FOR CHAPTER 4


3. Erickson, 51.

4. Erickson, 51.


15. Willis, 36.


22. Eusebius, 6-7.


34. Gregory of Nyssa, 63.

35. Gregory of Nyssa, 117.

36. Gregory of Nyssa, 117.

37. Gregory of Nyssa, 117, 140.


CHAPTER 5

JOHN CHRYSOSTOM: ARIAN ANTAGONIST

Of all the post-Nicene fathers who railed against the Arian heresy, none was more bold and masterful than John Chrysostom in leveling scriptural diatribes toward the Arian sect. Chrysostom was a bishop in both Antioch and Constantinople. His life and preaching stand as an example of a defender of the Nicene faith in Syria and Asia Minor.

Early Life

J.N.D. Kelly noted that it was “at Antioch that John, later to be designated Chrysostom, or Golden Mouth, because of his dazzling effectiveness as a pulpit orator, was born [around A.D. 349] and was to spend almost fifty years of his life.”¹ John’s mother, a Christian, vowed to devote her life to bringing up her children in the nurture and admonition of the Lord. Following a practice that was “widely accepted in those days,” Anthousa did not have John baptized as an infant, but rather, “as a young man approaching twenty [around 368] . . . he took the momentous step of offering himself for it.”²

Although John had contemplated a career in law, he made the decision to devote himself entirely to the study of the Scriptures. Along with a few friends, he made a covenant with Christ and renounced marriage. Of his study of the Scriptures, the Church historian Tony Lane noted:

He studied [in Antioch] under Diodore of Tarsus, who introduced him to the world of biblical scholarship. The school of Antioch was noted for its opposition
to allegory. The Antiochenes insisted that the Bible should be interpreted according to its natural meaning, the ‘literal’ sense as it was called. There was scope for typology (drawing parallels between God’s dealings with men at different times), but not for fanciful interpretations which excluded the plain historical meaning of the text. Chrysostom adopted this Antiochene approach.³

The Apostle Paul illustrated this idea in Galatians 4:22-31. All through his epistles, as well as his recorded sermons in the book of Acts, St. Paul made it clear that he believed in the historical accounts of the Old Testament characters such as Adam, Abel, Abraham, and Moses exactly as they were recorded in the Scriptures. But he also held that some of those stories illustrated typology or allegory, prefiguring things or events that would occur in the future. In his letter to the Galatians, Paul recounted the story of Abraham having two sons, one by his Egyptian handmaid, Hagar, who was named Ishmael, and one miraculously by his wife Sarah, who had been barren all her life, and this son, who had been promised by God, was named Isaac. Paul then stated that these “things are an allegory” representing two covenants: 1) the Law given to Moses at Mount Sinai, which leads to bondage because sinful man cannot keep it, with Hagar, the bondservant, and Ishmael typifying this law; 2) and the New Testament covenant of Grace through Christ which leads to the New Jerusalem in heaven, and is allegorized by Isaac, the promised son of Abraham that typified Christ, the promised Son of God. This same typology is delineated in Hebrews 11:17-19 and Galatians 3:14-24.

Antioch and Asceticism

In 371 John was ordained by the bishop of Antioch, Meletius, as an official reader of Scripture from both testaments during mass, a position within the clergy just below that of deacon. Shunning ordination into the priesthood the next year, John retreated to
Mt. Silpios to take up the life of a Syrian ascetic monk. He would later write that “the tasks of monks was that of Adam before the Fall, to converse continually with God, with absolute frankness and a conscience free from guilt.”

Seeking refuge in a cave, John attempted to spend most of his time in a standing position, avoiding sleep while memorizing much of both the Old and New Testaments. After four years of a life of self-mortification, John’s health began to severely break down, and he returned to live in Antioch, the Syrian capital, and was reinstated in his position as a reader in the church.

There was still controversy throughout the empire concerning the Arian heresy. In 379 the emperor, Gratian, issued an edict that outlawed “all forms of heresy,” and in 380, he further decreed that “all his subjects should conform to” the Nicene orthodoxy, i.e., “the belief in the one Godhead of three co-equal persons subsisting in trinity.”

Another council was called, this time to be held in Constantinople, and Meletios, John’s bishop, went to be in attendance, but while there Meletios died. The council, in 381, “confirmed the results of the Council of Nicea . . . ended the Trinitarian Controversy [and] affirmed the deity of the Holy Spirit.”

In 386 John was ordained as a deacon by Flavian, the bishop who had replaced Meletios in Antioch. Though not yet licensed to preach, John began writing essays and polemical pamphlets. John wrote two tracts on the subject that “Christ is God,” in which he refuted certain of Julian the Apostate’s arguments against Christ’s divinity. One argument used by Chrysostom to substantiate the divinity of Christ was the destruction of the Jewish temple in A.D. 70, which John saw as a fulfillment of Christ’s prophecy (that He made just before His crucifixion) concerning the temple: “There shall not be left here
one stone upon another, that shall not be thrown down” (Matthew 24:2). Chrysostom viewed the fulfillment of prophecy as a proof and demonstration that Christ was who He claimed to be, the Son of God.

In expounding Saint John’s Gospel, chapter one, Chrysostom noted that, as John stated in John 1:1-2 that Jesus Christ was the “Word” Who was “God,” so Paul wrote in his first epistle to Timothy that Christ was “God manifest in the flesh” (1 Timothy 3:16). In his Homilies on St. John, Chrysostom wrote:

As therefore the expression, ‘In the beginning was the Word,’ shows His Eternity, so ‘was in the beginning with God,’ has declared to us His Co-eternity. For that you may not, when you hear ‘In the beginning was the Word,’ suppose Him to be Eternal, and yet imagine the life of the Father to differ from His by some interval and longer duration, and so assign a beginning to the Only-Begotten, he adds, ‘was in the beginning with God;’ so eternally even as the Father Himself, for the Father was never without the Word, but He was always God with God, yet Each in His proper Person.

John was ordained into the priesthood in 386, at which time he began regularly preaching to the people. From 386 to 397 he “stood out as the leading pulpit orator of Antioch, building up an unrivaled reputation.” According to the historian, Sokrates, stenographers took down his sermons as they were preached, and a large number of his sermons are available today. People were amazed to see him preach without notes. Tony Lane stated that Chrysostom “preached regularly, normally working his way through an entire book of the Bible. These sermons were then published as commentaries.” Sister Thomas Aquinas Goggin, a twentieth century scholar, noted about Chrysostom’s homilies on the Gospel of John, which he preached through almost completely verse by verse, as with his other homilies on books of the Bible:

Flavian, because of his own advanced age, felt unable to discharge his episcopal
duty of instructing his flock by preaching. Hence he was glad to avail himself of the services of the talented John. For the next twelve years the principal occupation of the latter was preaching . . . . Every Sunday found him here, and at certain seasons of the year, especially Lent, he preached almost every day . . . as orator, St. John Chrysostom was pre-eminently the teacher.13

Hence, of all the homilies St. John Chrysostom devoted to the study of Scripture, these [on the Gospel of John, which were preached at Antioch around 390] are the most controversial in tone, for he used them as a means to anticipate the arguments of the Arians and other heretics who denied the divinity of Christ and tried to quote Scripture to their purpose . . . . His eloquence was so well matched by his strict orthodoxy that it has been truly said that the Church of the East has but a single Chrysostom, and of the preachers of the Western Church only Augustine compares with him.14

Between September 386 and early 387, Chrysostom preached a series of sermons that were intended to refute a group of radical Arians who were known as Anomoeans. They held that not only was “the Word” created by God the Father, but he was wholly unlike (anomoios: hence their nickname) Him, for the Father “alone possesses Godhead.”15 As noted earlier, Gregory of Nyssa had already written against Eunomios, an Anomoean, who taught that the Father was ingenerate while the Son had been generated, and therefore, they were not alike. In his refutations, Chrysostom sought to demonstrate that “the Son and the Spirit . . . both share his [God the Father’s] divinity, being only distinguished from him as persons.”16

Chrysostom in Constantinople

By the end of the fourth century the five leading sees were located at Rome, Constantinople, Jerusalem, Antioch, and Alexandria, and the leaders of each of these ecclesiastical centers were known as patriarchs. In 397 Chrysostom was unexpectedly chosen to be the patriarch of Constantinople. At that time he was just under fifty years old, Augustine was fifty-three, and Jerome was sixty-seven. Chrysostom was well
received as the new bishop of the Eastern capital. His second sermon was a “tirade against rationalist Arianism” and the “ravaging wolves of Arianism.” He continued preaching just as he had in Antioch, expounding Scripture as a Bible literalist. He believed that a bishop should be a Bible-believing preacher and teacher, as well as a practical theologian. On a few occasions, Arians in Constantinople paraded through the streets at night chanting and singing songs that denounced the orthodox Nicene view of the Trinity and the eternalness and co-equality of the Son with the Father. Several times Chrysostom counseled his followers to chant their own hymns in processions. Some of these street demonstrations resulted in violent conflicts with a number of people on both sides being killed. Chrysostom was interested in sponsoring and supporting missionary work, particularly to the Goths, who had been exposed to the Gospel through the efforts of Ulfila (311-383), and his Gothic German Orthodox translation of the Bible, but had later embraced Arianism.

John appointed a church in Constantinople to be used for services which would be held by priests, deacons, and readers appointed by Chrysostom who were proficient in the Gothic language. When some were critical of this, he replied: “The teaching of fishermen and tentmakers [the Apostles] shines in the language of barbarians more brightly than the sun.” Although John was popular with the common people, he managed to outrage the Empress, Eudoxia, who felt that his sermon on Jezebel was aimed directly at her. In 404 she had him banished to a “dismal place near Armenia, called Cacusus.” Church Historian Earle E. Cairns noted that Eudoxia was infuriated by John’s public preaching in which he had “denounced her extravagant dress and her
placing a silver statue of herself near Saint Sophia, where he preached.” Because John corresponded with his faithful and loyal followers while in exile, the emperor, who was jealous of John’s popularity, decided to banish him to a location even more remote and distant. Being in poor health, John, in 407, died at the age of fifty-eight, while traveling to his new location of exile, which was to be Pityus on the eastern shores of the Black Sea. Justo Gonzalez, in his first volume of Church history, wrote:

One hundred years after his death, John of Constantinople was given the name by which later ages know him: John Chrysostom - ‘the golden-mouthed.’ That was a title he well deserved, for in a century that gave the church such great preachers as Ambrose of Milan and Gregory of Nazianus, John of Constantinople stood above the rest, a giant above the giants of his time . . . . for John Chrysostom the pulpit was . . . the verbal expression of his entire life, his battlefield against the power of evil, an unavoidable calling that eventually led to exile and to death itself.23

In Issue 44 of Christian History magazine, which has a picture of John Chrysostom on the cover with the caption: “He was the greatest preacher of his age - maybe - ever - and he paid for his convictions with his life,” Robert A. Krupp, the librarian of Trinity Evangelical Divinity School in Deerfield, Illinois, closed a brief biography on Chrysostom entitled, “Golden Tongue and Iron Will” as follows: “Thirty-four years later [after the death of Chrysostom] . . . after John’s chief enemies had died, his relics were brought back in triumph to the capital. Emperor Theodosius II publicly asked forgiveness for the sins of his parents, who had sent John into exile.”24

Demonstrating Nicene Orthodoxy with the Scriptures

There are several texts that Chrysostom expounded as exemplifying the orthodoxy of Nicea over and against the Arian heresy. One of these is found in Hebrews 1:8: “But of the Son he [God the Father] saith, Thy throne, O God, is for ever and ever.”
Chrysostom correctly noted that St. Paul was quoting Psalms 45:6-7, and the context is God the Father speaking to the Son, Whom He referred to as “God,” i.e., “Thy throne, O God.” John noted that this verse “refuted Arian theology because the Son is designated as “God” (Theos). Of the next verse (Hebrews 1:9), “Therefore, God, thy God, hath anointed Thee,” Augustine wrote that “God (Christ) was anointed by God (the Father).”

Eusebius of Caesarea began his Ecclesiastical History with a section on the “divinity of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ,” in which he cited the above mentioned verses. Eusebius stated that David, in Psalms 45:6-7, called Christ “God.” Athanasius, in his treatise Against Arianism, which was written after he attended the Council of Nicea with Bishop Alexander of Alexandria, noted the heresy of Arius to be the statement that “there was once when He [Christ, the Word] was not.” Citing the passages in Hebrews chapter one, Athanasius noted that Christ was called “God” as opposed to the angels, “creatures which have been made out of nothing” and were commanded to worship the Son, Who has “eternal duration.”

Commenting on Hebrews 1:8, “But unto the Son he saith, Thy throne, O God, is for ever and ever,” John Calvin wrote: “Whosoever will read the verse, who is of a sound mind and free from the spirit of contention, cannot doubt but that the Messiah is called God.” Don Garlington, a professor of New Testament studies at Toronto Bible College, Canada, wrote in his article on trinitarian theology:

Moreover, there are passages where one person is called ‘God’ or ‘the Lord’ and is distinguished from another person who is also said to be God. In Psalms 45:6-7, the psalmist says, ‘Your throne, O God, endures forever and ever’ . . . . Here the psalm passes beyond describing anything that could be of an earthly king and
calls the king ‘God’ . . . In the New Testament, the author of Hebrews quotes this passage and applies it to Christ: ‘Your throne, O God, is forever and ever’ (Hebrews 1:8). Similarly, in Psalm 110:1, David says, ‘The Lord says to my lord: Sit at my right hand until I make your enemies your footstool’ . . . . Who could be saying to God, ‘Sit at my right hand’ except someone else who is also fully God? From a New Testament perspective, we can paraphrase this verse: ‘God the Father said to God the Son, Sit at my right hand.’

Herbert W. Bateman IV claimed one can see in Hebrews chapter one that, like His divine Father, Christ, the Son, is “God,” and, therefore is worthy of worship, for the Son is also identified in Hebrews 1:10-12 as the Lord that created the universe. In his *Exposition of Hebrews*, Arthur W. Pink wrote that in Hebrews 1:8 the Father is “addressing His incarnate Son, owning Him as ‘God’ . . . angels are but ‘spirits,’ the Son is ‘God’ . . . . This supplies us with one of the most emphatic and unequivocal proofs of the Deity of Christ to be found in the Scriptures . . . the angels have received command to ‘worship’ the Mediator . . . . He is ‘God!’” So thought the orthodox Church fathers and Reformers.

John 8:56 states that Jesus said to the Pharisees, “Your father Abraham rejoiced to see my day: and he saw it and was glad.” The Pharisees then asked, “Thou art not yet fifty years old, and hast thou seen Abraham?” Christ’s reply was, “Verily, verily, I say unto you, Before Abraham was, I am.” Then, records St. John, the Pharisees, in a rage, took up stones to cast at him (John 8:56-59).

Chrysostom, Athanasius, and Augustine all expounded this text as one that demonstrates the Deity of Christ. As to Christ’s statement that Abraham saw “My day,” Chrysostom said this referred to “the day of the Crucifixion, which Abraham
foreshadowed typically by the offering of the ram and of Isaac” in Genesis chapter twenty-two. Arthur W. Pink, agreeing with this interpretation, wrote that “Abraham saw the day of Christ *in type*. In offering Isaac on the altar and in receiving him back in figure from the dead, he received a marvelous foreshadowing of the Saviour’s death and resurrection [as noted in Hebrews 11:17-19].”

Chrysostom observed that Jesus did not say, “Before Abraham was, I was,” but, “Before Abraham was, I am,” and thus, the Jews became furious and decided to stone Him. The reason is because the Jews understood that Christ was referring to God’s statement to Moses in Exodus 3:14, where He said that His name is “I am.” Chrysostom wrote: “As the Father useth this expression, ‘I am,’ so also doth Christ; for it signifieth continuous Being . . . the expression seemed to them [the Jews] to be blasphemous . . . . He [Christ] continually made Himself equal to the Father,” a fact which the Arians, like the Pharisees of Christ’s day, could not see.

After citing various Scriptures in the Gospel of John, Romans, and Hebrews, Athanasius wrote: “it is plain then from the above that the Scriptures declare the Son’s eternity . . . [as in John 8:58] *Before Abraham was, I am.*” Augustine translated the verse as “Before Abraham was made, I am,” and then wrote: “Understand, that ‘was made’ refers to human formation; but ‘am’ to the Divine essence.” On John 8:58, Calvin said “that this saying of Christ contains a remarkable testimony of his Divine essence.” Arthur W. Pink said about Christ’s “I am” declaration: “Here was the full disclosure of His glory; the affirmation that He was none other than the Eternal One.”

John 1:1: The Word was God
In commenting on John 1:1, “In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God,” Chrysostom stated that, contrary to the teaching of Arius, the Word was with God, “making clear to us His [Christ’s] eternity . . . . And then he [St. John] went on to reveal this more clearly by adding that this Word also ‘was God.’” Citing this verse, Athanasius noted that, whereas Arius taught that there was a time when the Son (the Word) was not, the “Holy Scripture” never “used such language of the Saviour, but rather ‘always’ and ‘eternal’ and ‘co-existent always with the Father.’” According to Augustine, this verse expresses “the divinity of the Word.”

Martin Luther wrote this same thing, stating that the “introductory words to St. John’s sermon are about the eternal divinity of Christ.” So too, John Calvin commented: “In this introduction he asserts the eternal Divinity of Christ, in order to inform us that he is the eternal God, who was manifested in the flesh, (I Tim. iii.16.).” Calvin said that Arius demonstrated “wickedness” when, refusing to acknowledge “the eternal Divinity of Christ, he prattled about” an “imaginary Deity; but for our part, when we are informed that the Speech [Word, Logos] was God, what right have we any longer to call in question his eternal essence.” In his article, “Who is the Word? (John 1),” Stewart Custer, a modern day scholar, noted that the Word has “existed from all eternity as a Person within the true God . . . . The Word was pre-existent, truly God, and yet distinguished from God . . . the Word was God. Not ‘a god’ . . . . If he had wanted to imply inferiority, there was a word for it (Theios, ‘divine one’), but John used the regular word for ‘God’ (Theos).”

Philippians 2:6: Christ is Equal to God
Noting that Jesus stated in John 10:30, “I and my Father are one,” Chrysostom said that everywhere Christ “made clear His complete equality with Him [God the Father].” Further proof of this was given by Chrysostom citing St. Paul’s statement about Christ in Philippians 2:6-7, that Jesus “being in the form of God, thought it not robbery to be equal with God: But . . . took upon him the form of a servant, and was made in the likeness of men.” On whether Christ existed before Mary, Chrysostom, in his homily on Philippians 2:5-8, said:

How can the wretched [Sabellius] say that Christ’s existence began from Mary? This implies that before this he did not exist. But Paul says that being the form of God he took the form of a slave . . . . The form of a slave is truly a slave and nothing less. So too the form of God is truly God and nothing less. Paul did not write that he was in [the] process of coming to be in the form of God; rather being in the form of God, hence truly divine. This is as much as to say I am that I am [as Christ stated in John 8:58, ‘Before Abraham was, I am’].

Epiphanius (315-403), bishop of Salamis in Cyprus, said of this passage that Christ “is trueborn God by nature with respect to his Father, but with respect to humanity he is Mary’s trueborn son by nature, begotten without the seed of a man.” Gregory of Nyssa wrote: “The form of God is absolutely the same as the essence. Yet when he came to be in the form of a slave . . . he is not thereby divorced from his essence as God.” Calvin noted: “As, then, Christ has one person, consisting of two natures, it is with propriety that Paul says, that he who was the Son of God, - in reality equal to God, did nevertheless lay aside his glory, when he in the flesh manifested himself in the appearance of a servant . . . . Paul speaks of Christ . . . as he was God manifested in the flesh, (I Tim. iii.16).” Pope Leo I (440-461), author of the Tome, wrote this same thing concerning the Philippians passage in a letter to a group of monks in Palestine. Like Calvin, Chrysostom
specifically noted Paul’s definitive statement to Timothy on the “mystery of Godliness,”
that Jesus Christ was “God manifested in the flesh.”55 He also referenced St. Paul’s
calling Christ “God” in Titus 2:13 and Romans 9:5.56 Citing Hebrews 1:3 Chrysostom
noted: “For this reason, when Paul had said that He [Jesus] is ‘brightness,’ he added that
He is also ‘the image of his [God the Father, Hebrews 1:1-2] substance,’ in order that he
might make it clear that the Son has His own Person and is of the same substance
[homoousios] as that of which He is the image.”57

John Chrysostom, like Augustine, vehemently opposed the heresy of Arianism. He
stood for orthodox Christological Trinitarianism as it was defined at Nicea. He did his
best to defend this position from Scripture, as did Augustine, Athanasius, and later, the
Christian humanists and the Reformers, of which Erasmus and William Tyndale and their
New Testament productions are analyzed in the next two chapters.
NOTES FOR CHAPTER 5


2. Kelly, 32.


4. Kelly, 32

5. Kelly, 36.


11. Kelly, 57.

11. Lane, 37.

13. Chrysostom, x-xi, xviii.


15. Kelly, 60.


37. Athanasius, 170.


42. Athanasius, 167.


51. Edwards, ed. 237.


55. Chrysostom, *Fathers of the Church*, vol. 33, 144.


CHAPTER 6

ERASMUS AND THE GREEK NEW TESTAMENT

It has been said by scholars of the Reformation, such as Bruce Shelley, that Erasmus laid the egg that Luther hatched.¹ The egg that was laid by Erasmus was his publication of a Greek New Testament in 1516, and the hatching of the egg was Luther’s German translation of the Bible, in which he used Erasmus’ second edition of the Greek New Testament for his German New Testament rather than the Roman Catholic Latin Vulgate of Jerome. Both of these works (Erasmus and Luther) were not only printed in thousands of copies for people who were hungry to read the Bible for themselves, but both the works of Erasmus and Luther were used to translate the New Testament into many languages in Europe and eventually, around the world. Paul Johnson, an Oxford graduate and historian, noted that in “the 1530’s, 300,000 copies of [Erasmus’] Greek New Testament were circulating, and over 750,000 of his other works. He was a new phenomena, a living world best seller. He got so much correspondence that, when he was living in Antwerp, then the richest city in Europe, the postman used to stop at his house first, before going on to City Hall.”²

The editions of the New Testament produced by Erasmus contained annotations by which he attempted to explain and justify his translation of certain verses. In some cases Erasmus would cite how such verses were dealt with in the patristic writings of the Church fathers, and then he gave his own commentary on the verses.³ In so doing,
Erasmus pioneered the fields of textual criticism, the production of verse-by-verse commentaries on the Scriptures (this can also be seen in the Paraphrases of Erasmus), and philology by continuing the work of the Italian humanist and linguist, Lorenzo Valla, as exemplified in Valla’s Annotations of the New Testament which Erasmus published in 1504.4

Erasmus was born in Rotterdam in 1467, the illegitimate son of a priest. He and his brother were sent to Deventer to be educated at one of the schools of the Brethren of the Common Life, founded in the fourteenth century by Gerhard Groote. These schools stressed devotion, lay piety, scholarship, and the reading of the Bible. Souring on scholasticism, Erasmus developed the interest of the humanists, i.e., an interest in the humanities and the classics.5

In 1499 Erasmus traveled to England to tutor William Blount. While in Oxford he came under the influence of John Colet, a Christian humanist who, at the time, was lecturing on Paul’s epistle to the Romans.6 Colet and others inspired Erasmus to master the Greek language in which the New Testament was originally written.7 This shifted the interest of Erasmus from the secular classics of the ancient Romans and Greeks to the writings of the Church fathers and the Greek New Testament. Like other Renaissance scholars, beginning with Petrarch in the fourteenth century, Erasmus began collecting and collating Latin and Greek manuscripts, some of which were given to him by Colet.

Erasmus felt that there were many textual problems with Jerome’s Latin Vulgate. This position was confirmed in 1504 when Erasmus discovered Lorenzo Valla’s unpublished work on the Scriptures, i.e., his annotations on the New Testament. Valla’s
material influenced Erasmus in making his own annotations of the New Testament, which were published with the text in 1516. Erika Rummel, an Erasmian scholar, noted that “Valla’s work was an inspiration to Erasmus and confirmed the direction of his studies.” She stated that Erasmus was “perpetuating and advancing a movement that had begun with Manetti and Valla in Italy, was continued by the Complutensian scholars in Spain, and came to fruition in the work of the northern humanists. The quest that united these men was a desire to master the biblical languages and to put their linguistic skills to use in restoring scriptural texts.”

As to Erasmus formulating annotated notes on passages of Scripture, M.A. Screech of Oxford commented that such a “project had doubtless been in some ways in his mind since 1504 when he discovered a manuscript of Valla’s short Adnotationes in Novum Testamentum in Louvain. (He published it [the] next year in Paris).” Concerning the field of textual criticism, Screech noted that historically speaking, “Erasmus’ work as a textual critic is fascinating; our own textual and linguistic approaches today descend from the example and writings of Erasmus.”

While at Oxford, in 1505, Erasmus made his own Latin translation of the New Testament, using Latin manuscripts provided by John Colet. Erasmus’ hunt for Greek manuscripts led him to Basel, where he moved into the publishing house of the printer, John Froben, in 1513. According to the Reformation scholar, William Estep, Erasmus, by the end of July, 1513, “had completed his collection of the Greek manuscripts of the New Testament and, as he reported to Servatius Roger, ‘annotated over a thousand places, with some benefit to theologians.’”
Erasmus’ first edition of the Greek New Testament was published in February of 1516. Steven Ozment noted that it was “accompanied by a new Latin translation that departed in many particulars from the Vulgate.” The Annotations followed on March 1, 1516, but Erasmus preferred that they be published along with his New Testament, which they later were, rather than as a separate volume. It was the desire of Erasmus that people read and make note of his reasons for departing from the Vulgate in so many places. The more that criticisms were leveled at Erasmus concerning his translation of certain passages, the more he expanded his annotations to defend his position and comment on the Scriptures or cite the Church fathers. M. A. Screech stated that “Erasmus’ critical apparatus grew . . . as he read more of the early Fathers and consulted more and more manuscripts, or, as they became available, the printed texts of Scripture . . . [as to other sources.] There were the quotations and illusions in the Fathers; [and] there was the evidence of Valla (itself based upon several Greek manuscripts).”

Erasmus’ 1516 edition of the New Testament was entitled the Novum Instrumentum. Each page had the Greek text on the left side and the Latin text on the right in vertical, parallel columns. In making his copy of the Greek New Testament, Erasmus, along with all those who followed him, wrote with minuscule word separation as opposed to the uncial style of all-block capital letters with no spacing between the words, used in writing Greek manuscripts of the first eight centuries of Church history.

Because Erasmus undertook his project so people might read the Bible, he penned in the preface: “Would that these [words] were translated into each and every language . . . Would that the farmer might sing snatches of the Scripture at his plough, that the
weaver might hum phrases of Scripture to the tune of his shuttle.”\footnote{17} Bruce Shelley commented that “shortly after the publication of Erasmus’ Greek New Testament in 1516, with its preface urging the translation of Scripture into the common tongues of Europe, new versions appeared in German, French, and English. These fed the rising national sentiments and Protestant convictions.”\footnote{18} According to the Church historian Tony Lane, Erasmus’ Greek New Testament “influenced many towards Protestantism” and was “to be the tool for Luther’s study of the Bible.”\footnote{19} Earle E. Cairns, also a Church historian, wrote that the “biblical humanists or Oxford reformers of Oxford University, such as John Colet (ca. 1466-1519), dean of Saint Paul’s Church, began early in the sixteenth century to study the Bible in the original tongue through the medium of Erasmus’ Greek New Testament and to expound the meaning of the Bible to their people. These humanists were extremely critical of the failure that they saw in the Roman church and were anxious to bring about reform.”\footnote{20}

Prior to Erasmus, manuscripts of the New Testament were handwritten and copied by monks and scribes. This changed with the invention of the printing press by Johannes Gutenberg. Lewis Spitz, a scholar of both the Renaissance and the Reformation, stated that Gutenberg’s major contribution “around the year 1450, was the development of an alloy that could be poured into molds to form letters that would not shrink or twist on cooling. This made feasible the use of movable type . . . the mass production of books was now possible.”\footnote{21} Erasmus’ publication of the New Testament was the first text of the Scriptures ever printed in Greek and made available to the public. The scholar of Erasmus and Luther, Roland Bainton, noted that this “was a landmark in the history of
Of the five editions of Erasmus’ work, Edward Hills, a textual scholar of the twentieth century, wrote:

Between the years of 1516 and 1535 Erasmus published five editions of the Greek New Testament. In the first edition (1516) the text was preceded by a dedication to Pope Leo X, an exhortation to the reader, a discussion of the method used, and a defense of this method. Then came the Greek New Testament text accompanied by Erasmus’ own Latin translation, and then this was followed by Erasmus’ notes, giving his comments on the text. In his 2nd edition (1519) Erasmus revised both his Greek text and his own Latin translation . . . . The 3rd edition (1522) is chiefly remarkable for the inclusion of I John 5:7, which had been omitted in the previous editions. The 4th edition (1527) contained the Greek text, the Latin Vulgate, and Erasmus’ Latin translation in three parallel columns. The 5th edition (1535) omitted the Vulgate, thus resuming the practice of printing the Greek text and the [Latin] version of Erasmus side by side.23

Benjamin G. Wilkinson, a Church historian of the early twentieth century, noted that Erasmus was “the intellectual giant of Europe. He was ever at work, visiting libraries, searching in every nook and corner for the profitable . . . ever collecting, comparing, writing, and publishing . . . . He classified the Greek manuscripts and read the Fathers.”24 Having examined scores of manuscripts, Erasmus only used a few (dating from the eleventh to the fifteenth centuries) because the vast majority of Greek manuscripts were in practically unanimous agreement.

Wilkinson stated that these manuscripts “are, of course, not identical, but most of the variations are superficial; and in general character and context they represent the same kind of text.”25 This type of text was referred to in the preface of the second edition of the Elzevir Brothers’ Greek New Testament (1633) as the “Textus Receptus” (the Received Text), and this term may be applied to the Greek texts of Erasmus, Robert Stephanus (1550), and Theodore Beza (1598).26 This is the text that was used by William Tyndale, Miles Coverdale, John Rogers, Martin Luther, Ulrich Zwingli, John Calvin, and
the translators of the King James Bible (1611, followed by seven editions).27

After the publication of Erasmus’ first New Testament in 1516, cries of opposition began to be heard throughout Europe. One criticism was that Erasmus had dared to attack the Latin Vulgate, which was considered by many to be an “inspired text; to criticize it was tantamount to criticizing the Holy Spirit who had been at the translator’s side.”28 Petrus Sutor, a theologian at the University of Paris, and a critic of Erasmus, said that if “in one point the Vulgate were in error the entire authority of Holy Scripture would collapse . . . heresies and schisms would abound, blasphemy would be committed against the Holy Spirit . . . and indeed the Catholic Church would collapse from the foundations.”29 Jerome’s Latin Vulgate had been the standard Bible for the Church since the beginning of the fifth century.

Jerome’s Latin Vulgate

By the time of Pope Damasus (366-385), many Old Latin manuscripts of the Bible were circulating throughout the empire. Because of discrepancies and variances between these early Bibles, Damasus commissioned his secretary, Jerome, to translate a Latin Bible that would be recognized as the standard text for the Church. Jerome, a contemporary of Augustine and Chrysostom, was trained in Latin, Greek, and Hebrew, and he began his work in 382.30 Jerome started by using the Greek translation of the Old Testament, which was called the Septuagint. This Old Testament translation had been produced by seventy Jewish scholars in Alexandria, Egypt, around 250 B.C. at the request of Ptolemy II and included the Apocryphal books. This Old Testament document was called the Septuagint, meaning the “Interpretation of the 70 Elders,” and it is referred
to as the “LXX,” the combined value of the Roman numerals being seventy. Origen’s Hexapla

According to J. N. D. Kelly, Jerome carefully compared the Septuagint with the Hebrew Bible, and he was “greatly helped by the ready access he now had, in the library of . . . Caesarea, to Origen’s Hexapla . . . its fifth column presented a critical text of the Septuagint with signs (obeli and asterisks) indicating where the Greek was redundant or defective as compared with the Hebrew.” Origen (185-254) produced the six-column Hexapla which contained the following: 1) the first column was the Hebrew Old Testament; 2) the second column was a Greek transliteration of the Old Testament; 3) the third column was Aquila’s version of the Old Testament in Greek; 4) the fourth column was Symmachus’ Greek Old Testament version; 5) the fifth column was Origen’s version of the Old Testament in Greek, which contained the Apocryphal books; and 6) the sixth column was Theodotian’s Greek Old Testament.

Everett Ferguson, a Bible professor and historian at Abilene Christian University, noted that the fifth column of the Hexapla was “the important one, where Origen supplied critical notations marking which passages were not represented by the Hebrew and where there were omissions from the Hebrew. The Hexapla was too bulky to be copied in its entirety, so it is known now only from fragmentary copies and quotations.” Bruce M. Metzger, a present-day Greek scholar and Church historian, wrote that Origen (of Alexandria and Caesarea) produced the Hexapla, which was a “monumental tool that many patristic scholars (such as Pamphilus, Eusebius [of Caesarea], and Jerome) consulted, in the famed library of Pamphilus at Caesarea, until its destruction in the
seventh century during the Islamic conquest of the Near East.  

The Old Testament Apocrypha

During his translation work on the Old Testament, Jerome noted that the Hebrew Scriptures of the Jews did not contain the books of the Apocrypha. The Church compelled Jerome to include these books in his work, mainly because they were found in the Septuagint. But Jerome, like the Jews that held exclusively to the Hebrew Bible, did not consider the Apocryphal books to be inspired literature.

As the New Testament was originally written in Greek, so the Old Testament was written by various Jewish authors in Hebrew. The canon was considered as complete around 400 B.C. However, from that time until around 100 B.C., several books were written which came to be called Apocryphal books. The word “apocrypha” means “hidden away” or “secret.” Bruce Metzger observed that while some believed these books were termed apocryphal because their meaning was hidden from the uninitiated common people, others held that the books deserved to be hidden “because they were spurious or heretical.” The Hebrew Bible contains the same thirty-nine books that are found in the King James Old Testament, but they are in a different order. In the King James, the first book is Genesis, and the last book of the Old Testament is Malachi. In the Jewish Scriptures, the first book is Genesis, but the last is II Chronicles.

The Hebrew Bible falls into three divisions, the law, the prophets, and the writings, with no books of the Apocrypha. Christ noted these three divisions in Luke 24:44 as the law of Moses, the prophets, and the psalms (writings, comprised of Psalms through Chronicles). Christ also defined the Old Testament Canon to be Genesis to II
Chronicles (Matthew 23:35). No Orthodox Jew has ever accepted the apocryphal books as inspired, and no New Testament writer ever quoted from them. Like Jerome, I would argue that these books have no place in the Bible. Although Jerome had to include these books in his Vulgate, he made it clear that “in his opinion the Apocryphal books were only liber ecclesiastici (church books to be read for edification), as opposed to the fully inspired liber canonici (canonical books to establish doctrine).” Martin Luther and the translators of the Authorized Bible under King James (1604-1611) held this same view and put the Apocryphal books between the Old and New Testaments in their versions.

The King James translators put these books under the title, “Apocrypha,” without any preface or note; and at the close of II Maccabees, they wrote “The End of Apocrypha.” Subsequent editions of the King James Bible of 1611, beginning in 1613, dropped the books altogether. During the counter-reformation, the delegates of the Catholic Council of Trent (1545-1563) ruled in favor of an English translation to be made from the Latin Vulgate. The leaders of the council, during the fourth session in April of 1546 wrote out a list of the canonical books, which included as part of the Old Testament and interspersed throughout the Old Testament books (rather than between the Testaments), the Apocryphal books of Tobit, Judith, Wisdom, Ecclesiasticus, Baruch, and the two books of Maccabees, as well as the Song of Susanna, the song of the Three Children, and Bel and the Dragon as part of the book of Daniel. It was then decreed at Trent: “If anyone does not accept as sacred and canonical the aforesaid books in their entirety and with all their parts, as they have been accustomed to be read in the Catholic Church and as they are contained in the old Latin Vulgate Edition, and knowingly and
deliberately rejects the aforesaid traditions, let him be anathema.”

It was Jerome’s belief that the Apocryphal books could be used for edification and some historical knowledge, but not for establishing doctrine (again, the opinions of Martin Luther and the King James translators). Jerome’s Latin Bible became known as the Vulgate (from the Latin vulgus, “common”), and it “became so sacrosanct that eventually translating the Bible into common tongues was prohibited,” as well as implying that the Vulgate contained errors of translation or transmission. For many of Erasmus’ day, the Vulgate was still just as “sacrosanct.”

Erasmus and his Critics

One of the critics of Erasmus was a graduate of the University of Louvain, the Franciscan Frans Titelmans. He wrote a work which was a dialogue between himself, Erasmus, and Lorenzo Valla on the subject of their annotations to the book of Romans. In the preface to this work, Titelmans defended the Latin Vulgate and its translator. His view differed from that of Erasmus. He held that Jerome, under the authority of Pope Damasus, emended some passages in the Latin version that “may have been corrupted or changed for the worse,” and the Vulgate version of the sixteenth century was the “very one” revised by Jerome, unlike Erasmus, who “considered Jerome’s revision irretrievably lost.” Titelmans held that Jerome had penned the Latin Vulgate by the divine inspiration of God as the original authors had done in Hebrew and Greek. He believed that there was no need for Erasmus’ new Latin translation. Although Titelmans conceded that their Vulgate contained some mistakes, he wrote that “they are of no great importance and merely errors committed by careless scribes . . . . To rectify them, it was
not necessary to make a whole new translation.”

Pierre Cousturier (1475-1537) earned a doctorate of theology in Paris in 1510, and then entered into the Carthusian order, where he produced a book condemning new translations of the Bible (1524). He, like Titelmans, held that Jerome had collated Greek manuscripts and after comparing them with the Latin, had produced a “correct and catholic version” in the Latin Vulgate. Erasmus had argued that Jerome could not have authored all of the Vulgate because, according to Erasmus, Jerome’s biblical quotations and citations in his various works, letters, and polemics did not match the verses in the Vulgate. But it was common for the Church fathers to quote verses from memory in their writings and they not be exactly identical to the Scriptural text. Cousturier stated that the “biblical quotations in his [Jerome’s] works represented his personal and private choice, the Vulgate the official version.”

Roland Bainton noted that some of the translations and annotations of Erasmus created a furor and a storm of protest. One such rendering was that of Matthew 4:17, where Jesus stated, “Repent, for the Kingdom of heaven is at hand,” yet the Vulgate’s reading was translated as “do penance,” alluding to the Catholic sacrament of penance and confessing one’s sins to a priest. Bainton observed that “Erasmus in 1516 translated . . . ‘be penitent,’” and thereafter, “‘change your mind,’ thereby removing any possible philological connection with the sacrament of penance. Luther made good use of this version.” These are the kind of changes that could be noted in Lorenzo Valla’s annotations. Cousturier attacked Erasmus on the basis that Valla was his source of inspiration, and he wrote of Valla that he “was so arrogant that he criticized everything
and such a biting critic that it is a wonder he did not bite himself.”

Matthew 16:18 - Who is the rock?

Another verse that Erasmus annotated with a somewhat Protestant interpretation was Matthew 16:18, where Jesus said to Peter, “that thou art Peter [Petros], and upon this rock [petra] I will build my church; and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it.” The problem was not with translation, but with interpretation. The statement was made after Jesus had asked the disciples, “Who do ye say that I am?,” to which Peter responded, “Thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God.”

The Roman Catholic Church had identified “this rock” as Simon Peter, the first pope upon whom the Church was built. Christ’s statement was used for centuries to enforce papal authority and papal ex cathedra infallibility, especially by the Franciscans. The verse was also used by the Church to endorse the teaching of apostolic succession from Peter to the popes. Jesus had went on to state that whatever Peter bound on earth would be bound in heaven, and whatever he loosed on earth would be loosed in heaven. Popes made application of this verse in both spiritual and secular concerns, especially in matters that involved excommunication or the use of the interdict.

Around the middle of the fifth century, Pope Leo I (440-461) advanced a papal doctrine that was based on Christ’s declaration to the Apostle Peter, that he, as the rock of the Church, was to have binding and loosing power that would be recognized in both heaven and earth. The historian of the early middle ages, Roger Collins, noted that Peter passed on this authority to Clement, his successor, who in turn passed on the power of binding and loosing “to his own successor and so on through a supposedly unbroken
episcopal succession.”49 Collins observed: “Leo claimed that as Peter’s heir, indeed as Peter himself, he alone had the right and the duty of making final and binding decisions on matters of doctrine,” and this was adhered to by the councils, as well as the popes who succeeded Leo.50 In a letter to the bishops of the province of Vienna, Leo wrote that anyone who disclaimed that Peter was given the power of binding and loosing, and, therefore, was made head of the Church, with this headship being passed on to all popes “is puffed up with the breath of his pride, and plunges himself into the lowest depth.”51

The Two Swords Theory

Pope Gelasius I (492-496) espoused the two swords theory of Church (pope) and State (emperor or king). Gelasius taught that the authority (auctoritas) of the Church superceded the power (potestas) of a king. He held that the binding and loosing powers of a pope referred to both spiritual and secular matters. Philip Schaff wrote that “Gelasius I . . . clearly announced the principle, that priestly power is above the kingly and the imperial, and that from the decisions of the chair of Peter there is no appeal.”52

From the Matthew text the theory of papal supremacy became official Catholic dogma. Popes such as Gregory VII (1073-1085), Urban II (1088-1099), and Innocent III (1198-1216), accepted and enforced the two swords theory, subjecting rebellious kings and their countries to excommunication and interdict until the king did penance and humbly sought the pope’s forgiveness, admitting that the pope, and not the king, had the final authority in all matters of Church and State. The popes said the Bible taught that God had ordained two swords of authority in the Church and the State. But if a dispute arose between the two, the pope’s sword overruled that of the king because the pope had
the powers of binding and loosing that had been given by Christ to Peter.

Erasmus and William Tyndale both interpreted these verses differently from the Catholic teaching. Erasmus and Tyndale interpreted Matthew 16:16-19 in a manner more consistent with the Church fathers and the text itself. On Erasmus’ annotation of this text, Erika Rummel stated that Erasmus claimed Christ’s statement to Peter “could not be used to validate church doctrines on . . . papal authority. He noted that Jerome ‘seems to say that the church of Christ was founded on Peter;' he [Erasmus] himself preferred the spiritual sense: ‘Peter, the rock, represents the solid faith of the Church.’”\textsuperscript{53} Rummel observed that Erasmus adopted Origen’s exegesis of this verse, for he interpreted the “rock” as faith.\textsuperscript{54}

According to this interpretation, Jesus was not referring to Peter as “this rock,” but rather Peter’s confession that Jesus was the “Christ, the Son of the living God,” which was the “rock” the church would be built upon. Christ could have been pointing to Himself when He said, “upon this rock, I will build my church,” for Peter later refers to Christ as “the stone which has become the head of the corner,” the only One in which there is salvation (Acts 4:11-12). The Apostle Paul, referring to the Old Testament miracle of water coming from the rock in Exodus chapter seventeen, stated in I Corinthians 10:4, “and that Rock was Christ.” This interpretation does not support papal power.

William Tyndale, an English contemporary of Erasmus and Luther, caused a stir when he, too, advanced this interpretation in his work, \textit{The Obedience of a Christian Man}, published in 1528. He cited St. Paul’s statement about the Church being built on
Christ as the foundation [rather than Peter] in I Corinthians 3:11: “For other foundation can no man lay than that is laid, which is Jesus Christ.” Tyndale remarked: “And Paul (I Corinthians 3) calleth Christ our foundation and all other, whether, it be Peter or Paul, he calleth our servants to preach Christ and to build us on high. If therefore the Pope be Peter’s successor, his duty is to preach Christ only and other authority hath he none.”55

Tyndale exhorted his readers to go back and note what Augustine had written about this text, which Tyndale claimed the papists refused to do. Augustine, who wrote before the evolution of a strong papacy, had commented: “‘Therefore,’ he [Christ] saith, ‘Thou art Peter; and upon this Rock’ which thou hast confessed, upon this Rock which thou hast acknowledged, saying, ‘Thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God,’ will I build my Church; that is upon Myself, the Son of the living God, ‘will I build My Church.’ I will build upon Myself, not Myself upon thee.”56 When Christ said, “Thou art Peter,” He was pointing to Peter, but when He continued, “And upon this rock,” He was pointing to Himself while the Apostles, including Matthew, the one who recorded this incident, watched and attentively listened.

John Calvin wrote that “we must acknowledge the truth and certainly of the declaration of Paul, that the Church can have no other foundation than Christ alone, (I Cor. iii.11; Eph. ii. 20,) it can be nothing less than blasphemy and sacrilege, when the Pope has contrived another foundation.”57 Erasmus, Tyndale, and Calvin believed that Christians had the right to examine and question Catholic doctrines and interpretations of Scripture. Also Erasmus held that one could question certain verses as they had been translated in Jerome’s Latin Vulgate.
The Johannine Comma

By far the most controversial text that involved Erasmus was I John 5:7-8, called the Johannine Comma. The verses read: (verse 7) “For there are three that bear record in heaven, the Father [ho patar], the Word [ho logos], and the Holy Ghost [to hagion pneuma]: and these three are one. (Verse 8) And there are three that bear witness in earth, the spirit, and the water, and the blood: and these three agree in one.” This was the reading of the Latin Vulgate and the Complutensian Polyglot Bible, which was published in 1522 at Alcala, Spain under the direction of Cardinal Ximenes. However, the Greek manuscripts used by Erasmus did not contain verse seven of I John chapter five (called the Comma), so Erasmus did not include it in the first two editions of his New Testament. He simply translated: “For there are three that bear witness: the spirit, the water, and the blood: and the three are in agreement as one.”

Edward Lee

The Englishman Edward Lee, later Archbishop of York and a close friend of Thomas More, accused Erasmus of lapsing into Arianism (denying that the Son was of one essence with the Father) for refusing to incorporate the text as it was found in the Vulgate. Erasmus replied that “if the verse had been left in, it would not have refuted the Arians, because it does not say that the heavenly witnesses are of one substance, but only that they are of one mind.” Erasmus stated that if a Greek manuscript could be produced that contained the reading, he would put it in his third edition. Codex Vaticanus, housed in the Vatican library, did not contain the reading, but this mattered little because Erasmus rejected the Vaticanus manuscript as being “unreliable.”
Two manuscripts were produced with the Vulgate reading, one with it in the text and one with it in the margin of the text. Many, including Erasmus, had doubts about the genuineness of these manuscripts, for they feared that the reading was somehow recently inserted just for the occasion. Nevertheless, Erasmus put the reading into his third edition of the New Testament, which was published in 1522. Because Erasmus did not want anyone “slandering” him, he wrote that a “manuscript has been found in England which contains what is missing in the more common manuscripts . . . . Out of this English manuscript I have substituted what I said was missing in ours.” Because Erasmus’ third edition of the New Testament was used by Stephanus, Beza, Tyndale, and the King James translators, the reading is found in all of them. Luther used Erasmus’ second edition, so the Comma is not in his German Bible.

The Greek scholar and historian F. F. Bruce stated of Tyndale’s 1525 English translation of the New Testament that its “basis was the third edition of Erasmus’ Greek New Testament (1522). This was the first edition in which Erasmus (under protest) included the spurious text about the three heavenly witnesses (I John 5:7); accordingly, it appeared in Tyndale’s version and in succeeding English versions throughout the following century, including [the] AV/KJV [King James Version].” According to Bruce, the reading is “spurious,” and therefore, should not be in the Bible.

Bruce Metzger, a Greek scholar who agreed with F. F. Bruce, wrote that the “oldest known citation of the Comma is in a fourth-century Latin treatise entitled Liber apologeticus (ch. 4), attributed either to Priscillian or to his follower, Bishop Instantius of Spain.” But this is not the case. Both Edward Hills and Jack Moorman noted that
the third century Church father, Cyprian of Carthage, cited the verse. In his first treatise, written in A.D. 251, Cyprian wrote: “The Lord says, ‘I and the Father are one;’ and again it is written of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit, ‘And these three are one.’”\(^\text{67}\) This would mean that the Bible read and cited by Cyprian contained I John 5:7, i.e., the Comma. The same may be said of Augustine, who wrote in the early part of the fourth century that the trinity consists of “God supreme and true, with His Word and Holy Spirit (which three are one),” a reference to I John 5:7.\(^\text{68}\) The Baptist theologian John Gill (1697-1771) noted that Jerome wrote in an epistle to Eustochium his complaint “of the omission of it [I John 5:7] by unfaithful interpreters.”\(^\text{69}\) Commenting on I John 5:7, John Calvin stated that some had omitted this verse, and “Jerome thinks that this happened through design rather than through mistake . . . the passage flows better when this clause is added . . . I am inclined to receive it as the true reading.”\(^\text{70}\) Calvin’s son-in-law and successor, Theodore Beza, said, “It seems to me that this clause [I John 5:7 as found in Erasmus’ third edition] ought by all means to be retained.”\(^\text{71}\)

**Codex Vaticanus and Modern Criticism of Erasmus**

Scholars say a shortcoming of Erasmus’ work is that Erasmus did not have access to the fourth century Codex Vaticanus manuscript which has been housed in the Vatican library at Rome since 1481. The argument is that Erasmus’ New Testament, along with all editions of the Greek Textus Receptus which were based on Erasmus, is inferior to modern Greek texts and English translations made from Greek New Testaments like Vaticanus, of which Erasmus (supposedly) had no access. Roland Bainton, typical of the modern critics of Erasmus’ production, in speaking of Erasmus only having access to late
dated manuscripts (eleventh through the fifteenth centuries), alluded to Erasmus’ ignorance of Vaticanus when he stated that the “great Vaticanus was unfortunately at Rome.”

This criticism is not valid, for Erasmus had an open door to the libraries of Europe, including the Vatican library. Erasmus did know of the Codex Vaticanus (also known as Codex B or Codex 1229), but he rejected its readings because he considered them to be in error and not reliable. L. D. Reynolds and N. G. Wilson noted that although Erasmus “rightly regarded Codex B (Vat. gr. 1209) as of amazing age, and for a reprint of his edition obtained some collections of it through a friend, it does not seem that he ever used it systematically for the whole text.” During the controversy concerning I John 5:7, Erasmus “had a friend ascertain for him the evidence of Codex Vaticanus on the point.”

Erasmus had two friends who supplied him with readings from Codex Vaticanus. One was the papal librarian, Paul Bombasius (Paulo Bombace), who communicated notes to Erasmus concerning Vaticanus as early as 1521. Erika Rummel observed that Erasmus expressed doubts “about variants relayed by Paulo Bombace, who had access to the famous uncial B in the Vatican Library . . . . Erasmus . . . explains: ‘On my request [Bombace] copied it out verbatim [I John 5] from a very old manuscript in the Vatican library . . . if anyone is impressed by age, the book was very ancient; if by authority of the pope, this testimony was sought from his library.’”

The other man was Sepulveda, who corresponded with Erasmus in 1533. Of the Codex Vaticanus, Sepulveda noted many places in which the manuscript was in
agreement with the Latin Vulgate against the common Greek text. He supplied Erasmus with three-hundred sixty-five readings “as a convincing argument in support of his statements.” With four editions of the New Testament behind him, the sixty-seven year old Erasmus was little impressed with the Vaticanus readings. When he published his fifth and final edition two years later, it varied little from his previous editions. What few readings were incorporated from Codex B were annotated by Erasmus, who “expressly stated doubts” as to their being better readings than those found in his previous editions.

Historical Backgrounds of Vaticanus and Sinaiticus

Pope Nicholas V (1447-1455) created the Vatican library in Rome, and Pope Sixtus IV (1471-1484), the pope who had the Sistine Chapel built, greatly expanded this library. It was during the reign of Sixtus that the Vaticanus manuscript was discovered in the library of Rome, and it was catalogued in 1481. The Sinaiticus Codex was discovered by a manuscript hunter and Greek scholar, Constantin Tischendorf, in 1844 in a monastery at the foot of Mt. Sinai. The patron of Tischendorf’s travels, the tsar of Russia, purchased this codex and placed it in the public library at St. Petersburg in 1867, where it remained until it was sold to the London Museum in 1933. Concerning the Christological verses examined in this work in chapter eight, these two codices are in agreement.

Scholars date the origin of these two manuscripts back to the fourth century. Some believe that they are either two of the fifty copies of the Bible that Constantine ordered from Eusebius of Caesarea after the emperor moved his capital from Rome to Byzantium (Constantinople), or they are copies of these copies. It appears that Eusebius and his
scribes and copyists used the fifth column of Origen’s Hexapla as the main source for their work. In A.D. 231 Origen had fled from Alexandria to Caesarea because of persecution of Christians in Egypt, and his works were housed in the library of Caesarea where they could be accessed by men such as Eusebius. James H. Sightler, a present-day Church historian, argued that these two manuscripts were penned in Egypt rather than around Caesarea, but he does hold that Origen’s work was the major source material for both codices. Because of their connections with Alexandria, Egypt, these two manuscripts are designated as Alexandrian, Hesychian type manuscripts with an Alexandrian type of text. Codex Vaticanus is also referred to as B by Greek Scholars, and Sinaiticus has been designated as Aleph.

Manuscript historians and scholars, such as Bruce Metzger, trace the Textus Receptus type of Greek text back to Antioch, and, therefore, those manuscripts, which number up to several thousand, are called Antiochian or Syrian for Antioch of Syria, or they are designated as Byzantine type texts because many of them were copied out in the Byzantine area. Both B and Aleph are uncial manuscripts because they are written in block capital letters with no spacings between the words. The Greek manuscripts used by Erasmus dated from the eleventh to the fifteenth centuries. They were written in the cursive, minuscule, lower case style that was adopted by Erasmus. This style has been used by scholars since Erasmus for all Greek New Testaments, including those which have Aleph and B as their main sources. One example of this is Kurt Aland and Bruce Metzger’s Greek New Testament which is published by the United Bible Society and has been used for many modern-day English translations of the New Testament. As to the
text being divided into numbered verses, as is found in Greek New Testaments and English Bibles today, it was the French printer and scholar Robert Stephanus (1503-1559) who first did this in his 1550 edition of the Greek New Testament. This work is available in print today, and it is based on Erasmus’ third edition of the New Testament.

Westcott and Hort

B. F. Westcott (1825-1901) and F. J. A. Hort (1828-1892), two Anglican ministers of the Church of England and Cambridge scholars, elevated Codex Vaticanus to the prominent position of authority in translation work. Their production of a Greek New Testament was based on B and Aleph, with Vaticanus being given the pre-eminence. According to Metzger, Westcott and Hort labored for twenty-eight years on their project, which became “the most noteworthy edition of the Greek Testament ever produced by British scholarship.” In their summary of documentary evidence, Westcott and Hort included a discussion of various manuscripts, the first two being Codex Vaticanus (B) and Codex Sinaiticus (Aleph).

Ebehard Nestle produced twenty-five editions of his Greek New Testament, which were based mainly on Vaticanus and Westcott and Hort’s text. Ebehard’s son, Edwin, later continued the work of his father. Several of Nestle’s editions were used for the translating of many twentieth century English New Testaments. In the making of their Greek text, Aland and Metzger compared, among others, various editions of Westcott and Hort, Nestle, and Tischendorf.

The theory developed by Westcott and Hort was that because Vaticanus is the oldest manuscript of the entire Bible (including the Old Testament Apocrypha), then it is
closer in age and time to the original manuscripts, which went out of existence in the first
century due to their being constantly used and handled for making copies of the
Scriptures. Because Westcott and Hort held that the oldest is the best, they argued that
Codex B should be the authoritative source for textual criticism and the reconstructing of
a Greek New Testament to be used for translation work, especially in the making of
English Bible translations.

The Textus Receptus, which was called by Hort a “vile” and “villainous” text, was
to be replaced with a Greek New Testament based on Vaticanus and Sinaiticus. Greek
New Testaments such as that of Westcott and Hort were to be used for English
translations that would supplant the King James Bible because its New Testament was
based on Textus Receptus texts like those of Erasmus in Greek and Tyndale in English.
Tony Lane noted that “90 percent of Tyndale’s translation passed into the King James
Version.” The replacing of the King James Bible was first accomplished by the
Revised Version Committee, which was sanctioned by the Church of England and met in
England from 1871-1881. This committee was chaired by Westcott and Hort, and their
Greek text was used for the translating of the Revised Version New Testament of 1881.

The Greek scholar who opposed the new English version of 1881, along with the
text and theory of Westcott and Hort, was an Anglican vicar, John W. Burgon (1813-
1888), Fellow of Oriel College, professor of Divinity at Gresham, and Dean of
Chichester. He spent his life examining manuscripts and patristic quotations and writing
in defense of the Textus Receptus, which he called the Traditional Text. According to
Edward Hills, Burgon’s arguments have never been refuted.
One such argument was that the “oldness,” i.e., the antiquity and age of a manuscript do not necessarily prove its superiority over a manuscript of a later date. I would advance this same argument. Reynolds and Wilson noted the comments of Richard Simon (1638-1712), who, in his history of the text of the New Testament, which was published in Rotterdam in 1689, observed that “the great age of a manuscript does not automatically guarantee the truth of its readings . . . the Greek text should be tested by comparison with early patristic citations, since these are earlier than the schism of the Greek and Roman churches, as a result of which, according to some critics, the Greek text had been deliberately falsified.”

After thoroughly examining Vaticanus and Sinaiticus, Burgon condemned both texts as vastly inferior to Textus Receptus manuscripts, i.e., Greek manuscripts that agree with Erasmus, Stephanus, Beza, and the Elzevir brothers’ Greek New Testaments. Burgon stated: “As for the origin of these two curiosities, it can perforce only be divined from their contents. That they exhibit fabricated texts is demonstrable . . . they must have branched off from a common corrupt ancestor (probably from Origen’s Hexapla), and straightway become exposed to fresh depraving influences.”

I would argue that as soon as B and Aleph were penned, Christians noted that both manuscripts were filled with spurious readings, and, therefore, the codices were ignored. Hence, they remained in excellent condition throughout the last sixteen to seventeen centuries. Burgon’s thesis was that the exceptional age of both manuscripts was due, not to their goodness, but to their corruption and rejection. Erasmus rejected readings of Vaticanus because he viewed them as corrupt. David Fuller stated: “If they had been
good manuscripts, they would have been read to pieces long ago [as with the original papyrus documents of the New Testament].”

Burgon suspected, ascertained, and concluded that the two manuscripts were “indebted for their preservation” exclusively because of their “evil character; which has occasioned that the one (Codex B) eventually found its way, four centuries ago, to a forgotten shelf in the Vatican Library; while the other, (Codex Aleph) after exercising the ingenuity of several generations of critical corrections, eventually (viz. in A.D. 1844) got deposited in the wastepaper basket of the Convent at the foot of Mount Sinai [where Tischendorf found it in 1844].” Fuller held that the age of the two manuscripts was a point against them, rather than something in their favor. Rejecting the “oldest is the best” argument, he reasoned that their age and excellent condition was evidence that the Church rejected them and spent little time reading them. Vaticanus became a dust collector in the papal libraries, while Sinaiticus was placed in a trash can, where monks occasionally took some of its leaves for the purpose of starting fires in the fireplace of their monastery.

Conclusion

Erasmus was a pioneer in the fields of textual criticism, translation work, philology, and annotations. As to his paraphrases of the New Testament, which are like a verse-by-verse commentary with the text included, Erasmus said that he would like to see the sacred word in the hands of “the farmer, the tailor, the traveler, the mason, prostitutes, pimps, and Turks.” When his statement was objected to and criticized, Erasmus asked, “Do you think that the Scriptures are fit only for the perfumed?”
In the fifth century, Jerome collated various Latin and Greek manuscripts for his Vulgate translation of the New Testament. Erasmus changed some of these readings based on the Greek manuscripts he used. It is possible that Jerome got readings such as, “Do penance,” from the Latin manuscripts he was using, or he may have translated verses like this with an eye and a bias toward papal interpretations of Scripture. Erasmus felt that some of these verses may have been deliberately changed by scribal monks after Jerome, and, therefore, the Vulgate of Erasmus’ day was not a duplicate of the Vulgate originally penned by Jerome. The Catholic Church used interpretations of Scripture such as Peter being the “Rock,” i.e., the pope of Matthew chapter sixteen, to enforce doctrines of papal power and sacramental salvation, teachings with Erasmus rejected, as well as Tyndale. Erasmus also rejected readings sent to him from the Vatican library which were copied out of the Alexandrian Codex Vaticanus.

My argument is that Erasmus’ third edition of the New Testament, as exemplified in Stephanus’ Greek New Testament of 1550 and Beza’s Greek text of 1598, is the text that should be used for all translation work. There is textual, historical, theological, and patristic evidence to support the readings of the Textus Receptus, as was done in this chapter with I John 5:7, the Johannine “Comma.” Before examining further evidence (in chapter eight), there are two other major players that need to be studied, John Wycliffe and William Tyndale.
NOTES FOR CHAPTER 6


9. Rummel, xi.


29. Combs, 51.


38. Metzger, *The Apocrypha*, 188.


40. Curtis, Land, and Peterson, 47.


47. Bainton, 139.


50. Collins, 72.


60. Bainton, 136-37.


71. Hills, 206.

72. Bainton, 133.


77. Grady, 113.


80. Herklots, 35.


86. Samuel C. Gipp, *Reading and Understanding the Variations Between the Critical Apparatuses of Nestle’s 25th and 26th Editions of the Novum Testamentum* -
Graece (Shelbyville, TN: Bible and Literature Missionary Foundation, 1992), i.


88. Grady, 68.


90. Grady, 333.

91. Hills, 139.

92. Wilson and Reynolds, 179.

93. Fuller, ed., 93.

94. Fuler, ed. 93.

95. Fuller, ed. 93-94.

96. Bainton, 141.

97. Bainton, 141.
CHAPTER 7

JOHN WYCLIFFE AND WILLIAM TYNDALE

The lives of these two men extend from a time period near the beginning of the Renaissance with John Wycliffe (1330-1384) to the end of this era and the beginning of the Protestant Reformation with William Tyndale (1494-1536). They were brilliant Oxford scholars, and both men were Bible translators of major influence. Their writings were similar in such areas as their complete rejection of the two swords theory of papacy versus king, their denunciation of the selling of indulgences, and their insistence on the Scriptures being translated into English and made accessible to people.

Little is known about the early lives of these men. Both wrote virtually no autobiographical material. Instead they concentrated on tracts dealing with theology and practical Christianity, as well as translation work on the Scriptures. Because both were declared to be heretical, polemics were written by their enemies, most of which deal with denunciations of their works and beliefs. Their followers, like the Lollards with Wycliffe and John Rogers and Miles Coverdale with Tyndale, maximized their time in making copies of their translations and sermons, and continued the work of improving their Bible versions in subsequent editions and updatings rather than writing biographical works on the men themselves.

After these two Oxford doctors were classified as heretical, many people tried to eradicate any trace of the lives and works of both men. For example, the Renaissance
and Reformation scholar, William Estep, noted that Wycliffe’s “family, like most of those living in the diocese of York, was staunchly Roman Catholic - so much so, in fact, that Yorkshire relatives attempted to erase all references to him from the family history after he was declared a heretic at the Council of Constance [1415].” As in the case of Erasmus and Martin Luther, the Catholic Church placed the works of both Wycliffe and Tyndale on the Index list of forbidden books.

Both Wycliffe and Tyndale translated the Scriptures into English, believing that this was the most important thing that needed to be done in Christendom. They argued that the common man needed to be able to read the Bible in his own tongue. Preachers also needed the written word in English from which they could better minister to the people rather than continuing to attempt this with the Latin text, which, in most cases, could only be read by ecclesiastics who had training in the Latin language.

Concluding that Catholic doctrines such as transubstantiation and indulgences were unscriptural manmade dogmas with no Biblical backing, both of these English scholars felt that it was imperative for the laity to be able to read the Bible in order to obey the admonition of the Apostle Paul in I Thessalonians 5:21: “Prove all things [by comparing them with the Bible]; hold fast that which is good.” Jesus had said that “man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word of God” (Luke 4:4), but how could people do this without access to the Bible in their own language, argued Wycliffe and Tyndale.

Because “many Prelates are too ignorant of Holy Scripture, while others conceal many parts of it,” Wycliffe concluded “that believers shall ascertain for themselves what are the true matters of faith, by having the Scriptures in a language which all may
understand” because all Christians should give themselves to a “holy life and great study.” Wycliffe and Tyndale held to the principle of Sola Scriptura, i.e., Scripture alone is to be the Christian’s final authority in all matters of faith and practice. The scholar of Luther, Heiko A. Oberman, observed that with “Luther . . . Scripture is read as the only convincing basis for settling theological questions . . . . The *Sola Scriptura* articulated by Karlstadt before Luther (May 1518) is programmatically announced by Zwingli as the inspired reform charter for Zurich.” According to Oberman, Luther, early in the 1500's, was trained as a nominalist in Erfurt. He was taught the concept that in the realm of revelation, “in all matters concerning man’s salvation, God’s Word is the sole foundation - here reason and experience do not prescribe but confirm; here they do not precede but follow.” Such was the thinking of Wycliffe, Erasmus, and Tyndale when it came to Scholasticism vs. the Bible and practical theology.

**Decrees against English Translations**

Wycliffe and Tyndale were both forced to do their translation work illegally. In the thirteenth century at the Council of Toulouse (1229), the Church of Rome decreed: “We forbid the laity to possess any of the books of the Old and New Testaments, except perhaps the Psalter or Brieviary for the Offices of the Hours of the Blessed Virgin, which some, out of devotion, wish to have; but having any of those books translated into the vulgar tongue we strictly forbid.” This was enforced as canon law until the Council of Trent (1545-1563), at which time the Church allowed for the translating of the Latin Vulgate into English, to be done by Catholic scholars in Douay and Rheims, France. J. H. Merle D’Aubigne, a nineteenth century Church historian and Reformation scholar,
remarked that in Wycliffe’s day it was “then a maxim that the reading of the Bible was injurious to the laity; and accordingly the priests forbade it . . . ‘It is heresy,’ cried the monks, ‘to speak of Holy Scripture in English.’”

After Wycliffe’s death, Archibishop of Canterbury Arundel summoned a synod of the clergy that resulted in the issuing, in 1408, of the Constitutions of Oxford, which were still in force at the time of Tyndale:

We therefore enact and ordain that no one henceforth on his own authority translate any text of Holy Scripture into the English or other language, by way of a book, pamphlet, or tract, and that no book, pamphlet, or tract of this kind be read, either already recently composed in the time of the said John Wycliffe, or since then, or that may in [the] future be composed, in part or in whole, publicly or privily, under pain of the greater excommunication . . . Whoever shall do the contrary to be punished . . . as a supporter of heresy and error.

Of Wycliffe and his work, Archbishop Arundel stated that Wycliffe was a “‘pestilent and most wretched . . . child of the old devil, and himself a child or pupil of Antichrist . . . [he] crowned his wickedness by translating the Scriptures into the mother tongue.’” Henry Knighton, a Catholic chronicler of Wycliffe’s times, wrote that Wycliffe translated the New Testament from Latin into English, “the Angle not the angel language,” and now the masses have access to the Bible, including even “women who were able to read . . . And so the pearl of the Gospel is thrown before swine and trodden underfoot and what is meant to be the treasure both of clergy, and laity is not become a joke of both. The jewel of the clergy has been turned into the sport of the laity.”

Wycliffe argued that because “Christ and His Apostles taught the people in the language best known to them,” then Christian leaders of every generation should do the same. Wycliffe came to believe that an “unlearned man with God’s grace [and access
to the Bible in his own language] does more for the Church than many graduates.” He felt that the Church should be “governed purely by the law of Scripture,” for to be “ignorant of the Scriptures is the same thing as to be ignorant of Christ.” To those who held that lay persons could not understand the Bible, Wycliffe answered, “The Holy Ghost teaches us the meaning of Scripture as Christ opened its sense to His Apostles.” For studying the Bible, Wycliffe advised believers to obtain “a reliable text, understand the logic of Scripture, compare the parts of Scripture with one another [I Corinthians 2:11-13], maintain an attitude of humble seeking and receive the instruction of the Spirit.”

In 1528 William Tyndale produced his book, _Obedience of a Christian Man_, in which he stated that all Christians should be subject to the Bible. Because he viewed this concept as fundamentally important, Tyndale advanced several arguments as to why believers should be allowed to have the Scriptures in their own language. Two years earlier Tyndale had produced his English New Testament, which he had translated from Erasmus’ Greek text. Two years later, in 1530, he published the Pentateuch, i.e., the first five books of the Old Testament, in English. In arguing for an English Bible, Tyndale cited St. Paul’s comments on speaking in an unknown tongue during a church service: “Else when thou shalt bless with the spirit, how shall he that occupieth the room of the unlearned say Amen at thy giving of thanks, seeing he understandeth not what thou sayest? For thou verily givest thanks well, but the other is not edified. I thank my God, I speak with tongues more than you all: Yet in the church I had rather speak five words with my understanding, that by my voice I might teach others also, than ten thousand
words in an unknown tongue [I Corinthians 14:16-19]."

From this text Tyndale concluded that it was useless to an English-speaking congregation to have a priest read his sermon text from the Latin Bible, preach in Latin, and minister the mass in Latin when virtually no one in the audience understood what he was reading or saying. This was a violation of what Paul had written to the Corinthians. Tyndale stated that the pope should allow for the translation of the Bible into English. The papacy should also sanction that preaching from such a Bible should be in English, or German if one is in Germany, as Luther had translated the Bible into German, or French if one is in France, as with Olivetan’s version, etc. Tyndale wrote that in Latin, “they understand not . . . the lay man thereby is not edified or taught. How shall the lay man say amen (saith Paul) to the blessing or thanksgiving, when he wotteth [knoweth] not what thou sayest.”

Tyndale noted Moses’ admonition in the sixth chapter of Deuteronomy, where Moses instructed the Jews to learn the words of the law, hide them “in thine heart,” and “teach them diligently unto thy children.” He cited Simon Peter’s exhortation in I Peter 3:15, where Christians are instructed to “be ready always to give an answer to every man that asketh you a reason of the hope that is in you with meekness and fear.” Tyndale posed the question: How can we put into practice “God’s word . . . upon our children and household, when we are violently kept from it and know it not? How can we (as Peter commandeth) give a reason of our hope when we wot not what it is that God hath promised or what to hope?”

In John 5:39 Christ commanded His audience to search the Scriptures. When St.
Paul preached in Berea, Acts 17:11 states that his hearers were more noble than those in Thessalonica because they “searched the scriptures daily” to see “whether those things were so” that Paul alleged. Tyndale asked: “Why shall not I likewise, whether it be scripture that thou allegest? Yea why shall I not see the scripture and the circumstances and what goeth before and after [a verse of scripture, i.e., the context of a text must be noted], that I may know whether thine interpretation [the theologians of Catholicism] be the right sense . . . . Or whether thou be about to teach me or to deceive me?”17

Tyndale exhorted his readers to compare everything he wrote with the Bible to “see if these things are so.” He argued that because the Apostles preached their sermons in the mother tongue of the audience, even so, these things should be written in the mother tongue, which for him and his countrymen, was English. Tyndale saw that “the Greek tongue agreeth more with the English than with the Latin . . . in a thousand places thou must seek a compass in the Latin.”18

Tyndale did have a point, for of the twenty-four letters in the Greek alphabet, half of them adhere to their English counterparts (a, b, d, e, i, k, l, m, o, s [final sigma on a word], t, and u).19 Words such as kardia (cardiac, heart), Messias (Messiah), prophatas (prophet), phona (voice, sound, phonetics), anthropos (anthropology), ekklasia (church, ecclesiastic), Biblion (book, Bible), pneuma (wind, air, spirit, pneumatic, pneumonia), mustarion (mystery), hupokritas (hypocrite), martus (martyr), himatos (blood, hemoglobin), genos (race, genes, genealogy), grammateus (scribe, grammar, grammarian), ethnos (ethnic, nation), puros (fire, pyromanic), glukus (sweet, glucose), platus (broad, plateau), psyche (soul, psyche, psychology), soma (body, psychosomatics),
huginas (healthy, hygiene), and phobos (phobia, fear), illustrate Tyndale’s point.

As a linguist, Tyndale was an authority on languages. A. G. Dickens, a Reformation historian, cited the humanist, Buschius, stating of Tyndale that he was “‘an Englishman

. . . who is skillful in seven tongues, Hebrew, Greek, Latin, Italian, Spanish, English, French, that whichever he speaks, you would think it his native tongue.” Both Tyndale and Erasmus could speak with authority on the subjects of Bible translation and textual criticism. According to Dickens, Tyndale “firmly believed that the Bible came first [Sola Scriptura] and should invariably determine the doctrines, institutions, and ceremonies of a church which had come to bear little or no relation to that of the New Testament.”

Wycliffe had drawn the same conclusion some one-hundred and fifty years earlier.

The First English Bible

In the year 1380, Wycliffe and some of his colleagues, using several copies of the Latin Vulgate, translated the Bible into English. Their production was the first time that the entire Bible was made available to the English-speaking people in their own language. The first edition is sometimes called The Wycliffe Bible, while the revision which was done a few years later by John Purvey and used by scores of Lollards (Wycliffite disciples) is generally referred to as the Lollard Bible. Although no one knows for sure, it is believed that Wycliffe worked mainly on the New Testament, while John Purvey and Nicholas Hereford concentrated on translating the Old Testament as well the Apocryphal books. The Church historian, J. R. H. Moorman wrote: “Conscious of the ignorance of the laity, ground down by tyrannical priests, he [Wycliffe] conceived
the idea of translating the Bible into English in order that the ordinary literate layman might himself study the Scriptures and form his own judgments . . . . His other positive contribution was the assembling together of a body of disciples . . . they took copies of the Scriptures in English with them and laid much stress on the Bible as the sole standard [Sola Scriptura] of faith and action.”22

John Wycliffe is often referred to as the morning star of the Reformation because of his production of the first English Bible. Prior to Wycliffe, the Venerable Bede, in the eighth century, translated the Lord’s Prayer into English, and King Alfred the Great, in the 880's, had begun his Saxon law code with the ten commandments in English. But Wycliffe was the first to produce a Bible in English.23

There are two major differences between the work of Wycliffe and that of Tyndale. The first is that the printing press, with ink for movable print, was not invented until 1456 by Johann Gutenberg. Therefore copies of Wycliffe’s Bible had to be made by hand. William Grady noted that copying Wycliffe’s manuscript “required about 10 months of steady work by an experienced copyist.”24

The second difference is that Wycliffe did not know Greek or Hebrew. Being a Latin scholar, he translated from the Vulgate. It would not be until the time of Erasmus, who was greatly influenced by Valla, that the production and use of a Greek New Testament for translation work and disputations would become the scholarly norm. Wycliffe used what he had and knew, Jerome’s Latin Vulgate, the official Church-authorized Bible since A.D. 405.

According to a contemporary biographer of Tyndale, David Daniell, no one knows
for sure when Tyndale learned Greek. In his introduction to the modern-spelling edition of Tyndale’s New Testament, Daniell, the editor of the volume, wrote that Tyndale probably learned Greek at Oxford as well as at Cambridge, which Tyndale attended soon after Erasmus’ stay there.25 Translating the Bible into English was still a criminal offense. After the 1408 Constitutions of Oxford forbade the use of English translations with the threat of excommunication, in 1414, “the reading of the English Scriptures was forbidden upon pain of forfeiture ‘of land, cattle, life and goods from their heirs forever.’”26

Because he could receive no permission from the bishops of London to do translation work in England, Tyndale left for the continent. While in Germany, he translated the New Testament into English using the second and third editions of Erasmus’ Greek New Testament. Tyndale’s English New Testament was the first printed text of its kind, translated from the Greek rather than the Latin.

Tyndale then turned to the Old Testament. Daniell noted: “His knowledge of Hebrew was altogether more remarkable for his time. Germany was the centre of what slender knowledge of Hebrew there was in Europe in the 1520's, and Tyndale clearly learned it there . . . . Tyndale published his translation of the Pentateuch, the first five books of the Old Testament, in 1530, probably in Antwerp. It was the first English translation of any text written in Hebrew and was the basis for all following English versions.”27

Both of Tyndale’s translation works contained his marginal annotations, some of which were anti-papal. Such notes, along with his other writings, and the illegality of the
English translations in the eyes of the papacy, led to Tyndale’s martyrdom at the hands of papists in 1536. Prior to this Tyndale translated from the Hebrew into English the Pentateuch, the books of Joshua through II Chronicles, and the book of Jonah. John Rogers was able to get those manuscripts in his possession. Shortly thereafter, King Henry VIII allowed the licensing of an English translation of the Bible that parishioners could read in the churches throughout England. Without printing the marginal notes, Rogers used Tyndale’s works, along with the translation of Miles Coverdale for the books of Ezra to Malachi, for a complete printed English Bible commissioned and approved by the King of England.

Conclusion

Wycliffe’s influence can be seen not only on the Lollards of England, but particularly on John Huss of Bohemia. When Richard II married Anne of Bohemia, many Czech theological students desiring to study at Oxford accompanied her to England. One such person was Jerome of Prague, who, after studying for two years at Oxford, returned to Bohemia with copies of all of Wycliffe’s works. John Huss absorbed these writings and decimated Wycliffe’s teachings throughout Bohemia. Wycliffe was condemned, though already dead, along with Huss at the Council of Constance in 1415. Wycliffe’s remains were to be exhumed, burned, and scattered over a river. However, this ghastly deed was not carried out until Pope Martin V gave the order to Richard Flemming, the bishop of Lincoln, in 1428.28

Tyndale’s works not only influenced translators of his day like John Rogers and Miles Coverdale, but his English New Testament was greatly used by the translators of
the King James New Testament of 1611. Wycliffe and Tyndale pioneered the work of translating the Bible into English, and both did this with the same passionate burden. They wanted to make the Scriptures available for all people so that they might know the Biblical way of salvation and be able to determine for themselves what was truth and what was heretical, manmade accretions.

By studying the lives of Wycliffe and Tyndale, it can be seen how Scripture became central and a matter of great concern, especially with the Reformers preaching Sola Scriptura over and above the authority and decisions of Church councils and papal bulls. Through men such as John Rogers and Miles Coverdale using the translation work of William Tyndale, Erasmus’ third edition of the Teceptus Greek New Testament became the standard for the making of both Greek and English New Testaments from Tyndale and Stephanus in the sixteenth century to the King James translators and the Elzevir brothers of the seventeenth century. Erasmus’ text was the standard until it was replaced and supplanted by the Alexandrian Greek New Testament of Westcott and Hort in the late nineteenth century.

In Chapter eight, five Christological verses are examined to demonstrate the difference between the Textus Receptus and the Alexandrian text in both the Greek and the English translations made from these texts. The Alexandrian text has a proclivity toward Arianism, while the Receptus evidences the Trinitarian orthodoxy of Nicea.
NOTES FOR CHAPTER 7


16. Tyndale, 16.
17. Tyndale, 17.
18. Tyndale, 19.
21. Dickens, 94.
CHAPTER 8

A COMPARISON OF TEXTS

My thesis is that the Textus Receptus Greek New Testaments, along with the English translations that came from them, better exemplify the orthodoxy of the Nicene creed of A.D. 325 than do the Alexandrian texts and their English counterparts. Evidence comes from comparing the Receptus New Testaments of Erasmus (1516, 1522), Stephanus (1550), Beza (1598), Wycliffe (1380), Tyndale (1525, 1534), the Catholic Rheims Bible (1582), the Great Bible (1539, 1540), the Geneva Bible (1560, 1562), the Bishops’ Bible (1568, 1602), and the King James Bible (KJB 1611, 1873) with the Alexandrian readings of Westcott and Hort (1885, 1911), Aland and Metzger (1983), and four twentieth-century English versions which were based on Westcott and Hort, Nestle, and Aland and Metzger’s Greek text, the New American Standard Bible (NASB, 1963), the Catholic New American Bible (NAB, 1970), the New International Version (NIV, 1973), and Bruce Metzger’s New Revised Standard Version (NRSV, 1989). Modern English spelling is used for the earlier versions.

I Timothy 3:16: “God was manifest in the flesh”

In I Timothy 3:16 St. Paul wrote to Timothy: “And without controversy great is the mystery of godliness: God [Theos] was manifest in the flesh, justified in the Spirit, seen of angels, preached unto the Gentiles, believed on in the world, received up into glory [King James Bible].” This verse is clear as to the orthodox Nicene declaration
concerning Christ, i.e., He was “God manifest in the flesh.” He was, and is, eternal God, the second Person of the eternal Godhead. Contrary to the teaching of Arius, there was never a time when He was not, and He was not a created lesser god. All of the Textus Receptus readings stated that “God was manifest in the flesh” in I Timothy 3:16.

Erasmus’ Greek New Testament reads: “καὶ ἐθεώρησεν ἡμοῦ σοι [confessedly, without controversy] μέγα ἐστὶν τὸ τας εὐσεβείας [of piety, of godliness] μυστήριον [mystery]: Θεὸς [God] ἐφανερώθη [was manifested] ἐν [in] σάρκι [flesh].”1 Stephanus2 and Beza3 read exactly the same as Erasmus. The problem with this verse is that the Vulgate, which was used by Wycliffe and the Rheims translators, as well as the Alexandrian texts, have a different rendering for “God was manifest in the flesh.” The difference is that the Alexandrian reading has, in place of the word “Θεὸς” (God), the pronoun “Ἠσ” (’Os), which can be translated as “who,” “which,” or “that.”

The Westcott and Hort Greek text,4 and Aland and Metzger’s Greek New Testament,5 reads: “Ὁς ἐφανερώθη ἐν σάρκι [Who was manifested in the flesh].” Metzger, holding that Origen (185-254) was a great scholar of the third century, noted Origen as the earliest citation with the pronoun “Ｈος” (’Os).6 This difference must be noted because the reading, “Ｈος,” is a neutral reading that Arians would accept. The Receptus reading enumerates, delineates, demonstrates, and bolsters the orthodox Nicene position on Christology, i.e., that Christ was God and not a created, non-eternal god. The Alexandrian reading is unclear, for it does not specify “Who” it was that became flesh.

In his letter to the Ephesians, written around A.D. 115, Ignatius, the bishop of Antioch, quoted I Timothy 3:16 as “God come in flesh.”7 As noted in chapter five, John
Chrysostom, a fourth-century Church father, was the leading expositor of scripture at Antioch (386-397), and later, he was the bishop of Constantinople (397-403). Along with John 1:1 (“the Word was God”), Chrysostom cited I Timothy 3:16 in his refutations of Arianism. For Chrysostom, there was no doubt that Jesus Christ was “God manifested in the flesh.”8 While expounding John 1:14 (“the Word was made flesh and dwelt among us”) in a Christmas message, Chrysostom claimed that “God . . . was made flesh.”9

Gregory of Nyssa (335-394), the bishop of Nyssa and brother to Basil the Great, wrote of I Timothy 3:16: “And hence it is that all who preach the word point out the wonderful character of the mystery in this respect - that ‘God [Theos] was manifested in the flesh,’ and ‘the light shined in the darkness,’ ‘the Life tasted death’ - and all such declarations which the heralds of the faith are prone to make.”10 Commenting on I Timothy 3:16, John Calvin stated that the “Vulgate translator, by leaving out the name of God, refers what follows to ‘the mystery,’ but altogether unskillfully and inappropriately . . . All the Greek copies undoubtedly agree in this rendering, ‘God was manifested in the flesh’ . . . he [St. Paul] declares at the same time that Christ is true man and true God . . by this single passage, the true and orthodox faith is powerfully defended against Arius, Marcion, Nestorius, and Eutyches.”11

Calvin’s son-in-law and successor at Geneva, Theodore Beza, defended the reading with the word, “God,” in I Timothy 3:16. He said: “The concept itself demands we receive this as referring to the very person of Christ.”12 The contemporary historian, Gail Riplinger, noted that the “Westminster Confession of Faith cites I Timothy 3:16 as the verse attesting most strongly to the deity of Christ (Section 8, par. 2).”13
The problem with the Alexandrian rendering of the word, “Hos,” is that it makes little sense in light of the fact that the word is a personal pronoun which is normally translated into English as “Who.”\textsuperscript{14} This would give a subject with no predicate: “And without controversy great is the mystery of godliness: Who was manifest in the flesh, justified in the Spirit, seen of angels, preached unto the Gentiles, believed on in the world, received up into glory,” Edward Hills noted that if Paul rendered this verse as such, then he wrote “an incomplete sentence, a subject without a predicate, and left it dangling.”\textsuperscript{15} Observing this to be problematic, modern translators have written the phrase as, “He was manifest in the flesh.” However, this presents another difficulty because the Greek word for the pronoun, “he,” is “autos,” not “hos,” and no manuscript gives such a reading.\textsuperscript{16} My argument is the same as that of Edward Hills: “if the Greek is ‘who,’ how can the English be ‘He,’”? This is not translation but the creation of an entirely new reading.”\textsuperscript{17}

James R. White, a contemporary Greek scholar, gave the explanation that because Greek uncial manuscripts of the first four centuries were written in block capital letters with no word separation, and because the abbreviated form of “Theos,” called a nomina sacra (sacred name), looked so much like “’Os,” the wrong word could easily have been copied by a scribe, and thus, the Alexandrian reading accidentally and unintentionally became part of the text.\textsuperscript{18} Even if this is true, there is no excuse for a modern translator putting “’Os” in a Greek rendering of I Timothy 3:16, or “he” in an English New Testament. White does not find the word “’Os” to be problematic, nor does he have a problem with the English translation, “He who was.”\textsuperscript{19} But for such a translation, the
Greek text would have to read “Autos hos,” and no manuscript has such a reading.

When scholars in England in the mid-nineteenth century began to talk about revising the King James Bible and updating its archaic English, Jonathan Philpott stated that he feared such an undertaking because he believed that verses such as I Timothy 3:16 would be “meddled with,” i.e., the revisers would “remove ‘God’ from His own Incarnation in the passage.” The British committee that met from 1871-1881 to produce the first Revised English Version was headed up by Westcott and Hort (discussed in chapter six). The version they produced was based on Westcott and Hort’s Greek New Testament.

The contemporary Church historian, William Grady, noted of one of the more controversial committee members, Vance Smith, who held to a semi-Arian view of Christ, that Smith was pastor of “St. Saviour’s Gate Unitarian Church whose participation in the Revision Committee of 1871-1881 evoked bitter controversy, especially with regard to the role he played in removing the word ‘God’ from I Timothy 3:16.” This should be carefully noted, for I would argue that at times a personal belief or a theological bias will color and determine how a scholar reconstructs or translates a verse or text of Scripture. Westcott, Hort, and Smith’s English production of 1881 reads as an incomplete sentence: “And without controversy great is the mystery of godliness; He who was manifested in the flesh, Justified in the spirit, Seen of angels, Preached among the nations, Believed on in the world, Received up in glory.”

The beginning of I Timothy 3:16 is cited in the following:

Wycliffe: And openly it is a great sacrament of piety, that thing that was showed in flesh

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Rheims: And manifestly it is a great sacrament of piety, which was manifested in the flesh

Tyndale: And without nay, great is that mystery of godliness: God was showed in the flesh

Great Bible: And without doubt great is that mystery of godliness: God was showed in the flesh

Geneva Bible: And without controversy, great is the mystery of godliness, (which is,) God is manifested in the flesh

Bishops’ Bible: And without doubt, great is the mystery of godliness: God was showed manifestly in the flesh

NASB: And by common confession great is the mystery of godliness: He who was revealed in the flesh, Was vindicated in the Spirit

NAB: (Catholic version): Undeniably great is the mystery of devotion, Who was manifested in the flesh, vindicated in the spirit, etc.

NIV: Beyond all question, the mystery of godliness is great: He appeared in a body

NRSV (Metzger): Without any doubt, the mystery of our religion is great: He was revealed in flesh [the footnote for the word “He” reads: Gk Who; other ancient authorities read God; other Which]\n
By using the Latin Vulgate, Wycliffe and the Rheims translators rendered the

Alexandrian reading of I Timothy 3:16. As noted in chapter six, at times the Vulgate reflects an Alexandrian reading, whereas in other places it reads as the Receptus.

Tyndale and the English Bibles up to the King James Version, using the Receptus Greek of Erasmus, Stephanus, and Beza, gave the non-Arian reading of I Timothy 3:16, and it supports and substantiates the orthodoxy of Nicea. The modern English versions that follow Westcott and Hort, as well as Aland and Metzger, render the Alexandrian reading, which is a poor and faulty translation.

I John 5:7: The Johannine Comma

This verse was commented on in chapter six, but a few more notations and comparisons are necessary. The King James rendering of I John 5:7-8, with the

Johannine comma section italicized, reads: “For there are three that bear witness in
heaven, the Father, the Word, and the Holy Spirit: and these three are one. And there are three that bear witness on earth, the spirit, and the water, and the blood: and these three agree in one.” This is a verse which articulates the doctrine of the trinity, and Christ is called “the Word,” exactly as the same author, St. John, referred to Him in John 1:1, “In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God.” D. A. Carson, a contemporary scholar and author, quoted the citations of John Gill (1697-1771), who referred to various Church fathers that cited I John 5:7 in their writings. Carson stated: “In some of the fathers cited by Gill, the words are not cited as Scripture.” But this is not the case in the citations of Cyprian27 and Augustine28 given in chapter six. Both of these Church fathers quoted I John 5:7 as it is found in the third edition of Erasmus’ Greek New Testament, i.e., with the Johannine Comma. Scholars that support Westcott and Hort have said that the Comma only appears in late manuscripts, but that is clearly not the case since it is quoted by both Augustine and Cyprian, both of whom must have had this verse in their New Testament. The idea that no one in the third or fourth centuries knew of this Bible verse is not true.

Erasmus’ third edition of his Greek New Testament included the so-called “Comma” as part of the text.29 Both Stephanus and Beza used this edition of Erasmus, and in I John 5:7-8, they all read the same: “hoti [because] treis [three] eisin [there are] oi marturountes [who bear witness] en to ourano [in heaven], ho patar [the Father], ho logos [the Word], kai to hagion pneuma [and the Holy Ghost]; kai outoi oi treis [and these three] hen eisin [one are]. [verse 8] kai treis [and three] eisin oi marturountes en ta ga [there are who bear witness on earth], to pneuma [the spirit], kai to hudor [and the
water], kai to haima [and the blood]; kai oi treis [and the three] eis to hen eisin [to the one are].”

This should be compared with Westcott and Hort’s text and Aland and Metzger’s, both of which read the same: [verse] “7 hoti treis eisin oi marturountes [because three there are who bear witness], [verse] 8 to pneuma kai to hudor kai to haima [the Spirit and the water and the blood], kai oi treis eis to en eisin [and the three to the one are]. This is the reading of modern English versions:

NASB: 7 And it is the Spirit who bears witness, because the Spirit is the truth [this part of verse six in the King James Bible]. 8 For there are three that bear witness, the Spirit and the water, and the blood; and these three are in agreement [the footnote says a few late manuscripts include the Comma].

NAB: 7 So there are three that testify, 8 the Spirit, the water, and the blood, and the three are of one accord.

NIV: 7 For there are three that testify: 8 the Spirit, the water and the blood; and the three are in agreement. [the footnote gives the Comma reading, stating that it is from late manuscripts of the Vulgate].

NRSV: 7 There are three that testify: 8 the Spirit and the water and the blood, and these three agree [the footnote cites the Comma as coming from a few other authorities].

Wycliffe, Tyndale, Rheims, the Great Bible, Geneva Bible, and the Bishops’ Bible all read as the King James Version of the Bible. The Receptus reading was quoted by Cyprian and Augustine as Scripture, which means the Bible they were quoting included the Johannine Comma. As opposed to the Alexandrian reading, I John 5:7 in the Textus Receptus is a definitive statement which is in agreement with the Orthodox trinitarian formula of the Nicene creed.

Matthew 19:16-17: Why callest thou me good?

In Matthew 19:16-17 there is a story of a rich young man who questioned Jesus concerning eternal life. The King James Bible has the Receptus reading: “And, behold,
one came and said unto him, Good Master, what good thing shall I do, that I may have eternal life? And he said unto him, Why callest thou me good? there is none good but one, that is, God: but if thou wilt enter into life, keep the commandments.” This is a salient passage on the doctrine of the Deity of Christ. The rich man referred to Christ as “Good Master,” to which Jesus asked, “Why callest thou me good?,” and then responded, “for there is none good but one, God.” If the young man was willing to recognize that Christ was “good,” then he would have to admit that Christ was “God,” for according to the passage, God, alone, is good. This is what Jesus was trying to convey to the young man.

Stephanus\textsuperscript{35} and Beza\textsuperscript{36} cite the passage in the same manner as Erasmus’ Greek text: “\textit{Kai idou [And behold] eis proselthon [one having come to him] eipen auto [said to him], Didaskale agathe [Teacher or Master, good], ti agathon [what good thing] poiaso hina echo zoan aionion [shall I do that I may have life eternal?] ‘O de eipen auto [And he said to him], Ti me legeis agathon [why me callest thou good?]; oudeis agathos [no one is good] ei ma eis [except one], ho Theos [God].”\textsuperscript{37} A problem occurs in comparing this text with the Alexandrian reading of Westcott and Hort,\textsuperscript{38} and Aland and Metzger.\textsuperscript{39} Their reading has removed the word, “good” [\textit{agathe}], after the word, “Master,” in the young man’s address to Christ, and then has Christ asking, “Why asketh thou me about the good?,” with the word, “God,” erased from the passage.

Such a reading, instead of focusing on the subject of Christ’s Deity, changes the conversation to a neo-Platonic discussion about “the good,” which, I would argue, is not the subject of the passage. Aland and Metzger’s text reads: “\textit{Kai idou eis proselthon auto}
eipen [And behold, one having come to him, said], Didaskale, ti agathon poiaso [Teacher, what good thing shall I do] hina scho zoan aionion [that I may have life eternal?]; ’O de eipen auto [and he said to him], Ti me erotas peri tou agathou [Why me askest about the good?]; eis eatin ho agathos [one is the good].” Aland and Metzger trace this reading back to Codex Vaticanus, Codex Sinaiticus, and Origen. The Alexandrian reading changed the discussion from God and eternal life to pseudo philosophy concerning “the good.”

Erika Rummel noted that in his annotation on this passage, Erasmus “went as far as warning the reader of Origen’s latent Arianism . . . . Christ indicates that he is God and reproaches the speaker . . . . Here Origen must be read with caution. Perhaps his language contains a notion of Arianism, as if not even the Son could properly be called ‘good.’” One interesting thing about this is that, like Clement of Alexandria (150-215), Origen also cited the Receptus reading: “Our Lord and Saviour, hearing Himself on one occasion addressed as ‘Good Master,’ . . . said, ‘Why callest thou me good? There is none good but one, that is, God the Father.” With this reading it is clear that Christ was equating Himself with God the Father, as in John 8:58 and Philippians 2:5-6, which were cited in chapter five. This is a case of Origen citing one reading in one place, where he pictured Christ as a prophet of “the good,” and in another of his writings, Origen has Christ speaking of the only one who is good, i.e., God. The Receptus reading demonstrates the orthodoxy of Nicea.

In his first apology, the Church father, Justin Martyr (100-165), wrote: “And when a certain man came to Him and said, ‘Good Master,’ He answered and said, ‘There is
none good but God only.” One of Justin’s pupils was Tatian (110-172), a scholar who compiled the *Diatessaron*, the earliest harmony of the Gospels. In his *Diatessaron*, Tatian wrote: “And while Jesus was going in the way, there came to him a young man of the rulers, and fell on his knees, and asked him, and said, Good Teacher, what is it that I *must* do that I may have eternal life? Jesus said unto him, Why callest thou me good, while there is none but the one, even God?” Both Justin Martyr and Tatian, in the second century, cited the Receptus reading.

Augustine, in his sermons on the New Testament, stated that if “you consider good perfectly and strictly speaking, none is good but God Alone. Ye have the Lord saying most plainly, ‘Why callest thou Me good? there is none Good but One, that is, God.’” One of the early desert fathers cited the verse: “they were comforted, giving thanks to God, who alone is good.” In his homily on Matthew 19: 16-17, Chrysostom discoursed: “for he [Christ] said not, ‘Why dost thou call me good? I am not good;’ but, ‘there is none good,’ that is, none amongst men. And when He saith this self-same thing, He saith it not as depriving even men of goodness, but in contradistinction to the goodness of God. Wherefore also He added, ‘But one, that is, God.’”

Tyndale, the Great Bible, Geneva Bible, and the Bishops’ Bible all have the Receptus reading like the King James Bible. Wycliffe’s version reads: “Lo one came and said to him, Good master, what good shall I do that I have everlasting life? which saith to him, What askest thou me of good things? there is one good, God.” This is very close to the Receptus reading, as is the Rheims version in this particular case: “And behold one came and said to him, Good Master, what good shall I do that I may have life
everlasting? Who said to him, What askest thou me of good? One is good, God.”

Despite the great weight of these authorities being against the Alexandrian reading, it is this reading which is incorporated into contemporary translations:

**NASB:** And behold, one came to Him and said, ‘Teacher, what good thing shall I do that I may obtain eternal life?’ And he said to him, ‘Why are you asking Me about what is good? There is only One who is good.

**NAB:** Now someone approached him and said, ‘Teacher, what good must I do to gain eternal life?’ He answered him, ‘Why do you ask me about good? There is only One who is good.’

**NIV:** Now a man came up to Jesus and asked, ‘Teacher, what good thing must I do to get eternal life?’ ‘Why do you ask me about what is good?’ Jesus replied. ‘There is only One who is good.’

**NRSV:** Then someone came to him and said, ‘Teacher, what good deed must I do to have eternal life?’ And he said to him, ‘Why do you ask me about what is good? There is only one who is good.’

Such a reading has Christ switching from the subject, “what is good,” to “who is good.” I would argue that this reading, without the address, “Good Master,” is nonsense compared to the passage in the Receptus. G. A. Riplinger has asserted that “the Platonic dialogue concerning ‘What is good’ was inserted by Gnostics into Matthew 19:16, 17 in several ancient New Testament manuscripts.” Gnosticism and Arianism have many of these Platonic elements in common. This could account for all of the changes from the Receptus readings discussed in this chapter.

James R. White argued that scribes were comparing this passage with the same one in Mark and Luke, and, thus, they “smoothed” the text in Matthew into the Alexandrian reading. Even if this is true, it is no reason to reject the reading in the Receptus, which is attested to by the Church fathers all the way back to the second century. After quoting the Receptus reading, Calvin wrote that “the young man is directed to admit the truth of the doctrine [of the Godhead, that Christ was equal with God] . . . . Christ wishes him to
rise higher, that he may hear God speaking . . . . We need not wonder, therefore, if Christ, in order to maintain the authority of his doctrine, directs the young man to God [and to the fact that Christ was equal with God].\textsuperscript{56} Christ wanted the young man to recognize him as God before He elaborated on one’s need for keeping the commandments. The Receptus reading supports the Nicene creed in its declaration of Christ’s eternal Deity.

Luke 23:42 and Adoptionism

During Christ’s crucifixion, one of the two thieves that had been crucified with Jesus cried out for mercy and salvation: “And he said unto Jesus, Lord, remember me when thou comest into thy kingdom,” to which Jesus replied in the next verse, “Verily I say unto thee, Today shalt thou be with me in paradise [Luke 23:42-43, King James Bible].” Erasmus (and later Stephanus\textsuperscript{57} and Beza\textsuperscript{58}) reads: “\textit{Kai elegen to Iasou} [And he said to Jesus], \textit{Mnasthati mou kurie} [Remember me, Lord], \textit{hotan elthas en tu basileia sou} [when thou comest into thy kingdom].”\textsuperscript{59} The Alexandrian reading, as found in Westcott and Hort’s text,\textsuperscript{60} along with Aland and Metzger,\textsuperscript{61} omitted the word, “Lord” (\textit{kurie}), from the passage: “\textit{kai elegen, Iasou} [and he said, Jesus], \textit{mnasthati mou} [remember me] \textit{hotan elthas eis tan basileian sou} [when thou comest into thy kingdom].” This reading is found in the modern versions as opposed to those prior to the King James Bible which have the Receptus reading like the King James:

\begin{itemize}
  \item Wycliffe: and he said to Jesus, Lord have mind on me: when thou comest into thy kingdom.
  \item Tyndale: And he said unto Jesus: Lord remember me when thou comest into thy kingdom.
  \item Rheims: And he said to Jesus, Lord, remember me when thou shalt come into thy kingdom.\textsuperscript{62}
\end{itemize}
One of the earliest citations of Luke 23:42 is found in Tatian’s *Distessaron* from the second century: “And he said unto Jesus, Remember me, my Lord, when thou comest into thy kingdom.”65 Like Tatian, Augustine quoted this verse with the Receptus reading: “And he said unto Jesus, Lord, remember me when Thou comest into Thy kingdom.”66

John Calvin’s commentary reads as the Receptus with Calvin commenting: “he adores Christ as a *King* while on the gallows, celebrates his *kingdom* in the midst of shocking and worse than revolting abasement, and declares him, when dying, to be the Author of life.”67

The problem with following the Alexandrian reading which omitted the word, “Lord,” is that such a rendering lends credence to the ancient heresy of adoptionism, which is somewhat similar to Arianism. This teaching held that Jesus was a mere man, born of Joseph and Mary. He was adopted by God as God’s son when he was baptized by John the Baptist in the Jordan River. At that time, according to adoptionist theology, the Holy Spirit, i.e., the “Christ,” descended on him, with God saying to John, “This is my beloved son.” However, the adoptionists went on to say that the “Christ” left Jesus at his crucifixion, and hence, a mere man died on the cross, exclaiming, “My God, My God,
why hast thou forsaken me.” The Receptus reading of Luke 23:42 has the dying thief addressing Christ, not just as a man, Jesus, but rather, as “Lord.”

The adoptionistic doctrine was similar to the belief system of the Ebionites. The Church historian Everett Ferguson, in his work on early Christianity, wrote that as “Christians, they accepted Jesus as the Messiah, but regarded him as a man . . . who became the Messiah by reason of his righteous life. Thus, they rejected the virgin birth.” The editors of Christian History noted that Adoptionists, also called dynamic monarchianists, believed that either at Christ’s birth or baptism, God adopted “the human Jesus as his special son and gave him an extra measure of divine power,” and some Docetists and Gnostics taught that “Christ” left Jesus “before the crucifixion.”

Peter Lombard, in his third of Four Books of Sentences, said of Christ that He “is not an adopted son, because he did not first exist and then become adopted as son.” Riplinger wrote: “The ancient Adoptionists believed that ‘the Christ Consciousness’ entered Jesus at baptism . . . . The ancient popularity of the theory that ‘the Christ’ entered Jesus at Baptism and left before his crucifixion is seen in alterations to manuscripts like Aleph and B. Indications of his . . . deity, before his baptism or while on the cross, are removed [Luke 23:42 is cited as an example, noting the omission of the word, ‘Lord’].” I would argue the accuracy of the Receptus reading of Luke 23:42 and the retention of the word, “Lord,” which enforces the Nicene declaration of belief in one Lord Jesus Christ.

Mary’s firstborn son: Matthew 1:25

The verse in Matthew 1:25 pertains to Joseph and Mary, and her giving birth to
Christ. The King James version reads: “And he [Joseph] knew her not till she had brought forth her firstborn son: and he called his name JESUS.” The difference in texts is that the Receptus included the word “firstborn” in the phrase, “her firstborn son,” whereas the Alexandrian reading just stated, “her son.”

Stephanus\textsuperscript{72} and Beza\textsuperscript{73} followed Erasmus’ reading: \textit{“kai ouk eginosken autan [and not knew her] heos ou eteken [until she brought forth] ton huion autas ton prototokon [son her the firstborn, her firstborn son]; kai ekalesen to onoma auto Iasoun [and he called his name Jesus].”}\textsuperscript{74} Aland and Metzger,\textsuperscript{75} on the other hand, reads the same as Westcott and Hort: \textit{“kai ouk eginosken autan heos ou eteken huion [and not knew her until she brought forth her son]; kai ekalesen to onoma autou Iasoun [and he called his name Jesus].”}\textsuperscript{76} This can be noted in comparing the English translations:

\begin{itemize}
  \item **Wycliffe**: And he knew her not til she had born her first begotten son; called his name Jesus.
  \item **Tyndale**: and knew her not til she brought forth her first son / and called his name Jesus.
  \item **Rheims**: And he knew her not til she brought forth her first born son: and called his name Jesus.\textsuperscript{77}
  \item **Great Bible**: and knew her not, til she had brought forth her first begotten son, and called his name Jesus.
  \item **Geneva Bible**: But he knew her not, til she had brought forth her first born son, and he called his name Jesus.
  \item **Bishops’ Bible**: And he knew her not, til she had brought forth her first born son, and called his Name Jesus.\textsuperscript{78}
  \item **NASB**: and kept her a virgin until she gave birth to a Son; and he called his name Jesus.
  \item **NAB**: He had no relations with her until she bore a son, and he named him Jesus.
  \item **NIV**: But he had no union with her until she gave birth to a son. And he gave him the name Jesus.
  \item **NRSV**: but had no marital relations with her until she had born a son; and he named him Jesus [the footnote stated, ‘other ancient authorities read \textit{her firstborn son}’].\textsuperscript{79}
\end{itemize}
Tatian recorded Matthew 1:25 in his second century *Distessaron*: “and [Joseph] knew her not until she brought forth her firstborn son.”

The word “firstborn” implies that Mary had other children after Christ was born. Joseph and Mary had no sexual relations “until” Jesus was born. The word “prototokon” (proto, first, firstborn) means that Mary had children by Joseph after the birth of Christ, her first born son. Jesus is said to be firstborn because other children followed. It is possible that the motive for removing “firstborn” from the text was to support the dogma of the perpetual virginity of Mary. But this is problematic because Jesus’ brothers and sisters are spoken of in Matthew 13:55-56, and the (half) brothers are named. This is not a reference to cousins, as taught by those who hold to the perpetual theory, because the Scriptures use the word “cousin” when such a relationship is being designated, such as when Gabriel referred to Elisabeth as Mary’s “cousin” in Luke 1:36.

It is interesting to note that many of the Church fathers and, later, Reformers, held to the Receptus reading, yet still taught that Mary remained a lifelong virgin after Christ’s birth. Chromatius, a friend of Jerome, stated: “not a few careless people insist on asking whether after the Lord’s birth the holy mother Mary had relations with Joseph. But this is not admissible on the grounds of faith or truth . . . . It is not plausible . . . that the Mary of the Gospel, a virgin bearing God . . . had relations with a man.”

Chrysostom also taught this. He believed that in the phrase, “Joseph knew her not until,” the word, “until,” meant that Mary was a virgin when she conceived Christ and when He was born.

Matthew’s use of the word, “until,” according to Chrysostom, left it up to the
reader to decide what happened after that. But Chrysostom did not believe the word, “until,” meant that Joseph had relations with Mary after Christ’s birth, and he made no comment on the word, “firstborn,” although he did cite the passage as having the word in it. As to Christ’s brothers, Chrysostom stated: “How then, one may say, are James and the others called His brethren? In the same kind of way as Joseph himself was supposed to be husband of Mary. For many were the veils provided, that the birth, being such as it was, might be for a time screened.”82 But, according to Scripture, Joseph was the husband of Mary; he just was not the biological father of Christ. John of Damascus (650-750) was an Arab monastic and theologian whose writings had “great influence in both the Eastern and Western Churches.”83 In his *Exposition of the Orthodox Faith*, John wrote that the word “firstborn” meant that Christ was born first, but “does not at all suggest the birth of others . . . . The ever-virgin One thus remains even after the birth still virgin . . . . For could it be possible that she, who had borne God . . . should receive the embrace of a man. God forbid!”84

Tyndale argued that “Scripture usage does not mean Joseph knew our lady afterward.”85 Peter Damian, in the mid-eleventh century, was, according to the historian Christopher Brooke, “passionately devoted to virginity, both in women and in men,” so much so that Damian “fervently believed that Mary and Joseph had avoided all sexual intercourse, and that Jesus had entered the world without breaking Mary’s hymen.”86 Such ideas were used to justify a marriage where a couple was joined in a ceremony, but they chose to remain celibate and never consummate the marriage, supposedly like Joseph and Mary.
Calvin and Matthew 1:23-25

John Calvin quoted the Receptus reading and noted previous arguments that had taken place in the Church. Calvin observed that Helvidius taught that the inference could be made from Matthew 1:25 that after the birth of Christ, Mary had children by her husband, Joseph. Jerome, on the other hand, “earnestly and copiously defended Mary’s perpetual virginity . . . . It is said that Joseph knew her not till she had brought forth her first-born son: but this is limited to that very time. What took place afterwards, the historian does not inform us.” Calvin did reiterate the doctrine of Christ’s Deity concerning Matthew 1:23, “Behold, a virgin shall be with child, and shall be a son, and they shall call his name Immanuel: which . . . means, God is with us.” Calvin wrote: “Hence arises another proof, that Christ is God manifested in the flesh, (I Tim. iii.16).”

Helvidius gives the argument that is most clearly consistent with other Biblical passages while not reflecting early Christian Platonic obsessions with virginity. If Mary and Joseph never came together in a normal, marital, sexual relationship after Christ’s birth, then they both were in violation of the Biblical principle spoken of in I Corinthians 7:25:

Nevertheless, to avoid fornication, let every man have his own wife, and let every woman have her own husband. Let the husband render unto the wife due benevolence: and likewise also the wife unto the husband. The wife hath not power of her own body, but the husband: and likewise also the husband hath not power of his own body, but the wife [because they are ‘one flesh’]. Defraud ye not one the other, except it be with consent for a time, that ye may give yourselves to fasting and prayer; and come together again, that Satan tempt you not for your incontinency.

If the doctrine of the perpetual virginity is correct, then Joseph also remained a virgin unless he had a mistress or a concubine. The dogma was established as an explanation
for both the everlasting virginity of Mary, and that the sinless Christ was in no way tainted by Mary’s Adamic sin nature while He was in her womb. Matthew 1:25 has to do with Psalms 2:7, which, as noted in chapter four, was misinterpreted by Arius, who claimed that the passage, “Thou art my Son, this day have I begotten thee,” referred to God’s creating Christ, His Son, ex nihilo before Genesis 1:1. Psalms 2:7 is a reference to the day God’s Son was birthed through Mary as her firstborn son. Church fathers like Jerome sought to interpret the image of Mary as one who remained a perpetual virgin regardless of how the Scriptures were read. Their doctrine of virginity overwhelmed their text analysis.

Conclusions

The doctrine of Arius was condemned as heresy during the Council of Nicea. The Nicene creed was formulated to establish and articulate in writing what was to be the teaching of orthodox Christianity concerning Christology and the Trinity. The Deity of Christ was ruled as Scriptural dogma, and both Catholics and Protestants have held to this doctrine throughout the centuries, supported by arguments from Scripture by men like Athanasius and Chrysostom.

However, the Alexandrian readings noted in this chapter do not substantiate and uphold Nicene orthodoxy like the same readings in the Receptus texts, both in Greek and in English. I would argue that the Receptus readings are historically accurate according to quotes by the Church fathers and, therefore, Receptus Greek New Testaments like that of Erasmus and Stephanus should be used for all translation work. It has been demonstrated that these readings have support from patristic quotations and citations.
Christ claimed to be equal with God, the Son of God, and God manifest in flesh, and His apostles affirmed this in their writings. Jesus’ enemies knew that He was making such a claim, and, therefore, they demanded His death on the grounds that such a declaration was blasphemy which was to be punished by death. I have not tried to argue that Christ was who He claimed to be. I have argued that the Scriptures, as found throughout the Textus Receptus, do declare Him to be the eternal second Person of the Trinitarian Godhead, and such is the declaration of the creed of Nicea. Therefore, the salient passages of the Receptus that have been noted in this last chapter enforce and explain the orthodoxy of Trinitarianism and Christological Nicene Christianity.
NOTES FOR CHAPTER 8


16. Drumwright, Jr., 140.


30. Stephanus, 616.
31. Westcott and Hort, 342.
32. Aland and Metzger, eds., 824.
35. Stephanus, 53.
37. Erasmus, 45.
38. Westcott and Hort, 45.
40. Aland and Metzger, eds., 74.


54. Riplinger, 522.

55. White, 254.


57. Stephanus, 235.

58. Beza, 165.

59. Erasmus, 187.

60. Westcott and Hort, 182.

61. Aland and Metzger, eds., 312.


63. Weigle, ed., 492-93.

64. Kohlenberger III, ed., 461.

65. Tatian, 123.

66. Augustine, 204.


71. Riplinger, 348-49.

72. Stephanus, 3.

73. Beza, 2.

74. Erasmus, 3.

75. Aland and Metzger, eds., 3.

76. Westcott and Hort, 5.


78. Weigle, ed., 6-7.


80. Tatian, 45.


83. Simonetti, ed., 303.


88. Calvin, vol. 1, 106.


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