

Unitarian Answers to Trinitarian claims

Trinitarian claim: 'The New Testament clearly presents Christ as God. The names applied to Christ in the New Testament are such that they could properly be applied only to one who was God. For example, Jesus is called God in the phrase, "Looking for the blessed hope and the appearing of the glory of our great God and Savior, Christ Jesus" (Titus 2:13; compare John 1:1; Hebrews 1:8; Romans 9:5; 1 John 5:20–21).¹ Josh McDowell, *More Than a Carpenter*, Living Books, Tyndale House Publishers, Wheaton, 1973, page 11.

Unitarian Answer: The New Testament does not clearly present Christ as God. The names applied to Christ in the New Testament could properly be applied to one who represents God and has received 'all authority in heaven and earth' from Him. McDowell claims that the following texts clearly call Christ God.

1. Titus 2:13. 'Looking for that blessed hope, and the glorious appearing of the great God and our Savior Jesus Christ.'¹ McDowell assumes that the expressions 'great God' and 'Savior' are in apposition, that is, that they both refer to one and the same individual. The English translation is ambiguous. The fact is that the 'of' in English, which translates the Greek genitive is repeated in the Greek with the words 'Savior, Christ Jesus' so that a more literal translation would be: 'the glorious appearing of our great God and of our Savior, Jesus Christ'. There is no reason to assume that these are one and the same being. The text does not 'clearly' present Christ as God.

2. John 1:1. 'In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God.'¹ Our task is not to explain what this text actually means, but to demonstrate that it does not clearly present Jesus as God. The first point is that there is a difficulty in conceiving that the Word is with God on the one hand, and is God on the other.

The first clause states that there is a distinction between the Word and God (since the one is with the other), while the second states that they are one and the same. As it stands the sentence does not make sense. It does make sense, however, if we realize that the word *theos* in Greek used here is an equivalent of the Hebrew word *Elohim*. Now *Elohim* can mean God, gods, a god, judge, exalted one, and even angel. The first word refers to God, while the second to another entity.

The reference to another entity clearly shows the Word not to be the God with whom the Word is. Indeed some scholars point out that a better translation would be: 'and the Word was a god'. This also appears to me to be somewhat forced. One of the other alternatives should probably be chosen.

The Christian claim depends on John 1:14, 'The Word became flesh.' If this is taken to mean that the Almighty God became flesh, or became incarnate as a human being, this would entail a change in the essence of God, which is both logically and Scripturally unacceptable. Note that this text does not say that Jesus is God.

It is an interesting fact that the Qur'an calls Jesus the Word of God without any of its adherents suggesting that the expression 'clearly' presents him as God. Surely referring to Jesus as the Word of God is coherent with Islamic belief and terminology, and does not imply deity.

3. Hebrews 1:8. 'But unto the Son he said, Thy throne, O God, is for ever and ever: a sceptre of righteousness is the sceptre of thy kingdom.' This is one of a series of quotations from the Old Testament. The first, Psalm 2:7 (Hebrews 1:5a), was originally spoken to David. The second, 2 Samuel 7:14 (Hebrews 1:5b), was also spoken to David about his 'seed', primarily Solomon, but no doubt also secondarily and prophetically about the Messiah.

The third quotation (Hebrews 1:6) is from a non-Biblical Jewish tradition which also appears in the Qur'an: 'And let all the angels of God worship him.' The personage primarily referred to in the original tradition is Adam, to whom the angels are commanded to prostrate. The word 'worship' in Hebrews refers to prostration before a high personage such as a king. Then comes Psalm 45:6-7 the text quoted by McDowell from Hebrews 1:8. This text was originally part of the king's wedding invocation. The word *Elohim*, translated 'God', is applied to the king. As such, it should probably best be translated as judge' or 'exalted one'. This is especially apparent from the fact that the true God Almighty is referred to in Psalm 45:7 as a different entity.

McDowell does not refer to Hebrews 1:10, which is in fact the only verse used to prove the trinity demanding careful investigation. The quotation is from Psalm 102:25-27. It is the only one of the original quotations which was originally directed to God Himself.

Let it first be noted that the quotation is not directed to Jesus in Hebrews, but is a continuation of the expression in Hebrews 1:8 'pros or 'in reference to' Jesus. This is in contrast to sentences spoken 'to' someone, as in Hebrews 1:5. These phrases are not therefore spoken 'to' Jesus, but are 'in reference' to him.

The second point is that the context clearly has as its purpose to exalt Jesus Christ above even the angels. All of the quotations serve that purpose. They refer to aspects or events in the life of Jesus which show him to be in some way superior to the angels. Psalm 102 is the last of a series of martyrdom Psalms. The clear inference in this chapter is that after all of the glorious aspects and events in Jesus' life that show him to be superior to the angels, there is finally his martyrdom. This too shows his

superiority and leads into the subject of the second chapter of Hebrews which is in fact that self-sacrifice.

To those of us not accustomed to the liturgical use of the Psalms, this explanation is not immediately clear. But to the Hebrews to whom these words were written, nothing could be more natural. The whole panorama of the martyrdom liturgy immediately floods into the Hebrew mind when these words are encountered. No better introduction to chapter two could have been invented.

It is not stated that Jesus is God. Superiority to the angels does not necessarily imply that Jesus is God Almighty. The chapter deals in every possible superlative, but does not state Jesus to be God. Even verse three makes a clear distinction between the being which is Jesus and the being which is God, referred to here as 'Majesty on high'.

4. Romans 9:5. 'Whose are the fathers, and of whom as concerning the flesh Christ came, who is over all, God blessed forever. Amen.' The implication of McDowell is again that the word 'God' is in opposition to the word 'Christ'. The original Greek has no punctuation. The word 'amen' at the end makes the sentence more understandable as a formal benediction.

In that case, it is perfectly possible to understand the divine blessing attached to the end without in the least implying that this God and the earlier Christ are one and the same being. It is not even absolutely clear whether the phrase 'who is over all' should refer to Christ, which precedes it, or to God, which comes after it. There is no theological reason why it could not refer to Christ. If God has set Christ 'over all', that in itself shows that Christ, being the recipient of divine favor, is not God himself (see Philippians 2:9–11).

5. 1 John 5:20. 'And we know that the Son of God has come, and has given us understanding, in order that we might know Him who is true, and we are in Him who is true, in His Son Jesus Christ. This is the true God and eternal life.' McDowell assumes that the word 'this' refers to Christ as its antecedent, thus making Christ the true God. However, we must choose between the two possible antecedents given in the first part of the verse: God and Christ. Obviously God is equal to God. This text does not clearly present Christ as God. It infinitely more clearly presents God as God and Christ as Christ.

Trinitarian claim: 'The Scriptures attribute characteristics to him that can be true only of God. Jesus is presented as being self-existent (John 1:4; 14:6); omnipresent (Matthew 28:20; 18:20); omniscient (John 4:16; 6:64; Matthew 17:22–27); omnipotent (Revelation 1:8; Luke 4:39–55; 7:14, 15; Matthew 8:26, 27); and possessing eternal life (1 John 5:11, 12, 20; John 1:4).' McDowell 1973, 11.

Unitarian Answer: It is true that these characteristics absolutely belong to God alone. But God can and does impart divine graces to human beings sent to represent Him. The language of the texts referred to by McDowell indicates that Jesus received these characteristics from God. As a recipient he cannot be God himself for two reasons: 1) It is illogical to think that the giver and the recipient are both God; 2) to become a recipient implies need or dependence on the giver, which characteristic cannot be applied to

God.

The attributes of Jesus in the New Testament do not differ from the attributes claimed for the twelve holy Imams by Ali (1988:83a–96a) and Tabataba'i (123ff.). Yet in that belief system there is no inference whatsoever that these beings are God Himself. Orientalists suggest that the early Christian concept of Christ is the origin of the Islamic concept of the Imamate. Therefore, such attributes can be true without necessarily indicating that Jesus is one and the same person as God Almighty.

John 1:4. 'In him was life; and the life was the light of men.' At this point the gospel is still referring to the Word before the supposed incarnation. It cannot therefore be taken as a direct reference to the person of Jesus. The verse does not state that Jesus possessed life in himself without the intervention of God. No Bible text does.

John 14:6. 'I am the way, the truth, and the life: no man cometh unto the Father, but by me.' Jesus here claims a monopoly on access to God. This does not suggest that his life is independent of God.

Matthew 28:20. 'I am with you always, even unto the end of the world.' This is not in fact a claim of omnipresence. It is a claim of immediate and direct access for believers. The claim is no different than that for the Shiite Imam in occultation, and may not be very different than the Jewish claim for Elijah and the Muslim claim for Enoch (*Khidr*). There is no implication of deity.

Matthew 18:20. 'For where two or three are gathered together in my name, there am I in the midst of them.' This is not omnipresence either. It is in fact even more limited than Matthew 28:20, since there are more conditions: the presence of at least two believers, the purpose of gathering (for worship?), and the invocation of the name of Jesus. There is no implication of deity.

John 4:16 and 6:64 describe knowledge of people's lives and events past and future which would not normally belong to a human being. Such knowledge would, however, normally be granted to a prophet. If Jesus is given the attributes of a prophet, it does not mean that he is therefore God any more than any of the other prophets with such knowledge is God. Matthew 17:22–27 is also a prophecy of future events. It is not a claim to omniscience. Jesus in fact denies omniscience: 'But of that day and hour knoweth no man, no, not the angels of heaven, but my Father only.' Matthew 24:36.

Revelation 1:8. 'I am Alpha and Omega, the beginning and the ending, said the Lord, which is, and which was, and which is to come, the Almighty.' This verse is supposed to attribute omnipotence to Jesus because of the reference to the word 'almighty'. However, the speaker is not identified as Jesus.

It is assumed to be Jesus because it is inferred that Jesus was the origin of the voice speaking the same words in Revelation 1:11. But these words are a quotation from Isaiah 41:4, where they are spoken by God Himself. Revelation 1:8 says these words are spoken by the Lord. The word *kyrios* in the original Greek sometimes refers to God, sometimes to Christ, and sometimes as a form of polite address to other human beings. At this point it is safe to assume on the basis of the context that the speaker is God

Almighty and not Jesus Christ.

Luke 4:39–55. In this story Jesus has power to heal and authority over devils, who bear witness that he is 'the Christ, the Son of God'. Such power, delegated by God, does not imply omnipotence. It only implies God-given authority.

Luke 7:14–15. This story shows that Jesus had the power to raise the dead to life. He is not the only prophet mentioned in the Bible with such power from God. Such power does not imply omnipotence. It only implies God-given authority.

Matthew 8:26–27. This story of power to still the storm, impressive as it is, does not imply that this was anything but power delegated to Jesus from God. There is no intimation of omnipotence. For God to give a man such power is not to make that man into God Himself.

1 John 5:11–12, 20. This text speaks of no life whatsoever which is not given by God. Life that is given by God, although it be in Christ, does not imply that Jesus possesses eternal life in such a way to make him God. The text does not state or imply this.

Trinitarian claim: 'Jesus received worship as God (Matthew 14:33; 28:9) and sometimes even demanded to be worshipped as God (John 5:23; compare Hebrews 1:6; Revelation 5:8–14).' McDowell 1973, 12.

Unitarian Answer: The worship of gods in Greek is generally expressed by other words than the one translated 'worship' in the New Testament. The Greek word translated 'worship' in the New Testament seems to emphasize the bodily position of prostration involved in worship. As such it differs from the general usage of the Greek word, which implies giving honor by kissing or bowing to kiss the hand or even foot.

This kind of worship in Greek generally was not for God or gods, but for people in high position from whom petitions are made. The worship of gods in Greek is generally expressed by other words. Most of the texts in the New Testament either refer clearly to worship of God or are somewhat ambiguous acts of homage. Some texts show clearly that the word does not imply divinity. Such an example is in Matthew 9:18. 'While he speaks these things unto them, behold, there came a certain ruler, and worshipped him, saying, My daughter is even now dead...' This abject homage of the ruler was certainly not the worship of Jesus as God.

Dictionaries of New Testament Greek made even by Trinitarian scholars recognize this variety in the usage of the word. Even Matthew 2:2,8,11; 20:20; Luke 4:7; 24:52 are considered by Harper and Row's Analytical Greek Lexicon to be examples of the word in which it does not imply divinity. The line between the two meanings will therefore often be determined by the faith of the reader, and as such cannot be construed as proof of the deity of Jesus.

Trinitarian claim: Paul 'acknowledged the Lamb of God (Jesus) as God when he said, "Be on guard for

yourselves and for all the flock, among which the Holy Spirit has made you overseers, to shepherd the church of God which He purchased with His own blood" (Acts 20:28).¹ McDowell 1973, 12.

Unitarian Answer: The original Greek does not say 'with His own blood'. It says quite literally, 'with the blood of His own'. The verse does not say outright who 'His own' is, but we can safely assume that Christ is meant. To equate Christ with God in this verse is to jump again to unwarranted conclusions.

Trinitarian claim: 'Peter confessed, after Christ asked him who he was: "Thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God" (Matthew 16:16).¹ McDowell 1973, 12. The same point is made on the following page with John 11:27 and John 1:49, where the phrase 'Son of God' is used.

Unitarian Answer: The expression 'Son of God' does not imply divinity for Jesus any more than for anyone else given 'power to become the children of God'. If Jesus is the son of God, that definitely shows him not to be God Himself. One cannot be both one's father and oneself at the same time. If Jesus is the son of God, then he certainly is not God.

Christians use the argument of species as opposed to personage in order to show that since the Father is of the species 'God', so is the Son. The fallacy of this is that the Bible does not present the species of God, but the one personage of God. The word 'son' is used in the Bible to mean much more than the biological offspring. The species argument assumes that Jesus is the biological offspring of God. But in fact this is not the Christian teaching.

The Christian teaching itself, whatever it may in fact be, is not literal. No Christian believes that Jesus is the literal, biological son of God. The traditional Christian teaching is that Jesus' mother was a virgin. If God were the biological father of Jesus, Mary could not have been a virgin. So one of the metaphorical meanings of the word must be chosen.

A good example is in 1 Samuel 2:12: 'Now the sons of Eli were sons of Belial; they knew not the Lord.'¹ Here the word 'son' is used first literally, and then metaphorically. The margin says that a son of Belial is a wicked man. The verse itself goes on to explain that they 'knew not the Lord'. Now Jesus, the 'Son' of God, by the same token is precisely the opposite, that is, a righteous man, one who did know the Lord. Surely the Bible means more than this by the expression. It has to do with being the promised Messiah. But being the promised Messiah does not imply that Jesus is God. It implies only that he is the Christ.

On the other hand, it must be remembered that the phrase 'Son of God' in the Bible is not limited to Jesus. See for example Genesis 6:2 and Job 1:6. It cannot in itself imply deity.

Trinitarian claim: 'While Stephen was being stoned, he called upon the Lord and said, "Lord Jesus, receive my spirit!" (Acts 7:59).¹ McDowell 1973, 13.

Unitarian Answer: The *Trinitarian claim* may be based here on the usage of the word Lord. Although the word Lord is often applied to God in the Bible, it is not limited to that use by any means. It is applied to

Jesus in the sense of 'sir' or 'master' as well as to any number of people in courteous address. It is clear that the word Lord here refers to Jesus, but the word does not imply divinity.

The claim may depend, however, on Stephen's act of calling upon Jesus in this situation as an indication of his divinity. The author does not clarify what in fact here is supposed to prove that Jesus is God. Considering the fact that Stephen believed Jesus to have been crucified, resurrected and ascended into heaven, it is quite understandable that he should hope that Jesus would receive his spirit. That hope does not imply divinity, however. It only recognizes the resurrection and ascension. Although, for example, most Muslims deny the crucifixion, all Muslims believe in the ascension and second return of Jesus without believing in his divinity. Exceptional events or powers do not automatically imply divinity.

Trinitarian claim: 'John the Baptist announced the coming of Jesus by saying that "the Holy Spirit descended upon Him in bodily form like a dove, and a voice came out of heaven, 'Thou art My beloved Son, in Thee I am well pleased'" (Luke 3:22).' McDowell 1973, 13.

Unitarian Answer: Apparently the author assumes that to be the Son of God in the case of Jesus implies divinity. He does not assume it in other instances, which is inconsistent. Either all Sons of God are thereby divine, or they are not.

Trinitarian claim: "Thomas answered and said to Him, 'My Lord and my God!' Jesus said to him, 'Because you have seen Me, have you believed? Blessed are they who did not see, and yet believed'" (John 20:26–29). Jesus accepted Thomas's acknowledgement of him as God.' McDowell 1973, 14.

Unitarian Answer: This claim, like so many before it, is really based on a misunderstanding of the Bible because the claimant is referring to a translation. Much trouble could be avoided if Christians, like Jews and Muslims, printed their sacred books with the original language included. The adherents of those faiths become aware in that way at least of the fact that what they are reading in English is not authoritative. It is only a very fallible translation.

Now the Greek text of the phrase 'My Lord and my God!' uses the nominative form of both 'Lord' and 'God'. Since both of these are from the second declension singular, there is in Greek a vocative which is clearly different in form. Thus, if the words refer to the person addressed, they should be in the vocative. If the words refer to someone other than the person to whom they are spoken, they should be in the nominative case. Now in fact they are in the nominative, not the vocative.

This suggests that they refer to some other personage than to the one to whom they are addressed. They are addressed to Jesus. So we may know that Jesus at least is not the 'Lord' and 'God' to whom Thomas refers. If the person to whom you exclaim 'Oh, my Lord!' thereby becomes God, I am afraid that there must be thousands of new claimants to divinity every day.

This exclamation reveals Thomas's newly acquired faith in the resurrection of Jesus. That was the thing he doubted. There was never a question of whether or not Jesus was God. There was only a question of

whether or not he was alive. This is what Thomas doubted, this is what Thomas saw with his own eyes and felt with his hands, and this is what those who did not see Jesus still believed.

There is no blessing for those who believe something else (such as that Jesus is God). There is only a blessing for those who believe him to be living. Jesus does not accept Thomas's acknowledgement of him as God, because Thomas never acknowledged him as God. He only acknowledged him as living.

Trinitarian claim: John 5:16–18. 'The Jews did not refer to God as 'my Father.' Or if they did, they would qualify the statement with 'in heaven'. However, Jesus did not do this. He made a claim that the Jews could not misinterpret when he called God 'my Father'. Jesus also implied that while God was working, he, the Son, was working too. Again, the Jews understood the implication that he was God's Son. As a result of this statement, the Jews' hatred grew. Even though they were seeking, mainly, to persecute him, they then began to desire to kill him.' McDowell 1973, 16.

Unitarian Answer: The *Trinitarian claim* is that Jesus must have claimed to be God since some people accused him of this. It does not follow. It is very possible that those people, who in the words of McDowell, 'were seeking, mainly, to persecute him', grasped at every opportunity to misconstrue what Jesus said. The scenario must be familiar to everyone. In any verbal argument hostility induces people to misconstrue the words of their opponents. Surely such accusations cannot be taken seriously. Jesus himself does not stand by and accept the accusation, which came more than once. In John 10:33–36, Jesus makes this clear. In the face of unjustified accusation that he makes himself out to be God he says: 'Is it not written in your law, I said, Ye are gods? If he called them gods, unto whom the word of God came, and the scripture cannot be broken; Say ye of him, whom the Father hath sanctified, and sent into the world, Thou blasphemest; because I said, I am the Son of God?'

Here Jesus makes the point that to call himself 'God'(=*Elohim*) would not in fact be blasphemy since there is a Biblical precedence for it as applied to all the people. Secondly, he points out that he did not in fact even make that claim, as his accusers maintain, but that he claimed to be the 'Son of God'. In making that distinction, Jesus denies that the expression 'Son of God' refers to deity. He defines what being the 'Son of God' means: 1) being sanctified by God and 2) being sent into the world.

The fact is that the people could and did misunderstand Jesus' claims. They intended to misunderstand them. Jesus intimates that he may call himself the 'Son of God' because God sanctified him and sent him into the world. If he is a personage whom God sanctified and sent, then he is not God Himself.

Trinitarian claim: 'Not only did Jesus claim equality with God as his Father, but he also asserted that he was one with the Father... "I and my Father are one". (John 10:30).' McDowell 1973, 16.

Unitarian Answer: Again the misunderstanding of the hostile hearer is taken as evidence that Jesus claims to be God. The supposition is that when Jesus says that he and his Father are one, this means that he claims to be God. But in John 17:11, 21–23 Jesus prays that his followers might also be one, even as 'we are'. Therefore, if the oneness of Jesus and the Father implies that Jesus is divine, it also

implies that in precisely the same way his followers are also divine. Instead of three persons in the Godhead, we now have millions, maybe billions. There are many ways in which to be one, in purpose, in will, in motive, in action, in many ways, without being one in essence and being.

Trinitarian claim: `Jesus continuously spoke of himself as one in essence and nature with God. He boldly asserted, "If you knew Me, you would know My Father also" (John 8:19); "He who beholds me beholds the One who sent me" (John 12:45); "He who hates Me, hates My Father also" (John 15:23); "All may honor the Son, even as they honor the Father. He who does not honor the Son does not honor the Father who sent Him" (John 5:23); etc. These references certainly indicate that Jesus looked at himself as being more than just a man; rather, he was equal with God.' McDowell 1973, 17.

Unitarian Answer: In none of these texts does Jesus claim to be one in essence and nature with God. He does claim to be sanctified and sent by God. He thus represents God to his hearers. If they knew and listened to him, they would know God. It is true that to hate and dishonor the messenger of God is to show hatred and dishonor to God Himself. Jesus certainly looked at himself as being more than just a man. But he did not look at himself as being equal with God. He just does not make that claim. His claims are precisely those made by the Shiite Imams as well. He claims to represent God to humankind and that absolute loyalty and obedience is therefore his due. But he does not claim to be God.

Trinitarian claim: `Jesus claimed to be able to forgive sins... (Mark 2:5; see also Luke 7:48–50). By Jewish law this was something only God could do; Isaiah 43:25 restricts this prerogative to God alone.' McDowell 1973, 18.

Unitarian Answer: It is true that Jesus claimed to be able to forgive sins. It is also true that by Jewish law this prerogative is restricted to God alone especially in view of Isaiah 43:25. The third alternative is that Jesus claims to be the authoritative representative of God to humankind, and as such worthy to represent those powers which God delegated to him (See John 5:19). He had both power to forgive sin and to heal as delegated to him by God. It was just as much the power of God which healed as which forgave sin at the word of Christ. There is no claim here to be God, despite the accusation of some onlookers.

Trinitarian claim: `Also in the Gospel of Mark we have the trial of Jesus (14:60–64). Those trial proceedings are one of the clearest references to Jesus' claims of deity.' McDowell 1973, 20.

Unitarian Answer: The attempt of the rulers to fasten a blasphemy charge on Jesus does not prove Jesus' claim to deity. Jesus' clear affirmation of his Messiahship is precisely that: his claim is to be the promised and sent Messiah. He does not claim to be God. There are more than the two alternatives, that Jesus committed blasphemy or that he was indeed God. The third alternative is that he claimed to represent God to the world, to be the divine proof to use Shiite vocabulary, or to be the express image of God or the Word made flesh to use Bible vocabulary. In so doing he only upheld the strictest monotheism and never claimed to be God.

Trinitarian claim: `The biblical evidence in favor of our position shows that early references attributed to God are found in the plural form: Genesis 1:26: "Let us make man in our image." Genesis 3:22: "Behold, the man has become like one of Us." Genesis 11:7: "Come, let Us go down.'" Ralph Larson, *Water As A Flood*, in Land Marks February 1994, 16.

Unitarian Answer: It is true that there are a handful of texts referring to God in the first person plural, generally in the form of `Let's'. But generally, in thousands of cases, the Bible refers to God with a singular. This use of the plural hardly supports the doctrine of the trinity. If anything, plurality would support polytheism.

Genesis 1:26 uses a third person masculine singular in reference to God. If every person in the world who has ever said, `Well, let's see now,' has thereby become a trinity, I suppose this text might be construed as evidence for the trinity of God.

The words in Genesis 3:22 and 11:7 are addressed by God to celestial listeners. Genesis 3:24 suggests that these might be angels. There are one or two similar references in the plural which Ralph Larson does not mention.

Trinitarian claim: `In Isaiah 48, the One who identifies Himself as the Redeemer and the First and the Last (compare Revelation 1:11) says in verse 16: "The Lord God, and His Spirit, have sent Me [the Redeemer]".' Ibid.

Unitarian Answer: The author infers that the mention of three figures implies a divine trinity. This is known as exegesis, reading one's own ideas into a text. First of all, the Redeemer spoken of here is defined in verse 17 as God Himself. This cannot then be the referent of `me' in verse 16, because God has sent `me'. God and `me' are two distinct figures, and the Redeemer is God and not `me'. In Isaiah, as in some of the other prophets, the direct quotation of God and the prophet's own reference to himself in the first person, are sometimes difficult to distinguish and can lead to confusion.

We are left with God and His Spirit sending a human figure, not the Redeemer. God and His Spirit are not stated here to be distinct persons in a divine Trinity. The use of the conjunction `and' does not necessarily imply two distinct entities, and if it did, it would still not imply that His Spirit was a co-equal divine person.

Trinitarian claim: `In Ephesians 3:14, Paul mentions the Father and the Lord Jesus Christ, and in verse 16 he adds a reference to the Spirit.' Ibid.

Unitarian Answer: Mention of the three together does not imply a divine trinity, nor that Jesus is divine, or that the Spirit of God is a distinct person.

Trinitarian claim: `Some may respond at this point that they are not challenging the idea of three persons but are only denying that Christ always coexisted with the Father in full equality with Him. We may find

help with this question by looking at such Scriptures as these: "For in Him [Christ] dwells all the fullness of the Godhead bodily." Colossians 2:9. "Who, being in the form of God, thought it not robbery to be equal with God." Philippians 2:6 KJV.¹ Ibid.

Unitarian Answer: The author chooses two texts to demonstrate Jesus' equality with God. The first is written to the Colossians to dispel a heresy about which we know little but that it used terminology familiar in Gnostic speculation, such as 'pleroma' or fullness. The use of the term pinpoints the area of heresy which the apostle is attempting to replace with faith in Christ. The term does not describe the nature of Christ in general terms as such. However, considering that Jesus is the 'express image of God', or a divine proof, such terminology could well be applied to him in his role of revealing God to humankind. This would not imply, however, that he is himself equal with God.

The text in Philippians gives the humility of Jesus as an example to follow. As a side issue, it is mentioned that he is in the 'form of God'. This appears to be a clear reference again to Christ's role as divine proof. The expression does not mean that God appears in a form, but that there is a form which God owns or possesses. There is no implication that God Himself appears in a form. Limitation, by definition, cannot be attached to God.

The expression in this text, 'equal with' is a bad translation of a Greek term meaning 'like'. We are again confronted with Christ's role as a perfect divine proof or witness of God's existence and attributes. Equality with God is not implied. To associate any other being as equal with God is to be guilty of polytheism.

Trinitarian claim: 'For unto us a child is born, unto us a son is given: and the government shall be upon his shoulder: and his name shall be called Wonderful, Counselor, The mighty God, The everlasting Father, the Prince of Peace.'¹ Isaiah 9:6.

Unitarian Answer: The argument from Isaiah 9:6 is that the child referred to is the promised Messiah, whose many names indicate his divinity. The problem is one of translation. The Hebrew sentence order is generally, as also in this case, one of verb, subject, and object. Another translation would read: 'Wonderful, Counselor, The mighty God, The everlasting Father shall call his name The Prince of Peace'. Even if we accepted the King James translation, however, the fact that someone's name means Mighty God does not imply that the person is God himself.

To be fair, there are texts in the Bible which can be construed to support the doctrine of the trinity. But there are no texts which clearly do so, and none which necessarily do so. It is a historical fact that the idea of one God existing in three persons is outside the Biblical tradition. The Bible presents God as one, a fact acknowledged by both Judaism and Islam.

<https://www.al-islam.org/islam-bible-thomas-mcelwain/unitarian-answers-trinitarian-claims#comment-0>