

A WORKING STUDY REFERENCE

One God, One Mediator

The Man Christ Jesus

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Sixth Edition — The Counter-Texts Re-examined

King James Version

Compiled from an ongoing personal research project testing claims about the nature of God and the nature of Jesus Christ against scripture's own wording, grammar, and context.

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Page numbers reflect this edition's current layout and will shift slightly as future revisions are added. Appendix A (interpretive and speculative notes), Appendix B (nineteenth-century corroborating scholarship), and Appendix C (prior edition notes) are no longer bound into this document — they are collected in a companion volume, One God, One Mediator: Appendices, presented alongside this study.

Introduction

Why write another study on the nature of God and the nature of Jesus Christ? Because few questions have divided professing Christians more sharply, or for longer, than this one — and because most people inherit an answer from whatever church, family, or tradition raised them, rather than testing it directly against scripture's own words.

Walk into different churches on any given Sunday and the answers on offer will not agree with each other. Trinitarians hold that God is one being in three co-equal, co-eternal persons — Father, Son, and Holy Spirit — and that Jesus Christ is fully God and fully man at once. Unitarians and biblical Unitarians hold that God is one person only, the Father, and that Jesus Christ is His Son — truly sent by Him, truly given authority by Him, but not identical with Him. Arians and semi-Arians, historically, held that the Son was a real but lesser, created being. Oneness Pentecostals hold that Father, Son, and Holy Spirit are three titles or manifestations of a single person, with no real distinction between them at all. Still others hold combinations, qualifications, and positions that do not fit neatly into any of the above. This is not a minor disagreement over a peripheral doctrine. It touches how a person understands God Himself, how a person understands the one through whom scripture says salvation comes, and how a person prays.

Scripture itself states plainly what its own purpose is on exactly this kind of question:

■ **1 Timothy 2:4** — *“Who will have all men to be saved, and to come unto the knowledge of the truth.”*

God's own stated will is that people come “unto the knowledge of the truth” — not unto the knowledge of whichever tradition happened to raise them, and not unto a truth too complicated for an ordinary reader to test for themselves. This is the reason this study exists, and the reason for its method: if God wills that people come to know the truth on a matter this important, then scripture itself must be capable of being searched, read, and understood on this question — and that search is worth doing directly, patiently, and honestly, rather than deferred to whichever authority speaks loudest or claims the most tradition behind it. Look at what the very next verse says. It is easy to read past 1 Timothy 2:4 as a general statement about salvation and miss that Paul does not leave the “truth” in verse 4 undefined — he states it immediately, in the next breath, as plainly and specifically as language allows:

■ **1 Timothy 2:5** — *“For there is one God, and one mediator between God and men, the man Christ Jesus.”*

How much more plainly, and how much more boldly, could our heavenly Father state the matter? Verse 4 says God wants all men to come to the knowledge of the truth. Verse 5 does not change the subject — it supplies the truth: one God, and one mediator between God and men, and that mediator is identified specifically and by name as “the man Christ Jesus.” This is why this study takes the approach it does: rather than starting from a creed, a council decision, or a denominational statement of faith and reading scripture through it, this study starts from scripture's own direct statements and lets them set the terms. Where scripture speaks plainly, that plain statement is given the greatest weight. Where a text is genuinely disputed — grammatically, textually, or by translation — that dispute is named honestly rather than smoothed over in either direction.

How this study is organized. Chapter 1 begins with the Old Testament's own portrait of the coming Messiah and God's foundational confession of His own oneness (the Shema), then moves to the New Testament's confirmation of the same, and to Jesus's and the apostles' own direct statements distinguishing Jesus from God. Chapter 2 gathers corroborating evidence — patterns, word-counts, and named figures of speech — that reinforce the direct statements in Chapter 1. Chapter 3 turns to examine, one by one and on their own grammatical and contextual merits, the specific texts most often cited for a different conclusion. Chapter 4 addresses two logical tensions the position must answer. Chapter 5 states the working conclusion plainly. Chapter 6 summarizes it in table form. Chapter 7 is new to this edition: every counter-text that this study cannot honestly claim to have fully resolved is gathered there, in one place, after the conclusion has already

been stated — so that a reader is never left wondering, mid- chapter, whether the ground is about to shift underneath the study's own position. It has not. Those texts are named, explained, and held openly for further study, but they do not carry equal weight against the many direct, plain statements this study opens with.

A reader in a hurry, or a reader who finds a particular section's grammar or Greek difficult to follow, can safely skip ahead to any paragraph marked **Bottom line** — these appear throughout the study and state, in a sentence or two of plain language, what that section concludes and why, without requiring the reader to follow every step of the underlying argument first.

Preface: Purpose and Method

This document compiles the working study on the nature of God and the nature of Jesus Christ. Scripture is examined on its own wording first; counter-texts are tested on their grammatical and contextual merits rather than dismissed; and a provisional working position is stated explicitly, with specific texts named and gathered at the end of this study rather than forced into resolution.

Working Criteria

- Direct, propositional statements are weighted more heavily than inferences drawn from titles, poetic language, or disputed grammatical constructions.
- Where a Greek or Hebrew construction is genuinely ambiguous, both readings are stated, along with what would be needed to decide between them.
- Where a text carries real grammatical or contextual force against the working position, it is named plainly as such rather than absorbed into the majority reading.
- A provisional position is adopted to allow research to move forward, understood as revisable — a working conclusion, not a closed one.

Chapter 1: The Starting Position — Scripture's Direct Statements

Before looking at any individual verse, one word needs defining, because it anchors this whole chapter: the **Shema**. The Shema (Hebrew for “hear,” its opening word) is Deuteronomy 6:4, “Hear, O Israel: The LORD our God is one LORD” — Israel’s foundational confession of who God is, recited daily by observant Jews in Jesus’s own day and still today. It is not one verse among many; within Judaism it functions the way the Lord’s Prayer or the Apostles’ Creed functions for many Christians — the first thing a child is taught, the last words a dying believer is encouraged to say, the confession that defines what “God” even means for the one confessing it. Any claim about the nature of God, or about Jesus’s relationship to God, has to reckon with the Shema directly, because it is the starting point scripture itself gives for the question — which is why it is the starting point here as well.

1.1 The Shema and Its Old Testament Confirmation

Deuteronomy 18:15, 18 — *“The LORD thy God will raise up unto thee a Prophet from the midst of thee, of thy brethren, like unto me... I will raise them up a Prophet from among their brethren, like unto thee, and will put my words in his mouth.”*

The controlling comparison is explicit: this figure is “like unto” Moses, “from the midst of thee, of thy brethren.” Moses was a man; the terms of comparison are human and fraternal, not divine.

2 Samuel 7:12-13 — *“I will set up thy seed after thee, which shall proceed out of thy bowels, and I will establish his kingdom... and I will stablish the throne of his kingdom for ever.”*

“Seed... out of thy bowels” is unambiguous physical-descent language — an ordinary human son of David’s own body. Psalm 2:7’s “this day have I begotten thee” is the same enthronement pattern: a distinct figure installed by “the LORD,” not identical with him.

Isaiah 53:4-5 — *“Surely he hath borne our griefs, and carried our sorrows... he was wounded for our transgressions, he was bruised for our iniquities.”*

The Servant’s entire redemptive force depends on his being a real, mortal sufferer — nothing in the chapter’s own language claims deity for him.

Daniel 7:13 — *“I saw in the night visions, and, behold, one like the Son of man came with the clouds of heaven, and came to the Ancient of days... and there was given him dominion.”*

The figure is explicitly human in likeness (“like the Son of man”), distinct from “the Ancient of days,” and receives dominion from him rather than possessing it inherently — the same delegated-authority pattern this study finds throughout.

Micah 5:2 — *“...whose goings forth have been from of old, from everlasting.”*

Read plainly, this describes the ancient Davidic promise reaching back into Israel’s distant past — “from of old” (Hebrew *olam*) is the same word scripture uses of the “everlasting hills” (Genesis 49:26), where no claim to literal, timeless eternity is intended. A fuller discussion of what “from of old” and similar language can and cannot establish about a figure’s own pre-existence is taken up together with the parallel New Testament question raised by Revelation 3:14, in Chapter 4.

1.2 The Shema and Its New Testament Confirmation

Deuteronomy 6:4 — *“Hear, O Israel: The LORD our God is one LORD.”*

This is Israel's foundational confession, not a peripheral text. It states God's oneness as flatly as scripture states anything.

Mark 12:29 — *“And Jesus answered him, The first of all the commandments is, Hear, O Israel; The Lord our God is one Lord.”*

Asked directly for the first commandment, Jesus quotes the Shema without qualification or amendment. He affirms the same oneness Israel already confessed, rather than redefining it to include himself as a second object of that confession.

1 Corinthians 8:6 — *“But to us there is but one God, the Father, of whom are all things, and we in him; and one Lord Jesus Christ, by whom are all things, and we by him.”*

Paul affirms monotheism and, in the same breath, distinguishes “God” (identified specifically as the Father) from “Lord” (Jesus Christ). The “one God” in view here is the Father specifically, with Jesus named separately as “one Lord.”

1.3 Jesus Distinguishes Himself From God

1 Timothy 2:5 — *“For there is one God, and one mediator between God and men, the man Christ Jesus;”*

Already introduced above: a direct, propositional statement, naming Jesus “the man Christ Jesus” in the very sentence affirming God's oneness. A mediator, by definition, stands between two parties — the structure of the verse itself distinguishes the mediator from the God he mediates to.

John 17:3 — *“And this is life eternal, that they might know thee the only true God, and Jesus Christ, whom thou hast sent.”*

Jesus, in prayer to the Father, calls the Father “the only true God” and refers to himself as the one “sent” by that God — a distinct, dependent role, not a claim of identity.

John 20:17 — *“Jesus saith unto her, Touch me not; for I am not yet ascended to my Father: but go to my brethren, and say unto them, I ascend unto my Father, and your Father; and to my God, and your God.”*

After the resurrection, Jesus calls the Father “my God” — the language of relationship to a superior, matching how any believer would speak of God, not language of identity or equality.

Mark 10:18 — *“And Jesus said unto him, Why callest thou me good? there is none good but one, that is, God.”*

Jesus deflects the description “good” away from himself and toward God alone, when a man addresses him as “good Master.”

Mark 13:32 — *“But of that day and that hour knoweth no man, no, not the angels which are in heaven, neither the Son, but the Father.”*

Jesus states a real limitation in his own knowledge relative to the Father. This is one of the more difficult verses for a reading that holds Jesus to possess the full, unlimited knowledge of God — it is Jesus's own statement about himself, not a narrator's aside.

John 10:33 — *“The Jews answered him, saying, For a good work we stone thee not; but for blasphemy; and because that thou, being a man, makest thyself God.”*

John 10:34-36 — *“Jesus answered them, 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?”*

This exchange deserves particular attention, because it is the one place in the four Gospels where Jesus is accused, to his face and in plain words, of exactly the thing this study is examining — *“thou, being a man, makest thyself God”* — and answers the charge himself. He does not let it stand. He answers it in two moves, and both of them matter.

The first move is to show that the word itself does not carry the weight the accusation puts on it. He quotes Psalm 82:6 — *“I said, Ye are gods”* — and points out that scripture uses this word of men *“unto whom the word of God came,”* and that *“the scripture cannot be broken.”* This is the same *elohim/theos* pattern set out in Section 2.3 below, and it is worth noticing where it comes from: it is not a device invented later to explain away hard verses. It is Jesus’s own answer, given under direct accusation of blasphemy, appealing to scripture’s own usage.

The second move is the more important one. Having disarmed the word, he restates what he actually claimed, in his own words: *“because I said, I am the Son of God?”* Not *“I am God.”* Given the chance to correct a man who has just accused him of making himself God, Jesus corrects him — and the correction is *“the Son of God.”* That phrase is not a lesser way of saying the same thing; it is a different claim, and it is the claim Jesus made. This matters again in Section 7.1, where a verse from the same Gospel is read as though Jesus had let the opposite claim pass without comment.

1.4 The Apostles Call Jesus a Man

Acts 2:22 — *“Ye men of Israel, hear these words; Jesus of Nazareth, a man approved of God among you by miracles and wonders and signs, which God did by him in the midst of you, as ye yourselves also know:”*

Peter’s Pentecost sermon describes Jesus as “a man approved of God” — with God as the one performing miracles through him, not Jesus performing them as God himself.

Acts 17:31 — *“Because he hath appointed a day, in the which he will judge the world in righteousness by that man whom he hath ordained; whereof he hath given assurance unto all men, in that he hath raised him from the dead.”*

Romans 5:15 — *“But not as the offence, so also is the free gift. For if through the offence of one many be dead, much more the grace of God, and the gift by grace, which is by one man, Jesus Christ, hath abounded unto many.”*

Paul’s Adam/Christ parallel requires “man” to carry the same sense on both sides of the comparison — the structure of the argument depends on it.

1 Corinthians 15:21 — *“For since by man came death, by man came also the resurrection of the dead.”*

1.5 Born of a Woman

Galatians 4:4 — *“But when the fulness of the time was come, God sent forth his Son, made of a woman, made under the law,”*

Scripture’s own creation pattern, stated seven times in Genesis 1 (“after his kind” — Genesis 1:11–12, 21, 24–25), is that every living thing reproduces after its own kind: a plant yields the seed of a plant, an animal begets its own kind, and a human being, born of a human mother, is a human being. Jesus, “made of a woman,” fits this same pattern at the most basic level scripture describes: Mary was a human being, and the child she bore was, in the fullest sense the word can carry, a human being too — a real man, after his mother’s own kind, not merely something wearing the appearance of one.

One detail in the verse is worth naming honestly rather than passing over: “God sent forth his Son” is language of commission, and Luke 1:35 attributes the manner of Jesus’s conception specifically to the operation of holy spirit rather than to an ordinary human father. This does not unsettle Jesus’s full humanity — being born of a woman establishes that regardless of the manner of conception — but it is a genuine

question about what, if anything, “sent forth” implies about Jesus prior to his birth. That fuller question, along with this study’s other honestly-open texts, is taken up directly in Chapter 7 rather than left hanging here.

1.6 What This Would Have Meant to Its Original Readers

It helps to step back and ask plainly: what would the people who actually first heard these texts have understood by them?

An Old Testament believer, hearing Deuteronomy 18:15 (“a Prophet... like unto thee”), 2 Samuel 7:12–13 (“thy seed... out of thy bowels”), Isaiah 53 (“he was wounded”), and Daniel 7:13 (“one like the Son of man... came to the Ancient of days”), would have expected a coming redeemer who was a real man: a prophet like Moses, a physical descendant of David, a mortal sufferer, a figure who receives dominion from God rather than possessing it as God’s own equal. Nothing in Israel’s own scriptures, read on their own terms, prepared a reader to expect a second divine person alongside the LORD. The Shema itself had already foreclosed that expectation: “the LORD our God is one LORD” was Israel’s daily confession, not a confession awaiting future qualification.

A New Testament believer — a Jew formed by that same Shema, or a Gentile convert taught it as foundational — then encountered a Jesus who himself quoted the Shema without amendment (Mark 12:29), who prayed to the Father as “the only true God” while calling himself the one “sent” by that God (John 17:3), and who was preached by the apostles, from the very first sermon at Pentecost, as “a man approved of God” (Acts 2:22) rather than as God himself walking among them. Paul’s letters, written to congregations of both Jews and Gentiles, still affirm “one God, the Father... and one Lord Jesus Christ” (1 Corinthians 8:6) in a single breath, distinguishing rather than merging the two. Read the way its first audience would have read it — without the later church councils that had not yet happened — the New Testament’s own language continues, rather than reverses, what the Old Testament had already established.

Bottom line: Scripture’s own portrait of the coming redeemer, from the Old Testament straight through the New, is consistently human and consistently distinct from God Himself — a prophet, a son of David, a suffering servant, one sent, one appointed, one mediator standing between God and men. This is the starting position this study builds on.

1.7 The Gospel of John’s Own Stated Purpose

One further direct statement belongs in this chapter, and it is easy to walk past because of where it sits. The Gospel of John does not end without telling the reader what it was written to accomplish. The writer says so in his own voice, plainly, and he says it in the form of a purpose statement rather than an argument:

John 20:30–31 — *“And many other signs truly did Jesus in the presence of his disciples, which are not written in this book: But these are written, that ye might believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God; and that believing ye might have life through his name.”*

This is the author’s summary of his own book. Everything in the Gospel of John — every sign recorded, every discourse preserved, every conversation set down rather than left out — is here said to have been selected and written for one stated end. And the end is stated in six words: *“that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God.”* Two things follow. The first is that the Gospel most often cited for a high view of Christ’s nature states its own aim in exactly the language this study has been tracing from the Old Testament forward — Messiah, and Son of God. The second concerns something a reader would have no way of anticipating this early: verse 31 is the third sentence after Thomas says *“My Lord and my God”* (John 20:28). The writer, having just recorded that scene, and with the whole of his book behind him, tells the reader what he wants believed — and it is not that Jesus is God. Section 7.1 takes that up in full.

Chapter 2: Corroborating Evidence

The material in this chapter is drawn from a specific outside source, cited in this study as JCING (see References and Sources Consulted for full details). It is treated the same as any other source in this study: tested for what it actually demonstrates, credited where the underlying textual observation holds up independently, and distinguished from its author's own further theological system, which is not adopted wholesale.

2.1 The Weight of Direct Statement: “Son of God” versus “God”

JCING catalogs the New Testament's “Son of God” references — by its own count, sixty-eight — against a small handful of texts applied to Christ using the term “God.” This is offered as independent corroboration of a principle already used throughout this study: many clear, direct statements outweigh a few disputed ones, and the disputed few must be read in a way that fits the larger, plainer pattern, rather than the reverse.

Independent verification of this count. Checked directly against JCING's own text, its count of sixty-eight is not limited to the exact phrase “Son of God” — it includes the broader family of son-language applied to Christ throughout the New Testament (“the Son of God,” “his Son,” “only begotten Son,” “beloved Son,” and similar constructions). A search of the KJV New Testament for the literal phrase “Son of God” applied to Jesus alone, independent of JCING's book, turns up roughly forty-six instances — already a large number on its own, and the right order of magnitude for a count of sixty-eight once the wider son-language family named above is folded in. On the other side of the ledger, JCING names exactly four texts as its entire “God” list: 1 Timothy 3:16, Hebrews 1:8, John 20:28, and Isaiah 9:6 — and, by no coincidence, these are exactly the four texts taken up directly in this chapter and the next (Sections 2.2–2.4 below, and John 20:28 in Chapter 3). The specific figure of sixty-eight could not be reproduced verse-by-verse from outside JCING's own book, and is presented here as its tally, not this study's own independent recount. But the claim it supports checks out: the New Testament's overwhelming, preferred way of speaking about Jesus is relational (“Son of God”) rather than a direct identity claim (“God”), and the entire “God” side of the ledger is short enough to name in full and examine one text at a time — which is exactly what the rest of this study does.

2.2 Isaiah 9:6 — A Naming Formula, Not Only an Ontological Claim

Isaiah 9:6 — *“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, Counsellor, The mighty God, The everlasting Father, The Prince of Peace.”*

JCING treats “his name shall be called...” as an instance of a recognized biblical naming-formula, in which a name describes what its bearer represents or accomplishes rather than making a direct *ontological* claim about his essential nature. (“Ontological” is a word this study uses repeatedly and worth defining plainly the first time it appears: it simply means having to do with a thing's own being or essential nature. An ontological claim about Jesus is a claim about what he fundamentally is; it is a different kind of claim from one about his name, his role, his rank, or the authority he has been given to exercise.) Scripture supplies clear parallels: Jacob (“supplanter”) describes character and circumstance, not literal identity with the act of supplanting; Sarah (“princess”) describes standing, not a claim to a throne. Read this way, “The mighty God” and “The everlasting Father” describe the authority and fatherly care Messiah would exercise on God's behalf, in God's name and by God's commission — a documented pattern of usage, not a novel grammatical move constructed solely to defuse this verse. This is offered as a live, defensible reading alongside the verse's more traditional use as a direct deity-title; it is not claimed to be the only possible reading.

2.3 Hebrews 1:8 Revisited: The Elohim/Theos Pattern

Hebrews 1:8 — *“But unto the Son he saith, Thy throne, O God, is for ever and ever: a sceptre of righteousness is the sceptre of thy kingdom.”*

In addition to the Hebrew grammatical ambiguity in the underlying Psalm 45:6 text this verse quotes, JCING adds a documented biblical pattern worth weighing alongside it: *elohim* (God/god) and its Greek equivalent *theos* are applied elsewhere in scripture to exalted human beings acting with delegated divine authority, without those beings thereby being God in essence.

Exodus 7:1 — *“And the LORD said unto Moses, See, I have made thee a god to Pharaoh: and Aaron thy brother shall be thy prophet.”*

Exodus 22:28 — *“Thou shalt not revile the gods, nor curse the ruler of thy people.”*

Psalm 82:6 — *“I have said, Ye are gods; and all of you are children of the most High.”*

This is a real, documented pattern of usage — Moses is called “a god” to Pharaoh in a functional, representative sense; Israel’s judges are called “gods” (*elohim*) in the same sense in Exodus 22:28 and Psalm 82:6, 8. This does not by itself decide Hebrews 1:8 — the verse could still intend a full ontological claim — but it demonstrates that calling a person “God”/“*elohim*” in scripture does not automatically require identity with the Father. This strengthens, without fully settling, a reading of Hebrews 1:8 that addresses the Son in an exalted, delegated, representative sense.

Bottom line: The underlying Hebrew grammar is genuinely open, but the *elohim/theos* pattern above shows that being called “God” in this functional sense is a documented, unremarkable thing scripture does for faithful representatives of God — it does not by itself require the Son to be the one supreme Deity.

2.4 1 Timothy 3:16 — A Text-Critical Note

1 Timothy 3:16 (KJV) — *“And without controversy great is the mystery of godliness: God 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.”*

A word on what this section is and is not about, before the Greek details: the KJV text above reads “God was manifest in the flesh” — the word “God” is right there in plain English, and no reader should expect to find the words “who” or “which” sitting in this sentence instead. This section is not questioning how the KJV translated the Greek text its translators had in front of them. It is asking an older, separate question: which Greek word did the very earliest manuscripts — centuries before the KJV translators did their work — actually contain at this spot, before any translation into English was made?

JCING raises a specific textual-criticism point on that older question: the earliest surviving Greek manuscripts most plausibly originally read *hos* (a Greek word meaning “who” or “which,” referring back to Christ by pronoun), not *theos* (“God”), at the start of this clause. The two words differ in Greek uncial (capital-letter) manuscript script by a single horizontal stroke — Θ (theta, for *theos*) versus O with an overline abbreviation (for *hos*) — and a documented scribal path exists by which an abbreviation for *hos* could be mistaken for, or later conformed to, *theos* in the process of hand-copying and recopying manuscripts over centuries. If the earlier reading is correct, the underlying Greek would originally have read something like “...great is the mystery of godliness: *who* was manifest in the flesh...” — referring back to Christ by pronoun, rather than asserting “God” as the subject directly, with the word “God” entering the manuscript tradition only later, through a scribal error later copies then preserved and the KJV inherited. This is a genuine text-critical question independent of this study’s theological conclusions, presented here as supporting apparatus: worth knowing, not treated as fully decisive on its own, since serious textual scholars remain divided on the manuscript evidence for this verse.

2.5 John 1:1 — A Sourcing Correction on the Antanaclasses Claim

John 1:1 — *“In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God.”*

Before working through this specific case, it helps to know plainly what a “figure of speech” means in the sense this study — and Bullinger’s own reference work — uses the term. A figure of speech is a deliberate, recognizable departure from a word’s plain, ordinary sense, or from a sentence’s plain, ordinary grammatical order, used on purpose for emphasis or effect, and recognizable specifically because the same pattern shows up elsewhere in scripture and in ordinary language rather than being invented for one difficult verse. Simple, everyday examples make the idea concrete. When someone says “it’s raining cats and dogs,” no one thinks actual animals are falling from the sky — a figure of speech (deliberate exaggeration, called hyperbole) is doing a job the plain words alone don’t do. When scripture calls God’s people “the apple of his eye” (Deuteronomy 32:10), it is not describing fruit — it is a figure (metaphor) for something precious and closely guarded. Bullinger’s *Figures of Speech* catalogs hundreds of these named, recurring patterns across scripture, on the reasoning that once a pattern is genuinely attested elsewhere in scripture, pointing it out at a difficult verse is not special pleading — it is applying the same tool scripture already uses on itself throughout.

Two specific figures are relevant here. *Antanacsis* is the repetition of the same word within one sentence carrying two different senses (a rough modern feel for the same trick: “time flies, but you cannot fly time”). *Hyperbaton* is a deliberate change to a sentence’s normal word order, used to place a word earlier or later than expected so that it stands out with emphasis.

The second edition of this study followed JCING in reading *logos* (“Word”) as antanacsis — the same word used in two different senses within one verse — citing Bullinger’s *Figures of Speech Used in the Bible* as the source of the figure. Direct verification against Bullinger’s own text does not support this. Bullinger classifies John 1:1 under the other figure named above, Hyperbaton (word-order emphasis), and states the plain sense of the verse directly and without qualification: the Word was God. Antanacsis is a real, catalogued figure elsewhere in scripture (Bullinger applies it at John 3:6 and Hebrews 2:14, among others) — but he does not apply it to John 1:1, and his own reading of this verse is the traditional one, not a sense-shifted alternative to it.

This is recorded here as a correction, not merely a footnote: the antanacsis reading of John 1:1 was presented in the prior edition as “source-grounded,” and that characterization overstated what the source actually supports. The reading itself is not necessarily wrong as an independent grammatical proposal — JCING may extend a real figure to a new verse Bullinger did not happen to cover — but it cannot be credited as Bullinger’s own conclusion, and Bullinger’s own direct statement on this exact verse now counts as a data point the working position must carry, not one it can claim as support.

Verdict: Correction: this is not a source-grounded reading. Bullinger’s own text applies a different figure to this verse and states the traditional reading directly. See Section 3.1 for the updated verdict on John 1:1 overall.

Chapter 3: Examining the Counter-Texts One by One

These are the texts historically cited for a reading in which Jesus is fully identified with God. Each is tested on its grammatical and contextual merits, not dismissed by volume of opposing texts. Where Chapter 2 has added new material bearing on a text below, it is cross-referenced rather than repeated. Texts that, after honest examination, still carry real and unresolved weight against this study's working position are not force-fitted into a resolution here — they are gathered together in one place, after this study's conclusion has already been stated, in Chapter 7.

3.1 John 1:1

John 1:1 (in full) — *“In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God.”*

In plain terms, this one verse makes three back-to-back statements about “the Word” (John’s title for Jesus, made explicit at John 1:14, “the Word was made flesh”): first, that the Word already existed “in the beginning”; second, that the Word “was with God” — a statement of relationship, which requires the Word to be someone distinct from the God he was with; and third, “the Word was God,” repeating the word “God” a second time, but this time without the definite article (“the”) that the first use of “God” carries in the underlying Greek. That grammatical difference — one “God” with the article, one without — is the entire technical question this section addresses, and it matters because Greek, unlike English, can use *theos* (“god/God”) descriptively, to say what kind of being something is, as well as as a proper name, to say specifically which being is meant.

The Greek predicate *theos* has no definite article in “the Word was God” (*theos en ho logos*). This is a real and contested grammatical point: predicate nouns placed before the verb, as this one is, often drop the article even when the writer intends something definite (a documented pattern called Colwell’s Rule), so the missing article does not by itself prove “a god” rather than “God.” It also does not by itself prove full identity with “*ho theos*” (“the God,” meaning the Father), named in the clause immediately before. Most Greek grammarians across the spectrum read this construction as *qualitative* — describing the Word’s own nature as fully divine in kind — rather than as a flat equation of the Word with the Father just mentioned in the same sentence.

See Section 2.5 for a correction already logged: a proposed alternate reading of *logos* as antanaclosis (the same word used in two different senses within the verse) is not supported by Bullinger’s own text, which applies a different figure to this verse and states the traditional reading directly. That reading has been withdrawn as support and should instead be weighed as a data point on the other side.

Bottom line: Even under Greek grammar’s more traditional, God-affirming reading of this verse — that the Word is fully divine in nature — the verse’s own wording keeps “the Word” and “God” (the Father) as two distinct parties in the very same sentence: the Word *was with* God, not identical with him. A being can genuinely, fully share and display God’s own nature by God’s own doing (compare Sections 2.2 and 2.3, on delegated authority and the *elohim* pattern) without being “the God” of Israel’s Shema — the one this study, in Chapter 1, has already identified specifically as the Father. Read this way, John 1:1 is a real, technical grammatical puzzle, but it is not a verse this study needs to force into agreement with its conclusion; nor is it one that overturns that conclusion. Context and the wider argument of John’s own prologue, not the presence or absence of one Greek article, are what should decide a reader’s own final judgment here.

3.2 John 1:18

John 1:18 (KJV / Received Text) — *“No man hath seen God at any time; the only begotten Son, which is in the bosom of the Father, he hath declared him.”*

This is a live textual-variant question, worth knowing plainly: the earliest available manuscripts (including Papyrus 66, Papyrus 75, Codex Vaticanus, and Codex Sinaiticus) read “*monogenes theos*” — “only-begotten God” — while the Byzantine textual tradition underlying the King James reads “*ho monogenes huios*” — “the only begotten Son.” This means the KJV’s own textual tradition, the one this study is built on, carries the less deity-affirming reading at this exact verse.

Verdict: *Supports the working position, and does so from within the KJV’s own manuscript tradition.*

3.3 1 Timothy 3:16

See Section 2.4 above for the *hos/theos* textual-critical question, including an explanation of why this is a question about the earliest manuscripts, not about anything the KJV’s own translators mistranslated.

Verdict: *A genuine text-critical question, presented as supporting apparatus rather than a fully decided point.*

3.4 John 8:58

This verse is easier to follow with its immediate surrounding conversation included, rather than read as a single isolated sentence.

John 8:54 — “Jesus answered, If I honour myself, my honour is nothing: it is my Father that honoureth me; of whom ye say, that he is your God:”

John 8:56 — “Your father Abraham rejoiced to see my day: and he saw it, and was glad.”

John 8:57 — “Then said the Jews unto him, Thou art not yet fifty years old, and hast thou seen Abraham?”

John 8:58 — “Jesus said unto them, Verily, verily, I say unto you, Before Abraham was, I am.”

Two things become clearer once the fuller passage is read together. First, verse 54 — spoken in the same conversation, only moments before verse 58 — has Jesus once again drawing the same distinction this whole study finds throughout: he points away from himself and toward “my Father,” whom he explicitly calls, to this very audience, “your God.” Whatever verse 58 turns out to mean, it sits inside a passage where Jesus has just, in plain words, distinguished himself from the God his own listeners already worshipped.

Second, the Jews’ question in verse 57 — “hast thou seen Abraham?” — is their own framing, not Jesus’s own claim. Jesus’s actual statement in verse 56 was that Abraham rejoiced to see “my day,” not that Jesus had personally, physically seen Abraham face to face. The Jews respond by putting the claim in the terms that confused them: an ordinary man not yet fifty years old, they reason, could not possibly have seen someone who lived and died many centuries earlier. Jesus’s reply in verse 58 does not accept their framing on their terms; it answers with a claim about his own standing relative to Abraham’s place in time — “before Abraham was, I am” — rather than a claim about having personally encountered him.

What that claim itself establishes is real, and should not be minimized: some kind of priority relative to Abraham is being asserted, plainly and deliberately, with the emphatic double “verily, verily” Jesus uses to introduce his most weighty statements. What remains genuinely contested is *what kind* of priority “I am” (Greek *ego eimi*) is claiming. Some readers hear in it a direct echo of God’s own self-naming to Moses at the burning bush (Exodus 3:14, “I AM THAT I AM”). Others point out that *ego eimi* is also ordinary Greek existential or self-identifying speech, used with no claim to deity whatsoever elsewhere in the very same Gospel — compare John 9:9, where the man born blind, healed by Jesus, says “*ego eimi*,” translated “I am he,” simply meaning “I am the one you’re asking about.”

Verdict: *Establishes real priority to Abraham, spoken in the same conversation where Jesus has just distinguished himself from “your God” the Father (v. 54). The exact nature of that priority is not settled by the phrase “I am” in isolation, and should be held carefully rather than resolved by the phrase alone.*

3.5 Philippians 2:6–7 — Form of God, Not Grasping at Equality

Philippians 2:5–8 — “Let this mind be in you, which was also in Christ Jesus: Who, being in the form of God, thought it not robbery to be equal with God: But made himself of no reputation, and took upon him the form of a servant, and was made in the likeness of men: And being found in fashion as a man, he humbled himself, and became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross.”

The word translated “form” here (Greek *morphe*) is the hinge the whole passage turns on, and it is worth being precise about what it means. Checked directly against the standard Greek lexicons — Thayer’s Greek-English Lexicon, Bauer’s, and Kittel’s Theological Dictionary all converge on the same definition — *morphe* means “the outward appearance by which a person or thing strikes the eye; the external form,” not a word for inner essence or being. This is not a reading constructed to fit this study’s conclusion: it is confirmed by the word’s only other New Testament appearance. *Morphe* occurs exactly three times in the whole New Testament: Philippians 2:6 and 2:7, and Mark 16:12, where the risen Jesus “appeared in another *form*” to two disciples on the road — plainly a change in outward appearance, not a change in his underlying nature, since it is the same Jesus in both verses. The same word, in the very same clause, describes Jesus taking “the form of a servant” (*morphe doulou*) — an outward condition and role, not an inward transformation into a different kind of being. Read this way, “being in the form of God” describes Jesus visibly displaying, in his life and ministry, the outward appearance of God’s own character and authority — not a claim that he was, in his own person, the eternal, uncreated God.

Scripture explains directly *why* Jesus displayed that form. He was given “the Spirit... not by measure” (John 3:34) — an unlimited anointing no other human being is described as receiving. God “anointed Jesus of Nazareth with the Holy Ghost and with power,” and “God was with him” as he “went about doing good” (Acts 10:38). Because of this, Jesus could say plainly, “he that hath seen me hath seen the Father” (John 14:9), and explain the reason in his next breath: “the Father that dwelleth in me, he doeth the works” (John 14:10). A man so completely filled with, submitted to, and used by God’s own Spirit that he visibly displayed God’s own character and did God’s own works is exactly what “the form of God” describes — without requiring that man to be God himself.

This reading also makes sense of the next clause in a way the traditional reading struggles with: Jesus “thought it not robbery to be equal with God.” If Jesus were, in his own person, already God, it is an odd, backward compliment to praise him for *not* grasping at equality with himself — nobody is praised for declining to seize what is already, necessarily, their own. The statement makes full and straightforward sense read the other way: having God’s own form, character, and authority visibly at work in him by the Spirit given without measure, Jesus still did not reach for, exploit, or claim outright equality with God — unlike Adam, who was himself made in God’s own image (Genesis 1:26–27) and yet grasped at the serpent’s promise, “ye shall be as gods” (Genesis 3:5), and fell. Jesus, the “last Adam” (1 Corinthians 15:45), reverses exactly that failure: instead of reaching for what was not his to claim, he “made himself of no reputation,” took the form of a servant, was made in the likeness of men, and humbled himself all the way to death on a cross.

For the sake of completeness, this study’s earlier edition noted that Bullinger’s own treatment reads “form of God” and “form of a servant” as two paired conditions in a structured seven-step downward and seven-step upward pattern, which he takes to lean toward genuine personal pre-existence, held together with the same Adam contrast credited above. That structural reading is on record and is not re-argued point-by-point here; it is a real consideration a future pass of this study may wish to engage further. What this edition adopts as its working reading rests on the more direct evidence available: the word-level meaning of *morphe*, independently confirmed across three lexicons and this word’s own only other New Testament usage, together with the plain logic of the “robbery”/equality clause.

Verdict: Resolved, consistent with this study’s working position. “Form of God” describes Jesus’s visible display of God’s own character and authority, given to him by the Spirit without measure, not a claim of

personal deity; “equal with God” makes sharpest sense as something Jesus did not grasp at, in deliberate contrast with Adam.

3.6 Hebrews 1:8

See Section 2.3 above for the *elohim/theos* pattern (Exodus 7:1; 22:28; Psalm 82:6, 8), which shows that scripture’s own usage does not require “God” applied to a person to mean identity with the one supreme Deity.

Verdict: *Genuinely ambiguous at the level of the underlying Hebrew text itself; the *elohim* pattern strengthens, without fully settling, a delegated/representative reading.*

3.7 Matthew 28:19 — The Baptismal Formula

Matthew 28:18–20 — *“And Jesus came and spake unto them, saying, All power is given unto me in heaven and in earth. Go ye therefore, and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost: teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you: and, lo, I am with you always, even unto the end of the world. Amen.”*

This verse supplies the single most quoted text for a formula naming Father, Son, and Holy Ghost together in one baptismal command, and some readers are taught that this triune wording was not original to Matthew at all — that it was added later, after the fact, to manufacture scriptural support for a doctrine the earliest church did not hold. That claim was checked directly against the manuscript and patristic record before this section was written, out of the same commitment to accuracy this study applies everywhere else. It does not hold up. But a different, well-sourced resolution does — one reached without needing to claim the text is corrupt, and one fully consistent with this study’s conclusion in Chapter 1: there is one God, the Father, and one mediator between God and men, the man Christ Jesus (1 Timothy 2:5).

Every surviving Greek manuscript of Matthew 28, without exception, contains this clause; no manuscript in any language or family reads a shorter form. This is unlike a genuine case of a later addition, such as 1 John 5:7 (the so-called *Comma Johanneum*), where late manuscripts actually do add words absent from the early Greek witnesses — nothing analogous exists here. Eusebius of Caesarea does quote this verse in an abbreviated form, “make disciples of all nations in my name,” some seventeen or eighteen times, mostly in works written before the Council of Nicea in A.D. 325 — a pattern sometimes cited as evidence he knew a shorter original text. But Eusebius also quotes the verse in its full triune form well before Nicea (in his *Syriac Theophania*, Book IV), showing he knew the complete wording throughout; ancient writers routinely quoted only the clause bearing on their immediate point, in an age before chapter-and-verse reference made full citation the norm; and Eusebius himself held a subordinationist theology, later associated with the side Nicea opposed — he had no doctrinal motive to prefer or manufacture a triune-sounding formula. More decisively, the formula’s substance is already fixed in Christian practice long before any proposed forgery date: the *Didache*, independently dated by mainstream scholarship (including skeptical scholarship) to roughly A.D. 100–120, commands baptism “in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit” in its seventh chapter, and Justin Martyr’s *First Apology*, written around A.D. 150, independently describes baptism in the same threefold terms. Both predate Nicea by one and three-quarter to two full centuries — a theory that this wording was inserted at or after Nicea to manufacture proof of the Trinity is chronologically impossible on this evidence. Even Alvan Lamson’s *Church of the First Three Centuries* (1860) — a polemical history devoted to tracing exactly how trinitarian doctrine developed across the early church, written by an author with every motive to use this argument had he found it sound, and containing a full chapter weighing how much confidence Eusebius’s testimony deserves — never raises it.

The resolution that does hold comes from translation, not textual criticism, and it is already part of this study’s own standing source library. Andrews Norton, in *A Statement of Reasons for Not Believing the Doctrines of Trinitarians* (1856), makes two points about this verse. First, the word rendered “name” (Greek *onoma*) is, as often in scripture, redundant — “used pleonastically, by an idiom of the Hebraistic Greek in

which the Septuagint and New Testament are written,” an idiom English has no equivalent turn of phrase for; carried over literally, it manufactures the appearance of an invocation formula the original idiom never carried. Second, the preposition *eis* is better rendered “to” than “in”: Norton renders the clause, “baptizing them to the Father, and to the Son, and to the holy spirit” — dedicating converts by baptism to the Father’s worship, to the religion taught by the Son, and to the holy influences the Spirit brings, rather than invoking three persons by name. The Greek does have one *onoma*, singular, governing all three genitives, but this study does not lean on it. Trinitarian readers cite the same single word as one name shared by three persons, and it is just as natural for one dedication made to three objects; on its own it settles nothing either way. The weight rests on Norton’s two points above and on scripture’s own use of the construction, set out next.

Norton traces further what the traditional reading has to assume, unstated, to reach Trinity doctrine from this verse at all — and shows scripture itself refutes those assumptions elsewhere. The first assumption is that naming three objects together, two of them persons, makes the third a person too; but “Blessed be the LORD God of Israel... and blessed be thy advice; and blessed be thou” (1 Samuel 25:32–33) blesses God, a piece of counsel, and a man together without making the counsel a person, and “I commend you to God, and to the word of his grace” (Acts 20:32) commends hearers to God and to a word in the very same clause. The second assumption is that being “baptized in” or “to” the name of someone necessarily makes that someone divine; but “were all baptized unto Moses” (1 Corinthians 10:2) uses the identical grammatical construction of Moses, and Paul’s own rhetorical question — “were ye baptized in the name of Paul?” (1 Corinthians 1:13) — carries force only because the answer is obviously no, though the grammar is the same in kind as Matthew 28:19’s.

One further point converges with everything above: Acts never once records this commission carried out with the threefold wording. Wherever Acts names the name in which anyone was baptized, it is Jesus Christ’s — “in the name of Jesus Christ” (Acts 2:38), “in the name of the Lord Jesus” (Acts 8:16; 19:5), “in the name of the Lord” (Acts 10:48) — never a recitation of “Father, Son, and Holy Ghost.” Other baptisms Acts records, such as the Ethiopian eunuch’s (Acts 8:38), name no name at all. Read with Norton’s translation — dedication to the Father’s worship, the Son’s teaching, and the Spirit’s blessing, rather than a liturgical formula to be recited word for word — this stops looking like a contradiction requiring harmonization at all: Matthew 28:19 states the commission’s scope and object, Acts records how it was actually carried out, and the two were never truly in tension once “in the name of” is recognized as the Hebraistic idiom Norton identifies rather than an invocation formula naming three co-equal persons. This is also why this study, consistent with its own conclusion that there is one God, the Father, and one mediator, the man Christ Jesus (1 Timothy 2:5), holds that prayer belongs in the name of Jesus Christ alone (John 14:13–14) and that baptism, as Acts itself practices it, is in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ. This study therefore does not commend the threefold wording as a formula to be recited over a convert: it reads the verse as a dedication, not a liturgy.

Verdict: *Resolved. The claim that this text was forged or altered does not survive the manuscript and patristic evidence — the wording is attested everywhere, and its substance is already fixed in Christian practice a full two centuries before the earliest date any forgery theory proposes. What actually resolves the verse is translation: the single, Hebraistic “name” and eis rendered “to” describe a dedication to the Father’s worship, the Son’s teaching, and the Spirit’s blessing — not an invocation naming three co-equal persons, and not a formula this study commends for recitation. Consistent with this study’s conclusion throughout: one God, the Father, and one mediator, the man Christ Jesus.*

The remaining counter-texts most often raised for a different conclusion — John 20:28, 1 John 5:20, Colossians 2:9, Colossians 1:15–20, Titus 2:13, 2 Peter 1:1, and Romans 9:5 — are not treated here. Each of them carries enough weight, or enough unresolved difficulty, to deserve more room than this chapter’s format allows. Rather than scatter partial verdicts through the rest of this chapter and leave the reader weighing an unfinished case at every turn, every one of them is gathered, examined in full, and set plainly in its proper place relative to this study’s conclusion in Chapter 7: The Counter-Texts — Resolved and Held in Abeyance. Three of the seven are resolved there; four are not, and are said so.

Chapter 4: Logical Tensions, Resolved

4.1 Temptation: Resolved by This Study's Own Conclusion

James 1:13 — *“Let no man say when he is tempted, I am tempted of God: for God cannot be tempted with evil, neither tempteth he any man:”*

Hebrews 4:15 — *“For we have not an high priest which cannot be touched with the feeling of our infirmities; but was in all points tempted like as we are, yet without sin.”*

Matthew 4:1 — *“Then was Jesus led up of the Spirit into the wilderness to be tempted of the devil.”*

An earlier edition of this study treated this as an unresolved tension, framed around how Trinitarian theology answers it — the doctrine of two natures in one person, formulated at the Council of Chalcedon in 451 A.D. That framing, on reflection, borrows a problem that belongs to a different starting position than this study's own. The difficulty only exists for a reader trying to hold that Jesus is, in his own single person, both fully God and fully man at once: if he is fully God, James 1:13 says plainly that he cannot be tempted; Hebrews 4:15 and Matthew 4:1 say just as plainly that he was.

This study has already concluded, from the weight of scripture's own direct statements in Chapters 1 through 3, that there is one God, the Father, and that Jesus Christ is fully human — “the man Christ Jesus” (1 Timothy 2:5), “a man approved of God” (Acts 2:22), the last Adam (1 Corinthians 15:45, see also Section 3.5 above). Trinitarians are not the arbiters of what scripture itself says on this point, and their own doctrinal solution is not needed here, because on the foundation this study has already built, no real tension remains to solve: God cannot be tempted, because God cannot be tempted; Jesus, a man, was tempted, exactly the way scripture says every high priest who represents men before God must be — “in all points tempted like as we are, yet without sin” (Hebrews 4:15).

Verdict: *Resolved directly by this study's own conclusion. No later doctrinal apparatus is required once Jesus is understood, as scripture itself states him to be, as a man distinct from God rather than as God himself.*

4.2 Beginning: Resolved by Scripture's Own Use of the Word

Psalms 90:2 — *“Before the mountains were brought forth, or ever thou hadst formed the earth and the world, even from everlasting to everlasting, thou art God.”*

Revelation 3:14 — *“...These things saith the Amen, the faithful and true witness, the beginning of the creation of God;”*

Psalms 90:2 states God's own beginninglessness about as plainly as language allows: before anything else existed, God already was, is, and always will be, “from everlasting to everlasting.” Revelation 3:14, read in a hurry and in isolation, can look like the opposite claim made about Christ — that he is “the beginning of the creation of God,” which a quick reading could take to mean Christ was himself the first thing God created. The Greek word behind “beginning” here, *arche*, does not carry only one meaning, and this is not a technicality invented to escape an awkward verse — English “beginning” carries the same double sense every day. A company's “founder” is its beginning in the sense of *originating* it, not in the sense of having been its first employee. Scripture itself settles which of the two senses *arche* carries when it is applied to Christ, because the New Testament uses this identical word, of this identical person, in a place where the meaning cannot be mistaken:

Colossians 1:18 — *“And he is the head of the body, the church: who is the beginning, the firstborn from the dead; that in all things he might have the preeminence.”*

Christ plainly cannot be “the firstborn from the dead” in the sense of being the first thing that ever came into existence — he is called this specifically because he founded, and now heads, the new order of resurrection life, being the first to rise permanently into it. Paul’s own pairing of “the beginning” with “firstborn from the dead” fixes the sense as *originator and head*, not *first-created thing*. Revelation 3:14 uses the same Greek word of the same person, and the most consistent reading is the same one scripture has already shown its own use of that word to carry: Christ as the beginning — the source, founder, and head — of God’s new creation, not as the first item produced within it.

Micah 5:2’s similar language about the coming ruler’s “goings forth... from of old, from everlasting” (see Chapter 1.1) works the same way. Hebrew *olam*, like Greek *arche*, marks great antiquity far more often than it marks strict, literal, infinite eternity elsewhere in scripture — compare the “everlasting hills” of Genesis 49:26, which plainly are not eternal in the strictest sense. Proverbs 8:22–23’s poetic figure of Wisdom, sometimes proposed as a further parallel, is a personification within a poem, not a stated identification of Wisdom with Christ, and is not treated here as bearing independent weight either way.

Verdict: Resolved. None of these texts states, or requires, a literal beginning for Christ in the sense Psalm 90:2 denies of God. Scripture’s own paired use of “beginning” and “firstborn from the dead” for Christ (Colossians 1:18) shows the word functioning as source and head, not as first-created thing, and Revelation 3:14 is read most consistently the same way.

Chapter 5: Provisional Working Stance

Scripture's weight of direct, propositional statement favors one God — identified specifically as the Father — with Jesus Christ presented as fully human, distinct from the Father, and functioning as mediator, sent one, and appointed man rather than as the object of Israel's monotheistic confession. This is adopted here as the working position for continued research, on the strength of eleven or more direct texts (Chapter 1), the corroborating material incorporated in Chapter 2, and a majority of the disputed texts resolving toward this position, or toward manageable ambiguity, on grammatical and contextual grounds (Chapter 3). Both of the logical tensions this position must answer — temptation and beginning — are resolved directly by the position itself, without needing to borrow a later doctrinal formulation (Chapter 4).

A number of individual texts have carried real, unresolved grammatical or contextual force against this working position, and none of them has ever been treated as settled by assertion or dismissed as error. In this edition three of them are resolved and stated as such — Thomas's address to Jesus in John 20:28, the contested antecedent in 1 John 5:20, and the *theotes* question in Colossians 2:9. Four are not resolved and remain held: the referent and creation-language questions in Colossians 1:15–20, the Granville Sharp construction in Titus 2:13, its parallel in 2 Peter 1:1, and the punctuation question in Romans 9:5. Rather than being addressed piecemeal through the counter-text chapter, all seven are gathered together in full, in one place, in Chapter 7 — positioned deliberately after this working conclusion, not before it.

This study's operating principle on that point is stated plainly: a small number of individually strong counter-texts does not, by itself, negate a conclusion supported by the weight of many direct statements. That principle is sound, and is the reason the working position stands rather than resetting to "unresolved" after every new counter-text found. But the principle only holds if the counter-texts are honestly and completely logged, rather than minimized, omitted, or marked resolved by an attempted rebuttal that does not actually succeed. Chapter 7 exists to keep that condition honest — which is why it now reports, alongside three resolutions, both the texts that remain unresolved and one proposed line of resolution that was tested and found to fail.

This stance is provisional by design. It is adopted so that research can move forward rather than stall on every unresolved point, with the explicit understanding that items held in abeyance will be revisited as further study, tools, or evidence become available — and that the working position itself is subject to revision if that future work warrants it.

Chapter 6: Summary and Open Questions

- **John 1:1 — *theos* anarthrous (Colwell's Rule):** Grammatically ambiguous; compatible with One God either way (3.1).
- **John 1:18 — *monogenes theos* / *huios* variant:** Favors working position.
- **1 Timothy 3:16 — *hos/theos* variant:** Text-critical, minor, unresolved.
- **John 8:58 — “before Abraham was, I am”:** Priority established; nature of priority open.
- **Philippians 2:6–7 — “form of God”: Resolved** — visible display via the Spirit without measure, not a deity claim.
- **Hebrews 1:8 — “thy throne, O God”:** Hebrew text ambiguous; *elohim* pattern favors a delegated reading.
- **Matthew 28:19 — “Father, Son, and Holy Ghost”: Resolved** — not a forgery; the single *name*, properly translated, is a dedication, not an invocation of three persons, and not a formula to recite (3.7).
- **Temptation tension (James 1:13 / Heb 4:15): Resolved** by this study's own conclusion (4.1).
- **Beginning tension (Ps 90:2 / Rev 3:14): Resolved** — “beginning” reads as source/head, not first-created (4.2).
- **John 20:28 — “my Lord and my God”:** Resolved — the Gospel's own correction (John 10:36) and stated purpose (John 20:31); see Chapter 7.1.
- **1 John 5:20 — “this is the true God”:** Resolved — the same author defines the phrase at John 17:3; see Chapter 7.2.
- **Colossians 2:9 — “all the fulness of the Godhead bodily”:** Resolved — the fulness is conferred (Colossians 1:19) and shared (2:10); see Chapter 7.3.
- **Colossians 1:15–20 — “firstborn,” “all things created”:** Held in abeyance — three candidate readings, none settled; see Chapter 7.4.
- **Titus 2:13 — Granville Sharp construction:** Contested, materially weakened — the letter's own usage favors two referents; see Chapter 7.5.
- **2 Peter 1:1 — Granville Sharp construction:** Held in abeyance — the hardest single text in this study; see Chapter 7.6.
- **Romans 9:5 — “God blessed for ever”:** Held in abeyance — a live punctuation question; see Chapter 7.7.

Every item marked “Held in abeyance” or “Contested” above is examined in full — not in outline, and not split across two different parts of this document — in the next chapter, together with the three now marked “Resolved,” so that a reader can see the reasoning that moved them rather than being asked to take the verdict on trust.

Chapter 7: The Counter-Texts — Resolved and Held in Abeyance

This chapter exists because honesty requires it, not because this study's conclusion is in doubt. Chapters 1 through 5 have already stated that conclusion plainly, on the strength of many direct, plain scriptural statements: there is one God, the Father, and one mediator between God and men, the man Christ Jesus (1 Timothy 2:5). Nothing in this chapter changes that.

This edition revises the chapter substantially, and the revision should be described before the reader meets it. Each text gathered here was taken back through a dedicated research pass, applying the four checks this study uses on any hard verse — translation, transcription, punctuation, and context — and, where the question had moved since this study's standing sources wrote, checking what has been argued since. **Three texts came back with resolutions solid enough to state plainly**, and are marked *Resolved* below rather than held: John 20:28, 1 John 5:20, and Colossians 2:9. **One moved substantially without being resolved** — Titus 2:13, which had previously been paired with 2 Peter 1:1 as a single case and is now separated from it, because the two are no longer at the same level. **Three remain genuinely unresolved and are still held**: Colossians 1:15–20, 2 Peter 1:1, and Romans 9:5. Every section below says which of these it is, and why.

One proposed line of resolution was tested first and failed, and it is reported here as a failure, because a study that publishes only its successes is not worth the reader's trust. It is sometimes suggested — this study's own compiler raised it — that Thomas's words in John 20:28 must have said something different in the Aramaic that Jesus and his disciples actually spoke, and that whatever that difference was got lost when the Gospel was written down in Greek. It is a reasonable thing to suspect. It does not survive checking. There is no manuscript variant of any consequence at John 20:28 in any Greek witness: no family of manuscripts omits the phrase, alters its case, or assigns it elsewhere. And the Syriac tradition — the closest surviving witness there is to the Aramaic-speaking church, in a sister dialect of the language Jesus spoke — reads *Mar[y] w'Alah[y]*, “my Lord and my God,” in exact agreement with the Greek. The resolution offered in Section 7.1 below is therefore a contextual one, drawn from the Gospel of John's own words about itself, and not a textual one. That distinction is worth stating out loud: this study does not defend its position with evidence that is not there.

Holding a text in abeyance is not the same as ignoring it, and it is not the same as conceding it. It means exactly what it says: this specific text, honestly examined, has not yet yielded a resolution solid enough for this study to state with the same confidence it states its main conclusion — and rather than force one, or bury the difficulty, this study says so plainly, names the text, and waits. Perhaps future study, better tools, or evidence not yet available will settle these more fully. Three of them now have been, which is the reason this chapter is shorter in one sense and longer in another than it was. But as the remaining texts stand today, they do not carry, and should not be given, the weight to overturn what the many plain, direct statements already examined in this study have shown.

It would be a disservice, after all that scripture has shown throughout this study, to hand a few unresolved texts more authority than the abundance of direct testimony that stands opposite them. That is precisely the mistake this chapter exists to prevent — not the mistake of pretending these texts do not exist, but the opposite mistake, of letting a handful of hard verses, because they are hard, quietly govern the reading of everything else. They are set out here, openly and by name, so that no reader of this study need make that mistake, either by misreading them alone or by hearing them mistaught as though they were scripture's plain, settled voice — when scripture's plain, settled voice has already been heard, at length, in the chapters before this one.

7.1 John 20:28 — “My Lord and My God” (Resolved)

John 20:25 — *“The other disciples therefore said unto him, We have seen the Lord. But he said unto them, Except I shall see in his hands the print of the nails, and put my finger into the print of the nails, and thrust my hand into his side, I will not believe.”*

John 20:27 — *“Then saith he to Thomas, Reach hither thy finger, and behold my hands; and reach hither thy hand, and thrust it into my side: and be not faithless, but believing.”*

John 20:28 — *“And Thomas answered and said unto him, My Lord and my God.”*

John 20:29 — *“Jesus saith unto him, Thomas, because thou hast seen me, thou hast believed: blessed are they that have not seen, and yet have believed.”*

The difficulty, stated at full strength before any answer is offered. The text specifies that Thomas’s statement was made *“unto him”* — grammatically addressed to Jesus, not an exclamation of praise to God merely spoken in Jesus’s presence. Jesus’s reply in the very next verse addresses Thomas’s believing, and does not correct the address or redirect it toward the Father. Bullinger’s own Companion Bible Appendix 98 (“The Divine Names and Titles in the New Testament”) lists this verse among its direct, unhedged examples of *theos* (“God”) used of the Son — meaning the strongest counter-evidence here is not an outside source; it is already sitting inside this study’s own primary reference library. And Murray Harris, whose *Jesus as God* is the standard book-length scholarly treatment of every New Testament passage where *theos* may refer to Jesus, grades this verse at his highest level of confidence. This verse is widely treated in current New Testament scholarship as one of the strongest direct ascriptions of deity to Christ anywhere in the New Testament, often read together with John 1:1 as forming a deliberate frame around the Gospel of John — “the Word was God” at the opening, “my Lord and my God” at the close. None of that is softened here.

The two responses previously on file. The first is JCING’s proposal that “my Lord and my God” is *hendiadys* — a documented figure of speech in which one single idea is expressed through two paired words, so the effect would be closer to “my godly Lord,” an exclamation of astonished reverence rather than two separate predications. This is a real figure of speech elsewhere in scripture, and applying it here is not an unreasonable instinct — but checked directly against Bullinger’s own *Figures of Speech*, this specific verse does not appear among his own catalogued Hendiadys examples anywhere in the book. The reading is JCING’s own extension of the figure, not one Bullinger himself made for this verse, and it remains the weaker of the responses. The second, and materially stronger, is the appellative reading, arrived at independently by both Norton and JCING: that “God” (*theos*) is being used the way Hebrew *Elohim* is applied elsewhere to Moses (Exodus 7:1), to judges (Exodus 21:6; 22:8–9), and to kings (Psalm 45:6; 82:1, 6) without those figures being the one supreme Deity — the same pattern documented in Section 2.3, and the same pattern Jesus himself appeals to in John 10:34–35.

The objection that blocked the appellative reading, and why it no longer holds. This study’s previous edition flagged a specific, unanswered problem with that reading, and it was a fair one: in every Old Testament case where a human is called *elohim* — Moses, the judges, the kings — it is God who assigns the title downward to the human, never a worshiper who addresses a man upward that way. Thomas’s situation appeared to invert this entirely: a monotheistic Jew, formed by the Shema he recited daily, personally addressing another human being as “my God” — literally “the God of me.” If scripture never did that anywhere else, the appellative parallel would not reach Thomas’s sentence. But scripture does do it, in two places, and one of them is a psalm this study already relies on:

Psalms 45:1 — *“My heart is inditing a good matter: I speak of the things which I have made touching the king: my tongue is the pen of a ready writer.”*

Psalms 45:6–7 — *“Thy throne, O God, is for ever and ever: the sceptre of thy kingdom is a right sceptre. Thou lovest righteousness, and hatest wickedness: therefore God, thy God, hath anointed thee with the oil of gladness above thy fellows.”*

Psalms 45:11 — *“So shall the king greatly desire thy beauty: for he is thy Lord; and worship thou him.”*

1 Chronicles 29:20 — “*And David said to all the congregation, Now bless the Lord your God. And all the congregation blessed the Lord God of their fathers, and bowed down their heads, and worshipped the Lord, and the king.*”

Read Psalm 45 in order and the direction of address is unmistakable. In verse 1 the psalmist announces, in his own voice, that he is speaking “*of the things which I have made touching the king.*” In verse 6 he then addresses that king directly: “*Thy throne, O God.*” This is not God conferring a title downward on a subordinate. It is a human writer, addressing a human king, in the second person, as *elohim* — and in the very next breath keeping the distinction between them perfectly clear: “*therefore God, thy God, hath anointed thee.*” The king is addressed as *elohim* and told in the same sentence that he has a God above him. Verse 11 completes the pattern: of that same king, the psalmist writes “*he is thy Lord; and worship thou him.*” 1 Chronicles 29:20 shows the same direction of movement in narrative rather than poetry — the whole congregation “*worshipped the Lord, and the king,*” in one sentence, without the writer feeling any need to explain that the second is not the first.

That is the asymmetry answered on its own terms. Scripture does contain worshipers addressing an anointed man as *elohim* and rendering him honor in language otherwise reserved for God, without confusion and without any suggestion that the man is the supreme Deity. And the point carries additional force here because this study already leans on Psalm 45:6 in Section 2.3, by way of Hebrews 1:8. The verse that answers this objection was already inside this study, doing other work.

The “said unto him” point, honestly weighed. Two things belong on the record, neither of which overturns the plain reading of the phrase but both of which reduce the weight it can carry alone. First, the construction “X said to Y” followed by words addressed elsewhere is attested in scripture: “*And David said to Abigail, Blessed be the Lord God of Israel, which sent thee this day to meet me*” (1 Samuel 25:32). The person spoken to is not automatically the referent of every word spoken. The honest limit is that David’s words are a blessing-formula rather than a direct personal address, so this lowers the weight of “unto him” without removing it. Second, the Greek behind Thomas’s words is articular nominative — *ho kyrios mou kai ho theos mou* — rather than the vocative forms (*kyrie, thee*) that existed and were available for direct address. Articular nominative standing in for the vocative is ordinary in Koine Greek, so this proves nothing by itself and this study does not lean on it; it is logged because the previous edition described the address as grammatically unambiguous, and it is very slightly less so than that.

What actually resolves the verse: Jesus corrected this charge himself, in this same Gospel. The whole force of the traditional reading rests on Jesus’s silence at verse 29 — on the assumption that a man who was not God would have said so. That assumption is testable, and this Gospel tests it. In John 10:33 Jesus is accused, in words that could hardly be closer to the point at issue, of “*being a man*” and making himself “*God.*” He answers the charge directly (see Section 1.3): he first shows from Psalm 82:6 that scripture itself calls men “*gods,*” and then states what he actually claimed — “*because I said, I am the Son of God?*” He was given the opportunity, under formal accusation, to affirm that he was God. He did not take it. He corrected the accuser and named himself the Son of God. Jesus’s silence at John 20:29 is therefore not silence about an unmade claim; it is silence about a claim he had already answered publicly, in this same Gospel, ten chapters earlier.

And the writer of the Gospel says what he meant the reader to conclude. Two verses after Thomas speaks, John states the purpose of his entire book (see Section 1.7): “*these are written, that ye might believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God.*” This is not an incidental remark. It is the author’s own summary of what every sign he chose to record was chosen to produce. If Thomas’s confession were the christological climax of the Gospel of John — the closing half of a frame that opened at John 1:1 — then this sentence, three sentences later, is the one place in the book where the author would have to say so. It says something else, and it says the same thing Jesus said in John 10:36. This is also what the *inclusio* argument has to step over: a frame said to close at 20:28 has to account for the fact that the author himself keeps writing for three more sentences and states a different conclusion.

What the scene itself was about. It is worth noticing how little of this passage concerns the nature of God at all. Thomas’s stated problem in verse 25 is the print of the nails. Jesus’s answer in verse 27 is “*be not*

faithless, but believing.” And Jesus’s comment in verse 29 is *“because thou hast seen me, thou hast believed”* — believed what he had been asked to believe, which was that the man in front of him was alive. The subject of the exchange, from beginning to end, is the resurrection. And eleven verses earlier in the same chapter, the risen Jesus had said to Mary: *“I ascend unto my Father, and your Father; and to my God, and your God”* (John 20:17). A reader who takes verse 28 as a statement about Jesus’s nature has to explain why the same chapter, in the mouth of the same person, calls the Father *“my God.”*

A third reading, from outside this study’s own tradition. One further response is worth logging because it comes from mainstream scholarship rather than from this study’s sources, and therefore cannot be dismissed as reasoning built backward from a conclusion. Several scholars read Thomas’s words as an acclamation of allegiance rather than an ontological statement — noting that *dominus et deus noster*, “our Lord and our God,” was the title the emperor Domitian required of his subjects, and that a Gospel circulating in the 90s would have handed persecuted readers a deliberate answer to it: this man, not Caesar, is the one to whom that allegiance belongs. On this reading the sentence is a confession of loyalty in the political-religious sense the phrase carried at the time. The honest limit is the dating: Domitian reigned from 81 to 96, so the argument works if John was written late, which is the majority view, and weakens if it was written earlier. It is offered here as a third live possibility, not as this study’s own resolution.

Verdict: Resolved — on context, not on the text. The Greek is secure and the Syriac agrees with it, so no appeal to a lost Aramaic original is available, and none is needed. What resolves the verse is the Gospel of John’s own testimony surrounding it. Jesus had already answered this exact accusation in this same Gospel by restating his claim as *“I am the Son of God”* (John 10:36). The writer states two verses after Thomas speaks that his whole book was written *“that ye might believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God”* (John 20:31). Eleven verses earlier the risen Jesus himself calls the Father *“my God”* (John 20:17). And the one objection that previously blocked the appellative reading — that scripture never shows a worshiper addressing a man as *elohim* — is answered by Psalm 45:1, 6–7, 11 and 1 Chronicles 29:20. The strongest evidence on the other side is named above rather than hidden, and is not denied its weight; it is outweighed here by the author’s own stated purpose for writing.

7.2 1 John 5:20 — “This Is the True God” (Resolved)

1 John 5:20 — *“And we know that the Son of God is come, and hath given us an understanding, that we may know him that is true, and we are in him that is true, even in his Son Jesus Christ. This is the true God, and eternal life.”*

Two translation points first, both uncontroversial, both worth clearing before the real question. “Even” is a KJV addition with no equivalent in the Greek, which simply repeats the preposition: *“...in the true one, in his Son Jesus Christ.”* Modern translations generally drop it as well. What that bare repeated “in” means, however, is a live and consequential question. Norton and JCING both render the second “in” as instrumental — “through” or “by,” meaning believers are with the true One through Christ — which keeps Father and Son distinct all the way through the verse. But a bare repeated preposition, without a connecting word like “through” actually present in the Greek, is more standardly read as appositional: “in X, that is, in Y,” identifying Y with X rather than treating Y as merely the means of reaching X. This study does not rest anything on the instrumental rendering, because on the more standard grammatical default the repetition would identify “the true one” with “his Son Jesus Christ” — and, as will be seen, the verse resolves without needing that rendering at all.

The real question, and the case against this study’s position, stated fully. The crux is who “this” (Greek *houtos*) refers to in the closing sentence, *“this is the true God, and eternal life.”* Three considerations bear on it, and two of the three run against the reading this study adopts. First, plain proximity: *“his Son Jesus Christ”* is the last-named noun before “this,” and the ordinary default in Greek, as in English, is that a demonstrative pronoun points to whatever was just named. Reading “this” as the Father requires overriding that default and reaching back past Christ to “him that is true.” Second, a modern author-specific usage study counted

roughly seventy instances of *houtos* with a personal referent across John's Gospel and epistles and found that nearly two-thirds of them refer to the Son, and none to the Father — a real corpus-level pattern, specific to this author, and unavailable to Norton in 1856. Third, it has been objected that reading "this" as the Father makes the sentence end in near-repetition, since the verse has already said twice that "we are in him that is true." These are genuine arguments and none of them is dismissed here.

What resolves the verse: the same author defines this exact phrase, in the most deliberate sentence he ever wrote. Set 1 John 5:20 beside John 17:3 and read them together. They are not merely similar; they are built out of the same three parts.

1 John 17:3 — "*And this is life eternal, that they might know thee the only true God, and Jesus Christ, whom thou hast sent.*"

The three components of 1 John 5:20 are *knowing*, *him that is true*, and *eternal life*. The three components of John 17:3 are the same three: "*that they might know*" — "*thee the only true God*" — "*this is life eternal.*" Same author, same three elements, same combination. And in John 17:3 the referent is not left to a pronoun. Jesus states it in prayer, in the plainest words available to him: the one addressed as "*the only true God*" is the Father, and Jesus Christ is named separately, in the same sentence, as the one *whom thou hast sent*. That is this writer's own formal, deliberate use of his own phrase, spoken by his Lord in the high-priestly prayer, in a construction that distinguishes Jesus from "the only true God" by naming them as two. This bears directly on the third of the three considerations above — the objection that a Father-reading makes the ending repetitious. It does not, once the letter's own vocabulary is in view. In this letter "eternal life" is not a loose synonym for salvation; it is a term with a settled home:

1 John 1:2 — "*For the life was manifested, and we have seen it, and bear witness, and shew unto you that eternal life, which was with the Father, and was manifested unto us.*"

1 John 5:11 — "*And this is the record, that God hath given to us eternal life, and this life is in his Son.*"

Eternal life "*was with the Father*"; God "*hath given*" it; and it is "*in his Son.*" The Father is its source and the Son is where it is found. So the letter's closing line, "*This is the true God, and eternal life,*" is not a redundant restatement at all. It is this letter's two governing themes named together at the close, in the order the letter has used them throughout — and it names the one the letter has consistently identified as their source. Read that way, the ending is a summary rather than a repetition, and it matches the summary the same author records in John 17:3.

Where the wider scholarship actually stands on this verse. This is worth stating precisely, because it is not the usual picture of a minority reading holding out against a settled consensus. Murray Harris — again, the standard scholarly monograph on the New Testament's use of *theos* for Jesus, written from the traditional side — does not count this verse among his confident cases; he places it in a category of passages that are possible but not likely to refer to Christ. B. F. Westcott, one of the two editors whose Greek text this study cites in Section 3.2, argued directly that in this verse the most natural reference of *houtos* is "*to the subject not locally nearest but dominant in the mind of the apostle*" — which is precisely the move Norton makes. C. H. Dodd read it the same way. Norton's own editor lists a long roster of scholars on both sides of the trinitarian question who assign "the true God" here to the Father: Erasmus, Grotius, Wetstein, Michaelis, Newcome, Rosenmüller, Winer, Lücke, De Wette, Neander, Huther, Meyer, and Hofmann among them.

What is not claimed. The nearest-antecedent default is real, and the *houtos* usage-count is real, and neither is refuted by anything above. What can fairly be said about the count is that it establishes a strong tendency rather than a rule: it is drawn from a body of writing that is largely *about* the Son, so a heavy Son-skew is what one would expect on any reading, and it does not establish that *houtos* cannot reach a more prominent remoter antecedent — which is exactly what Westcott, Dodd and Harris each conclude it does here. This study therefore states the resolution as resting on the author's own defined use of his own phrase, with the grammatical default named honestly as running the other way.

Verdict: Resolved. The writer of this letter defines “the true God” himself, in the same body of writing, at John 17:3 — where the phrase belongs to the Father and Jesus Christ is named separately as the one sent. The letter’s own account of “eternal life” (1 John 1:2; 5:11) points the same way, and dissolves the objection that a Father-reading leaves the sentence repetitious. The nearest-antecedent default does favor Christ and is stated plainly above rather than suppressed; it is outweighed by the author’s own usage. Notably, this is not a reading the traditional side rejects: the standard scholarly treatment of theos-applied-to-Jesus does not count this verse among its cases.

7.3 Colossians 2:9 — “All the Fulness of the Godhead Bodily” (Resolved)

Colossians 2:8–10 — “Beware lest any man spoil you through philosophy and vain deceit, after the tradition of men, after the rudiments of the world, and not after Christ. For in him dwelleth all the fulness of the Godhead bodily. And ye are complete in him, which is the head of all principality and power.”

The difficulty. Taken by itself, verse 9 sounds like a statement of identity. The Greek word behind “Godhead” here is *theotes* — deity, divine essence — and it is a stronger and rarer term than *theiotes* (divine nature or quality), the word used of general revelation in Romans 1:20. Add “all the fulness” and “bodily” and the sentence reads, on its face, like a claim that the whole of what God is resides in Christ in physical form. This study’s previous edition offered Ephesians 3:19 as a parallel — believers are prayed for that they might be “filled with all the fulness of God,” which is full indwelling language used of ordinary Christians with no claim that they become God — and then honestly noted that the *theotes/theiotes* word-strength difference is a real asymmetry that the Ephesians comparison does not answer. That was correct, and the verse was left unresolved on that basis.

The resolution does not require Ephesians at all. It is in Colossians, on both sides of the verse. Seven verses before the end of chapter 1, Paul has already told the reader how the fulness came to be in Christ:

Colossians 1:19 — “For it pleased the Father that in him should all fulness dwell.”

The word is the same one — *pleroma*, “fulness” — and the sentence states its origin without ambiguity. The fulness dwells in Christ *because it pleased the Father that it should*. That is the language of bestowal, of one party’s decision conferring something on another, and it is incompatible with the fulness being simply what Christ is in himself. A thing that is placed somewhere by another’s good pleasure was not already there by nature. Whatever 2:9 means, it must mean something 1:19 can support, and 1:19 makes the fulness given rather than intrinsic. This is the same pattern this study has traced everywhere else: what Christ has, he has because the Father gave it (Acts 2:36; 1 Corinthians 15:27–28).

And the next clause applies the same word to ordinary believers. Verse 10 does not begin a new subject; it completes verse 9’s sentence: “And ye are complete in him.” The word rendered “complete” is *peplerōmenoi* — from the same root as the “fulness” of verse 9. Paul says the fulness dwells in Christ, and in the same breath says that his readers are filled full in Christ. If verse 9’s language required that its subject be God in essence, verse 10 would require the same of the Colossians, which no one has ever suggested. The Ephesians 3:19 parallel this study previously offered turns out to be unnecessary: the parallel is inside the same paragraph.

The context settles what the sentence is for. Verse 8 states the problem Paul is addressing: “Beware lest any man spoil you through philosophy and vain deceit... and not after Christ.” His answer is not a definition of Christ’s essence; it is an argument about sufficiency. Everything you could go looking for elsewhere is already in Christ, and you are already filled with it in him — so do not go elsewhere. Read in its own paragraph, from verse 8 through verse 10, the passage is about where the Colossians should look, not about what Christ is made of. The *theotes/theiotes* observation remains a true lexical point and is not withdrawn; it simply no longer carries the verse, because the verse’s own neighbors say what the fulness is and how it got there.

Verdict: Resolved. Colossians 1:19 states that the fulness dwells in Christ because “it pleased the Father” that it should — conferred, not inherent — and Colossians 2:10 applies the same word to believers in the clause immediately following 2:9. Read with verse 8, the passage is an argument about the sufficiency of Christ against rival philosophies, not a definition of his essence. The stronger sense of *theotes* over *theiotes* is a real lexical observation and stands as such; it does not survive contact with the two verses on either side of the one it was raised against.

7.4 Colossians 1:15–20 — Firstborn, Creation, and the Two Creations (Held in Abeyance)

Colossians 1:15–18 — “Who is the image of the invisible God, the firstborn of every creature: For by him were all things created, that are in heaven, and that are in earth, visible and invisible, whether they be thrones, or dominions, or principalities, or powers: all things were created by him, and for him: And he is before all things, and by him all things consist. And he is the head of the body, the church: who is the beginning, the firstborn from the dead; that in all things he might have the preeminence.”

“Firstborn.” The Greek *prototokos* genuinely carries two ranges of meaning in scripture: literal birth order, or rank and preeminence. Psalm 89:27 is the clearest case of the second — David is called God’s “firstborn” in the sense of rank, being neither the first man born nor even the firstborn of his own father’s house. The clause immediately following in Colossians, “for by him were all things created,” reads naturally as the reason the title is given, which mildly favors the rank reading. Bullinger’s own *Figures of Speech*, however, groups this usage alongside Romans 8:29 and Hebrews 1:6 under the figure *Anthropopatheia* — attributes predicated of God or Christ in human terms — and specifically as a temporal attribute, “firstborn as to time.” That leans toward the plainer, more literal reading rather than the rank reading this study would otherwise favor, and it is logged honestly as a data point pulling the other way.

One consideration should be weighed against Bullinger’s classification, and named as the reason it does not settle the matter: the passage states its own purpose, and the purpose it states is rank. Verse 18 closes the unit with “that in all things he might have the preeminence.” Preeminence is precisely the rank sense of *prototokos*, and it is the text’s own summary of what the whole paragraph has been establishing. A classification Bullinger applied across a group of verses is real evidence, but it is a lower-order witness than the passage’s own closing statement of what it is doing. This study therefore treats the rank reading as better supported, without claiming the question is closed.

Verses 16 and 17. “By him were all things created... and by him all things consist” raise a separate question, and three distinct answers are on file. None is adopted here as settled; they are presented side by side, as this project’s method requires when sources do not converge.

The first is JCING’s own stated position: that verses 16–17 are a parenthesis, removable without breaking verse 15’s flow into verse 18, and that every pronoun inside that parenthesis (“by him,” “for him”) in fact refers to God the Father, not Christ. The sentence does read smoothly with verses 16–17 removed, which fits Bullinger’s own definition of a parenthesis — material “grammatically complete without it, but needed for clarity.” But Bullinger’s own taxonomy draws a sharp line between a Parenthesis (which stays on the same subject) and a *Parecbasis*, or digression (which turns aside to a different subject) — and reassigning the pronouns inside verses 16–17 to a different subject than verse 15’s is exactly what that second, different figure describes, not the first. Colossians 1:16–17 does not appear anywhere in Bullinger’s own text as an example of either figure, so this specific application is JCING’s own extension, not independently corroborated. Verse 16 also opens with the Greek word *hoti* (“because,” a causal conjunction), which grammatically explains why the subject of verse 15 is called “firstborn” — tying it back to the same subject rather than introducing an independent statement about someone else.

The second is Norton’s “new creation” reading: Norton keeps Christ as the subject of the whole passage, but reads “created” as the new, moral and spiritual creation — the kingdom Christ founded — rather than the original material cosmos, paralleling Paul’s own repeated use of the same creation-language elsewhere for the new-birth or new-order sense: “if any man be in Christ, he is a new creature” (2 Corinthians 5:17); “a

new creature” (Galatians 6:15); “*created in Christ Jesus*” (Ephesians 2:10); “*the new man, which is created in righteousness*” (Ephesians 4:24). On this reading, “thrones, dominions, principalities, powers” are the ranks and offices within Christ’s kingdom — Norton connects this directly to Matthew 19:28, “*ye also shall sit upon twelve thrones*” — not literal angelic orders created at the beginning of time.

Three observations strengthen Norton’s reading beyond what he himself offered, and all three come from inside Colossians rather than from other letters. First, this letter uses both of verse 15’s key words — “image” and “created” — of the new creation, in its own third chapter: “*And have put on the new man, which is renewed in knowledge after the image of him that created him*” (Colossians 3:10). Second, the kingdom is already the subject when verse 15 opens: two verses earlier Paul writes that the Father “*hath translated us into the kingdom of his dear Son*” (1:13). Third, the “all things” of verse 16 reappears in verse 20 as the “all things” reconciled “*through the blood of his cross,*” and verse 21 identifies who those are — “*And you, that were sometime alienated and enemies in your mind by wicked works, yet now hath he reconciled.*” Reconciliation is something done with estranged persons, not with stars and planets. Whatever “all things” means in verse 16, verses 20–21 give it a scope that fits a kingdom of reconciled people better than it fits the material cosmos.

The third is a more conservative reading worth naming on its own terms: verse 16 uses “in him,” “through him,” and “for/unto him” — sphere, agency, and goal language — but never “of/from him,” source language. Paul elsewhere keeps that distinction load-bearing: “*of him, and through him, and to him, are all things*” (Romans 11:36, of the Father); “*one God, the Father, of whom are all things... and one Lord Jesus Christ, by whom are all things*” (1 Corinthians 8:6, splitting the two explicitly in a single sentence). Colossians 1:16’s own choice of prepositions is consistent with Christ as the agent and instrument of a real, natural creation, rather than its ultimate, uncaused source — without requiring either of the other two readings’ further moves. This reading has a real, unresolved complication of its own, though: verse 16 also assigns Christ the “for him” (goal) role, and Romans 11:36 applies that same word to God the Father specifically — so the Father/Son preposition split Paul uses elsewhere is not applied with full consistency here, a point in the traditional reading’s favor that this study does not claim to have answered.

The wider structure of the passage is a genuine consideration on all three readings’ behalf, and against none of them equally: verses 15–20 form a recognized two-part hymn, pairing “*who is the image of God, firstborn of creation*” (v. 15) with “*who is the beginning, firstborn from the dead*” (v. 18), each followed by explanatory material — verses 16–17 unpacking the first pairing, verses 19–20 the second. That parallel favors keeping verses 16–17 speaking of the same figure named in verse 15, which the second and third readings above do, and the first reading’s subject-reassignment does not.

Verdict: Held in abeyance, but narrowed. “Firstborn” is genuinely ambiguous, with the passage’s own closing purpose statement (“*that in all things he might have the preeminence,*” v. 18) favoring rank and Bullinger’s classification leaning temporal. Of the three readings of verses 16–17, the first — JCING’s parenthesis, reassigning the pronouns to the Father — is the weakest, running against *hoti*, against Bullinger’s own Parenthesis/Parecbasis distinction, and against the hymn structure. The second and third both remain live, and Norton’s gains real support from Colossians 3:10, 1:13 and 1:20–21. This study does not choose between them. Note that Colossians 2:9, previously held with this passage, is now resolved separately at Section 7.3.

7.5 Titus 2:13 — “The Great God and Our Saviour” (Contested)

Titus 2:11–13 — “*For the grace of God that bringeth salvation hath appeared to all men, Teaching us that, denying ungodliness and worldly lusts, we should live soberly, righteously, and godly, in this present world; Looking for that blessed hope, and the glorious appearing of the great God and our Saviour Jesus Christ.*”

The difficulty, stated at full strength. The Greek here is *tou megalou theou kai sōtēros hēmōn Iēsou Christou* — one definite article governing two singular, personal, common nouns joined by “and” (“God and

Saviour”), followed immediately by the proper name “Jesus Christ” in apposition. Granville Sharp identified this pattern from ordinary Koine Greek usage in 1798, not as an argument devised for theology, and it favors reading both nouns as naming one and the same person: “our great God and Savior, Jesus Christ.” Daniel Wallace’s full New Testament corpus study of this construction found it holds with very high consistency once the genuinely excepted categories are set aside, and this verse falls into none of them. Bullinger’s own *Figures of Speech* treats Titus 2:13 directly, in three separate places, classifying it as Hendiadys and stating without qualification that one person is meant — Jesus Christ himself as the referent of “the great God,” whom Bullinger himself calls “our Divine Saviour.” That is not a hedge; it is Bullinger’s own settled conclusion, in this study’s own primary reference library. This carries the strongest grammatical case for the traditional reading of any text in this chapter, and it is named as such plainly.

The rebuttals previously on file, and their limits. JCING argues from the phrase “the glory of” — already present in the standard Greek text and reflected in the KJV’s “glorious appearing” — that Jesus is the glory of the great God rather than the great God himself. On inspection this does not escape the underlying construction: JCING’s own restated translation still ends by identifying “the great God” with “our Saviour Jesus Christ” appositionally. Norton takes a different route, arguing that the fuller Greek speaks of “the appearing of the glory of the great God and of our Saviour Jesus Christ” — not simply “the appearing... of the great God” — and connects this to Christ’s own repeated statements about coming “in the glory of his Father” (Matthew 16:27; Mark 8:38; Luke 9:26). On this reading the two remain distinct referents, united by a shared glory, with the Father as the one whose glory is chiefly in view. Norton also reports that Professor Moses Stuart, defending the traditional reading in his own day, conceded in print that the article-based argument for this verse “falls to the ground” — a concession on the grammar specifically, not a change of position.

What this edition adds, and it changes the balance: the letter’s own usage. This study applies a particular test to 2 Peter 1:1 in Section 7.6 below — asking how the author of that letter uses this same title elsewhere in the same letter — and there the test runs against this study’s position. Honesty requires running the same test here. Applied to Titus, it runs the other way, and it runs strongly.

Titus 1:3 — “But hath in due times manifested his word through preaching, which is committed unto me according to the commandment of God our Saviour.”

Titus 2:10 — “Not purloining, but shewing all good fidelity; that they may adorn the doctrine of God our Saviour in all things.”

Titus 3:4–6 — “But after that the kindness and love of God our Saviour toward man appeared, Not by works of righteousness which we have done, but according to his mercy he saved us, by the washing of regeneration, and renewing of the Holy Ghost; Which he shed on us abundantly through Jesus Christ our Saviour.”

In this one short letter, “God our Saviour” is used three times as a title of the Father — at 1:3, at 2:10 (three verses before the disputed text), and at 3:4. “Jesus Christ our Saviour” is used twice, at 1:4 and 3:6. And Titus 3:4–6 names both of them, distinguished, inside a single sentence: the kindness of “God our Saviour” appeared, and what he gave he “shed on us abundantly through Jesus Christ our Saviour.” Two Saviours, one the source and one the channel through whom the source acts — eight verses after 2:13, in the same letter, from the same hand. Titus 1:4 does the same in the greeting: “from God the Father and the Lord Jesus Christ our Saviour.” The pattern is not peculiar to Titus, either; the companion letter opens “by the commandment of God our Saviour, and Lord Jesus Christ, which is our hope” (1 Timothy 1:1) and repeats “God our Saviour” at 1 Timothy 2:3 — the same chapter that gives this study its title verse at 2:5.

The force of this is not that it refutes Granville Sharp. It is that by the time a reader of Titus reaches 2:13, this letter has already taught that reader that “God our Saviour” is one of its standing titles for the Father — and has already shown, once in the greeting and once in the closing chapter, that this author will name God and Jesus Christ side by side as two, using “Saviour” of each. The reading that takes 2:13 as naming one person

requires this author, in this letter, to use in one verse a phrase he uses nowhere else that way, three verses after using half of it of the Father.

A further point from the immediate context: verses 11 and 13 are a matched pair. Verse 11 says “the grace of God... hath appeared” — the Greek verb is *epephanē*. Verse 13 looks for the “glorious appearing” — the noun *epiphaneia*, from the same root. First appearing and second appearing, two verses apart, in deliberately matched language. And in verse 11, “of God” is unambiguously the Father: no one reads “the grace of God that bringeth salvation” as the grace of Jesus Christ. If the two verses are a pair — grace of God appeared, glory of the great God will appear — then “the great God” in verse 13 is most naturally the same God whose grace appeared in verse 11. This supports Norton’s route without depending on the article question at all, and it was not part of this study’s previous treatment.

What is not claimed. Sharp’s rule is a real feature of Koine Greek, and Wallace’s corpus work strengthening it is real; nothing above refutes either, and this study does not adopt the popular claim that the rule has been debunked. One point genuinely runs the other way in the immediate context and should be named: *epiphaneia* elsewhere in these letters is used of Christ’s appearing (1 Timothy 6:14; 2 Timothy 1:10, 4:1, 4:8), which is a real consideration in favor of reading verse 13 as a single reference to Christ’s own appearing. What has changed is the balance. The previous edition of this study treated Titus 2:13 and 2 Peter 1:1 as one case resting on one grammatical rule, and concluded that this study’s sources had not answered it. They still have not answered the rule. But the letter answers the reading, and that is a different and stronger kind of evidence than a rebuttal of the grammar would have been.

Verdict: *Contested, and materially changed. The grammatical case for the traditional reading stands and is not disputed here: Sharp’s rule is genuine, Wallace’s corpus study strengthens it, and Bullinger himself read this verse as naming one person. Against it stands this letter’s own usage — “God our Saviour” of the Father three times (Titus 1:3; 2:10; 3:4), “Jesus Christ our Saviour” twice (1:4; 3:6), both named as two in one sentence at 3:4–6 and again at 1:4, with the same pattern in 1 Timothy 1:1 and 2:3 — together with the matched appearing-language of Titus 2:11 and 2:13. This verse is no longer at the same level as 2 Peter 1:1 and is no longer paired with it. It is not claimed as resolved; it is stated as genuinely contested, with the weight now closer to even than the previous edition allowed.*

7.6 2 Peter 1:1 — “God and Our Saviour Jesus Christ” (Held in Abeyance)

2 Peter 1:1–2 — “Simon Peter, a servant and an apostle of Jesus Christ, to them that have obtained like precious faith with us through the righteousness of God and our Saviour Jesus Christ: Grace and peace be multiplied unto you through the knowledge of God, and of Jesus our Lord.”

This is the hardest single text in this study, and it is treated separately from Titus 2:13 for that reason. The Greek is *tou theou hēmōn kai sōtēros Iēsou Christou* — the same construction described in Section 7.5, and falling into none of the recognized exceptions to it. But 2 Peter carries an additional argument that Titus does not, and it is the stronger of the two. The same short letter uses the identical grammatical slot three more times — 1:11, 2:20 and 3:18 all read “our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ,” unambiguously naming Christ alone — with only “God” swapped in for “Lord” at 1:1. Read against the author’s own repeated usage, that argues 1:1 is doing the same single-referent thing the other three instances do. This is precisely the test applied to Titus in Section 7.5, and here it runs against this study’s position, which is why it is stated first and stated fully.

The manuscript question does not help either. A real variant exists: Codex Sinaiticus and a few other witnesses read “Lord” instead of “God,” which would align 1:1 with the letter’s other three occurrences. But the earliest and strongest evidence — Papyrus 72, Vaticanus, and the majority of witnesses — reads “God,” and the standard text-critical preference for the harder, less-expected reading points the same way: a scribe smoothing “God and Saviour” into the more familiar “Lord and Saviour” is a more natural error than the reverse. This study reports that as it stands. The variant does not rescue the verse.

What can honestly be added. Two things, and the first is modest. Verse 2 — the author’s very next sentence — distinguishes them: *“through the knowledge of God, and of Jesus our Lord.”* A writer can identify two titles in one breath and distinguish two persons in the next without contradicting himself, so this is not decisive; but it belongs on the record beside 1:11, 2:20 and 3:18, and it was absent from the previous edition’s account. Norton’s treatment of the closely related doxology at Jude 25 is worth knowing for the same reason: its best manuscript evidence reads *“the only God our Saviour, through Jesus Christ our Lord,”* explicitly distinguishing the two in a construction of similar shape.

The second is more substantial, and it locates precisely where the grammatical argument is soft. Consider 2 Thessalonians 1:12: *“according to the grace of our God and the Lord Jesus Christ.”* The Greek is *tou theou hēmōn kai kyriou Iēsou Christou* — one article, two singular personal nouns joined by “and,” followed by the proper name. That is the identical shape as 2 Peter 1:1, differing only in that the second noun is “Lord” rather than “Saviour.” Yet virtually every English translation renders 2 Thessalonians 1:12 as naming two persons, and Murray Harris — the same scholar who rates 2 Peter 1:1 among his confident cases — places 2 Thessalonians 1:12 in his lowest category, as not at all likely to call Jesus *theos*. He does the same with Ephesians 5:5, *“the kingdom of Christ and of God.”*

The reason given for the difference is that *kyrios*, “Lord,” had come to function as a quasi-proper name, and proper names are one of the rule’s recognized exceptions, whereas *sōtēr*, “Saviour,” had not. That may well be correct. But notice what it means for the argument: in these two verses the outcome is decided not by the rule but by the exemption list — by a judgment about which nouns had become name-like by the time of writing. And that judgment is made by interpreters who already know which verses they want the rule to cover. This is a precise, documentable form of the circularity objection Norton raised in general terms, and it is a better statement of it than his was, because it can be checked: the same construction, in the same corpus, is read two different ways depending on a category assignment that is asserted rather than demonstrated. A comparable case appears in the Greek Old Testament at Proverbs 24:21 — *“Fear God, my son, and the king”* — where article, noun, “and,” noun name two plainly different parties; the intervening address “my son” and the different grammatical government make it suggestive rather than decisive, and it is logged here at that weight.

None of this resolves the verse, and this study does not claim that it does. The internal-usage argument from 1:11, 2:20 and 3:18 remains unanswered. What the material above establishes is narrower: that the grammatical rule is doing less work than it appears to, and that a reader who is told this verse is settled by Greek grammar alone is being told something the grammar’s own defenders do not consistently apply. That is worth knowing. It is not a resolution.

Verdict: *Held in abeyance — the hardest single text in this study, and stated as such. The Granville Sharp construction holds here with no recognized exception available; the author’s own threefold usage at 1:11, 2:20 and 3:18 independently supports a single referent; and the manuscript evidence favors “God” over the harmonizing “Lord” variant. The counterweights are real but insufficient: verse 2 distinguishes the two in the next breath, Jude 25 shows the distinction in a similar construction, and the rule’s application to 2 Thessalonians 1:12 and Ephesians 5:5 shows that its outcome depends on an asserted exemption list rather than on the rule itself. This study names this verse as unresolved and does not pretend otherwise.*

7.7 Romans 9:5 — “God Blessed for Ever” (Held in Abeyance)

Romans 9:4–5 — *“Who are Israelites; to whom pertaineth the adoption, and the glory, and the covenants, and the giving of the law, and the service of God, and the promises; Whose are the fathers, and of whom as concerning the flesh Christ came, who is over all, God blessed for ever. Amen.”*

The live question is punctuation, and it cannot be settled from the manuscripts. The Greek text Paul wrote carried no punctuation at all — commas, periods, and paragraph breaks are all later additions, made by editors and translators long after Paul’s own hand. Where they are placed here changes the verse’s meaning

substantially, and three real construals exist among serious scholars. Read as one continuous clause about Christ (a comma after “flesh” only), the verse directly calls him “God blessed for ever” — the traditional reading, and the modern majority position; Murray Harris rates it among his confident cases. Read with a fuller stop after “flesh,” the remainder becomes an independent doxology to God the Father, grammatically separate from the preceding statement about Christ’s human descent. Norton proposes a third construal — comma after “flesh,” a further stop after “over all” — yielding “he who was over all was God, blessed for ever,” read as praise of God’s own providential headship over the history of Israel just recounted, not a doxology to Christ at all.

None of these three is invented to fit a predetermined conclusion; all three are defended on independent grounds by serious nineteenth- and twentieth-century scholarship. There is a real, if weak, manuscript data point on the punctuation question: four of the oldest Greek uncials and roughly twenty-six minuscules place a stop after “flesh,” by the original scribe or a later corrector. The standard caution applies, though — early New Testament punctuation is, in the words of textual scholar Bruce Metzger, “so sporadic and haphazard that one cannot infer with confidence the construction given by the punctuator,” and both the punctuated manuscripts and the earliest patristic citations postdate Paul’s own autograph by generations.

The case for the traditional reading, fairly stated. Paul’s phrase “according to the flesh” elsewhere sets up a flesh/spirit contrast specifically about Christ (Romans 1:3–4), which a following “God over all” clause completes naturally. Paul’s other doxologies are always tied grammatically to their immediately preceding context (Romans 1:25; 11:36; 2 Corinthians 11:31; Galatians 1:5), making a free-standing doxology to the Father here Paul’s only exception to his own pattern. And “over all” is applied to Christ elsewhere in the New Testament (Acts 10:36, “Lord of all”; Romans 10:12), so the phrase is not unprecedented as a description of him.

The case on the other side, fairly stated. The nineteenth-century Greek grammarian Winer showed that the convention of placing “blessed” first in a doxology is not an absolute rule — the Greek Old Testament itself breaks it — so Romans 9:5’s actual word order is not decisive against a Father-directed reading. A genuine grammatical parallel exists elsewhere in Paul for an elided “is” with *theos* as its predicate (2 Corinthians 1:21; 5:5; Hebrews 3:4). And if Paul meant to assert Christ’s deity this explicitly, he introduces it with no explanation or defense anywhere in the letter, which is unusual for a claim this consequential to a Jewish audience for whom, as Justin Martyr’s later debate with Trypho shows, such a claim needed real argument, not a passing title. The early Greek Fathers, per Norton, explicitly denied that Christ was called “God over all,” a title they associated specifically with the Sabellian heresy.

One observation this edition adds, and it is the strongest new item on this verse. The phrase in dispute is *ho ōn epi pantōn* — “who is over all.” Paul uses that phrase, in almost exactly that form, of the Father, in a passage that is itself a confession of one God:

Ephesians 4:4–6 — “There is one body, and one Spirit, even as ye are called in one hope of your calling; One Lord, one faith, one baptism, One God and Father of all, who is above all, and through all, and in you all.”

The Greek behind “who is above all” in Ephesians 4:6 is *ho epi pantōn* — the same words as Romans 9:5’s *ho ōn epi pantōn*. This is the closest verbal parallel to the disputed phrase anywhere in Paul, and it names the Father. It is worth adding that Ephesians 4:4–6 lists “one Lord” as a separate item from “one God and Father of all,” so this is not a passage in which the two are being merged. The previous edition of this study answered the “over all” point with Acts 10:36 and Romans 10:12; neither of those is this phrase, and neither is Paul. This does not settle the punctuation, and it is not offered as if it did. It does establish that “who is over all” is Pauline language for the Father, which is precisely what was in dispute.

A small correction to how this study previously stated the doxology argument also belongs here. The list of Paul’s other doxologies (Romans 1:25; 11:36; 2 Corinthians 11:31; Galatians 1:5) was cited above for its grammatical point — that Paul ties doxologies to their context — and that point stands. What was not said is that every one of those four doxologies is addressed to God the Father. That is not a small omission, since the addressee is the thing actually in dispute. The wider letter-level pattern points the same way: “God, even

the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ” (Romans 15:6), and Paul’s statement that the Son himself will be subject to “him that put all things under him” (1 Corinthians 15:27–28).

Verdict: *Held in abeyance — genuinely contested, and unresolved in either direction. The punctuation ambiguity is real, attested by early manuscript stop-placement rather than invented, and Norton’s construal is grammatically defensible on independent grounds. But the traditional reading is equally defensible and holds the modern commentator majority. What this edition adds is not a resolution but a correction of weight: Ephesians 4:6 uses Paul’s own phrase “who is above all” of the Father, in a one-God confession that lists “one Lord” separately, and all four of Paul’s comparable doxologies are addressed to the Father. The verse remains open.*

Closing note. Seven texts, examined honestly and in full: John 20:28; 1 John 5:20; Colossians 2:9; Colossians 1:15–20; Titus 2:13; 2 Peter 1:1; and Romans 9:5. Three are now resolved, and the reasoning that resolved them is set out above at length rather than asserted, so that a reader can test it rather than take it. One — Titus 2:13 — has moved far enough to be separated from the verse it was formerly paired with, and is stated as contested. Three remain unresolved and are named as such, with 2 Peter 1:1 identified plainly as the hardest text in this study. None of the seven is dismissed here, minimized, or explained away by a rebuttal that does not actually hold up; and one proposed resolution that did not hold up — the suggestion of a lost Aramaic original behind John 20:28 — is reported at the head of this chapter as a failure rather than quietly dropped. That is what it means to hold a text in abeyance, and what it should mean to release one. It is offered in the confidence that naming a hard verse plainly is not a threat to the truth scripture has already shown at length in the chapters before this one, but a way of taking that truth, and its readers, seriously.

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