existed in perfect, eternal, loving community. The Father, Son and Holy Spirit have always been and always will be one in nature, will and purpose.

IX. God the Son

A. His virgin birth

Jesus' conception was miraculous. He was conceived of the Holy Spirit and born of the virgin Mary. Angelic announcements to Joseph and Mary preceded His birth (Matt. 1:20b-25; see also Luke 1:26-38).

- 1. Theological implications of the virgin birth: The entirety of the Christian faith is dependent upon Jesus having been born of God. If Jesus' father had been human, the following would have been true:
 - a) He would have inherited Adam's fallen nature, and His death would not have been vicarious or substitutionary.
 - b) He would not have been infinite, and even if some method could have been arranged to avoid a corporate identity with Adam, He could not have died for the world. He would have been merely a sincere, zealous but finite religious leader.
 - c) He could not have been the "only begotten" of the Father, the unique, infinite Son of God. The denial of the virgin birth is a virtual denial of the deity of Christ.
 - d) He would have been, at best, a spiritual genius with unusual religious insight, not the Lamb of God who fulfilled and satisfied all requirements of the Law and the Old Testament sacrificial system. Only a divine and infinite offering could make an effective, all-encompassing, once-for-all sacrifice for sin. Christ's sacrifice had the authority to free all creation, for He is the creator of all things (Col. 1:15-18).

- 2. New Testament support for the virgin birth: In Matthew 1:16, the conclusion of Joseph's genealogy states that Jesus was born of Mary: "And Jacob begot Joseph the husband of Mary, of whom was born Jesus who is called Christ." The "by whom" in the Greek (ex hes) is singular, feminine gender, making the birth to be "by Mary" only even though the genealogy is Joseph's. Paul stated that Jesus was "born of a woman" (Gal. 4:4). That terminology, in conjunction with the other genealogical references, undeniably indicates Christ's virgin birth.
- 3. Old Testament prophecies regarding the virgin birth: Progressive revelation in the Old Testament points toward the supernatural virgin birth of Jesus. Various New Testament scriptures confirm that the Old Testament prophecies listed below were fulfilled in Jesus' birth.
 - a) Genesis 3:15 prophesied about the woman's Seed: "And I will put enmity between you and the woman, And between your seed and her Seed; He shall bruise your head, And you shall bruise His heel."

Fulfillment: Matthew 1:16 states that Jesus was born "of Mary"; Galatians 4:4 states that He was "born of a woman."

b) Genesis 22:18 prophesied of the seed that will bless the entire earth: "In your seed all the nations of the earth shall be blessed, because you have obeyed My voice."

Fulfillment: "Now to Abraham and his Seed were the promises made. He does not say, 'And to seeds,' as of many, but as of one, 'And to your Seed,' who is Christ" (Gal. 3:16).

c) Isaiah 11:1-2 prophesied of the rod and branch of Jesse: "There shall come forth a Rod from the stem of Jesse, And a Branch shall grow out of his roots. The Spirit of the LORD shall rest upon Him, The Spirit of wisdom and understanding, The Spirit of counsel and might, The Spirit of knowledge and of the fear of the Lord."

Fulfillment: Matthew begins his gospel with the words, "The book of the genealogy of Jesus Christ, the son of David..." (Matt. 1:1).

d) Isaiah 7:14 prophesied of the virgin birth of Immanuel: "Therefore the Lord Himself will give you a sign: Behold, the virgin shall conceive and bear a Son, and shall call His name Immanuel."

Fulfillment: An angelic announcement preceded the birth of Jesus. Mary was told that she would bring forth a child who would be the Son of the Highest, and in spite of her not "knowing" a man (Luke 1:34), it would happen by the Holy Spirit's "overshadowing" (Luke 1:35).

4. Orthodox creeds concerning the virgin birth: The Westminster Catechism defines the doctrine of the virgin birth as follows: "Christ the Son of God, became man, by taking to himself a true body and a reasonable soul, being conceived by the power of the Holy Ghost, in the womb of the Virgin Mary, and born of her yet without sin." The Apostles' Creed, which sums up the belief of the early church, states this of Jesus: "conceived by the Holy Ghost, born of the Virgin Mary." 13

B. His nature

Jesus had a divine nature and a human nature, yet He was one person, not two. He was the "Son of God" and the "Son of Man." However, Jesus' two natures did not result in a dual personality. Rather, God and flesh-and-blood existed in perfect harmony in Jesus Christ (1 Tim. 2:5). Jesus existed in the form of God and was equal with God, but He took upon Himself the form of a servant and was made in the likeness of humanity. The Greek *homo-ioma* means "real likeness," but His likeness was not merely human. Jesus was a real man, but He was not merely a human. Jesus was born in the flesh, lived a physical life and died a physical death. Even so, He was also the Ancient of Days (John 8:58).

¹² The Westminster Larger Catechism, accessed at http://www.opc.org/lchtml (January 17, 2008).

^{13 &}quot;The Apostles' Creed," accessed at http://www.reformed.org/documents/index.htme?mainframe+http://reformed.org/documents/apostles_creed.html (January 17, 2008).

- 1. The humanity of Jesus: John warned against a heresy that denied the humanity of Jesus (1 John 4:1-3). Some believers have been so intent on maintaining the deity of Christ Jesus that they have minimized His humanity. Jesus did not merely have a brush with humanity; He took to Himself a genuine human nature with every human attribute except sinfulness. His human nature was in submission to His divine nature without sacrificing any of its humanness. The following is evidence of His humanity:
 - a) Jesus was born a natural infant in Bethlehem (Luke 2:7).
 - b) He grew up in the normal manner of a child (Luke 2:39-40).
 - c) He grew up in subjection to His parents (Luke 2:51-52).
 - d) He was traced through two genealogies: one of Joseph (Matt. l), and one of Mary (Luke 3:23-38).
 - e) Scripture refers to Him as "The Seed of Woman," "The Seed of Abraham" and "The Son of David." These references link Jesus to the human race.
 - f) Jesus was tempted and tested at every point of human weakness, yet He remained without sin. It was perfectly in order for Him to be tested to demonstrate, as the "Last Adam," His perfect obedience, and as the Lamb of God that He was "without spot or blemish" (Matt. 4:1-11; 26:36-46; Luke 4:1-13; Heb. 2:18; 4:15).
 - g) He called Himself a "man" (John 8:40); others called Him a man: "For there is one God and one Mediator between God and men, the Man Christ Jesus" (1 Tim. 2:5). He called Himself or was called the "Son of Man" 70 times throughout Scripture, e.g., John 8:28.
 - h) The Bible declares that Jesus is the believer's High Priest (Heb. 4:14-16). The Old Testament stated that priests were to be chosen from among the people to be their representative. To be the High Priest of all

believers, Jesus had to share the believer's state (Heb. 5:1-10). The true High Priest must also be able to approach the throne of God on his own merit. Jesus the Son of God represents God to people, and conversely people to God. The believer's High Priest is the Godman, "...having become High Priest forever according to the order of Melchizedek" (Heb. 6:20).

- i) Jesus experienced human feelings and sensations; He experienced hunger, thirst, tears and fatigue. He suffered, shed His blood, died and was buried.
- j) Even after the resurrection, when Jesus had a glorified body, Jesus invited Thomas to touch His hands and side to feel His wounds. Jesus retained His humanity along with His divinity. According to Revelation 19:11-16, Jesus will return to reign on earth. In Revelation 22, Jesus is described as being with the Father in the New Jerusalem.
- 2. The divinity of Jesus: Human reasoning alone cannot fully comprehend the dual nature of Jesus. However, when faith is added, it is possible to accept the Scripture-revealed mystery that Jesus was both human and divine. The following is evidence of Jesus' divinity:
 - a) Old Testament prophets foretold of a Redeemer and gave Him divine names:
 - (1) Isaiah called him "Wonderful, Counselor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace" (Isa. 9:6) and "Immanuel," or God with us (Isa. 7:14).
 - (2) Jeremiah referred to him as "THE LORD OUR RIGHTEOUSNESS [Yahweh Tsidkenu]" (Jer. 23:6).
 - b) He is called God and Lord in the New Testament (John 1:1; 20:28; Tit. 2:13; Heb. 1:8).

- c) He is called the unique Son of God (John 1:14; 3:16). The term "only begotten" (Gr., monogenes) means "unique, of the very same kind." A host of scriptures refer to Jesus as the "Son of God" (John 5:25; Rom. 8:3; 1 John 2:22-23).
- d) Jesus declared himself to be one with the Father (John 10:30; 14:9).
 - e) Scripture teaches Jesus is preexistent (John 1:1; 8:58; 17:5).
 - f) Divine attributes were ascribed to Jesus:
 - (1) He is omnipotent (Matt. 28:18, TMB).
 - (2) He is omniscient (John 2:24-25; 16:30; Col. 2:1-3).
 - (3) He is omnipresent (Matt. 28:20).
 - (4) He is eternal (John 1:1-2; Col. 1:17; Heb. 7:24).
 - (5) He is immutable (Heb. 13:8).
 - (6) He is creator (John 1:10; Eph. 3:9; Col. 1:16; Heb. 1:10).
 - (7) He is holy (Heb. 7:26; 1 John 3:5).
 - (8) He is forgiver (Mark 2:5; Luke 7:48).
 - (9) He is judge (John 5:22; Acts 17:31; 2 Cor. 5:10).
 - g) Jesus was aware of and declared His unique relationship as the Son of God to the Father and to the Holy Spirit (John 15:26).

h) Worship was directed toward Jesus. Worship belongs only unto God Almighty (Exod. 20:3-5). Yet, Christ received worship without objection or protest (Matt. 14:33). At Jesus' birth, the wise men paid homage unto Him (Matt. 2:11). Angels were commanded to worship Him (Heb. 1:6). Jesus is God, the second person of the Trinity, coequal and coeternal with the Father. Therefore, Jesus is and forever will be worshiped as God.

Some individuals and movements have denied the deity of Christ. Jesus' deity was denied by the Ebionites (A.D. 107) and then later by Arias and his followers (325 A.D.). Christ's deity has also been questioned by liberal theologians as well as Deists, Unitarians, Christian Scientists, Jehovah's Witnesses and Mormons. Some who have professed belief in Christ's deity actually believe in a created Christ who was above men but less than God, or they believe that Jesus was "divine" in the sense that all men may be divine. Regardless, the mainstream of the church has always held to the doctrines of the Trinity and the deity of Christ.

C. His works

Jesus was a worker. He said, "My Father has been working until now, and I have been working" (John 5:17). He stated to the disciples, "My food is to do the will of Him who sent Me, and to finish His work" (John 4:34). Near the end of His earthly ministry, Jesus proclaimed to the Father, "I have finished the work which You have given Me to do" (John 17:4). Any study of the Christian faith must interpret the meaning of Christ's work on earth. God Himself, in the person of the Son, visited the world to redeem out of the world a people for His own possession. To understand the foundations of salvation and all Christian life, it is crucial to study the saving work of Christ. Many theologians have categorized Jesus' work into three general areas: (1) His work as a prophet, (2) His work as a priest and (3) His work as a king. There were three types of Old Testament leaders, commissioned by God, who were ushered into their offices by the symbolic act of being anointed with oil. This act signified the fullness of the Holy Spirit. While ministering on earth, Jesus was called both the "Messiah" and the "Christ," terms meaning "the

anointed one." Christ, God's Anointed, fulfilled all three ministries as the ultimate prophet, priest and king.

- 1. Jesus the prophet: A prophet is commissioned by God with the pri-1. Jesus the proposed in the pri-mary task of making God's will and character known to His people. Often prophets will proclaim God's will by foretelling future events. Moses was the greatest Old Testament prophet, having proclaimed to the Israelites the will of God in the form of the Law. Moses also spoke on behalf of God when he foretold the coming of the greatest of all prophets (Deut. 18:18). Centuries later, when Jesus addressed the synagogue at Nazareth, He applied to Himself a Messianic prophecy from Isaiah 61 (Luke 4:18-21). After healing a lame man at the Beautiful Gate, Peter addressed the gathered crowd and declared Jesus was the promised prophet who fulfilled Moses' prophecy (Acts 3:25-26). The author of Hebrews further expressed the prophetic mission of Jesus to speak God's will to the people (Heb. 1:1-2). Five functions usually characterize the ministry of a prophet: (1) preaching, (2) teaching, (3) discipling, (4) predicting and (5) performing miracles. Not every prophet's ministry included all five functions, yet the lives of several Old Testament prophets, e.g., Elijah, Isaiah and Jeremiah, included a full range of these functions. Most certainly the prophetic ministry of Jesus manifested all of them.
 - a) Preaching: Jesus began His prophetic ministry with preaching (Mark 1:14). Approximately 50 of the discourses of Jesus are recorded in the New Testament. The best known of these messages is called the "Sermon on the Mount" (Matt. 5-7). The preaching of Jesus was revolutionary. He called people to change their ways (Mark 1:15). To Nicodemus, Jesus firmly stated that people must be born again (John 3:3). Yet Jesus did not preach as a doomsday prophet; He always held out hopeful assurance for those who would respond and repent (Luke 19:10). Jesus did not merely declare the word of God; He was the Word of God incarnate.
 - b) Teaching: In ancient times the title of "master" or "teacher" conveyed great honor. The Bible states that people were astonished with Jesus' teaching (Mark 1:21-22; John 7:40, 46). Jesus' parables amazed the most astute and learned of the day, yet His teaching even attracted

the children. The parable of "The Good Samaritan" still resounds today as perhaps one of the best known stories in the Western world. Considering the profound impact that Jesus' life and words have had on people throughout the centuries, we can confidently assert that Jesus is the greatest of all teachers. He did not merely quote authorities; He is the Authority. He did not merely show the way; He is the Way. He did more than teach truth; He is Truth forevermore.

- c) Discipling: Closely connected with Jesus' ministry of teaching was that of making disciples. Some of Jesus' disciples became the apostles of the church and were the first to preach the message of Jesus as the crucified and risen Savior. The gospel of Mark records Jesus' discipleship call to Simon, Andrew, James and John (Mark. 1:16-20). Later, Jesus appointed twelve that He would disciple and send out to spread the good news (Mark 3:14-15). These passages describe three purposes for making disciples: (1) that they might be with Jesus, (2) that they might preach and (3) that they might heal the sick and cast out demons. If these are in the order of priority, the first matter of importance was that of Jesus' followers spending time in His presence. Disciples did not merely learn the content of books and lectures; rather, they matured by being in the presence of their teacher, following His example and emulating His character. Later, when Jesus gave His disciples the Great Commission to go and make disciples of all nations, they understood the term "making disciples" because they had experienced discipleship firsthand. Believers are to make disciples for Christ in the same manner Jesus did. Jesus taught His followers how to preach the gospel of the Kingdom, not in words only, but also by the power of His deliverance. Finally, He gave His disciples power to heal the sick and to cast out demons (Mark 16:17-18).
- d) Predicting: Another important function of a prophet is foretelling future events. If a prophet's prediction came to pass and glorified God, then that prophet was authenticated as one sent from God. While Jesus devoted the majority of His ministry to preaching and teaching, He also predicted a number of future events:

- (1) His own death and resurrection (Matt. 16:21)
- (2) The persecution of the church (Luke 12:11)
- (3) The coming of another Helper, the Holy Spirit, to abide in the church (John 14:16-17; 16:7-11)
- (4) The destruction of the temple and the city of Jerusalem in A.D. 70 (Luke 19:43-44; 21:6)
- (5) The signs and conditions of the last days (Matt. 24; Mark 13; Luke 21)
 - (6) The church's triumph (Matt. 16:18)
- e) Miracles: A frequent mark of Old Testament prophets was that the supernatural attended their ministry. Moses' miraculous deeds ranged from the plagues of Egypt and the parting of the Red Sea to bringing water from the rock. Elijah called down fire from heaven, multiplied the widow's meal and oil, raised her son from the dead and was caught up to heaven in a whirlwind. Elisha brought healing to Naaman the leper, raised up the Shunammite's son and performed numerous other miracles. Isaiah brought healing to King Hezekiah. Daniel stopped the mouths of lions and interpreted dreams. The miraculous also characterized the ministry of Jesus. Yet He was not simply a worker of miracles; He was the fountainhead of the supernatural. Jesus' birth was a miracle, and His resurrection from the dead was the miracle of all miracles. During His life on earth, He demonstrated His deity by such wonders as walking on water, calming the storm, turning water into wine and multiplying the bread and fish. However, by far the greater number of Jesus' signs and wonders were miracles of compassion upon the sick, afflicted and demon-possessed. Jesus came to destroy the works of the devil, thus imparting to the church the power to carry on the ministry of deliverance. Jesus gave assurance of the continuance of miracles in the Great Commission (Mark 16:15-18).

- 2. Jesus the great High Priest: While a prophet represented God to humanity, a priest represented humanity to God. Three things characterized the work of a priest: (1) he was chosen from among those he represented to God (Exod. 28:1), (2) he offered sacrifices to God to atone for sin (Lev. 4:13-21), and (3) as a mediator, he made intercession for the people (Isa. 53:12; 1 Tim. 2:5). Jesus met all of these qualifications (Heb. 5:1-5; 10:11-12) and has assumed the priestly role on behalf of believers (Heb. 7:24-26).
 - a) Jesus emptied Himself to become human. He did not hold onto the prerogatives of deity but took upon Himself the form of a servant who was made in the likeness of humanity to identify fully with those for whom He would make atonement (Phil. 2:5-8). Jesus is qualified to stand before God the Father on behalf of believers because He made himself one with humanity: "Therefore, in all things He had to be made like His brethren, that He might be a merciful and faithful High Priest in things pertaining to God, to make propitiation for the sins of the people. For in that He Himself has suffered, being tempted, He is able to aid those who are tempted" (Heb. 2:17-18).
 - b) Jesus is both priest and sacrifice. Timothy stated of Jesus' priestly role that "...there is one God and one Mediator between God and men, the Man Christ Jesus" (1 Tim. 2:5). John the Baptist introduced Jesus as "the Lamb of God," speaking of His sacrifice for man's sin (John 1:29). Peter also spoke of Jesus as "a lamb without blemish and without spot" (1 Pet. 1:19). In the final human drama described in the book of Revelation, the One who sits on heaven's throne—God Almighty—searches for one worthy to receive the title deed to the Kingdom. No one is found but one called "the Lion of the Tribe of Judah" and "the Root of David."

When He approaches the throne to take the document, this victorious One is pictured as a slain lamb. All of heaven and the church then sing a new song declaring the worthiness of the Lamb (Rev. 5:9). Jesus Christ is both the "Lion of the Tribe of Judah" and the "Lamb who was slain." He is the priest who mediates between God and humanity as well as the sacrifice who takes away the sin of the world.

c) Jesus makes atonement and intercession for believers. Jesus not only died to make atonement for sin, but also perpetually intercedes for believers before the Father (Rom. 8:34; Heb. 10:12). Jesus saves from the guilt of sin all who place their faith in Him. He also intercedes continuously for those who believe in Him, saving them from the power and presence of sin (Heb. 7:24-25). Jesus is the great High Priest. Having fully identified with human frailties, He now represents believers to the Father so they may have access to the throne of grace. He is also the perfect sacrifice for sin. Through the blood and sacrifice of Jesus, believers receive atonement. Finally, He is the interceding advocate for every believer.

d) Jesus' priesthood is likened to that of Melchizedek. Little is known of Melchizedek; Genesis 14:18-20 contains the historic account of this priest in three short verses. The psalmist referred to Melchizedek in Psalm 110:4, a Messianic psalm. Peter applied this psalm to Jesus (Acts 2:34-35) as did the writer of Hebrews (1:13). Melchizedek was an earthly king of Salem, but he had been appointed to the priesthood of the Most High God by direct revelation. In other words, his office was not dependent upon a priestly dynasty. Even though he was human, his priesthood was divine and endless in nature. Since the priesthood of Levi (and Aaron) was not able to offer sacrifices that could take away sin (Heb. 10:4), a high priest of a perpetual order needed to come who could destroy Satan's kingdom. The Levitical priesthood was under the old covenant that was destined to come to an end (Heb. 7:18). The priesthood of Jesus is under the new covenant of grace and is eternal (Heb. 7:24-25).

Hebrews 7 compares the priesthood of Jesus to that of Melchizedek. First, Melchizedek was more than a priest; he was also a king. In fact, by both name and title, Melchizedek held a royal distinction. His name means "King of Righteousness," and his title as King of Salem (Jerusalem) means "King of Peace." Jesus holds this same royal distinction. As the "King of Righteousness" (Isa. 32:1) and "Prince of Peace" (Isa. 9:6), Jesus embodies the very essence of the traits represented by Melchizedek's priesthood. Though Jesus fulfilled a number of aspects of the Levitical priesthood (e.g., entering within the veil), Levi was not a sufficient type for His priesthood. Priests were those from the tribe of

Levi, and Jesus' earthly lineage was of Judah (Heb. 7:14). Melchizedek, however, represented a priesthood that was superior to the Levitical for the following reasons:

- (1) Abraham, the great-grandfather of Levi, paid tithes to Melchizedek, his superior (Heb. 7:4).
- (2) Abraham was blessed by Melchizedek; "the lesser is blessed by the greater" (Heb. 7:6-7).
- (3) Levitical priests must be able to trace their genealogy; no parentage or genealogy is recorded for Melchizedek although the book of Genesis is full of genealogies (Heb. 7:3).
- (4) The deaths of Levi, Aaron and Eleazar are recorded. No mention is made of the birth or death of Melchizedek; his priesthood was by direct divine appointment and not dependent upon tribal status or parentage. Therefore, in type, the priesthood of Melchizedek is perpetual (Heb. 7:15-17).
- (5) The priestly work of the Levitical priesthood had virtue only because, in the "fullness of time," the perfect priest would come and offer the perfect sacrifice (Heb. 10:1-12).
- (6) The perfect priest, prophesied by the psalmist in Psalm 110:2, would be a royal priest.
- 3. Jesus the king: Christ's work has been presented in this study under the categories of (1) prophet, (2) priest and (3) king. As prophet, He is the message-bearer. As priest, He is the sin-bearer. As king, He is the scepter-bearer. Moses prophesied His coming as a prophet; Isaiah prophesied His coming as the priest, and Daniel prophesied His coming as Messiah and King. The angel announced the birth of Jesus to Mary as a royal proclamation (Luke 1:31-33). Christ's kingly work will be examined under three headings:

a) Jesus' kingly mission: Even at His birth, there was awareness that Jesus was a king. Herod asked the Magi to tell him the location of the baby who had been born "King of the Jews" (Matt. 2:2). Jesus Himself was aware of His royal mission as announced by John the Baptist (Matt. 3:1-2). In Mark 11:1-11, Jesus presented Himself to Jerusalem as their king as prophesied in Zechariah 9:9. When Pilate asked Him if He were a king, Jesus answered affirmatively but added that His kingdom is not of this world (John 18:36). The cross on which Jesus died bore the title, "Jesus of Nazareth, the King of the Jews" (John 19:19). After the resurrection, during the forty days on earth before the ascension, Jesus' central focus was His kingdom (Acts 1:3).

b) Jesus' kingdom: Christ represented His kingdom as both present and future (Mark 1:14-15). Some scholars insist that the kingdom of God is entirely future, an eschatological kingdom. Such a conclusion is not plausible when two key factors are considered. First, the Greek word for "kingdom" (basileia) does not refer to the sphere over which Christ rules but to the rule itself. Wherever Christ Jesus is sovereign, there is His rule (kingdom). Wherever Christ is Lord, there His kingdom is present. Second, when people place their faith in Christ, they are delivered from Satan's kingdom into Christ's kingdom (Col. 1:13). During Jesus' earthly ministry which culminated in the crucifixion and resurrection, He overturned the kingdom of Satan (Luke 11:20). Further, in connection to the founding of the church, Jesus said to the disciples, "And I will give you the keys of the kingdom of heaven, and whatever you bind on earth will be bound in heaven, and whatever you loose on earth will be loosed in heaven" (Matt.16:19). George Eldon Ladd had the following to say about the present manifestation of Christ's kingdom:

Men may now experience the reality of the reign of God...The presence of Christ on earth had for its purpose the defeat of Satan, his binding, so that God's power may be a vital reality in the experience of those who yield to God's reign by becoming the disciples of

Jesus. In Christ, the kingdom in the form of its power has come among men.¹⁴

c) Jesus' kingly return: As the culmination of Christ's work on earth, He will come again to reign as King of Kings and Lord of Lords (Rev. 19:16; 20:6). Jesus fulfilled the prophecies of the coming Messiah. His kingdom was not a visible realm with a throne and a capitol. Rather, during His earthly ministry, He defeated Satan and initiated a kingdom of righteousness (Col. 1:13). At the culmination of this age, Christ the King will come and establish His kingdom on earth as well as in heaven, and all believers shall reign with Him.

X. God the Holy Spirit