

HASKER'S TRI-PERSONAL GOD VS. NEW TESTAMENT THEOLOGY

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Abstract. Hasker's "social" Trinity theory is subject to considerable philosophical problems (Section II). More importantly, the theory clashes with the clear New Testament teaching that the one God just is the Father alone (Section III). Further, in light of five undeniable facts about the New Testament texts, we can know that the authors of the New Testament thought that the only God was just the Father himself, not the Trinity (Section IV). Hasker can neither deny these facts nor defeat the strong evidence they provide that in affirming a triune God in the late 4th century, catholic tradition departed from apostolic teaching about the one God (Section V).

I. INTRODUCTION

According to William Hasker's highly developed "Social" Trinity theory, the "Persons" of the Trinity are so many selves¹ (or persons), each of whom is constituted by the divine nature, which is understood to be a concrete, non-universal property (a trope), which Hasker characterizes as God's "soul."² The three divine selves "are [i.e. compose] together *a single concrete being* [=the Trinity]."³ Other critiques have focused on Hasker's controversial deployment of a metaphysics of constitution.⁴ But I wish to focus on the credentials of this Trinity theory as a kind of monotheism which is meant to be consistent with the New Testament.

Despite his Protestant heritage, Hasker has thus far placed a high level of trust in patristic tradition, that they got biblical interpretation and trinitarian theology *basically* correct.⁵ And yet he (correctly, in my view) rejects divine simplicity as problematic and without foundation either in Scripture or reason.⁶ Presumably as an open theist he also rejects doctrines widely assumed by ancient theologians, such as divine immutability, timelessness, impassibility, a static conception of divine omniscience, and fatalistic accounts of divine providence. It would seem then that Hasker and I agree that our assumption of divine providential guidance of Christian mainstream tradition gives only an overridable benefit of the doubt. And in fact God *has* allowed some long- and widely-popular errors. The only question is: which, exactly? Answering this requires re-examining long-held assumptions about the interpretation of Christian

1 By "self" I mean a being which is in principle capable of knowledge, intentional action, and interpersonal relationships. I take it that Hasker would agree that the Persons of the Trinity are "selves" in this sense. (William Hasker, *Metaphysics and the Tri-Personal God* (Oxford Univ. Press, 2013)), Chapters 1, 3, 24.

2 Ibid., 226, 256–58.

3 Ibid., 257.

4 Daniel Howard-Snyder "[Review of] William Hasker, *Metaphysics and the Tri-Personal God*", *Faith and Philosophy* 32, no. 1 (2015); Brian Leftow, "The Trinity is Unconstitutional", *Religious Studies* 54, no. 3 (2018), "The Trinity is Still Unconstitutional", *Religious Studies* (2020). Hasker has developed his views on constitution in "The One Divine Nature", *TheoLogica* 3, no. 2 (2019), and has replied to critics on this topic in "The Trinity as Social and Constitutional: a Rejoinder to Leftow", (forthcoming) and "Constituting the Trinity", *Religious Studies* (2019).

5 Hasker, *Metaphysics*, 10. This is why, for instance, he refuses to admit that there is no biblical foundation for traditional "generation" and "procession" claims. (222) He does concede that the "fathers" made many exegetical mistakes, but he supposes that biblical evidence for "the Trinity" is so abundant that this doesn't significantly weaken biblical support for it. (168–69)

6 William Hasker, "Is Divine Simplicity a Mistake?" *American Catholic Philosophical Quarterly* 90, no. 4 (2016).

Scripture. Thus far, it seems to me that Hasker, in his zeal for metaphysics, has neglected the New Testament, preferring to start his theorizing with the late 4th century “fathers.”⁷

But recently Hasker has lodged what I think is a powerful *biblical* objection to Brian Leftow’s one-self Trinity theory.⁸ In essence, Hasker argues that the New Testament portrayals of the Father and Son as two persons/selves fits Hasker’s Trinity theory well, but not Leftow’s theory that these are two “Persons” (in a sense coined by Leftow) while there is really but one self/person between them. This should count in favor of Hasker’s theory, as compared with Leftow’s.

I agree. But parallel criticisms are fatal to Hasker’s Trinity theory. When we look at the New Testament, we don’t see what we’d expect to see, if these authors believed in a tri-personal God. What is and isn’t in those texts better fits a rival theology, the unitarian Christian view that the one God just is (is numerically identical to) only the one Jesus calls “Father.”⁹ In the rest of this discussion, I will first discuss some metaphysical problems for Hasker’s brand of monotheism, and then what I think are more serious biblical problems for it.

II. TRINITARIAN METAPHYSICS AND MONOTHEISM

I have criticized Hasker’s account of the Trinity as implying polytheism, since it posits three beings (specifically, persons/selves) each of which has all that it takes to be a god (the divine nature).¹⁰ As a trinitarian, Hasker says that each Person of the Trinity “is God.” Some trinitarians understand this as asserting the numerical sameness of each Person with the one God. But Hasker, in my view wisely, rejects this.¹¹ He observes that “the most natural alternative is to say that ‘is God’ attributes a *property* to” each of the Persons.¹² Following work by Edward Wierenga, Hasker specifies that this is the property of being divine, that is, of having all the divine attributes, such as omnipotence, omniscience, being uncreated, and being eternal.¹³

I take it that these attributes, taken all together, are a kind-essence — that in virtue of which their owner is a reality of a certain kind. What is the kind here? It would seem: god. The divine attributes all together are the essence deity or divinity, that in virtue of which something is a deity, a god. But then, the Father is a god, and the Son is a god. And since they are numerically distinct, they can’t be the same god.¹⁴ Thus, they are numerically two gods. And the Spirit would be a third. This is not consistent with monotheism.

7 Hasker, *Metaphysics*, 10.

8 For the basics of Leftow’s Trinity theory and references see my “Trinity,” *The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy* (2020), <https://plato.stanford.edu/entries/trinity/>, Section 1.5. For Hasker’s objection see the ending sections of his “Constituting” and “The Trinity as Social”.

9 As I define it, a “unitarian” Christian theology identifies the one God with the Father only, but is neutral about the exact status of God’s Son and spirit. (See my “Tertullian the Unitarian,” *European Journal for Philosophy of Religion* 8, no. 3 (2016)). Thus defined, some unitarians, like Samuel Clarke or Origen or Tertullian, think the Son and Spirit to be two lesser divine persons/selves. Others, like me, hold that Jesus is a man who came to exist not too long before he was born, and that the “spirit” of God in the Bible can mean, in various places, God, the inner unseen aspect of God, the risen and exalted Jesus, or an exercise of God’s power or an effect of this which enables humans to prophesy, pray, preach, resist temptation, etc.

10 Dale Tuggy, “Hasker’s Quests for a Viable Social Theory,” *Faith and Philosophy* 30, no. 2 (2013), 185. This is a very old criticism pro-Nicene theories; in fact, it goes back to the career of the bishop Basil of Caesarea, who in my view did *not* believe in a tri-personal God. On this see my “When and How in the History of Theology Did the Triune God Replace the Father as the Only True God?” *TheoLogica: An International Journal for Philosophy of Religion and Philosophical Theology* 4, no. 2 (2020), Section 3.4. Lest the reader think that I caricature Hasker’s Trinity theory by talking of the Persons as three “beings,” the reader should note that he uses this very language, since a self is by definition a type of being/individual/concrete thing. (*Metaphysics*, 256)

11 Hasker, *Metaphysics*, 187–88.

12 *Ibid.*

13 Hasker, *Metaphysics*, 189.

14 Hasker, in my view correctly, rejects relative identity theories of the Trinity, and so I believe he accepts the self-evident truth that if any x and any y are the same F (some kind of thing), then x is an F, y is an F, and x just is y (x and y are numerically identical). Thus, if some x and y are *not* numerically identical, they can’t be the same F.

Hasker tells us that understanding the claims that each Person “is God” as attributing the divine attributes to that Person enables us to avoid “either affirming a plurality of Gods or collapsing the Trinity in modalistic fashion.”¹⁵ But to the contrary, the account is impaled on the first horn. Having the divine essence is *by definition* supposed to be necessary *and sufficient* for being a god. If Hasker denies that it is sufficient, then on his account the Persons each fall short of full divinity/deity — something contrary to the catholic traditions he is seeking to uphold.

In his book Hasker explores various ways in which the three Persons may be unified: they enjoy *perichoresis*, are “united in their dealings with the world,”¹⁶ exist eternally and necessarily in a chain of “processions,”¹⁷ and are constituted by one concrete divine nature.¹⁸ They are even the parts of a composite entity.¹⁹ But conceivably, three gods (supposing that such are possible) could be unified in all those ways, which is to say that it has *not* been shown why these three divine beings should count as a single, tri-personal god. Yes, *even* being constituted by the concrete divine nature; if things which share this can be numerically different beings (namely, persons), then it would seem that they might also be different gods. We’re left with the appearance of tritheism, as in the end there are three beings/things/individuals each of which has all it takes to be a god, be they ever so remarkably “united.” A uniquely “united” triad of gods is just that.

Hasker tries to head off this sort of objection with a gag-order: we must not *say* that “the Father is a God” or “that the Son is a God.”²⁰ But *why*, if each has all that it takes to be a god? It is an analytic truth that something is a god if and only if it has the divine essence.²¹ Further, this use of “god” as a count-noun, as in, “Yahweh is a god,”²² is a perfectly acceptable usage in the Bible.²³ Just conceptually, then, Hasker has trouble showing why his brand of monotheism doesn’t also, despite his intentions, imply polytheism. His gag-order is irrelevant; if each Person is implied to be a god, and not the same one, the theology is polytheistic, whether or not its proponents *say*, e.g. “the Son is a god.”

And let’s remember that the New Testament clearly implies that the Father is a god,²⁴ because it says that he’s *the only* god, and that he’s the god over Jesus, who therefore can’t be the same god.²⁵ On the face of it, New Testament theology is not consistent with any theory that the one God is the Trinity, rather than the Father alone. More on this below.

15 Ibid.

16 Hasker, *Metaphysics*, 204.

17 Hasker, *Metaphysics*, Chapter 26; Hasker accepts the Nicene stipulation that divinity excludes aseity. (*Metaphysics*, 219)

18 Hasker, *Metaphysics*, Chapter 28; “The One”, “Constituting”, “The Trinity as Social.”

19 Hasker, *Metaphysics*, 257.

20 Hasker, *Metaphysics*, 190.

21 Other Trinity theories are built to recognize this truth. Thus, relative identity theories say that the Father and Son are the same god (while being different Persons), while the unique theory of William Lane Craig makes only the Trinity, not the Persons, have the full divine essence (all the divine attributes); the account avoids multiple gods by making each Person less than fully divine.

22 Howard-Snyder observes that Hasker seems to want to avoid this use of “god” (“[Review],” 111).

23 As I explain in my “Divine Deception and Monotheism” (*Journal of Analytic Theology* 2 (2014)) this usage is more common in earlier books of the Bible, because as time went on authors increasingly used this word only for Yahweh, as it came to express a more strict or specific conception of deity or godhood—that possessed only by him. Still, we find Old Testament statements that “Who is like you, O Lord, among the gods?” (Exodus 15:11), “Now I know that the Lord is greater than all gods, because he delivered the people from the Egyptians, when they dealt arrogantly with them” (Exodus 18:11), and “O give thanks to the God of gods, for his steadfast love endures forever” (Psalm 136:2). All such statements imply that Yahweh too is a god; see also Psalm 82. This usage does not, as many scholars since the 19th c. have mistakenly inferred, imply that the Jews transitioned from polytheism or “henotheism” to monotheism during Old Testament times. In my view, monotheism is expressed even in the oldest parts of the Old Testament; it’s just that in those times the terms we translated as “god” or “gods” expressed a more general concept of a divine being that applied both to God and to lesser deities or divine beings, ones which would later be called “angels” and “demons.” On this see my “On Counting Gods,” *TheoLogica* 1, no. 1 (2017).

24 E.g. John 17:3, 20:17; 1 Corinthians 8:6; Ephesians 1:17. To say that something is “the” F or “the only” F is to imply that it is an F.

25 *God-over* is necessarily an irreflexive relation, which is death of all “relative identity” Trinity theories, for they assert that the Father and Son are the same god. On the Father being Jesus’s god, see note 40 below.

Hasker's theory runs aground even by the lights of many trinitarians. If we ask "Is the Trinity divine?" Hasker must say: no, not in the sense which entails being a god. A divine being, a god, is, e.g. omniscient and omnipotent, but the Trinity, not being a self, doesn't *literally* know or intentionally do anything.²⁶ Hasker tells us that it can be thought of and spoken of "as if it were a person."²⁷ This is contrary not only to the Bible, but also to common Christian belief and experience, perfect being theology, and even one-self Trinity theories. For these the unique God is a someone, a who, and not a mere what which we're invited to *imagine* as a who.

III. THE GOD OF THE NEW TESTAMENT

In a response to some of my published criticisms, Hasker alleges that

The fundamental premise in Tuggy's critique is that a god, or a God, is and must be a single divine person ... The social trinitarian conception of God as a Trinity of closely related persons cannot, then, qualify as monotheistic ... Now, I have never been able to understand why unitarians like Tuggy should be entitled to fix the definition of monotheism, so as to rule out trinitarians as being monotheists.²⁸

This diagnosis is mistaken. The claim that a god must be unipersonal (i.e. identical to a single self) is *not* the fundamental premise of my critique of Hasker's Trinity theory, nor does my argument turn on my own definition of "monotheism." The definition of that term is not in dispute; it is the claim that there is exactly one god.²⁹ The issue is the New Testament doctrine about what or who this one god, called "God," is; the issue is what is entailed by *the New Testament's* monotheism.

Hasker's view, in line with catholic traditions going back to around 381,³⁰ is that the one God is the tri-personal god, the Trinity. The Father, for Hasker, is a divine self who is one of three divine selves who compose the one God. He assures us that "the key conceptions that ground the doctrine [of the Trinity] are *over-determined* by the biblical text."³¹ To the contrary, as I'll show in this and the next section, any tri-personal god theology contradicts the theology of the New Testament. The numerical sameness of the one God with the one Jesus calls "Father" is assumed by every New Testament author, and sometimes this is clearly implied. Whenever these authors mention one God,³² the only God,³³ the true God,³⁴ the Almighty³⁵ — the LORD who is the unique god of the Old Testament — this same one is called "God the Father" in the New Testament.

For example, Paul tells us that while the pagans believe in various gods, as far as Christians are concerned, there is "one God, the Father."³⁶ That is two references to a single referent. In the fourth gospel Jesus says to his Jewish opponents, "If I glorify myself, my glory is nothing. It is my Father who glorifies

26 Daniel Howard-Snyder forcefully makes this point in his "[Review]," 113–115. For Hasker, although the Trinity is strictly an "it," it *somehow* counts as omnipotent and omniscient (or rather: "omnipotent" and "omniscient" — see 249) by having parts (the Persons) with those properties. (*Metaphysics*, 198; cf. 209)

27 Hasker, *Metaphysics*, 249, original italics.

28 William Hasker, "Can Social Trinitarianism be Monotheist? A Reply to Dale Tuggy," *Faith and Philosophy* 30, no. 4 (2013), 439.

29 This raises the question of what a god is, so there is more room for conceptual analysis here. For my views on this, see my "On Counting Gods." For Hasker's obfuscation regarding "monotheism" see *Metaphysics* 201–02.

30 On this momentous change in the history of theology, see my "When and How."

31 Hasker, *Metaphysics*, 168, original emphasis.

32 1 Timothy 2:5; Ephesians 4:6.

33 Jude 1:25; 1 Timothy 1:1–2, 17. Compare: Romans 16:27.

34 1 Thessalonians 1:1, 9–10.

35 2 Corinthians 6:18; Revelation 1:8, 4:8, 11:17, 15:3, 16:7, 16:14, 19:6, 19:15, 21:22.

36 1 Corinthians 8:6. (All biblical quotations are from the New Revised Standard Version.) Following a recent fashion, Hasker misreads this passage, opining that because Jesus is called "Lord" here, "the central Jewish affirmation of the one God is interpreted as including Jesus Christ." (*Metaphysics*, 180) This view has been propounded by N.T. Wright and others, but Hasker there mis-attributes the misreading to Hurtado, who as far as I can see never says or implies this, although Hurtado assumed that his work overall serves the cause of creedal trinitarianism. On the term "Lord" in the New Testament see my "podcast 225 — Biblical Words for God and for his Son Part 2 — Old 'Lord' vs. New 'Lord,'" <https://trinitities.org/blog/podcast-225-biblical-words-for-god-and-for-his-son-part-2-old-lord-vs-new-lord/>.

me, he of whom you say, ‘He is our God...’³⁷ Right—the god of the Jews, the only god in both Old Testament and New Testament is the one Jesus calls “my Father”; Jesus and his Jewish opponents agree on this. This is why in Mark 12 Jesus simply agrees with his Jewish interlocutor about the most important commandment, rather than informing him that the Jewish concept of God is inadequate. In Acts the message preached to the Jews is that “the God of our ancestors,” in other words, the Father, “has glorified his servant Jesus.”³⁸

The monotheistic god, the “God” of the Bible, is necessarily at the top of the heap; no one who is the one God can be under any god. But the New Testament explicitly states seven times that the Father is Jesus’s god.³⁹ And Jesus is portrayed as calling the Father “my God” in seven other places.⁴⁰ Although he towers above any mere prophet, and now that he’s exalted he must be worshiped even by angels,⁴¹ in the New Testament, like you, Jesus is subject to the unique God, the Father. These Father-as-Jesus’s-god texts are not the subject of interpretive, translation, or textual disputes. They are explicit and as clear as can be. I suggest that we accept Jesus as our authority about who God is.⁴² In the New Testament Jesus is not taught to be the same god as the Father, or any god at all; there is only one God, the Father, and he is, Paul says “the head of” Jesus, his Christ.⁴³ In 1 Corinthians 15 Paul could hardly be more clear in his teaching that even though all other things are subjected to him, the risen and exalted Jesus is still the servant of the one God, God the Father.⁴⁴

In my experience, many trinitarians are quick to charge that a unitarian Christian like me is “merely assuming” unitarianism when I come to the texts. Or, like Hasker, they see me observe that in a Christian context “God” is supposed to be a self who can be an appropriate recipient of worship, and they cry foul, thinking that I’ve loaded the dice by defining “monotheism” so as to exclude any trinitarian theology (even though I manifestly have not). Therefore, I have found that it is helpful to argue that the New Testament authors assume and teach a unitarian rather than a trinitarian doctrine of God in a way that demonstrably does not assume the truth of unitarian theology or the correctness of unitarian interpretations of the Bible. In the next section I argue in this way.

IV. HOW WE CAN KNOW THAT THE AUTHORS OF THE NEW TESTAMENT HELD TO A UNITARIAN VIEW OF GOD

In this section I will discuss five indisputable facts about the New Testament writings, each of which would be very surprising if these authors think that the one God is the Trinity, but none of which would be surprising if these authors think the one God is the Father alone. These facts strongly confirm my thesis that in the New Testament the one God is the Father, in other words, that these authors are unitarian in their theology, against the thesis that these authors really think that the one God is the Trinity.⁴⁵

37 John 8:54.

38 Acts 3:13. See also Acts 5:30, 22:14, 24:14, 26:6.

39 Romans 15:6; 2 Corinthians 1:3; 2 Corinthians 11:31; Ephesians 1:3, 17, 3:13; 1 Peter 1:3.

40 Mark 15:34; Matthew 27:46; John 20:17; Revelation 3:12 - four times.

41 Hebrews 1:6.

42 Some will retort that in the New Testament Jesus claims to be the one God, or even to be God himself (the same self/person as the one God). To the contrary, he never says or implies this, and the assumed differences between Jesus and God mean that out of charity, we can’t read these authors as assuming or asserting that Jesus and God (a.k.a. “the Father”) are either the same god or the same self, as either claim would imply them to be numerically identical (and so in principle they could not simultaneously differ from one another). On this see my “podcast 124—a challenge to “Jesus is God” apologists,” <https://trinities.org/blog/podcast-124-a-challenge-to-jesus-is-god-apologists/>. About the many dodgy traditional arguments from the New Testament to “the deity of Christ” see Dale Tuggy and Date, Christopher, *Is Jesus Human and Not Divine?* (Ichthus, 2020), 17–32. Hasker’s position relies on some of these, e.g. *Metaphysics*, 247.

43 1 Corinthians 11:3.

44 1 Corinthians 15:20–28.

45 This is not a deductive argument; rather, it depends on what philosophers of science call the prime principle of confirmation. Each fact is logically consistent with these authors being trinitarians, but this doesn’t detract from the power of the argument. Also, the argument works just about as well when comparing the theses that these authors are unitarians with the thesis

Fact 1 is that in the New Testament, the word “God” nearly always refers to the Father. If these authors were trinitarians, we’d expect them to sometimes use the word “God” to refer to the Trinity—but they never do. And we’d expect them to somewhat spread the title “God” around between the three, often calling the Son or the Spirit “God,” in addition to the Father. But this is not what we see. In the New Testament, “God” is nearly always the Father; all textual scholars agree on this. In a small handful of cases, no more than eight in the whole New Testament, it can be argued that “God” refers to the Son. But we know that in biblical terminology, a human who is subject to God can be referred to or addressed using the word “God.” Jesus makes this very point in John 10:34, quoting Psalm 82. We also see it in Hebrews 1:8–9, quoting Psalm 45. While many latter-day readers suppose that only the one God should be called “God,” biblical authors don’t assume this. Even so, all these authors are very stingy about applying the word “god” to anyone other than the Father. This would be very surprising if they were trinitarians, but it’s just what we’d expect if they hold that the one God is the Father alone. This fact confirms the thesis that they are unitarians over the thesis that they are trinitarians.

Fact 2 is that no New Testament word or phrase was then understood to refer to the Trinity. As best we can tell, the word “Trinity” was coined around the year 180 A.D. But my point is *not* mainly or only about that word. My point is that it is vanishingly unlikely that these authors believed in a triune god and yet had *no word or phrase* by which to refer to that god. The very first thing a trinitarian will do is to coin a word or phrase to refer to the triune God as such. They needn’t use the word “Trinity.” They could just coin a new use of the word “God,” or they could talk of “the heavenly three,” or “the triple God,” “or the divine three.” But we don’t see any term or phrase in the Bible which was then understood to refer to a tripersonal God. These authors’ lack of any word or phrase for the Trinity is exactly what we’d expect if they instead held the one God to be the Father alone. This fact confirms the thesis that they are unitarians over the thesis that they are trinitarians.

Fact 3 is that all four gospels feature a “mere man” compatible main thesis—that is, a thesis which one can accept while believing that Jesus is human and not divine. This is the thesis that Jesus is God’s Messiah/Christ. While this thesis is plainly and repeatedly stated throughout these books, it is highlighted at certain key moments. In the first three gospels, Jesus privately asks his disciples who they think he is, and their leader Peter replies: “You are the Messiah.”⁴⁶ And towards the end of the fourth gospel, John states his main thesis: “these [signs] are written so that you may come to believe that Jesus is the Messiah, the Son of God, and that through believing you may have life in his name.”⁴⁷

Wait ... that’s it? Nothing about Jesus being God, God the Son, having a divine nature, or being the “godman,” or the second Person of the Trinity? Nothing about his being one of three parts of God? This simple thesis only mentions the man Jesus’s uniquely important role as God’s Messiah, saying nothing about his deity. It’s not at all surprising if the author thinks the one God just is the Father, but it would be shocking if he were a trinitarian. This fact again confirms that these authors are unitarians, not trinitarians.

Fact 4 is that the New Testament writings without embarrassment or explanation present Jesus as both limited and dependent on God. Let’s start with his dependence on God. These texts explicitly assert that Jesus got his mission, authority, message, and power from God.⁴⁸ In a sense, the New Testament Jesus is sporting a number of “divine” qualities. What sort of *man* could be a savior, preach God’s word, forgive sins, or do things requiring divine power? The New Testament answer is: God’s anointed one.

that they’re confused—i.e. in light of “the Christ event” they’re sort of trying to feel their way towards Nicene orthodoxy. I understand this confusion thesis to be Hasker’s view about the New Testament authors. Finally, there are many more than five relevant facts here. See my “The Unfinished Business of the Reformation,” in Thomas Marschler et. al. (eds.) *Herausforderungen und Modifikationen des klassischen Theismus: Band 1 — Trinität* (Aschendorff Verlag, 2019), 199–227. An earlier version of this was presented in Augsburg, Germany in 2017 (“podcast 189—The unfinished business of the Reformation,” <https://trinities.org/blog/podcast-189-the-unfinished-business-of-the-reformation/>).

46 Mark 8:29; Compare: Matthew 16:15, Luke 9:20.

47 John 20: 30–31.

48 E.g. John 5:30; Matthew 9:8; John 17:8; John 14:10; Luke 4:18.

God is working through this man and has empowered him in unique ways. No writer shows any embarrassment about Jesus's dependence on God in these ways, even though for a Jew, the Almighty God does *not* take orders from anyone, and does *not* get his authority, message, or power from any other! Nor do these authors make the convoluted distinctions beloved by some trinitarians, that Jesus was subordinated to God “as man” but not “as divine.”

And they always present Jesus as having some obvious limits in comparison with God. Jesus tells us that he didn't know the day or hour of his future return, although God did.⁴⁹ These authors are unembarrassed to imply that Jesus at that time knew less than God. Hence their consistent portrayals of him as learning, asking questions, and even feeling anxious about what is going to happen.⁵⁰ Like us, the New Testament Jesus puts his faith and trust in God.⁵¹ They even quote him, without comment, as implying that God is good in some way that Jesus is not.⁵²

Again, the New Testament is explicit that God is immortal, and arguably implies that he is *essentially* immortal,⁵³ whereas the man Jesus died, which demonstrates that he is *not essentially* immortal.⁵⁴ Happily, his and our God then raised him and made him immortal.⁵⁵ Although both are now immortal, only God was always and essentially so.

The New Testament always portrays Jesus as a real man. He has a real human mom, although according to Matthew and Luke, not a human father. Rather, God miraculously made Mary pregnant. Jesus, the angel in Luke 1:35 says, is “begotten” in Mary by God. As with ordinary human reproduction, it is assumed here that Jesus was brought into existence at some point in this miraculous pregnancy; he's not portrayed as traveling from some other realm to enter Mary's womb. But the one God, by definition, is eternal; he never began to exist. How can these authors sit back while the reader infers that Jesus came to exist at some point in this miraculous pregnancy? Notably, no New Testament author shows any concern whatever to assert the eternal existence of the Son of God. Unlike partisans of the Nicene creed since the 4th Christian century, New Testament authors don't say anything to rule out that Jesus came into existence. This is why early Logos theories featured the Logos coming into existence before creation, so that God could create through him.⁵⁶

Do you think some New Testament passage teaches Jesus's “pre-existence”? I'll remind you that he's clearly presented as a real man, a descendent of David,⁵⁷ but for the purpose of this argument, I can grant that Jesus existed before the world was created. That would make him really old! But notice that existing before the creation of the cosmos does not imply having always existed. That's just not a New Testament teaching. But it *is* taught that he was begotten in his mother.

All these apparent limits on Jesus are simply left to stand in the New Testament. This is incredibly unlikely if the authors are trinitarians. Trinitarians would not want to leave you with the impression that Jesus is less than fully divine! But it makes sense if they simply had no need to argue for “the deity of Christ,” because like other Jews, they believed in exactly one deity, God the Father.

49 Mark 13:32; Matthew 24:36.

50 Luke 2:52; Mark 5:31; Mark 14:32–36.

51 I explore this neglected New Testament theme in my “Jesus as an Exemplar of Faith in the New Testament,” *International Journal for Philosophy of Religion* 81, no. 1–2 (2016).

52 Mark 10:18.

53 1 Timothy 1:17; Romans 1:23; 1 Timothy 6:16. For the implication of God's essential immortality, see my “podcast 145 — ‘Tis Mystery All: the Immortal dies!” <https://trinities.org/blog/podcast-145-tis-mystery-immortal-dies/>.

54 Further, “two natures” speculations do not, as many assume, resolve this difficulty. On this see my “podcast 145”.

55 Acts 2:24, 32, 3:15, 26, 4:10, 5:30, 10:40, 13:30, 37; Romans 10:9; 1 Corinthians 15:15; Galatians 1:1; Ephesians 1:20; Colossians 2:21; 1 Peter 1:21. On his being given immortality see 1 Corinthians 15:26, 42, 53. I assume that the saints will receive the same benefit in this regard as the “firstborn from the dead.” (Colossians 1:18, Revelation 1:5)

56 To briefly address the favorite proof-text for Jesus's eternity: John 1:1–14 nowhere says that the man Jesus is the same person as the Logos, and in my view the author does not presuppose that. But suppose that he does. At most, then, he asserts that the pre-human Jesus (the Logos) existed when the world was created, a claim which is compatible with his not being eternal, and with his having been brought into existence a finite time ago.

57 I sketch a case against Jesus's pre-existence based on the clear claims of the New Testament together with common sense in my “podcast 235 — The Case Against Preexistence,” <https://trinities.org/blog/podcast-235-the-case-against-preexistence/>.

Fact 5 is that in the New Testament only the Father and the man Jesus are worshiped, and worship of Jesus is to the glory of the Father. One would expect trinitarian authors to command, model, or portray worship of the Trinity as a whole, or at least worship of all three Persons of the Trinity; we see this in countless later liturgies. But there are exactly two objects of religious worship in the New Testament: God, and the human Son of God.

Further, we'd expect each of the Persons, as fully divine, to be an *ultimate* object of worship, not one such that glory given to him as it were passes on to another who is "above" him. One might worry that two objects of worship means two gods. But Paul explicitly teaches that the worship we give to the exalted Jesus is "to the glory of God the Father."⁵⁸ Jesus is not a second god, rivaling God. Rather, he is God's human Son, and it honors God when we worship Jesus. His exaltation to God's right hand implies that all must worship him—not "as God" (i.e. confusing him with his and our god), but rather, as the exalted *Son of God*. As a leading expert on this subject explains,

My own proposal has been that [the] earliest believers treated the risen/exalted Jesus as they did *only because they felt required to do so by God*. Note that the typical way that reverence of Jesus is justified in various New Testament texts is to invoke God's action of exalting him and requiring that he be revered: E.g., Philippians 2:9–11; 1 Corinthians 15:20–28; Hebrews 1:1–4; Acts 2:36; John 5:22–23, et alia).⁵⁹

This explanation simply and adequately explains the New Testament worship of Jesus, and fits the fact that these authors never cite his "being God" or his having the divine nature as a justification for their religiously worshipping him. It is not a case, as Paul says, of worshipping "the creature rather than the Creator."⁶⁰ Jesus, being a man, is a creature, yes, but in worshipping him, according to Paul, we *thereby* worship the Creator, the one God who raised and exalted him. One may call this "Christological monotheism,"⁶¹ but there is no support here for any multi-personal-god speculations.

This pattern of worship would be quite a shock if the New Testament authors were trinitarians. But there, the Holy Spirit is never worshiped,⁶² the Trinity is never worshiped, and worship given to Jesus glorifies another, God (that is, the Father). But it's not a shock given that the authors think the one God just is the Father. Thus, the actual New Testament pattern of worship disconfirms the theory that the New Testament authors are trinitarians, and like our other facts, confirms that they are unitarians.

In conclusion, let's review our five facts:

1. In the New Testament, the word "God" nearly always refers to the Father.
2. No New Testament word or phrase was then understood to refer to the Trinity.
3. All four gospels feature a "mere man" compatible main thesis.
4. The New Testament writings without embarrassment or explanation present Jesus as both limited and dependent on God.
5. In the New Testament only the Father and the man Jesus are worshiped, the latter to the glory of the former.

None of these facts can be disputed. Each one would be *very* surprising if the New Testament authors think God is the Trinity. But none would be surprising if the New Testament authors think God is the Father alone. Therefore, these provide powerful evidence for the thesis that New Testament authors are unitarian in their theology, not trinitarian. Further, this all fits hand in glove with the clear pan-New-

58 Philippians 2:11. Hasker seems not to notice this. (*Metaphysics*, 181) In my view this much-discussed text is actually about the earthly career of the human Jesus, the explicit subject of passage. On this see my "a reading of Philippians 2:5–11," <https://trinitities.org/blog/a-reading-of-philippians-25-11/>.

59 Larry Hurtado, "Messiah and Worship", March 19, 2014, <https://larryhurtado.wordpress.com/2014/03/19/messiah-and-worship/>, original italics. See also my "Larry Hurtado on early Christians' worship of Jesus," trinitities blog, November 27, 2019, <https://trinitities.org/blog/larry-hurtado-on-early-christians-worship-of-jesus/>.

60 Romans 1:25.

61 Hasker, *Metaphysics*, 181.

62 Hasker seems to grant this without recognizing this as a problem for his theology. (*Metaphysics*, 183)

Testament theological assumption we saw in section III. I urge that we should agree with them, despite the clash between their theology and later orthodoxy.⁶³

V. CAN HASKER REBUT THE FIVE FACTS ARGUMENT?

How can Hasker withstand this evidence? I'm not aware of anything he's written concerning facts 3 and 4. About worship, he doesn't deny fact 5, nor should he; nor does he dispute that this is surprising if the authors are implicit trinitarians. But some things he's said could be grounds for thinking that fact 5 would *also* be very surprising if the authors think the one God just is the Father alone. He asserts that "No non-divine person can properly be the recipient of divine worship."⁶⁴

The answer to this is that Jesus, who is clearly a real man in the New Testament, is portrayed as a proper recipient of such worship, in addition to God. In previous articles I have cited Revelation 4 and 5 as showing this, along with Philippians 2:11, but Hasker is impressed with the fact that Jesus is worshiped at all, being given honor that is in the Bible normally reserved for God alone.⁶⁵

This is indeed a remarkable fact. But Hasker seems to miss details in these chapters which reveal what is and is not being presupposed there about God and about his human Son. In Revelation 4, the author has a vision of a figure on a throne; this is clearly God, the one Isaiah saw in his famous vision⁶⁶ — as the worshipers go on to say, he is "the Lord God the Almighty."⁶⁷ The heavenly host in this vision is portrayed as worshipping this unipersonal God using these words:

You are worthy, our Lord and God, to receive glory and honor and power, for you created all things, and by your will they existed and were created.⁶⁸

Who is the recipient of worship here? God, who in earlier times was called "Yahweh," the Lord God Almighty. *Why* is he worshiped? The worshipers state their reason: he is the unique god who created all other things.

In chapter 5, a new character is introduced into the scene. Someone is needed who is worthy to open a sealed heavenly scroll; not to worry, the Messiah Jesus is worthy—but here he is characterized as "the Lion of the tribe of Judah, the Root of David," and as "a Lamb standing as if it had been slaughtered."⁶⁹ He is worthy because he has "conquered," and the reader is to understand that this is the risen Jesus, who has conquered by means of his obedience to God even through a terrible sacrificial death.⁷⁰ When the Lamb (=the risen and exalted Jesus) takes the scroll the heavenly host cry out,

You are worthy to take the scroll and to open its seals, for you were slaughtered and by your blood you ransomed for God saints from every tribe and language and people and nation; you have made them to be a kingdom and priests serving our God, and they will reign on earth ... Worthy is the Lamb that was slaughtered to receive power and wealth and wisdom and might and honor and glory and blessing!⁷¹

Jesus is being honored here not "as God," or on the grounds that he has the divine nature or is a "Person" within God, but rather because of his mighty service to the one God, the one seated on the throne, from whom he has taken the scroll.⁷² Clearly here there are two selves — Hasker is right about that — but one

63 To those still unwilling to see the clash, I would submit this argument: "podcast 248 — How Trinity theories conflict with the Bible," <https://trinities.org/blog/podcast-248-how-trinity-theories-conflict-with-the-bible/>.

64 Hasker, "Can Social Trinitarianism Be Monotheist?," 440; Compare: *Metaphysics*, 182.

65 Hasker, "Can Social Trinitarianism Be Monotheist?," 441.

66 Isaiah 6.

67 Revelation 4:8.

68 Revelation 4:11.

69 Revelation 5:5–6. This Lamb is also described as "having seven horns and seven eyes, which are the seven spirits of God sent out into all the earth," which I understand to mean that this Lamb is now, having been exalted, great in power or dominion and in knowledge.

70 Philippians 2:6–11. In the New Testament, human servants of God—both Jesus and his followers—"conquer" the opposition through their faithful obedience. (John 16:33; Hebrews 11:33; 1 John 2:13, 4:4)

71 Revelation 5:9–10, 12.

72 Revelation 5:7.

of them is God, and the other is his human servant, the Messiah. This chapter is a portrayal of the central New Testament theme of Jesus's post-resurrection exaltation "to God's right hand."⁷³ This is not merely a change of place, but a change of status, position, and power. And there is not the slightest hint in this text that God is multipersonal, or that Jesus is a "Person" in some sense "in" God, or that he has the divine nature. To the contrary, it is assumed that he *doesn't* have the divine nature, because divine nature implies essential immortality, whereas this "Lamb" has died and been raised back to life. All of this is the context of the heavenly host continuing to worship both God and his Son — note, as two recipients of worship.

Then I heard every creature in heaven and on earth and under the earth and in the sea, and all that is in them, singing, 'To the one seated on the throne and to the Lamb be blessing and honor and glory and might forever and ever!' And the four living creatures said, 'Amen!' And the elders fell down and worshiped.⁷⁴

All of this presupposes the falsity of what seems self-evident to Hasker, that "No non-divine person can properly be the recipient of divine worship."⁷⁵ That isn't true unless it is impossible for a non-divine person to be elevated "to God's right hand." But that is precisely what we see in the New Testament, where there is no claim that the man Jesus could not have been so raised unless he had the divine nature. Hasker would need to argue for the impossibility of this in order to establish his claim about recipients of worship.

Why does Hasker think this is an obvious truth? I can only speculate that this is a widespread assumption in systematic theology, one that Hasker has been taught and has not been willing to reconsider, and that perhaps for him, as with many modern people, the word "worship" *by definition* means a sort of honor which should only be given to God, or to a divine person.⁷⁶ But this is not true of the words we translate as "worship" in the New Testament.⁷⁷ At any rate, words should not distract us. If Hasker insists that "worship" *means* something which should be given to God alone, or to a divine person, we can simply let him use "worship" that way, and then talk about how in the New Testament only God and his human Son are given "religious honor," where by this we mean something which is usually given only to God, but which in principle can be given to a human. One can simply restate everything that I say about fact 5 above in terms of "religious honor," and so re-stated, it still provides strong confirmation of the thesis that the New Testament authors think the one God just is the Father over the thesis that they think the one God is the Trinity. And using "worship" in this restricted way, worship in the New Testament is given only to God, not to Jesus, the Spirit, or the Trinity — so this in effect adds fact 6 to our overall case.

About fact 1, I think Hasker says some relevant things, although in the end he doesn't undermine the evidence which this supplies for the thesis that the New Testament authors are unitarian rather than trinitarian in their conception of the one God. In chapter 29 of his book, Hasker sets out to discuss some different uses of the word "God," but in fact he argues about both terminology and theology. First, he states a part of fact 1:

... 'God' is used to designate Yahweh, the God of the Old Testament, who was known to Jesus as Father and whom he taught his followers to address as Father. This is the standard usage of 'God' throughout the New Testament ...⁷⁸

Here, Hasker correctly identifies (not merely associates, but as it were collapses into one and the same thing) Yahweh with the one God of the Jewish scriptures, and with the one Jesus calls "Father." But this (because the Father and the Trinity *can't* be so identified) rules out the one God being the Trinity, which is the core thesis of any Trinity theory. Hasker is here making the correct point that just because "God"

73 Matthew 26:64; Mark 14:62; Luke 20:42, 22:69; Acts 2:33–34, 5:31, 7:55–56; Romans 8:34; Ephesians 1:20; Colossians 3:1; Hebrews 1:3, 13, 8:1, 10:12, 12:2; 1 Peter 3:22.

74 Revelation 5:13–14.

75 Hasker, "Can Social Trinitarianism Be Monotheist?", 440.

76 Hasker, *Metaphysics*, 178, n. 6.

77 On this see my "Who Should Christians Worship?" *Journal of Biblical Unitarianism* 1, no. 1 (2014); James Dunn, *Did the First Christians Worship Jesus? The New Testament Evidence* (SPCK, 2010); Larry Hurtado, *At the Origins of Christian Worship* (Eerdmans, 1999), 65–69.

78 Hasker, *Metaphysics*, 246–247, original italics.

names Yahweh (a.k.a. the Father) in the Bible, it doesn't follow that trinitarians can't use "God" to refer to the Trinity. But in so doing, he utters another truth about the Bible which is inconsistent with any Trinity theory. But rather than reflecting on the significance of this truth⁷⁹ when it comes to determining the theology presupposed by these authors, Hasker moves on and attacks a strawman argument, which in footnotes he attributes to me:

Unitarians consider this usage [of "God" for the Father] normative and definitive, and appeal to it in order to rule out as incorrect other uses of "God" that arise in trinitarian discourse.⁸⁰

The issue, though, is *not* word-usage, but rather a correct understanding of New Testament theology. Our view is not, primarily, that current Christians should stick to New Testament uses of words, but rather that we dare not depart from the theology of Jesus and of his apostles. These not only used "God" mainly for the Father, but the reason for this was that they identified the one God with the Father alone, as we saw in sections II and III above. I think Hasker sensed, when he wrote the above passage, that the issue is not primarily about word-usage, but is rather theological. Thus, immediately after the above passage he gives a quick and unconvincing argument that the New Testament Jesus must not be "a mere creature" (i.e. he must be fully divine) because he's properly worshiped.⁸¹

Moving on, Hasker observes that according to trinitarians,

... each of the trinitarian Persons can be described as 'God' and can be referred to, addressed, prayed to, and worshiped as God ... [and here] 'god' (*theos*) is not a proper name, but a term that makes a predication about the person or reality so named. 'God' as applied to the Persons ... ascribes to that Person the property of divinity or deity.⁸²

Indeed, this is what trinitarians say. But again, it is beyond dispute that the Spirit is never prayed to or worshiped in the New Testament, and while arguably it is called "God" at least once,⁸³ this is compatible with a non-trinitarian take on talk of God's "spirit" in the Bible.⁸⁴ As to Jesus being referred to as "God," Hasker cites six texts in which many interpreters think Jesus is referred to as "God."⁸⁵ Many of these are disputable for textual, translation, or interpretive reasons, but rather than go through these one by one and engage these scholarly controversies, it is sufficient to remember that in these books no less than Jesus himself makes the point that beings who are less great than God can be referred to using forms of the word "God."⁸⁶ And probably the least controversial of the Jesus as *theos* texts shows us why: the earlier tradition of referring to human kings as "God," presumably because of their god-like and God-given power, position, and authority. The author of Hebrews asserts that the raised and exalted Son of God fulfills the old text where God says,

Your throne, O God [i.e. the Son], is forever and ever, and the righteous scepter is the scepter of your kingdom. You have loved righteousness and hated wickedness; therefore God [i.e. the Father], your [i.e. the Son's] God, has anointed you with the oil of gladness beyond your companions.⁸⁷

This is a quotation from Psalm 45, where the one addressed as "God," even though God is the god over him, is evidently an ancient king of Israel; this was the original setting of the above words. The author of Hebrews, like other New Testament authors, believes that unbeknownst to any but God, even at the time these words were written, they also had another application to God's coming Messiah. So no, for the Old Testament literate authors of the New Testament, calling someone other than God the Father "God"

79 I.e. that according to the Bible Yahweh just is God and Yahweh just is the Father. (In logic: $y=g \wedge y=f$.) See my "podcast 248" for how this rules out Trinity (triune-God) theories.

80 Hasker, *Metaphysics*, 247.

81 Ibid.

82 Ibid.

83 Acts 5:4.

84 See note 9 above.

85 Hasker, *Metaphysics*, 247.

86 John 10:34–36.

87 Hebrews 1:8–9, material in brackets added to clarify how the author is interpreting that text.

is *not* a way of ascribing essential divinity to him, whether we're talking about Jesus or Satan.⁸⁸ Nor is Jesus anywhere in the New Testament clearly assumed, implied, or asserted to be, as Hasker says, "'true God' ... fully and unambiguously divine."⁸⁹ There are huge differences between the God-talk of the New Testament and that of trinitarians, which reflects the underlying clash of theologies.

Next, contradicting part of his first point above, Hasker asserts that

... when the Father is referred to as 'God,' this should not be taken as an identity statement in such a way as to exclude the Son and the Holy Spirit.⁹⁰

Here I think Hasker has lost sight of the New Testament, and is simply lecturing us on the "grammar" of the Trinity, that is, how trinitarians ought to, given the truth of "the Trinity" use and interpret various kinds of sentences. Of course, any *identity* statement about the Father and God will "exclude" the Son and Spirit, because they are not (like God, if these identity sentences are true) numerically the same as the Father.⁹¹

But the question is, is it part of New Testament theology that the one God just is the Father? It seems that the New Testament everywhere assumes this, for the reasons cited in sections II and III above. And sometimes this assumption that the one God just is the Father is visibly near the surface. A case in point is the prayer of Jesus portrayed in John 17:1–3:

After Jesus had spoken these words, he looked up to heaven and said, 'Father, the hour has come; glorify your Son so that the Son may glorify you, since you have given him authority over all people, to give eternal life to all whom you have given him. And this is eternal life, that they may know you, the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom you have sent.'⁹²

This prayer assumes that the Father has the status "true God" and that nothing else does.⁹³ That's just what it means to say that the Father is *the only* true God, and it's an expression of the unitarian Christian position that the one God just is the Father.

Later in the same gospel, Mary Magdalene interacts with the risen Jesus. After she recognizes him, he says to her,

Do not hold on to me, because I have not yet ascended to the Father. But go to my brothers and say to them, 'I am ascending to my Father and your Father, to my God and your God.'⁹⁴

Jesus tells her that he's going away, away to someone who is his Father, his disciples' Father, his god and his disciples' god: obviously, this is God, the only god (but as we've seen not the only "God") in the Bible. These four expressions, "my Father," "your Father," "my God," and "your God" are supposed to be co-referring, the referent being the one God himself—yes, a single self, a sole "he." Again, it is clearly assumed that the Father just is God and vice-versa.

Back to Hasker, he notes that "a third usage is one in which 'God' is used to refer to the Trinity as a whole."⁹⁵ Hasker correctly observes that this usage is not found in the New Testament, that it became prominent only around the time of Augustine, that this usage is important for trinitarians, and that given

88 2 Corinthians 4:4.

89 Hasker, *Metaphysics*, 247. For a rebuttal of common arguments that New Testament writings imply that Jesus is "fully divine" see Tuggy and Date, *Is Jesus*, 6–33.

90 Hasker, *Metaphysics*, 248. See also pp. 187–88. And no, contra many church fathers, 1 John 5:20 is not an exception. On this see Murray Harris, *Jesus as God: The New Testament Use of Theos in Reference to Jesus* (Baker, 1992), 239–53.

91 Some Trinity theories are happy to collapse each of the Persons with God. See my "Trinity," Sections 1.7, 1.8. But Hasker sees that the New Testament implies simultaneous differences between the Father and the Son, which rules out their being one and the same.

92 John 17:1–3.

93 This is represented in modern predicate logic with quantification as: $Tf \wedge \forall x (Tx \supset x=f)$. That is: the Father has the quality true-God, and for anything whatever, it has the quality true-God only if it just is the Father. This analysis underscores that fact that two claims are being made here, which is a useful corrective to some who misread this as simply ascribing the quality *only-true-God* to the Father, a claim which by itself would allow that perhaps others are *only-true-God* too.

94 John 20:17.

95 Hasker, *Metaphysics*, 249.

scriptural precedent it's hard to imagine this becoming the main usage of "God" day to day for Christians.⁹⁶

We should add that the reason why "God" (and I would add: "the Trinity") came to be used to refer to the triune God around the time of Augustine is that this was when a tripersonal-God theology was mandated by a collusion of "pro-Nicene" catholic bishops and the empire.⁹⁷ For most earlier Christians, the one God was none other than the Father Almighty, although starting in the second century they ramped up references to the Logos as "God" and "our god" etc., and they thought of this Logos (either the pre-human Jesus or that which "became flesh" at the Incarnation) was a second and lesser deity.⁹⁸ And typically the Spirit would be the third-greatest, even lesser divine being.

In sum, philosophers can and should pick at the metaphysical details of Hasker's three-self Trinity theory. But more fundamental for Christians who accept the authority of the New Testament, is the question of whether Hasker's theology is consistent with New Testament theology or even well-motivated in light of those writings. I have argued briefly here that the account fails on both scores. Hasker, to a degree which perhaps is surprising for a Protestant who is also an open theist, trusts in mainstream trinitarian theorizing, and in particular in its interpretation of the New Testament as in *some* sense requiring a doctrine of a tri-personal God. But I, another Protestant who is an open theist, urge that he has yet to grapple with those textual facts in light of which it is clear that Trinity theories belong to a later age than the New Testament, and do nothing to help us to understand its theology or christology. Socinus was correct; it was a mistake for the less radical Reformers like Calvin and Luther to roll back theology only to about the time of Augustine, when it comes to the New Testament God, his human Son, and the spirit they have given to believers.

VI. CONCLUSION

In some areas of scholarship, particularly in biblical studies, much of what I have said above would just be assumed as obvious. In fact, one might be a Roman Catholic trinitarian and take exactly the same view as I do of New Testament theology.⁹⁹ Such a person, as Catholic, considers church tradition (specifically, that under the leadership of the Pope) to be the primary authority for Christians; in their view the Church simply has moved on from New Testament theology to something better.

Among many scholars who have immersed themselves deeply into the mindset of the New Testament texts, it is taken for granted that these texts do not obviously support later theories about the one God as the Trinity. Hasker himself admits that "the Church's doctrine of the Trinity is not as such to be found in the New Testament" and really dates to the latter fourth century.¹⁰⁰ But what *is* in the New Testament clashes with any Trinity theory. I would urge Hasker, as a Protestant, to let New Testament theology stand on its own two feet, as "the faith once delivered to the saints."¹⁰¹ Either this, or let him admit that in some sense New Testament theology has been superseded, not merely drawn out, developed, or clarified by later developments.

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96 Ibid.

97 For the basic historical details on the crucial 381 council, see my *What is the Trinity?* (Amazon, 2017), Chapter 5.

98 On this see Tuggy and Date, *Is Jesus*, 76–80, 149–51. I pass by many complexities here about what a "two natures" christology is supposed to be; on this see Ibid., *Is Jesus*, 2–6, 10–17, and my lecture "Clarifying Catholic Christologies," <https://youtu.be/s6wK-IRZP-k>.

99 As a case in point see my "Catholic Theologian Hans Küng on New Testament theology," <https://trinities.org/blog/hans-kung-on-new-testament-theology/>.

100 Hasker, *Metaphysics* 8, 9.

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