

(The Trinity) Not Expressly Revealed

The doctrine of the Trinity is rather a doctrine of inference and of indirect intimation, deduced from what is revealed respecting the Father and the Son and the Holy Ghost, and intimated in the notices of a plurality of persons in the Godhead, in the form of baptism, and in some of the apostolic benedictions, than a doctrine directly and explicitly declared. . . . We have now come to the limit of explicit revelation, and are entering upon the region of reason and inference. . . .

I admit that we have not the same clear light to conduct us which have hitherto enjoyed. I admit that a doctrine of inference ought never to be placed on a footing of equality with a doctrine of direct and explicit revelation. It is very obvious, that, in so far as our belief of any doctrine is the result of inference, it is not an exercise of faith in the testimony of God, but in the accuracy of our own reasoning (James Carlile, *Jesus Christ the Great God our Saviour*)

Our belief in the Trinity, the co-eternity of the Son of God with his Father, the proceeding of the Spirit from the Father and the Son, . . . these, with such other principle points, . . . are in Scripture nowhere to be found by express literal mention; only deduced they are out of Scripture by collection. (Richard Hooker, *Ecclesiastical Polity*)

There are many things, which, although they are not read expressly and definitely in Holy Scripture, yet, by the common consent of all Christians, are attained from it. For instance, "That in the ever blessed Trinity three distinct persons are to be worshipped. . . ." (Bishop Beveridge, *Tracts for the Times*)

It is reasonable to expect, that those doctrines which form the leading articles of any system should be plainly stated in the book which professes to make that system known. (Dr. Wardlaw)

The more you recede from the Scriptures by inference and consequences, the more weak and dilute are your positions. (Lord Bacon)

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Measuring Progress in the Early Church

On three occasions, the early church used speaking in tongues as an indicator for measuring progress (Acts 2:4; 10:46; 19:6). On nine occasions in Acts, the apostles measured progress by baptisms (2:41; 8:12; 8:13; 8:38; 9:18; 16:15; 16:33; 18:8; 19:5). We can find over twenty instances in Acts where progress was measured by the fact that people were obedient to the Gospel (2:41; 4:4; 4:32; 5:14; 6:7; 8:12; 8:13; 8:14; 9:42; 10:44; 11:1; 11:17; 11:21; 13:12; 13:48; 13:49; 14:1; 16:5; 16:14; 17:12; 17:34; 18:8; 18:27-28; 19:10; 19:18-20; 21:20; 21:25). This latter method of measuring progress is much more difficult and complex than the first two. First, it implies that these people were indoctrinated. For all but the most faithful Jews, teaching would have been a very lengthy process.

Secondly, this standard of measuring progress would require that someone who was well established in the faith, stayed with these people long enough and in a close enough relationship to know how they lived and believed. It seems unlikely anyone could make such claims without having sufficient knowledge of the people, their habits, their customs, and the practices of the religion from which they were converted.

The only way this can be done is for someone to spend time with these people. This person must understand both the Gospel and the people to whom he is preaching. This becomes much more complex when we deal with people of a strange culture. Until someone has met these two criteria, we cannot know what we are seeing, nor how to evaluate progress.

No one can go into a foreign country which has a vast cultural difference from

his experiences and understand the people without spending a considerable amount of time among the people and studying their cultural and religious beliefs. Any serious evangelistic effort, whether at home or abroad should follow the Apostolic example of measuring progress, not only by counting those who spoke in tongues and those who were baptized, but also by knowing whether or not those people were obedient to the Gospel, since the Gospel regulates all aspects of human behavior. A good understanding of the scriptural term "convert" and an application thereof would be in order.

The concept of "converting" is essential to New Testament teachings. The root word in the Greek is "strefo" meaning "to twist, turn, bend, or steer" and counting its various forms, occurs eighteen times in the New Testament relative to religious conversion (Matthew 13:15; 18:3; 27:3; Mark 4:12; Luke 22:32; John 12:40; Acts 3:19; 9:35; 11:21; 14:15; 15:19; 26:18, 20; 28:27; 1 Thessalonians 1:9; James 5:19, 20; 1 Peter 2:25). In a theological sense, it means "to make a complete change." This term is used negatively in Acts 7:39; Galatians 4:9; and 2 Peter 2:22. Jesus taught conversion; the early church taught and practiced conversion.

There are three elements in true and complete conversion. To be truly converted, one must have a "doctrinal conversion." In this case, a person understands, believes and obeys Bible doctrines. A "spiritual conversion" is another necessary element. One who is converted spiritually, will be filled with the Holy Ghost, initially speaking in tongues, and subsequently walking in the light of the Gospel. A "moral conversion" is also necessary. One who is converted morally, will live a repentant, overcoming life, striving to measure up to scriptural teachings on separation and behavior. Any outreach effort must employ this New Testament concept to be effective in the kingdom of God.

E.W. Wheeler

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The Philosophical Theology of Paul—Thomas Weisser

Paul's discourse on Mars' Hill in Athens reveals the inherent inadequacies of human philosophy. Truth about the major questions in life was available through the testimony of the Old Testament. These words originated from One whose ways and thoughts are much higher than ours. As God anointed the writers of the Bible, we received something wonderful that didn't originate from the finite reasoning of man.

Athens, at that time, was dominated militarily by Rome. Even though Rome's military might subdued the fragmented empire of Alexander the Great, Greek ideas permeated Roman thought and affect us unto this day.

The God of the Jews was missed by Greek thinkers primarily because of their dependence upon the carnal mind which is enmity with God (Romans 8:7). Paul informed the Corinthians that the world by wisdom (i.e. Greek philosophers) knew not God. Greek philosophy infected later concepts of God with incomprehensible Trinitarianism that negated the simple teaching of Scripture and made the divine part of Christ something distinct from the Father. It confused the issue more by endeavoring to state that Father, Son, and Holy Ghost were three persons but constituted One God.

Athens was a center for philosophy and her thinkers tried to ignore the Old Testament and Jerusalem. God set Jerusalem in the midst of the nations (Ezekiel 5:5) and proclaimed it to be a city of truth (Zechariah 8:3). In my personal journey I went from Rome to Athens to Jerusalem. I was brought up in a church that claimed Rome as its mother city. I was taught in a school system that, for the most part, looked to human philosophy represented by Athens. It wasn't until I looked to Jerusalem and heard the word of Peter that I found the answers to life's biggest questions. Obedience to the Gospel as preached in Jerusalem on the day of Pentecost two thousand years ago gave me what I was looking for. The death, burial, and resurrection of Christ became real to me as I died out to my own ways in repentance, was buried with Him in baptism, and received the resurrecting power of the Holy Ghost (Acts 2:38). My joy was real and my entrance into a superior kingdom through this new birth was complete.

Paul on Mars' Hill is the repentant man confronting the secular and unrepentant man; the spiritual mind verses the worldly mind; humility confronting pride; the heavenly perspective brought to bear toward that which is earthly. Traditionally Mars' Hill was a place of judgment. Human philosophy was being judged and found wanting on Mars' Hill. Mars or Ares was the god of war in the Greco-Roman pantheon of gods. The war between God's word and the words of men was being fought while Paul was preaching there. Paul was plainly and authoritatively giving them the basics of creation, judgment, and the need of man to repent and reject anything but the living God. His main points include:

1. God is Spirit and does not need temples for His habitation or statues to represent Him.
2. Mankind is equal because we all have come from an original pair. External differences can be explained by the separation after Babel and the limiting of the gene pool by language differences.
3. Because God is Spirit and not far from everyone, our main purpose in life should be to seek after Him.
4. He implies the scriptural truth that all have sinned by requiring repentance for all mankind.
5. The reason for repentance (those who accepted this he assuredly baptized and prayed through to the Holy Ghost [see Acts 19:1-5]) is that judgment is coming and will be administered by the one (Christ) who was raised from the dead.
6. By saying these things he rejected mechanism (the belief that everything that exists is purposeless) and embraced teleology (that there is purpose in existence).

Paul covers the beginning and the ending. He goes from creation to judgment in this short message. He gives the way to achieve utopia if mankind would follow his advice. If mankind did recognize the true God and follow His word the world would be very different from the way it is. Let us reject the messages from other cities including Athens and let us look to Jerusalem and be born again into an everlasting kingdom and find the true meaning to life and the reason for our existence.

The Recognition of the Humanity of Christ in the Epistles—William Chalfant

The apostle Paul, in his epistles, gives constant cognizance of the continuing (glorified) humanity of Christ, although he also continually acknowledges His Supreme Deity. There are a number of reasons why Paul carefully records the humanity of Christ. The obvious one is that Paul believed firmly in the Supreme Deity and genuine humanity of our Lord Jesus Christ through the incarnation. There are others almost as important.

For Paul, Jesus did not lose His humanity in the glorification of the resurrection, and with His powerful ascension into heaven. Instead, the phrase “God in Christ” still held a glorious, salvational meaning for Paul. God is still in Christ! The incarnation did not end when He ascended! He retains the nail-scarred hands as a witness of what He did for us.

I do not mean flesh and *blood* entered into heaven. Jesus makes it clear to the disciples that He was flesh and bones (not flesh and blood) in Luke 24:39. In 1 Timothy 2:5 Paul reminds us that there is only one mediator between God and man: the man (*anthropos christos Iesus*) Christ Jesus. Thus, Paul is stressing the post-resurrectional humanity (albeit glorified) of the man Christ Jesus. Some have attempted to interpret this passage to only refer to the pre-resurrectional, earthly man Jesus, but Paul uses the present tense (“there is one mediator”). Calvary’s blood is the fountain of all remission of sins, reconciliation, and mediation. But He is still presently our High Priest, who “ever liveth to make intercession for (us)” (Hebrews 7:25). His mercy endures forever, and His loving kindness to all generations.

In the Last Judgment, or at least in what one might call “the Judgment of the Nations,” following the triumphant return of Christ, Paul speaks of the Judge as being “the man” (*andros*) “whom he (God the Father) hath ordained” (Acts 17:31). Jesus Himself explains the reason for judgment being put into the hands of a human being. This in no way detracts from His mighty Deity. It justifies Him in the spirit, and makes us to know that the incarnation is forever, and not just for a mere thirty-three years or so.

Verily, verily, I say unto you, The hour is coming, and now is, when the dead shall hear the voice of the Son of God: and they that hear shall live. For as the Father hath life in himself; so hath he given to the Son to have life in himself; And hath given him authority to execute judgment also, because he is the Son of man. (John 5:25-27 KJV)

We then find that Jesus (who is also God the Father insofar as His deity is concerned) retains His humanity for at least two purposes: judgment and fellowship. He will judge sinful, unrepentant humanity, and fellowship with his sons and daughters throughout eternity future. Right now He pleads with sinners.

This explains the words of the man Christ Jesus when He triumphantly became the first human being to be resurrected to eternal life.

And Jesus came and spake unto them, saying, All power is given unto me in heaven and in earth. (Matthew 28:18 KJV)

There is no “transfer” of power from one divine “Person” to another divine “Person,” but rather the enduement of power by the Eternal Spirit is in the resurrected body in which He is pleased to dwell.

And this is why the writer of Hebrews gloried in the resurrected man, Christ Jesus, calling Him “a son over his own house” (Hebrews 3:6). And even though God had previously given Adam dominion over the earth, and had crowned him with “glory and honor,” Adam had failed. The writer lamented, “But now we see not yet all things put under him (mankind)” (Hebrews 2:8). But, taking courage, he wrote, “But we see Jesus, who was made a little lower than the angels for the suffering of death, crowned with glory and honor . . .” (Hebrews 2:9). The great God of heaven has condescended to add this human nature to Himself! He has glorified it, and will glorify us in a similar (but less potent) way if we remain faithful to Jesus.

Seducing Spirits—Mike Klann

1 Timothy 4:1-3 (1) Now the Spirit speaketh expressly, that in the latter times some shall depart from the faith, giving heed to seducing spirits, and doctrines of devils; (2) Speaking lies in hypocrisy; having their conscience seared with a hot iron; (3) Forbidding to marry, *and commanding* to abstain from meats, which God hath created to be received with thanksgiving of them which believe and know the truth.

When Paul wrote to the younger Timothy, a pastor, his own son in the faith, he gave several instructions, admonitions, exhortations, and warnings for the benefit of this young man finding his way through the temptations, challenges, and opportunities which are presented to any man desiring to walk with God.

Paul's warnings were clear and distinct with the tone of absolute assurance, that if heeded, shipwreck would be avoided (see 1 Timothy 1:4-7; 4:12-13, 16; 5:22; 6:10 and 2 Timothy 2:3; 2:15-18; 2:22-23; 4:1-5).

Paul wanted to take Timothy to task in the pitfall areas where he had personally witnessed the demise of others. He took on the tone of a stern father who deeply loved his own son in the faith. He was not afraid to name the dangers or characterize the attitudes which would lead to a fall.

It is in this environment of writing that Paul chose to label what the spirit had spoken expressly (out *spokenly*, that is, *distinctly*)... "that in the latter times some shall depart from the faith, giving heed to seducing [*roving* (as a *tramp*), that is, (by implication) an *impostor* or *misleader*] spirits, and doctrines of devils." Notice the plural—"spirits."

These roving spirits keep coming around to hitchhike onto every group, region, or generation of believers and/or preachers.

There are some obvious seductions which Paul warned Timothy about such as youthful lusts, fables, and such like. Every man must guard himself against the wandering, roving spirits which would appeal to his fleshly nature. Yet, it seems that seduction on other fronts goes unchecked, unheeded, and underestimated. We must also flag those desires which would lead us down the road of satisfying ego, intellect, power, control, pride, etc.

From the first fall of Adam and Eve into sin unto John's definition of all that is in the world (1 John 2:15-16), we learn that there is just as much an appeal to the "pride of life" as there is to the lust of the eyes and the lust of the flesh. Could the original temptation in the garden have been just as much a lust to be "in the know" (make one wise), as it was “good for food” and “pleasant to the eyes”? Seeing that the heart is deceitfully wicked, shouldn't we examine our fleshly desires more carefully in the realm of appeals to higher education, and unlimited access to information?

The recent wave of purveyors of say, preterism, divine flesh, or neo-phariseeism has revealed the seductive methods used by these "seducing spirits." They prey upon the "thinkers" and appeal to the ego by flashing just enough to whet the appetite and make the prospect feel that he is not "in the know." There are as many "falling" to ego and intellect-centered activities as there are to lust. There are doctrines of devils which seem to entice the intellectual. While there is nothing wrong with spiritual knowledge, there has to be a reckoning with the motive to examine its origin so that one will not become prey to those looking to seduce.

Colossians 2:8 Beware lest any man spoil you through philosophy and vain deceit . . .

The Dangers of Carnality—D. S. Garza

Open thou mine eyes, that I may behold wondrous things out of thy law. (Psalms 119:18)

The state of carnality is a dangerous place to live. Not only do you run the risk of losing your soul, but you also lose the ability to "see" or understand the true meaning of the Scriptures. Luke 2:21-40 tells of two very spiritual people that were looking for the Messiah. The rest of the nation was looking for a messiah as well, but its focus was entirely different. While Simeon and Anna, the prophetess, strove to see "wondrous things," the rest were looking for a conquering messiah. The former sought that which was spiritual and eternal, while the latter sought revenge and that which is earthly.

Simeon was a just and devout man. And because of his devotion to God, he was able to say, (vv. 29-30) "Lord, now lettest thou thy servant depart in peace, according to thy word: For mine eyes have seen thy salvation." Anna, the prophetess, served God with fasting and prayers night and day, and she too saw "wondrous things" (v. 38) for she coming in that instant gave thanks. It pays to live for God—to stay close to God. While the rest of the nation battled with carnality and hatred, two people stayed close to God. Hatred alone blinds the mind to spiritual things. First John 2:11 says, "But he that hateth his brother is in darkness, and walketh in darkness, and knoweth not whither he goeth, because that darkness hath blinded his eyes."

The Bible is a spiritual book. Carnal people cannot understand it. There are people that have spiritualized away such things as heaven, hell, and the coming of the Lord. But there are others who have not spiritualized it enough. They have failed to "see" beyond what they could understand with the natural mind. For example in John 3:1-5, when the Lord spoke with Nicodemus, a religious man—a man familiar with Scripture, and said, "Except a man be born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God," he completely failed to see what Jesus was talking about. Nicodemus answered, "How can a man be born when he is old? Can he enter the second time into his mother's womb, and be born?" The Lord's response is telling, "That which is born of the flesh is flesh; and that which is born of the Spirit is spirit." In other words, one is natural, the other is spiritual.

Jesus said in John 2:19 "...Destroy this temple, and in three days I will raise it up." Carnality responded and said, "Forty and six years was this temple in building, and wilt thou rear it up in three days?" People misunderstand truth when they don't pray—and when they don't know God.

We must avoid anything that lends itself to carnality, for it blinds us to many things and it creates a spiritual dullness. In John 4:14, once again, the carnal nature misinterprets figurative language when the woman at the well confuses physical water with living water. In John 8:22, when the Jews confused His departure with suicide, Jesus responded by saying, (v. 23) "Ye are from beneath; I am from above: ye are of this world; I am not of this world." In other words, you are carnal. You can only understand the things you see, hear, and touch. They could not see "wondrous things" out of His law.

Henry Virkler, author of a book called *Hermeneutics*, writes that there is a "school of thought that holds that Scripture itself teaches that spiritual commitment, or lack of it, influences ability to perceive spiritual truths." And that based on the following scriptures, 1 John 2:11; Romans 1:18-22; 1 Corinthians 2:6-14; and Ephesians 4:17-24 that "this view believes that spiritual blindness and darkened understanding hinder a person's ability to discern the truth regardless of one's knowledge and application of hermeneutical principles."

We cannot allow our spirits to become infected by pride and hatred and all the other carnal elements that constantly war against us. We must stay close to God and seek that which is above; pray without ceasing and pray for understanding. Stephen, the first martyr of the church saw "the glory of God, and Jesus standing on the right hand of God." The right hand of God denotes His power. It is figurative language; but you cannot tell that to those that are carnal. The more carnal the religion, the more gods, and the more convoluted the doctrine. It is so tragic that so many still misinterpret the Scriptures. Only God can reveal truth to a hungry soul. In Isaiah 9:6 a prophecy about Jesus, it says that this child that is to be born is also the "everlasting Father, the mighty God, " and that He is "Wonderful." Surely the Lord still shows us "wondrous things" out of His Word.

In conclusion, it is important to be able to identify the type of genre we are dealing with when we are reading a scriptural text. If it is figurative language, then we must interpret it as such. If it is to be taken in a literal sense, then we must interpret it as such. Spiritualizing away vital doctrines leads to heresy. In other words, it is incorrect to interpret a scripture that is meant to be taken literally and identify it as figurative or symbolic language. In contradistinction, the opposite is also true. To take figurative language and force a literal meaning (hyper-literalism) on it leads to doctrinal error and repeats the errors of those that we have just mentioned.

HUMILITY—Elder Paul Price

Text: Matthew 11:29-30

Deuteronomy 8:3 And he **humbled** thee, and suffered thee to hunger, and fed thee with manna, which thou knewest not, neither did thy fathers know; that he might make thee know that man doth not live by bread only, but by every *word* that proceedeth out of the mouth of the LORD doth man live.

2 Chronicles 12:12 And when he **humbled** himself, the wrath of the LORD turned from him, that he would not destroy *him* altogether: and also in Judah things went well.

2 Chronicles 33:12 And when he was in affliction, he besought the LORD his God, and **humbled** himself greatly before the God of his fathers.

Psalms 35:13 But as for me, when they were sick, my clothing *was* sackcloth: I **humbled** my soul with fasting; and my prayer returned into mine own bosom.

Isaiah 2:11 The lofty looks of man shall be **humbled**, and the haughtiness of men shall be bowed down, and the LORD alone shall be exalted in that day.

Daniel 5:22 And thou his son, O Belshazzar, hast not **humbled** thine heart, though thou knewest all this.

Philippians 2:8 And being found in fashion as a man, he **humbled** himself, and became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross.

Deuteronomy 8:2 And thou shalt remember all the way which the LORD thy God led thee these forty years in the wilderness, to **humble** thee, *and* to prove thee, to know what *was* in thine heart, whether thou wouldest keep his commandments, or no.

Deuteronomy 8:16 Who fed thee in the wilderness with manna, which thy fathers knew not, that he might **humble** thee, and that he might prove thee, to do thee good at thy latter end.

2 Chronicles 7:14 If my people, which are called by my name, shall **humble** themselves, and pray, and seek my face, and turn from their wicked ways; then will I hear from heaven, and will forgive their sin, and will heal their land.

2 Chronicles 34:27 Because thine heart was tender, and thou didst **humble** thyself before God, when thou heardest his words against this place, and against the inhabitants thereof, and humbledst thyself before me, and didst rend thy clothes, and weep before me; I have even heard *thee* also, saith the LORD.

CARNAL PEOPLE DO NOT KNOW JESUS,
THEY JUST KNOW ABOUT JESUS—Paul Price