The FOUR PRINCIPLES of DIVINE PROCREATION
& the IMPACT on CHRISTIAN MONOTHEISM

By Tim Warner © www.4windsfellowships.net

T he language of Scripture concerning God and His Son is the foundation of a solid and proper understanding of the God of Abraham. Conservative Christian theologians have rightly claimed that Scripture must be interpreted based upon the normal standards of speech and terminology. In communicating with humanity through His prophets and apostles, God has always used current human language and concepts to convey His truths. We are necessarily limited in our understanding of God's spoken and written revelation by the limits of human language.[1] Thus God's communications and specific terminology can only be understood properly when interpreted consistent with the way that humans communicated at the time. God did not have special divine grammar or unique word definitions which are contrary to normal speech at the time.

Yet, when it comes to very specific biblical language concerning God and His Son, virtually all modern theologians abandon this principle in one way or another. It was this abandonment of defining biblical language by common usage that caused the early controversies concerning the Godhead, and continues to block the resolution of the conflict dividing Trinitarians, Unitarians, Arians, and Modalists.

God chose to reveal Himself to us using familial terms. We only understand the word "father" or "son" or "mother" or "daughter" as defining human relationships between persons. We understand the term "beget/begotten" because this activity is a part of the human experience. Thus, if God calls Himself "Father" it necessarily implies that He has produced offspring, similar to the human condition. Without offspring, God cannot be a "father." Similarly, a "son" is only a "son" by means of having been "begotten" by his father. Also, the idea of "begetting" can only be understood by comparison to human procreation. Thus, it must be assumed that God's application of human familial and procreation terminology to Himself and His Son was intended to convey concepts which are understood from the human experience. Otherwise, if God wanted us to think of Him differently than what such familial terminology conveys, He certainly would have used terminology which conveyed those different concepts.

---

[1] This is not to say that God's revelation is limited to language, since He also has made Himself known through His handiwork of the creation itself (Rom. 1:18-20).

The problem here is that Trinitarians, Unitarians, Arians, and Modalists alike alter the normal common meaning of biblical language in order to accommodate their unique theological views. The problem behind it all is the imposition of faulty presuppositions, attempting to harmonize foreign ideas with the biblical text. Rather, foreign ideas ought to be identified and abandoned, replaced with presuppositions that can be definitively established from Scripture. In order to get back to the pristine Faith regarding the most basic theological concept – God Himself – it is necessary to first understand the concepts implied by the particular familial terminology God chose to use.

There are four such concepts implied by human familial and procreative terminology which are required from biblical usage. When the biblical information concerning the Godhead is viewed through these concepts as fixed presuppositions, the correct Jewish-Christian theology of God becomes obvious and the seemingly problematic statements in Scripture resolve themselves. They are as follows:

1. PREEXISTENCE OF SUBSTANCE: The biblical concept of "begetting" (fathering) requires preexistence of the offspring as an integral part of his father. This concept was best illustrated by Paul in Hebrews 7. He claimed that Levi was in the loins of Abraham when Melchizedek met him, and thus participated in Abraham's paying tithes to Melchizedek along with the entire Levitical priesthood. This was not merely metaphor to Paul since it proved the superiority of the blessing of Abraham over the Mosaic Covenant, including the Levitical priesthood. The entire Levitical priesthood, being in Abraham's loins, paid tithes to Melchizedek the superior high priest through Abraham's action. The same concept is found in the chronology given by Moses. It required that Abraham's descendants were already present in his loins when he left Ur to travel to the Promised Land, and thus they were "sojourners" in foreign lands along with Abraham, being carried within his loins.[2] In fact, in Paul's theology, the entire human race was created in Adam's loins, which is why he stated that "in Adam all die,"[3] concluding that the sentence of death on Adam's body extended to all of his offspring that were in his loins when he sinned, being part of his body.

2. BEGETTING DESCRIBES A DISTINCT EVENT: In the Bible, the father "begets"[4] a child, while the mother "bears"[5] the child. *"For thus says the LORD concerning the sons and*

---

[2] This is required when harmonizing Moses' chronology given in Gen. 15:13; Ex. 12:40 with Gal. 3:17, and also explains the variant reading in the LXX which states this explicitly. See: Warner, Tim, **The Time of the End**, ch. 12.

[3] 1 Cor. 15:22

[4] Louw-Nida Greek Lexicon: *"the male role in causing the conception and birth of a child - 'to be the father of, to procreate, to beget.'"*

[5] Literally, "carries"

*daughters born in this place, and concerning **their mothers who bear them, and their fathers who beget them** in this land."*[6] While both the father's and mother's roles are often viewed together as a single nine-month-long event, the emphasis is on the father as the one who actually produces (begets) the offspring from his loins. The mother's role in carrying and delivering the child was seen as secondary. The biblical term that is translated "conceive" literally means "to receive" the child into the womb. Thus the mother is the agent through whom the father begets a child at a point in time.

3. PROCREATION REQUIRES EQUALITY OF KIND: In the Bible, a "begotten" son or daughter can only be of the same "kind" as the one who fathered him. This principle is abundantly obvious in the creation account. Moses stressed that all living things procreate according to "kind."[7] Thus wherever procreation (begetting) is indicated, ontological equality – sameness of "kind" – is absolutely required. In no case is it even remotely conceivable that a "father" could "beget" a "son" who is not ontologically the same "kind."

4. PROCREATION REQUIRES SUBORDINATION IN RANK: A "begotten" son was always inferior to his father in rank, since in biblical thought priority both in time and cause of origin always dictated rank. Thus a father always out-ranked his son in authority and priority.[8] For this reason God commanded that offspring must always "honor" one's parents, regardless of age. Consequently, even in genealogical records, Jacob outranks the twelve tribes, Isaac outranks Jacob, and Abraham outranks Isaac, etc. This principle is even carried over in the order in which names are listed in Scripture. For example, it is always "Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob," never any other order.

These essential concepts must inform our handling of the familial and procreative terminology in Scripture related to God and His Son. As one examines the earliest witnesses to the apostolic teaching, it quickly becomes evident that their theology was indeed dependent on these four presuppositions. However, that began to change around

---

[6] Jeremiah 16:3 (NASB)

[7] γένος – genos, (Gen. 1:11,12,21,24,25)

[8] This concept is the basis for Jesus' riddle presented to the leaders of Israel from Psalm 110:1, found in Matt. 22:42-46. Since David called the Messiah "my Master," how can He be David's descendant? The leaders had no answer for this question simply because they understood that David must necessarily outrank all of his descendants, and thus be the "master" of the Messiah whom he procreated. The answer to Jesus' riddle is the foundation of the biblical teaching of the preexistence of Christ, as God's agent in creation. As such, even David was produced through the actions of the Son of God, and thus Jesus actually outranked David because He was the co-source of David's own existence. Jesus Himself provided the direct answer to His own riddle in Revelation 22:16 – *"I am the Root and the Offspring of David."* The idea that the same Messiah who was to be a descendant of David was also the "root" of David's genealogy was first expressed in Isaiah 11:1&10.

the middle of the second century when conflicts were introduced in the Scriptures because of faulty and foreign presuppositions of some interpreters. This drove a gradual departure from the pristine Faith, eventually spawning the following variations in this order: Subordinate Trinitarianism, Modalism, Unitarianism, Co-Equal Trinitarianism, Arianism. Because Trinitarianism in general had the official backing of Rome, being forced upon all of Christendom under threat of state-sponsored persecution, it has become the "orthodox" view. Earlier views, even the view held by the Christian writers closest the Apostles, have all been declared heresy by Rome.

We now turn our attention to the specific way each of the four modern views violate biblical precedent regarding the language of procreation and familial relational terms. Three of the four, Modalism, Unitarianism, and Arianism, are all attempts to begin with the Shema, *"Hear O Israel, the LORD our God, the LORD is one."*[9] This was Judaism's "creed" both before and after Christ. And thus all three of these theological camps use the Shema as their starting point, attempting to explain all other Scripture in light of their understanding of the "one God" statements.

MODALISM:
Modalism (also known today as "Oneness Theology") begins with the Shema, teaching that God is one Person who chose to manifest Himself in different ways in history, sometimes as "Father," other times as "Son," and other times as "Spirit." That is, God changed His manner of interaction with humanity and His apparent form in the same way that an actor might change costume and then come back on stage as a different character. Modalism did not gain much traction when first introduced in the mid-second century or afterwards, and is a very small minority among modern Christians. Its greatest problem is its introduction of a multitude of contradictions and absurdities into the Scriptures, one "actor" playing the roles of two persons simultaneously, and interacting with each other. At best such a concept would be deceptive. The most obvious example is the Son's prayer to His Father in Gethsemane, declaring, *"not My will but yours be done."* Modalism must ride roughshod over the biblical terminology used in Scripture, the familial terms, the relationship between two distinct persons implied by them, and the concept of the Son being "begotten" out of His Father. All such language has to be explained away against its obvious meaning. This view also necessitated the adoption of some Gnostic ideas related to the person of Jesus Christ, in effect making the divine Son of God and the human Jesus two distinct persons in order to explain the two competing "wills" (one human and one divine) evident in Jesus' Gethsemane prayer, also to explain how the immortal God could be tempted and die. Many Modalists will admit to the idea (when pressed) that God used deceptive language in Scripture. Consequently, Modalism

---

[9] Deut. 6:4

(as taught today) is willing to sacrifice God's character[10] to maintain their alleged devotion to the Shema.

UNITARIANISM:

Like Modalism which preceded it, Unitarianism claims devotion to the "one God" of the Shema as their starting point. In order to avoid (rather than solve) the apparent contradiction of two distinct Persons referred to as "God" in Scripture,[11] they deny any ontological connection (likeness of "kind") between the Father and the Son. Thus, Jesus was merely a human being, with no former existence before His human conception in the womb of Mary. The familial relational terms "Father" and "Son" are viewed from the perspective of adoption rather than procreation. While such a view is possible with these two terms, it cannot accommodate the concept of "begetting" which requires ontological likeness of "kind." Scripture nowhere refers to Jesus as God's "adopted" Son. Instead it consistently uses the terminology of uniqueness of solitary procreation, such as *"Today I have begotten You,"*[12] *"His only-begotten Son,"*[13] *"the only-begotten of the Father,"*[14] and *"only-begotten Son of God."*[15] Scripture is also careful to distinguish between the positional state of being "sons of God" by adoption[16] (believers) – called "the begotten ones."[17] Use of the term γεννάω "beget/begotten" for a state-of-being rather than the act of "begetting" is accomplished by placing the verb (or participle) "beget/begotten" in the perfect tense (which indicates a continuous state) when referring to Christians, but using the same verb (or participle) in the aorist tense (referring to an act or historical event) when referring to Christ.[18] The latter refers to the event of the Son's procreation from His Father, the former refers to the static state of Christians in union with *the only-begotten of the Father."*[19] Thus

---

[10] Titus 1:2

[11] Scripture does indeed refer to two distinct persons as "God" several times, and on a few occasions calls both the Father and the Son "God" in the very same passage. The best examples are Psalm 45:6-7 (quoted in Heb. 1:8-9 where Paul identified the second "God" as the Son), and John 1:1 where the second "God" is "Logos" (the Word).

[12] Psalm 2:7

[13] John 3:16

[14] John 1:14

[15] John 3:18

[16] Rom. 8:15,23; Rom. 9:4; Gal. 4:5; Eph. 1:5

[17] In John's writings, Christians are only said to be the "begotten out of God" as a title referring to their current state-of-being, never as an act or event. This continuous state of being is the result of union with the "only-begotten Son," and thus sharing in His inheritance as one with Him. Just as a bride joined to her husband assumes his name, so also the redeemed assume the name of the "only-begotten of the Father."

[18] That is, when referring to being *"begotten **out of God**"* (with the prepositional phrase ἐκ θεοῦ – "out of God"). See notes on John 1:12-13 in the LGV. (http://www.4windsfellowships.net/LGV/LGV_John.pdf)

[19] John's distinguishing between the perfect tense for believers and the aorist tense for Christ is clearly illustrated in 1 John 5:18 where recognizing this distinction is critical to understanding the verse: *"We have*

5

the unique term for the Son of God, *"the only-begotten of the Father,"* can apply to the Son alone, and not to Christians in general as "sons of God." Otherwise, the term "only-begotten" becomes contradictory. Unitarianism also has a host of exegetical problems in passages that deal with the preexistence of Christ, especially in John's Gospel,[20] but also in Paul. Thus, Unitarians cannot adequately accommodate two of the four[21] principles outlined above concerning the implications of the biblical language of procreation.

ARIANISM:

Like Modalism and Unitarianism, Arianism begins with the "one God" statement of the Shema. Like Unitarianism, it denies any ontological likeness, sameness of "kind," between God and the Son of God in order to maintain its understanding of the Shema. Yet, unlike Unitarianism, Arianism maintains the preexistence of the Son and His uniqueness. Arians view the familial terms "Father" and "Son" like Unitarians, referring to adoption only. They cannot adequately accommodate the terms "begotten" and "only-begotten," claiming instead that the Son was a special creation of God, greater than the angels but of a different "kind" than God Himself, angels, or man. Arians attempt to maintain their system by eliminating any distinction between the concepts of "begotten" and "created," even though in the Bible there is a world of difference.[22] Thus Arians would have to disagree with #1 and #3 principles above. Of the three views discussed above, Arianism has the least difficulties in explaining contradictory passages. Yet, it still misses the mark in its inability to accommodate the biblical statements regarding procreation.

TRINITARIANISM:

Finally, modern Trinitarianism has for all intents and purposes abandoned the Shema as it has been historically understood by both Jews and Christians. They explain it away by redefining the term "God" from a personal (concrete) noun to sometimes defining "God" as an impersonal essence or an abstract concept – not a Person. The best example of this is their interpretation of John 1:1, where "Logos" is correctly interpreted as a Person, but in the clause, "and Logos was God," the term "God" is defined as an abstract, impersonal

---

observed that the whole collective __having been begotten__ [perf. tense] *__out of God__ does not sin, __but the One who was begotten__* [aorist tense] *__out of God__ guards him, and the wicked does not touch His"* (LGV).

[20] John included many statements problematic to Unitarianism, beginning with his prologue concerning Logos, several statements about Jesus having come down from heaven, His origin before John the Baptist, His imminent ascending back to where He was before, the glory He shared with His father before the world was, and His statement, *"for I issued forth out of God"* (ἐγὼ γὰρ ἐκ τοῦ θεοῦ ἐξῆλθον – John 8:42) which is the essential meaning of "begotten."

[21] Unitarians would accept #2 that the term "begotten" requires an event, and #4 that a "son" must be subordinate to a father.

[22] "Begotten" requires producing like kind, while "created" requires producing a different kind.

concept (divine/divinity) instead of the personal (concrete) noun that it actually is. This is done to avoid the obvious problem of having two persons called "God" in the very same sentence, and then explaining that away against the "one God" statement of the Shema. Thus, for Trinitarians, the term "God" can be either a Person or an impersonal divine essence, whatever they need it to mean in any given passage in order to harmonize Scripture with their view. For Trinitarians, the "one God" of the Shema does not refer to a Person at all, but to "divinity" as an essence or nature of which the three Persons consist (just as "humanity" is shared by all humans). There are a host of problems in attempting to read Scripture this way. But the obvious question ought to be, why is this not polytheism? Sure, one can acknowledge a single "god-stuff" (as an ontological essence) shared by three Persons, but if each Person is also "God" individually, then this is really "three Gods." It would be the same as recognizing "one humanity" but millions of "humans." One can explain away the Shema as not referring to "Person" and thus not requiring a single Person to be "God," but such a position is merely justifying "Christian" polytheism. It abandons any pretense of "monotheism," and only masks the issue with double-talk.

Yet, turning back to the problem of the familial terminology of Scripture applied to God and His Son, Trinitarians face significant problems here also. They can either refer the term "begotten" (such as in Psalm 2:7) to a time before creation, or to the incarnation, but not to both. If they apply it to the Father "begetting" the Son prior to creation (as all the early Trinitarians did), they cannot maintain a co-eternal or co-equal three-Person Godhead, because "begotten" requires an origin at a point in time as a distinct Person. If they insist that the Son had no beginning, they cannot then account for the principle outlined in #2 above, that "begetting" is not a state-of-being but an action verb, requiring a point in time prior to the Son being "begotten" by the Father. Thus, if "begotten" refers to something prior to creation, it necessarily requires that at some point God was not a "Father" and there was no "Son" distinct from the Father. While the earliest Trinitarians actually stated this,[23] later Trinitarians rejected it as heresy. To avoid the problem, they invented a new and unique definition for the term "begotten," making it an eternal state-of-being for the Son instead of an event. They have invented the unbiblical theological term, "eternal generation," which is itself an oxymoron, yet excused as a "divine

---

[23] Tertullian, the first to articulate a "Trinity" of three divine Persons, wrote: *"Because God is in like manner a Father, and He is also a Judge; but He has not always been Father and Judge, merely on the ground of His having always been God. For He could not have been the Father previous to the Son, nor a Judge previous to sin. There was, however, a time when neither sin existed with Him, nor the Son; the former of which was to constitute the Lord a Judge, and the latter a Father. In this way He was not Lord previous to those things of which He was to be the Lord. But He was only to become Lord at some future time: just as He became the Father by the Son, and a Judge by sin, so also did He become Lord by means of those things which He had made, in order that they might serve Him."* (Tertullian, Against Hermogenes, ch. III).

mystery." Yet the early Trinitarians who devised and adhered to the early ecumenical creeds,[24] placed the Son as being *"begotten before all ages,"* as an event rather than a continuous state of being.

However, most modern Evangelical Trinitarians no longer adhere to those ancient creeds, instead applying the term "begotten" to the incarnation of Jesus instead of His preincarnate origin as did the first Trinitarians. Yet, this presents its own unique set of problems. First, if the "Holy Spirit" is a distinct (3rd) Person who came upon Mary to impregnate her, then why did Jesus refer to the first Person as His "Father" rather than to the third Person? Second, this view cannot accommodate #1 principle that kind begets like kind. If Jesus was truly "begotten" by God at the time of His birth in Bethlehem, it would require that Jesus as the Son of Man was entirely of the "God kind" (full divinity). Or else, He would be a hybrid being "divinity" from the Father's "kind" and "human" from Mary.[25] Not only is such a concept contrary to all begetting according to "kind," it would not actually be "begetting" in any sense by the Father because the Son already existed as a distinct Person apart from the Father, already being of the God-kind prior to the incarnation. In modern Trinitarianism, Jesus is not really *"the only-begotten Son"* nor *"only-begotten of the Father"* because in incarnation He did not come out of the Father's Person as a distinct Person, nor did He inherit God's essence (kind) from His Father in the incarnation. None of these things fit the incarnation as a "begetting" out of God. Thus, these familial terms are extremely problematic for Trinitarians also. For this reason modern Trinitarian scholars have abandoned both the ancient creeds (with their statements about the Son being *"begotten before all ages"*) and the long history of etymology of the term *"only-begotten,"* completely redefined the Greek word "mono-genes." This move to redefine "mono-genes" is driven by the Trinitarian need to remove the concept of "begetting" and origin from both the incarnation and the early creedal statements. Their new and improved definition of "mono-genes" as meaning merely "unique" rather than "only-begotten" is now making its way into many Bible translations in order to provide cover for the latest evolution of Evangelical Trinitarianism.[26]

---

[24] Roman Catholic, Orthodox, Anglican, Lutheran, etc.

[25] This concept is also untenable, since in creation, "kind" cannot mix with a different "kind," the real point of Moses saying that everything reproduces "according to its kind." And breeders know this to be true from experience. You cannot cross a dog with a cat to produce a "cog."

[26] To easily evaluate English translations, simply turn to John 3:16. All of the following modern translations have removed the concept of "begetting" from "mono-genes," translating it as "only," or "one and only," or "unique": RSV, NIV, ESV, NLT, BBE, CEB, CJB, CSB, GNT, GW, HNV, LEB, MSG, NCV, NRS, WEB. It is correctly translated as "only-begotten" in the old English versions and in the following modern versions: NKJ, NAS, JUB, TMB, LGV.

Trinitarians also cannot accommodate #4, that the role of a "Son" absolutely demands subordination and a lower rank. They might be able to accommodate this after the incarnation (as willing submission), yet their own unbiblical term "God the Son" takes the "Son" title to all eternity past. The title "Son" implies subordination (whether "God the Son" or "Son of God"), and clashes with the "co-equal, co-eternal" concept which is an integral part of modern Trinitarianism.

Finally, the alleged personhood of the Holy Spirit is also problematic, since God chose to reveal Himself and His Son using familial terms which define their relation to each other, and the concept of "begetting" to explain the origin and rank of the Son as a distinct Person. There is no similar familial language concerning a third Person. The "Spirit" is almost exclusively described using neuter terminology in the original languages, and there is no explanation of any kind concerning how or why such a third Person would be distinct from the Father. The modern Trinitarian concept almost begs the title "Holy Uncle" for Jesus' relationship to the alleged third Person.

In conclusion, it is apparent that all of the modern views of the Godhead listed above have serious difficulties in properly accommodating the terminology which God chose to reveal Himself and His Son to mankind. In each of the above "—isms," the common meanings of terms in Scripture have been abandoned in order to force unbiblical concepts upon God's Word. The view held by 4Winds Fellowships, which we call *"Apostolic Monotheism,"* is the exact view held and taught by the earliest Christian writers after the Apostles,[27] and easily accounts for all four of the above concepts related to the language of procreation.

---

[27] See our series of articles, "The Evolution of God," which documents the earliest recorded view of the Godhead and the gradual evolution away from it in the centuries after the Apostles.