

B.F. Westcott and the Deity of Jesus Christ: A Study in King James Onlyism

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We very soon find ourselves lost in mysteries here; but remembering St John's emphatic "I" as including both the divine and human natures of the Incarnate Lord, I always prefer to speak of "the two aspects of the Lord's divine-human Person," or to use some such phrase. By this mode of expression the most precious fact of the unity of the Lord's Person is guarded, and yet we are enabled to regard Him as truly man and truly God. ~ B.F. Westcott

The mode of the Lord's existence on earth was truly human, and subject to all the conditions of human existence; but He never ceased to be God. ~ B.F. Westcott

But the assumption of humanity, not for a time, but for ever, by the Word, who is God, was a truth undreamt of till it was realized. ~ B.F. Westcott

Christ the Incarnate Word is the perfect revelation of the Father: as God, He reveals God. ~ B.F. Westcott [\[2\]](#)

B.F. Westcott asserted the deity of Jesus Christ so many different times, in so many different ways, under such a variety of headings, that writing a paper to prove his position may appear to be an exercise in the obvious. This author has compiled ten pages of quotations similar to those given above, all the while passing over many references as the project became more and more akin to proving that the sun radiates light. It may border on the absurd to seek to prove that which is obvious, yet there are those for whom obvious is not enough. It is so plain that Westcott believed in the deity of Christ that all who read Westcott's writings (or profess to read them) have no excuse for claiming otherwise. Unfortunately having no excuse does not stop the leaders of the King James Only movement from devoting themselves to this odd practice. David Sorenson provides an outrageous illustration as he claims that, "Though Westcott stops short of outright denial of the Deity of Christ, he certainly does not affirm it either." [\[3\]](#) It cannot be stated too strongly that Sorenson does not know what he is talking about, and this in material that was the major project for his D.Min. degree at Pensacola Christian College Seminary. There is such an abundance of material in which Westcott most clearly affirms the deity of the Lord Jesus that such statements are utterly ridiculous.

B.F. Westcott has become the object of such perverse attacks for one simple reason: he, along with his fellow English clergyman Fenton John Anthony Hort, in 1881 published a Greek New Testament which became the starting point for most subsequent scholarly research in the text of the New Testament and the basis of translation for the English Revised Version, the first English Bible to present a serious threat to the supremacy of the King James Version. Here was the beginning of what would become a flood of Bibles which have clearly dethroned the KJV as the monarch of English versions and have replaced it with an oligarchy of extremely popular Bibles and a multitude of lesser contenders. [\[4\]](#) For this, the King James Only crowd will never forgive the Bishop. While Westcott was probably not the most important contributor to the rise of modern versions, he has suffered the greatest abuse by the KJO. The reasons are not important, but suffice it to say that the nature and extent of the attacks have told us much more about the

attackers themselves than about the former Lord Bishop of Durham.^[5] Men whom we suspect were formerly of sound judgment have fairly gone rabid in their attacks against the Bishop. Apparently anyone as successful as Westcott in removing the aura from the version which has practically become the object of idolatry must be ipso facto the most despicable of men and totally corrupt in every aspect of his theology and personal life, even if the facts state otherwise. And the facts are certainly much different than one would think who has confined his reading on this subject to the unending stream of books and pamphlets that flow from those who equate standing for the Bible with defending one particular translation. While the materials to easily settle this issue are readily available in any good seminary library, much less is actually required: all one really needs is a copy of either of Westcott's popular commentaries on the Gospel of John or the Epistle to the Hebrews. The truth is not difficult to find for any who truly wish to do so, both in words easy to fathom and in others demanding careful attention.

Pantheist: The charge not quite made

Virtually any author who has written extensively on complex subjects can be misunderstood and misrepresented with or without malice by those who do not maintain great care in their research and who fail to examine a broad spectrum of that which the author has written. Such skewing becomes not only possible but most likely when the examiner has an agenda to fulfill and is more concerned with proving a point than with finding the truth. When analyzing the theology of a man of such powerful intellect as B.F. Westcott, who was not only a world-class biblical scholar but also a thinker of deep philosophical insight, any student must consider all of his words most carefully in the broadest of contexts. His statements must be pondered and weighed against clarifying material supported by the widest possible reading. Any hasty throwing together of conclusions about the Bishop's musings on deep issues of theology is sure to result in literary disaster. All of this is complicated immensely by the fact that Westcott held to positions both orthodox and unorthodox. An eagerness to make him either better or worse than he actually was will insure a misunderstanding of his writings.

And a misunderstanding of Westcott's writings is exactly what we find in James Sightler's book, A Testimony Founded For Ever.^[6] We have already documented Dr. Sightler's disregard for the truth concerning Westcott's view of the inspiration of the Bible.^[7] One focus of this paper is upon his assault against Westcott's view of the deity of Christ, and in particular his charge that Westcott was a pantheist. In his book this accusation occupies the first half of chapter eleven, "Brooke Foss Westcott, Trinity College Mystic." It is a charge, interestingly, that is not directly made, but very strongly implied, the whole drift of his argument pointing to such a conclusion. Sightler asks rhetorically, "How indeed can such a system [Westcott's] be distinguished from pantheism and the Eastern religions?" (p. 241), and supports his implication by (1) linking Westcott to others who expressed false views, (2) reproducing Westcott's statement that there is but one life, (3) asserting that Westcott believed that the incarnation began at creation, and (4) asserting that he believed that God was incarnate in all men. We will consider these allegations seriatim.

Quoting others to condemn Westcott

Sightler follows a "Mulligan stew" approach in his attack: everyone whom he can find in nineteenth century England with a false view of the incarnation gets thrown into a common pot, and we are evidently supposed to believe that the resulting potpourri represents the view of Brooke Foss Westcott. Hence the Bishop is linked to Maurice with the observation that both found a central place for the incarnation in their theology (true enough). With this link in place, a quote concerning Maurice's doctrine alleges that he believed that men are not separated from God by sin but rather

are all indwelt by Christ. We are informed that “This is the meaning of the Incarnation as seen by the Broad Church,” (p. 224), and the innuendo is that Westcott held to such a view (a point most certainly not established by Sightler’s methodology). Quotes follow from Strauss, Eliot, Kingsford, and Maitland where step by step the implication is made that Westcott believed that in all men there is a “unity of the divine and human natures,” that Christ’s incarnation was not unique, but common to all men, that God is “the Substance of humanity,” and that God is the “one Substance of which all things are modes of manifestation.” The words of this last quotation are immediately followed by Sightler’s comment, “Or as Westcott so often put it, the One Life,” (p. 229), which implies that Westcott’s position is the same as that expressed by Maitland. The fact that Westcott held some positions in common with some of these writers does not mean that he held all positions in common with all of them, which would have to be the case for Sightler’s methodology to be valid.

Westcott, as any scholar would, studied and learned from the works of many men with whom he disagreed in important ways, and as all of us, could probably find almost no one with whom he disagreed on everything. For example, in 1849 he wrote to his fiancé, “What will you say to me for reading Carlyle? . . . there is much in him I like. Is it not right to learn even from a foe, as an old Latin proverb says?” (Westcott, Life and Letters, Vol. I, p. 158). He also purposely sought the good among false teachings. According to the Rev. T.M. Middlemore-Whithard, Westcott’s brother-in-law, Westcott believed that “the way to combat error was to seek the element of good in it, and show that its real explanation and satisfaction were included in the Bible,” (Westcott, Life and Letters, Vol. I, p. 19). So it means very little when Sightler says repeatedly that Westcott studied a certain teacher, read his book, or was influenced by him.

Sightler mentions David Strauss no less than five times as he defames Westcott and tells us that the Bishop of Durham sought to combine the German theologian’s pantheistic ideas with Christianity, (pp. 225 (2), 226, 229, 237). In his “defense of the faith,” however, the doctor from Greenville fails to mention that Westcott wrote an entire book devoted to refuting the false views of Strauss:

It is an important feature of the work [Introduction to the Study of the Gospels], that, though it is intended specially to refute the form of skepticism represented, for example, by Strauss in Germany, and by Theodore Parker in this country, it is not directly polemic in its character, but treats of facts and discusses principles which render the argument appropriate to all times and places.^[8]

Sightler not only fails to give us accurate information concerning Westcott’s view of Strauss, but he commits the same error concerning Auguste Comte, the father of sociology and positivism. Sightler informs us that one of the men who “influenced” Westcott was Comte, (pp. 225, 226). Evidently we are expected to see something very sinister in this (the nature of the influence is not explained). Since we are no better prepared to comment upon such influence than Sightler is, we will refrain from doing so. We will, however, produce two comments by Westcott about Comte which apparently escaped Sightler’s attention:

And with this problem before us, it would be superfluous to criticize the errors and misrepresentations—to use no harsher terms—with which Comte’s religious writings are disfigured. He puts them forward so boldly and so frequently, that no one moderately conversant with Christianity can be misled by them. It is equally unnecessary to exhibit his weakness.^[9]

But while we must never leave out of sight, in dealing with the religion of Positivism, the fundamental defect which mars its completeness, it is necessary to remember that this is not the

only form in which a religion can be founded upon a dualism, though it is that most repugnant to our instincts, (Ibid., p. 253).

Obviously Westcott was somewhat less devoted to Comte than we might have been led to believe by Sightler's comments. His false method of quoting from other writers or alleging their influence as if they represent Westcott renders impotent a large portion of the material that the doctor cites in his attack, as is evident from these examples. It hardly bolsters our confidence in the King James Only leadership to see how very adept they are at neglecting inconvenient information and creating an impression that is entirely false. If Sightler wants to condemn Westcott for following Strauss, Comte, or anyone else, he must prove the particular error that they share by clear documentation from both, which of course he regularly fails to do. Informing us that they lived on the same street, owned the same breed of dog, or listened to similar music will not be convincing. Telling us that Westcott "read so-and-so's book" or was "influenced" by him has about as much force as pointing out that Martin Luther was "influenced" by Johann Tetzel.

Is there but One Life?

Sightler further seeks to link Westcott to pantheism by equating his claim that "there is but one life" with the words of Maitland referring to

the underlying original Substance, which is necessarily nothing less than Divinity itself, since there can be but one Substance of which all things are modes of manifestation, (p. 228).

Is it possible to believe in one life in some sense other than the pantheistic one advocated by Maitland? The Bible itself supplies the answer. The Apostle John speaks of one life as he informs us that life was in Christ and the life was the light of men, (John 1:4). The figure of the vine (Christ) with the branches (Christians) drawing life from him in John 15 suggests the same idea. One life is surely indicated by the concept of all Christians united in a body as the bride of Christ and also by Paul's words, "But no longer I myself live, but Christ lives in me," (Galatians 2:20). Colossians 3:4 tells us, "When Christ may be revealed, who is your life, then you also yourselves shall be revealed with him in glory." So yes, the Bible teaches the concept of one life, at least for those who are in Christ. To support his defamation of Westcott for believing in one life, which is allegedly not life in Christ, Sightler produces a quotation from The Gospel of Life in the following form:

"our thoughts are raised to a vaster life than that which is realized individually, a life in which humanity becomes one...a life which is not an abstraction, not [sic] simply a participation in a common nature but personal...Whatever is, He is. There is but one life."

Immediately following the words that Sightler draws from Westcott as given above, he makes this statement: "The question is whether Westcott, when he speaks of one life, is speaking of the Lord Jesus Christ," (p. 229). He follows with a series of appositional descriptions of Christ which he evidently feels justify an accusation that Westcott believed in a false Christ. He thus proposes that Westcott is not speaking of life in Christ "when he spoke of the One Life. He did not mean the life of the Lord Jesus Christ," (p. 234). It is acceptable practice to omit words from a quotation provided the omission is marked with an ellipsis and provided the omission does not change the force of the quotation. Keeping in mind that Sightler's main point here is that Westcott's "One Life" is not the life of Christ, we allow the reader to judge the integrity of his quotation. We reproduce the full quotation from Westcott, with the words underlined that Sightler chooses to allow us to see. We again reproduce Sightler's edition for easy comparison.

Sightler's version:

"our thoughts are raised to a vaster life than that which is realized individually, a life in which humanity becomes one...a life which is not an abstraction, not [sic] simply a participation in a common nature but personal...Whatever is, He is. There is but one life."

Westcott's version:

Then follows the declaration of the union of believers in one Person [Greek omitted], by which our thoughts are raised to the contemplation of a vaster life than that which is realized individually, a life in which humanity becomes one, a life which is not an abstraction nor simply a participation in a common nature [Greek and reference omitted], but (as we apprehend it) personal (comp. Eph. iv. 15 f.). And in the third place the life which has been regarded in its supreme unity in Christ is regarded, so far as this is possible, in its separate parts, 'ye are one man in Christ'; and conversely 'Christ is all things and in all.' The differences between man and man are in the faithful, partial manifestations of Christ. Whatever is, He is. There is but one life. And thus in the personal lives of Christians His image, the archetype of man as originally created, is more and more completely attained, (Westcott, The Gospel of Life, p. 234, bold added).

Anyone new to King James Only literature is invited to think long and hard about this quotation. We encounter no rarity here, but rather a common practice by the KJO to manufacture statements when their victims are uncooperative. Here is why nothing found in King James Only literature, no matter how convincing it may sound, can be taken at face value. Every claim must be carefully investigated, and frequently some such deception as that seen above will be found. These tactics are one reason that many of us do not consider the King James Only debate to be simply a difference of opinion between faithful Christians. Are we being too harsh? Is a little "constructive editing" justified for a cause so noble as defending the King James Bible? We believe that such tactics are utterly despicable, and that we, if anything, have been restrained in our denunciations.

Before leaving the subject of one life, several observations are in order. First we note that Westcott believed that life is only in Christ and that to be apart from him is death:

No good is apart from Christ; and in Him alone is life, (Westcott, Life and Letters, Vol. II, p. 352).

Life, in other words, life eternal, is in Christ Jesus, and is realized in all its extent in union with Him: it is death to be apart from Him. [\[10\]](#)

The pantheistic concept of one life includes the idea of all personality being merged into one, so that individual identity eventually ceases. Westcott was careful to inform us that he held no such position:

But the end is fellowship and not absorption. We are said to be 'in Christ;' and we are said also 'to be at home with Christ.' [\[11\]](#)

It must be evident from this rapid summary that the claims of Christianity as an absolute religion are unique. It claims to bring the perfection no less than the redemption of finite being. It claims to bring a perfect unity of the whole sum without destroying the personality of each man, (Westcott, The Gospel of Life, p. 248, bold added).

Believers were to be transfigured, and at the same time their life was to continue in Christ. In other

words, a glimpse was given of a 'personality' of a raised humanity, in which each member was included but not absorbed, (Westcott, The Gospel of the Resurrection, p. 296, bold added).

The one life is potentially available to all mankind, but is not necessarily experienced by all:

The glorious view which is thus opened of the one life 'fulfilled in many ways' which animates mankind, potentially at least, does not exhaust the prospect which Christianity offers to the eye of faith, (Westcott, The Gospel of the Resurrection, p. 185, bold added).

The Incarnation and creation

A third link which Sightler attempts to establish between Westcott and pantheism is contained in his claim that the Bishop proposed that God was incarnate from the beginning of creation. Thus we read,

[1] This quote shows that the Incarnation had assumed an important place in Westcott's thinking even by 1860 while he was still at Harrow, although he might not have seen it then as beginning at creation, as he later come [sic] to do, (Sightler, p. 223).

[2] So he proposed that God was incarnate in all humanity from the beginning of creation: "And the whole tenor of revelation, as I conceive, leads us to regard the Incarnation as inherently involved in the Creation," (Sightler, p. 230).

[3] "If Christ took our nature upon him (as we believe) by an act of love, it was not that of one but of all. He was not one man only among men, but in him all humanity was gathered up. An [sic] thus now as at all time mankind are (so to speak) organically united with Him," (Sightler, p. 230, quoting Westcott).

We are unable to resist the temptation to demonstrate what a sloppy author Sightler is and have therefore reproduced Westcott's words in quote #3 as actually recorded by him with the places where Sightler has errors in his version set in bold. We grant that the errors are minor, but there are four of them in three consecutive sentences, and such errors are common throughout A Testimony Founded For Ever:

If Christ took our nature upon Him (as we believe) by an act of love, it was not that of one but of all. He was not one man only among men, but in Him all humanity was gathered up. And thus now as at all time mankind are (so to speak) organically united with Him, (Westcott, The Gospel of the Resurrection, p. 177).

In the numbered quotes we have reproduced Sightler's charge against Westcott and the material that allegedly supports it. A careful reading shows that the Bishop never says what Sightler claims, i.e., from quote #1, that the Incarnation began at creation. Westcott's words are reproduced in quote #2, "the Incarnation [is] inherently involved in the Creation." Of course this statement can be understood in many ways other than that given in Sightler's explanation: "inherently involved in the Creation" = "beginning at creation." Westcott taught that the Son of God would have become incarnate at some time after the creation to bring man to his intended consummation even if man had never fallen, (see Westcott, The Historic Faith, p. 66 and quoted by Sightler, p. 236). In other words, God created man in his image with the intention of extending the relationship by the incarnation, and this was the sense in which the incarnation was "inherently involved in the Creation." "The fitness and the necessity of the Incarnation exist therefore from the moment when man was made."^[12]

Westcott believed that there was an “organic union” (quote #3) between God and man that was completed by the incarnation of Christ. This “organic union” existed before the incarnation. Sightler produces no material where Westcott said that the incarnation began at creation. All such talk is simply a figment of an imagination run amuck. Much of what Westcott develops is speculation, and as such is beyond definitive analysis, but there is also thinking here rooted in truths that are plainly biblical. Westcott spends many pages developing his thoughts on the incarnation, and any remote possibility that we could do him justice here is excluded by limitations of space and topic. Our concern for now is Sightler’s false accusation that Westcott said that the incarnation began at creation, which he did not say.

God incarnate in all men

Closely related to the false accusation that Westcott believed in an incarnation that began at creation is the claim that he saw the incarnation as including all men. This charge is recorded in quotes “A” and “B” below, and the primary passages from Westcott used as support are shown in quotes “C” and “D.” Quote “D” is expanded to include more of Westcott than Sightler did, with the extent of his quote indicated by underlining. Four errors by Sightler were omitted without indication (minor as they were). Quotes “E,” “F,” and “G” were supplied by this author. As was the case with the charge that Westcott believed that the incarnation began at creation, a careful reading of Sightler’s book reveals that he does not produce any material where Westcott says precisely what Sightler claims.

[A] As early as 1853, in his Theological Essays, Maurice had tentatively suggested the view that God was incarnate in all men, and this is the view that Westcott came to during his years at Harrow from 1851 to 1869, (Sightler, p. 223).

[B] Westcott first implied that the incarnation involved all humanity in 1866 in The Gospel of the Resurrection as we will shortly see, (Sightler, p. 225).

[C] If Christ took our nature upon Him (as we believe) by an act of love, it was not that of one but of all. He was not one man only among men, but in Him all humanity was gathered up. And thus now as at all time mankind are (so to speak) organically united with Him, (Westcott, The Gospel of the Resurrection, p. 177).

[D] The essence of the idea of the Incarnation lies not in the recognition of a distinct divine person, but in the personal and final union of the Godhead and humanity. There had been real theophanies under the old dispensation in which God had been pleased to manifest Himself under a limited and transitory form. . . . But the assumption of humanity, not for a time, but for ever, by the Word, who is God, was a truth undreamt of till it was realized. And yet it answers to the original constitution of man’s nature. If he was made capable of union with God, to which truth his aspiration towards God is a silent and lasting witness, the consequence seems inevitable that this union would be brought about; and this (as far as our thoughts reach) could only be by God freely taking, not a man, but humanity, to Himself.

Thus we return to the point from which we started. The first Gospel lies in the record of Creation (Gen. i. 27). It was given before the Fall and not after the Fall. The Divine counsel of the union of God with man realized in the Incarnation is the foundation of Revelation, (Westcott, The Gospel of Life, pp. 252-53, bold added).

[E] He not only bore His blood, the virtue of His offered life, into heaven for the salvation of the nature which He had taken to Himself, but He applies it personally to each believer on earth, to

purify and to sustain, to begin and to complete that union with Himself for which man was made, (Westcott, Christus Consummator, p. 68, bold added).

[F] We believe not that one man by the cultivation of natural powers has striven upwards to fellowship with God, but that the Son of God has taken humanity to Himself and gained that for the race which each member can find for himself in Him, (Westcott, Christus Consummator, p. 151, bold added).

[G] Thus Christ is representatively man; and it is by fellowship with His human nature, by taking it to ourselves as He offers it, by striving, as we may, to win that which in the end we shall receive freely from His love, that we all can obtain life. This is what He speaks of as 'eating the flesh of the Son of man, and drinking His blood,' making our own, appropriating, using, the virtue of His humanity as He lived for us, the virtue of His humanity as He died for us, (Westcott, The Historic Faith, p. 65, bold added).

Quotes "C" and "D" present several problems for the idea of an incarnation in all men beginning at creation. First the "assumption of humanity" was "undreamt of till it was realized," which most certainly means "undreamt of" until it occurred during the reign of Herod the King. For this reason the "assumption of humanity" could not be describing an incarnation in all men beginning at creation. Further, his "assumption" did not occur under the old dispensation, where it was merely foreshadowed by theophanies. This latter point is established in material which Sightler bypassed (to our complete surprise). Four times in the two quotes Westcott speaks of a union between God and man, but instead of the union existing from the beginning of creation (Sightler's version), man was only made "capable" of the union, and the union did not exist before the incarnation of Christ. Again, Sightler's accusation cannot be brought into harmony with Westcott's statements, and again the material which supports this latter observation was omitted (should we say, "snipped out?") by Sightler. There is further difficulty for Sightler in quote "E" where "the nature which He [Christ] had taken to Himself" carries the same import as "the assumption of humanity" in quote "D." The sequence of events envisioned in "E" is illuminating. First, Christ took human nature to himself, which he then brought to salvation by the offering of his blood/life in heaven. He then applied the virtue thereby gained "personally to each believer on earth" "to begin and to complete that union with Himself for which man was made." It is clear that the union which Sightler thinks is an incarnation did not occur until after the passion, resurrection, and ascension, and that it was only for believers in Christ, not for all men. The words set in bold type in quotes "F" and "G" reinforce the idea that Christ in "taking humanity to Himself" did not thereby make every man an incarnation of God, but rather supplied a potential benefit which each man must "find" and "take" for the benefit to become effective in his case.

There can be no doubt that Westcott's words in quotes "C" and "D" are very difficult to follow and are prone to misunderstanding. We grant that if there was firm information that Westcott did indeed believe in an incarnation in all men, several of the phrases in the quotes would be harmonious with that error, but this is a far cry from saying that Westcott's statements can only be understood as reflecting the incarnation that Sightler proposes. There are other words in Westcott that do not match such an analysis, both in these quotes, and much more extensively, in material that is included under the next heading in this paper. In other words, Westcott said so many things that would exclude pantheism from his theology, that we dare not see the doctrine in any passage where any other interpretation is viable.

An important question is whether there could be a close, personal union of God and men brought about through the incarnation of Christ that did not itself involve an incarnation of God in everyman. There are several very close unions described in the Bible that do not involve

incarnation. It is apparent that just such a union occurs as Christ takes the Church unto himself as his bride. Believers are also said to be “in Christ” and Christ is said to be “in them,” but no incarnation is thereby indicated. The indwelling of the Holy Spirit in believers is no incarnation, and neither does the close unity of Father, Son, and Holy Spirit result in the Father and Spirit being incarnate in the incarnation of the Son.

Westcott is not espousing the view that there is a union of God and man such that each man is an incarnation of God, but rather that there is a union of God with man brought about through the incarnation of Christ in which Christ not only became a man, but also in some sense took “humanity” to himself. In this sense “humanity” is not equal to the sum of all individuals in their personal identities, but equals that which becomes a perfected humanness that can be appropriated by and applied to each individual man as he has faith in Christ. Westcott believed that Christ, by his life, by his sufferings, and finally by his death, perfected this new “humanity” (or “humanness”) which he offers to all who are willing to receive it, and thereby gain eternal life. The Cambridge scholar, by his own admission, is dealing with concepts that cannot be fully explained. We believe that Westcott is in error here, but his error is in the doctrine of salvation, particularly that of the atonement and of justification, and not in the doctrine of Christ. None of his words imply an incarnation of God in all men anymore than the union of Christ with his bride, the Church, implies an incarnation of God in all believers, nor anymore than the fact that believers are “in Christ” implies such an incarnation. Taking humanity to himself may be a nebulous concept, but that certainly does not grant Sightler license to twist it into something that it is not. As we examine Westcott’s writings for clarification of this “taking humanity to himself,” we gain some help concerning what it means (and it remains murky), but we also find an abundance of help concerning what it does not mean, and it does not mean that Westcott was a pantheist, which will be fully proved in the next section.

Pantheism: A shoe that doesn’t fit

When we find words by the Apostle Paul such as those in Colossians 3:11, “Christ is all and in all,” how do we know that he did not believe in pantheism? We simply examine his writings for other statements that would absolutely exclude such a belief. What has Sightler done with statements by Westcott which could be understood in such a false way? He has ignored a multitude of words by Westcott that are completely at odds with pantheism and clustered around the Bishop’s statements quotations from others who clearly held to false views, including pantheism, thus creating the impression that Westcott agreed with the false views. There are statements by Westcott that we are not able to fully explain, and some of his material could be given a pantheist interpretation, but we have gathered much material from Westcott in which he states many positions that cannot in any way be harmonized with the false doctrine. Some might argue that Westcott was promoting pantheism “on the sly.” Such would not explain his clear denials of the teaching in contexts where it would have been most convenient to simply keep silent. The statements that Westcott makes under the following seven headings are totally at variance with a belief in any form of pantheism. We will not insult the reader’s intelligence by pointing out that which is obvious in the words of the Bishop but will simply let him speak for himself.

Westcott believed that men in their natural state are separated by sin from God.

In the case of the unbeliever, the judgment is completed; he is separated from Christ, because he hath not believed on the revelation made in the person of Him who alone can save, (Westcott, The Gospel According to St. John, p. 56).

For everyone recognizes in himself the two conflicting truths which are expressed in the narrative of

the Fall: the power of evil and the prerogative of personal responsibility. There is we feel a 'baseness in our blood,' and we feel also that we have embodied the corruption 'by our fault, by our own fault, by our own great fault.' The tendency indeed is our inheritance, but we have made the issues our own by deed, we are actually, and we know ourselves to be, guilty, enthralled, alienated from God, (Westcott, Christus Consummator, pp. 116-17).

In consequence of sinfulness and sin man is spiritually in bondage, in debt, alienated from God. [\[13\]](#)

Man is in darkness and death, (Westcott, The Epistles of St. John, p. 88).

Naturally 'darkness' is the sphere in which man abides until it is dispelled, (Westcott, The Epistles of St. John, p. 87).

It follows that all that is in darkness, all that is darkness, is excluded from fellowship with God by His very nature, (Westcott, The Epistles of St. John, p. 17).

St. John therefore considers the three views which man is tempted to take of his position. He may deny the reality of sin (6, 7), or his responsibility for sin (8, 9), or the fact of sin in his own case (10). By doing this he makes fellowship with God, as He has been made known, impossible for himself, (Westcott, The Epistles of St. John, p. 18).

. . . so in any particular case the past sin must still work its full effect in separating the sinner from God without end, unless some new power be interposed, (Westcott, The Gospel of the Resurrection, p. 171).

The natural state of men is that of death, (Westcott, The Epistles of St. John, p. 149).

We know that we were made for God; we know that we have been separated from God; we know that we cannot acquiesce in the desolation of that divorce, (Westcott, Christus Consummator, p. 36).

Westcott believed that men cannot find God within themselves.

And thirdly, if man has fallen from God by his responsible ('free') act, the consequent relation of man to God is such that he cannot be restored to his original state of perfect communion otherwise than by the action of Divine Love, (Westcott, The Gospel of Life, p. 205).

For while we feel no less surely that God is than that we are and that the world is, and are conscious of an affinity to Him, we cannot come to a knowledge of Him from the interrogation of nature. We cannot deduce from an examination of our own constitution what He must be. This would be impossible in any case for an imperfect and finite creature; and if the creature be also fallen and sinful the impossibility is intensified. We must then look without ourselves for the knowledge of God. But here again we cannot command at our pleasure adequate sources of information. Experiment is capable only of rare application to the complicated phenomena of life and it can have no place in regard to the will of an Infinite Being. If then we are to know God, He must in His own way make himself known to us, and we on our part must be able to recognize and to give a personal welcome to the revelation, (Westcott, The Gospel of Life, pp. 78-79).

Within obvious limits man may obtain by direct observation knowledge of himself and of the world. But if he is to know God, God must reveal Himself, (Westcott, The Gospel of Life, p. 285). It is impossible, so far as our experience yet goes, for man to have direct knowledge of God as

God. He can come to know Him only through One who shares both the human and divine natures, and who is in vital fellowship both with God and with man. In Christ this condition is satisfied. He who as the Word had been declared to be God, who as the Son is one in essence with the Father, even He set forth that which we need to know, (Westcott, The Gospel According to St. John, p. 14).

Westcott believed that the work of Christ provides a potential redemption for all men that is not automatically realized for each individual.

The Gospel was addressed to all men, and potentially it availed for all men: as in Adam all die, so also in Christ shall all be made alive (1 Cor. Xv. 22), (Westcott, The Gospel of Life, p. 235).

In this respect the idea of the Church may be compared with the idea of humanity with which it is potentially commensurate, (Westcott, The Gospel of the Resurrection, p. 242).

He not only bore His blood, the virtue of His offered life, into heaven for the salvation of the nature which He had taken to Himself, but He applies it personally to each believer on earth, to purify and to sustain, to begin and to complete that union with Himself for which man was made, (Westcott, Christus Consummator, p. 68).

We believe not that one man by the cultivation of natural powers has striven upwards to fellowship with God, but that the Son of God has taken humanity to Himself and gained that for the race which each member can find for himself in Him, (Westcott, Christus Consummator, p. 151).

Westcott believed that men must fulfill conditions to gain eternal life. [\[14\]](#)

Such faith in Christ is the condition of eternal life, (Westcott, The Gospel According to St. John, p. 1).

The love of God is without limit on His part (v.17, note), but to appropriate the blessing of love, man must fulfill the necessary condition of faith, (Ibid., p. 55).

The message of the Gospel is the glad-tidings of sin conquered. . . . To embrace it personally is to gain absolution. [\[15\]](#)

Make disciples of all the nations, the Lord says, baptizing them into — not 'in' — the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit. The beginning of discipleship lies in the reception of a Divine gift by those who are willing to accept it. The power through which we can render peaceful obedience cannot originate in ourselves. But the new Sacrament of Baptism, now first instituted, establishes the connection through which the currents of the spiritual life now flow, if I may so speak, naturally. It forces us to look away from ourselves for the strength which we need. It concentrates our thoughts on God's loving purpose. It offers us — sense-bound as we are — a historical pledge that He on His part will most surely accomplish what He has begun. It gives us that point of support whereby we are enabled to move the world.

The more we reflect on that brief sentence, baptizing them into the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost, the more we shall feel with a living conviction that it includes the foundation of all our confidence, the sum of all our creed, (Ibid., p. 159).

The first passage shews that by our covenant rite [baptism] we are made not only a people of God, but also priests of God, (Westcott, Christus Consummator, p. 70).

So then, we repeat, our covenant rite, our Baptism, brings us into a personal relation to Christ. No one stands between the believer and the Lord. Our Sacrificial Feast, our Eucharist, offers to us the virtue of Christ's life and death, His Flesh and Blood, for the strengthening and cleansing of our bodies and souls, (*Ibid.*, p. 72).

Westcott believed that Jesus Christ is the unique Son of God, i.e., he is the Son in a sense in which no other is.

[Christ is not ashamed to call Christians "brothers" in spite of] the essential difference of the sonship of men from His own Sonship, (Westcott, [The Epistle to the Hebrews](#), p. 50).

Thus from the Person of the Lord we go on to consider His Nature. We confess that He is 'the only Son of God' and 'our Lord.' In both respects, though truly man Who lived with men, He occupied a position essentially distinct from that of any other. His Godhead is one with the Godhead of the Father, His sovereignty over men is absolute. Christians are sons of God, but sons by adoption in virtue of their fellowship with Him Who is Son by nature, (Westcott, [The Historic Faith](#), p. 49).

Westcott believed that Christ is the Creator and is infinitely above his creatures.

The full importance of these passages [in the Apocalypse] is brought out by the stern denunciations against every form of idolatry with which the book abounds (comp. I John v. 21). Christ therefore is wholly separated from creatures, (Westcott, [The Gospel According to St. John](#), p. lxxxvii).

The exalted king [Christ], who is truly man, is also above all finite beings, (Westcott, [The Epistle to the Hebrews](#), p. 27).

Thus the expression which describes the self-humiliation of Christ raises Him at the same time immeasurably above all those whose nature He had assumed, (Westcott, [The Gospel According to St. John](#), p. 35).

As we come to apprehend more clearly what we are and what God in Himself must be, the interval between the creature and the Creator opens out in its infinite depth, (Westcott, [The Gospel of Life](#), pp. 38-39).

Westcott emphatically stated that pantheism is a false view.

Such a revelation of the divine Fatherhood through the Son to sons definitely distinguishes the Christian doctrine of God from Pantheism and Theism. As against Pantheism it shews God as distinct from and raised immeasurably above the world; as against Theism it shews God as entering into a living fellowship with men, as taking humanity into a personal union with Himself, (Westcott, [The Historic Faith](#), p. 220).

In this sense the thought of 'the only God' (John v. 44) is opposed to all forms of Dualism, Polytheism, Pantheism. . . . All notion of coeternal matter or of a coeternal principle of evil, as antagonistic to or limiting the divine action, is set aside, (Westcott, [The Epistles of St. John](#), p. 166).

The Preexistence of our Lord

As far as this author knows, the first writer to deny that Brooke Foss Westcott believed in the preexistence of Jesus Christ was Donald Waite in his book of errors, [The Theological Heresies of Westcott and Hort](#). It is exasperating to try to describe a book so filled with the absurd and

containing so much “documentation” that is no documentation at all. Over and over Dr. Waite lists supposed doctrinal errors of the Cambridge textual scholars and supports his charges by quotations from their books. The problem is that time and time again the quotations do not say what Waite says they do. Hard as it is to believe, the pattern is just this simple: Westcott, “Here we see that A=B.” Waite, “Here we see Westcott denying that A=B.” In gathering material on Westcott and the deity of Christ for the major project for his D.Min. degree (see footnote #3), it appears that David Sorenson did little more than reproduce Waite’s nonsense. Sorenson makes three points “supported” by comments that Westcott made on four scripture passages. Both the points and the passages are presented in the same order as material in Waite, and the third point in Sorenson contains a quotation from Waite. Gail Riplinger also gathers similar poison from Waite for the foul accusations made in her book.^[16] Sorenson’s book is certainly on a higher level in terms of form and tone than Riplinger, but it is just as much in error, and in truth, we have three peas in a pod.

Under the heading “Christology,” Sorenson begins, “One of the worst aspects of Westcott’s position was his view of Christology,” (Sorenson, p. 115). Just the opposite is in fact the case. While Westcott held to numerous errors, his doctrine of Christ was thoroughly orthodox. The doctor continues:

In his commentary on John 1:1, he wrote, “The ‘being’ of the Word is thus necessarily carried beyond the limits of time, though the pre-existence of the Word is not definitely stated. The simple affirmation of existence in this connexion suggests a loftier conception than that of pre-existence; which is embarrassed by the idea of time” [emphasis Sorenson’s]. Though Westcott was notorious for his doublespeak and mumbo-jumbo style of theological writing evident above; [sic] at this juncture, he clearly questions the pre-existence of Jesus Christ, (Sorenson, p. 115, and compare Waite, p. 21).

Two out of three men here are guilty of “doublespeak and mumbo-jumbo,” and one of them is not B.F. Westcott. The Bishop most certainly does not question the preexistence of Jesus Christ in these words, but recognizes that John does not say, “Before the beginning was the Word,” but rather, “In the beginning was the Word.” His point is that at the moment of creation, Christ was existing completely above and beyond time as the eternal Word of God.

It is always a wise practice when confronted by a quotation in material from the likes of Waite and Sorenson to expend the necessary energy to examine the material for one’s self. It will frequently mean the difference between darkness and light. In this example, the light is already on by the time we finish reading Westcott’s material as given, but it shines much brighter in a broader context, and thus we reproduce at length from the Bishop of Durham (the Waite/Sorenson quote is underlined):

In the beginning] The phrase carries back the thoughts of the reader to Gen. i. 1, which necessarily fixes the sense of the beginning. Here, as there, “the beginning” is the initial moment of time and creation; but there is this difference, that Moses dwells on that which starts from the point, and traces the record of divine action from the beginning (comp. I John i. 1, ii. 13), while St John lifts our thoughts beyond the beginning and dwells on that which “was” when time, and with time finite being, began its course. Comp. Prov. viii. 23. Already when “God created the heaven and the earth,” “the Word was.” The “being” of the Word is thus necessarily carried beyond the limits of time, though the pre-existence of the Word is not definitely stated. The simple affirmation of existence in this connection suggests a loftier conception than that of pre-existence; which is embarrassed by the idea of time. Pre-existence however is affirmed in a different connexion: ch. xvii. 5.

This force of in the beginning is brought out by a comparison with the corresponding phrase

in 1 John i, 1, from the beginning. The latter marks the activity of the Word in time from the initial point: the former emphasizes the existence of the Word at the initial point, and so before time.

was] The verb was does not express a completed past, but rather a continuous state. The imperfect tense of the original suggests in this relation, as far as human language can do so, the notion of absolute, supra-temporal, existence, (Westcott, The Gospel According to St. John, p. 2).

The overwhelming force of this passage as it thoroughly discredits the false charge made by Waite and Sorenson hardly requires comment. At the risk of stating the obvious, a few observations are offered. Immediately preceding the material reproduced by Waite and Sorenson, Westcott said,

Already when “God created the heaven and the earth,” “the Word was.”

Why did Waite and Sorenson not include these words with their quote?

Immediately following the material reproduced by Waite and Sorenson, Westcott said,

Pre-existence however is affirmed in a different connexion: ch. xvii. 5.

Here Westcott states that the preexistence of Christ is affirmed in John 17:5, “And now, O Father, glorify thou me with thine own self with the glory which I had with thee before the world was.” Why did Waite and Sorenson not include these words with their quote? As he compares John 1:1 with I John 1:1 Westcott clearly says that the Word existed before time, “the former emphasizes the existence of the Word at the initial point, and so before time.” Why were these words not given in material alleging to relate the position of Westcott on the preexistence of Christ? A final question for now: Why do fundamentalists tolerate this from their leaders?

What about John 1:15?

Sorenson/Waite “support” their charge against Westcott with a second quotation from his commentary on the Gospel of John, this time at 1:15. We are expected to believe the following:

He similarly wrote in his commentary for John 1:15 (“He that cometh after me is preferred before me”) that the “supposed reference to the pre-existence of the Word . . . seems to be inconsistent with the argument which points to a present consequence” (emphasis mine). Again, Westcott questions the pre-existence of our Lord, (Sorenson, p. 115).

There is no need to prove again that Westcott believed in the preexistence of Christ, but we will answer this second assault upon the Bishop. Westcott most certainly does not “question the pre-existence of our Lord” in his comments on John 1:15, but he does question whether one particular phrase is referring to that preexistence. Here is a regular practice of the KJV Only leadership. One of their victims may fully believe that a particular doctrine is clearly taught in Scripture, and agree that it is taught in one hundred different verses, but if there is one verse where that author holds to an interpretation that results in that one particular verse not supporting the doctrine, the author will be accused of “denying” the doctrine. Torquemada himself could not have done a better job than this crew. But there is more. In his commentary on John 1:15, Westcott says that the phrase “is preferred before me” does not refer to the preexistence of Christ, but when he comments upon the very next phrase, “for he was before me,” he says that these words do refer to the Savior’s preexistence! His exact words are:

The precedence in dignity (iii. 33) which Christ at once assumed when He was manifested, was due to His essential priority. He was in His essence (viii. 58) before John, and therefore at His

revelation He took the place which corresponded with His nature, (Westcott, The Gospel According to St. John, p. 13).

The most important clarifying point in this quotation is the reference that Westcott cites to prove that Christ “was in His essence before John,” i.e., “Before Abraham was, I am.” (John 8:58).

Bre’r Rabbit and the Tar Baby

Sorenson follows Waite into a sticky mess with the following charge:

In his comments on John 4:1, Westcott wrote, “Nothing implies that the knowledge of the Lord was supernatural.” He clearly undermines the omniscience of our Lord, (Sorenson, p. 115).

Dr. Sorenson may not realize it, but on this one he has taken the place of Bre’r Rabbit and done got hisself all tangled up with the Tar Baby. The question just below the surface here concerns the relationship between the human attributes and the divine attributes in the Person of the Lord Jesus. If we suppose that his divine attributes were transferred to his human nature, then Christ ceases to be man, and we have plunged into at least one of several ancient heresies. In other words, Christ in his true humanity experienced the same limitations (apart from sin) that all men do, including limitations of knowledge. How this is to be harmonized with his divine knowledge, no wise theologian will hazard to guess, not being willing to engage the Tar Baby. But while we cannot and will not understand this truth, it is clearly taught in Scripture: “And Jesus increased in wisdom,” (Luke 2:52); “But of that day and that hour knoweth no man, no, not the angels which are in heaven, neither the Son, but the Father,” (Mark 13:32). Perhaps Waite and Sorenson would also like to fault St. Mark and St. Luke for their false doctrine. If Waite and Sorenson believe that Christ possessed omniscience in his human nature, they are on the verge of the ancient heresy of Docetism. The term derives from a Greek word meaning “to appear” and describes the teaching that Christ only appeared to be human. Westcott explains it better than we could:

His knowledge appears to be truly the knowledge of the Son of Man, and not merely the knowledge of the divine Word, though at each moment and in each connexion it was, in virtue of His perfect humanity, relative complete. Scripture is wholly free from that Docetism — that teaching of an illusory Manhood of Christ — which, both within the Church and without it, tends to destroy the historic character of the Gospel, (Westcott, The Gospel of St. John, p. 46)

The Lord’s manhood was (negatively) sinless and (positively) perfect, that is perfect relatively at every stage; and therefore He truly advanced by ‘learning’ (Luke ii. 52; 40 pleroumenon), while the powers of His human Nature grew step by step in a perfect union with the divine in His one Person, (Westcott, The Epistle to the Hebrews, p. 128).

Are Waite and Sorenson ignorant of that which every other conservative theologian knows?

Since the orthodox doctrine of Christ acknowledges that he was fully human, there is no problem with the statement that Jesus was ignorant of many things. [\[17\]](#)

Sorenson’s final attempt

In his final insult to Westcott’s view of Christ, David Sorenson again merely repeats old, worn out, tired material from Donald Waite. Perhaps we should remind the reader that these are two of the few King James Only advocates who have earned doctorates. In other words, these are the “bright and shinning lights” of their movement, representatives of King James Only “scholarship” at

it zenith. We have added an additional quotation from the same context in Waite where Sorenson did his “research.”

In his commentary of John 1:1, he wrote further, “Because the Word was personally distinct from ‘God’ and yet essentially ‘God,’ he could make Him known.” As D.A. Waite notes at this point, “If the Lord Jesus was distinct from God,” then he could not have been ‘God’ . . . yet Westcott wants merely to say that He was ‘essentially God’ without actually being God” (emphasis has been added). In this same context, Westcott went on to say, “Thus we are led to conceive that the divine nature is essentially in the Son” (emphasis has been added). Jesus was not essentially divine. He is Deity! (Sorenson, pp. 115-16).

This qualifying word, “ESSENTIALLY” should not be used if Westcott wishes to affirm Christ’s absolute DEITY! . . . Westcott wants to use the term, “GOD” only for the Father. This is HERESY! (Waite, p. 23).

According to Waite/Sorenson Jesus could not be distinct from God and also be ‘God.’ But we know that he most certainly could, just as Westcott with perfect theological precision stated. Why not apply Waite’s logic to the text of John’s Gospel? John states that “the Word was with God.” Waite’s crooked reasoning would claim that the Word could not be God and also be with God. How can a person be with himself? The thought is absurd, is it not? Or better yet: John tells us that Jesus “came forth from God, and was going back to God,” (John 13:3). How can a person leave himself and then return to himself? John says nothing here easier to understand than what we find in Westcott, and indeed, if Westcott is denying the deity of the Lord Jesus, then so is the Apostle John. Of course Waite/Sorenson are just playing a little game with us here, but it is one in which we choose not to participate. We all know that in these references (and there are more of them) both John and Christ used the term “God” as referring to God the Father, and yes, Jesus was personally distinct from God the Father while being of the same essence as the Father, which means that he was and is fully God. This pair of accusers have themselves, in their zeal to condemn Westcott, stated heresy by denying the clear biblical teaching that Jesus is both “God” and yet distinct from “God.”

It is important to note that in Westcott’s statement, “Because the Word was personally distinct from ‘God’ and yet essentially ‘God,’ He could make Him known,” (Westcott, The Gospel According to St. John, p. 2.), the word “God” is enclosed in quotation marks. This device tells us that Westcott is using the term “God” not in its general sense, but in the particular sense that John did. And what is that particular sense? It is again obviously in the sense of “God” = “the Father.” There would be no other reason for Westcott to use quotation marks here. It is also interesting that as Sorenson quotes Waite, he fails to reproduce Westcott’s capitalization of “he” in reference to Christ (“He could make Him known”). In normal English grammar, this pronoun would not be capitalized, but many Christian writers, including Sorenson himself, choose to capitalize all pronouns when they refer to God. We can think of no other reason why Westcott would have provided such unusual capitalization in a pronoun referring to Christ other than to assert his deity. We also note that when Waite refers to Christ with a capitalized pronoun, Sorenson reproduces it accurately, “. . . yet Westcott wants merely to say that He was ‘essentially God’” Was it just an oversight or did Sorenson with malice choose not to reproduce a capitalization by Westcott that would be understood by all readers to indicate that Westcott believed in the deity of Christ? Sorenson is generally much better than many of his fellow “defenders of the faith” in such “minor” matters, but not this time. Perhaps we are jaded, but we suspect foul play here, having seen so many similar antics from this crowd.

We encounter another “antic” in the treatment that Waite/Sorenson give to Westcott’s use of

the term “essence/essential/essentially” (noun/adjective/adverb). The duo wish to foster upon us the idea that when Westcott says that Christ is “essentially” God, what he really means is that Christ is not God at all. Strange way of speaking, but stranger still for anyone with any training in theology. Of course “essentially” means the same as “in essence,” and it just so happens that the term “essence” (and its various forms) has a precise meaning in theological usage (a meaning of which Waite/Sorenson are unaware?).

The story begins in the third century with the Church father Tertullian. He wished to affirm the full deity of Jesus Christ and did so by stating (in Latin) that Christ was of one substantia with the Father. The English word substance of course derives from this Latin.

In connection with God Tertullian employed the Latin word substantia, taken from Roman legal terminology and meaning a man’s status in a community. He declared that in his substantia, or substance, God is one. [\[18\]](#)

These three are one substance, not one person; and it is said, ‘I and my Father are one’ in respect not of the singularity of number but the unity of the substance. ~ Tertullian [\[19\]](#)

Some years later in the early fourth century the Church was battling the heresy of Arianism. Arias, in his denial of the deity of Christ, would accept the view of the Savior indicated by the Greek word homoiousios, “of similar substance” with the Father, but not the view indicated by homoousios, “of the same substance” with the Father. There was, indeed, just an iota’s worth of difference. Most fortunately in 325 at the Council of Nicaea, the Church adopted the second term, and thus we have in the English translation of the Nicene Creed,

[We believe] in one Lord Jesus Christ, the only-begotten Son of God, begotten of the Father before all worlds, God of God, Light of Light, Very God of Very God, begotten, not made, being of one substance with the Father

Given the background of the Latin term “substantia,” it is most natural that the English word “substance” found its way into the translation of the Creed and into our theological jargon. Many theologians, however, believe that the word “substance” sounds too material, and therefore prefer the term “essence.” Thus when we assert that Jesus Christ is in essence God, or that he is essentially God, or that he is of one essence with the Father, we are affirming the universal doctrine of orthodoxy, as was Westcott when he used various forms of the same terminology. Waite/Sorenson are simply blabbering when they assert that “Westcott wants merely to say that He was ‘essentially God’ without actually being God.”

For the benefit of those who remain skeptical we demonstrate the usage of the terms “substance” and “essence” in modern writers (including Westcott). The quotes from Lewis Sperry Chafer were chosen because Waite used his Systematic Theology as his point of departure in “demonstrating” the errors of Westcott and Hort. Waite should have studied Chafer a little more closely during his days at Dallas Seminary.

Until more recent times, theologians believed that the plural form of Elohim with its varying combinations with either singular or plural pronouns, adjectives, and verbs, indicated the trinity of Being in one Essence. [\[20\]](#)

Whatever is within the Essence of Deity is lacking nothing which belongs to infinite completeness, (Ibid., Vol. I, p. 294, bold added).

The word “substance” might be too materialistic; some would prefer to use the word “essence.” . . . The whole undivided essence of God belongs equally to each of the three Persons. John 10: 30: “I and the Father are One,” beautifully states this balance between the diversity of the Persons and the unity of the essence.[\[21\]](#)

The doctrine of the Trinity holds that God is both a unity and a plurality. Within one essence there are three persons, the Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost.[\[22\]](#)

Orthodox Trinitarian doctrine is summarized in the definition “One essence [or nature, substance] in three Persons.” There is but one God, as the Jewish Shema (the prayer “Hear, O Israel . . .”) affirms (Deut. 6:4), for there is only one divine essence. This essence subsists in three distinct subjects or Persons.[\[23\]](#)

The precedence in dignity (iii. 33) which Christ at once assumed when He was manifested, was due to His essential priority. He was in His essence (viii. 58) before John, and therefore at His revelation He took the place which corresponded with His nature, (Westcott, The Gospel According to St. John, p. 13, bold added).

It is enough for us to know that He Who lived our life, on Whom we place our trust, is the only Son of God, and therefore Himself in essence very God . . . (Westcott, The Historic Faith, p. 50, bold added).

We find it most difficult to believe that Waite and Sorenson, with their advanced theological training, are unaware of this usage of “essence.” In fact, we do not believe it, but rather think that in their rabid defense of the KJV they have ignored what they know to be true in order to maliciously slander Brooke Foss Westcott.

We have previously accused KJV Only writers of “selective editing” in their choice of quotations. We do so again. Here are the words of Westcott that Waite/Sorenson refer to at the head of this section (with a little more context):

The absolute, eternal, immanent relations of the Persons of the Godhead furnish the basis for revelation. Because the Word was personally distinct from “God” and yet essentially “God,” He could make Him known, (Westcott, The Gospel According to St. John, p. 2).

We have again underlined the words that Waite/Sorenson chose for our viewing. Why did they not include the immediately preceding sentence? It certainly throws additional light upon Westcott’s statement, but perhaps such illumination is unwelcome. Further light may be gained by securing a copy of Westcott’s commentary on the Gospel of John and reading all that the Bishop has to say on the person of our Lord, particularly his section on John 1:1-3. For a final observation under this heading, we note Waite’s comment, “Westcott wants to use the term, [sic] “GOD” only for the Father,” (Waite, p. 23). The quotations at the beginning of this paper are sufficient to refute this nonsense.

John 10:30

Westcott Denied That The Lord Jesus Christ And God The Father Could Be “EQUAL IN POWER,” Hence Denied Thereby The DEITY Of Christ. He wrote:
(John 10:30)(I and my Father are one) It seems clear that the unity here spoken of cannot fall short

of unity of essence. The thought springs from the EQUALITY OF POWER (my hand, the Father's hand); but infinite power is an essential ATTRIBUTE OF GOD; and it is IMPOSSIBLE TO SUPPOSE THAT TWO BEINGS DISTINCT IN ESSENCE COULD BE EQUAL IN POWER. (W-John, op. cit., p. 159).

Westcott is vague here, but he seems to be saying that there could be no "EQUALITY IN POWER" between God the Father and God the Son. If there is no "EQUALITY IN POWER," there can be no DEITY of Christ, and Christ could not in fact be "GOD," (Waite, p. 24).

Waite's reproduction of this selection from Westcott is accurate except for an extended omission that is not indicated and the extensive capitalization of entire words which was not present in the original. Such foibles would not be accepted in a quality graduate program. In this section Westcott presents a syllogism in reverse order. He begins with his conclusion, moves to the minor premise, and finally proceeds to the major premise. His conclusion is that when Christ affirmed that he is one with the Father, the unity thus indicated is a unity of essence, "It seems clear that the unity here spoken of cannot fall short of unity of essence." The previous section of this paper demonstrated that such language is a clear statement by the Bishop of the full deity of Jesus Christ. Westcott's conclusion follows from the minor premise that Christ and the Father are indeed equal in power and from the major premise that two beings distinct in essence could not be equal in power. Westcott affirms his major premise by stating the impossibility of the antithesis rather than the necessity of the thesis, which makes his logic awkward to state as a syllogism in standard form. The following represents the syllogism in customary order while reflecting the logic of Westcott's argument clothed in simpler language:

Major: Two beings equal in power must be of the same essence. [\[24\]](#)

Minor: Christ and the Father are equal in power.

Conclusion: Christ and the Father must be of the same essence.

For Waite's foolishness to be correct, Westcott would have had to have reasoned as follows:

Major: Two beings distinct in essence cannot be equal in power.

Minor: Christ and the Father are distinct in essence.

Conclusion: Christ and the Father cannot be equal in power.

Westcott affirms the exact opposite of the required minor premise when he says, "It seems clear that the unity here spoken of cannot fall short of unity of essence." He further indicates the converse of Waite's conclusion by stating, "The thought springs from the equality of power (my hand, the Father's hand)." He clearly believed that Christ and the Father were equal in power, a most certain indication of the deity of the Son. We again are faced with a prime example of Waite's twisted logic: Westcott, "Here we see that A=B." Waite, "Here we see Westcott denying that A=B."

It was mentioned above that Waite has an extended omission which he fails to indicate in his quotation from Westcott. There is an observation to be made here not concerning the deity of Christ but of the more general question of the perfection of the King James Version. Westcott begins his discussion of John 10:30 by quoting the words as translated in the KJV followed by a more precise translation of his own: "I and my Father are one] I and the Father are one." The KJV has "my Father." Yes, "my" is placed in italics, but placing an incorrect translation in italics does not change it into a correct one. Every form of the Greek text, including Westcott and Hort, the Majority Text, and all editions of the Textus Receptus [\[25\]](#) read "the Father." To state the matter simply, here Westcott and the modern versions are more precise and accurate than the King James. The KJV has a large number of such minor deficiencies, all protestations to the contrary.

The Sinless Savior

For the stout hearted, one more example of Waite's perversion of Westcott's Christology is given. In the face of massive evidence to the contrary, the president of the Dean Burgon Society would have his readers believe that Brooke Foss Westcott held to the view that Jesus Christ was a sinner.

Westcott Questions Or Denies The Impeccability Or SINLESSNESS Of The Lord Jesus Christ, (Waite, p. 27).

We choose not to discuss the points that Waite offers in support of this blather as we have grown weary of belaboring the absurd. This author has collected two and one half pages of quotations from Westcott's writings in which he most clearly asserts over and over the sinlessness of the Lord Jesus. The material from the Bishop that Waite cites does not in the slightest offer any contrary position. The two and a half pages contain twenty-eight separate quotations taken from five of Westcott's books. A sample is sufficient:

. . . 'He was crucified.' In that most terrible form He bore the last issue of sin, though He knew no sin, (Westcott, The Historic Faith, pp. 61-2).

His work was to take away sins: He Himself was sinless, (Westcott, The Epistles of St. John, p. 103).

True fellowship with Christ, Who is absolutely sinless, is necessarily inconsistent with sin; and, yet further, the practice of sin excludes the reality of a professed knowledge of Christ. 'No one that abideth in Him sinneth', (Westcott, The Epistles of St. John, p. 104).

Christ, in His sinlessness, perfectly realized its awfulness, (Westcott, The Epistle to the Hebrews, p. 47).

He [Christ] endured all without the least stain of sin, (Westcott, The Epistle to the Hebrews, p. 107).

Christ, as sinless man, could approach God for Himself, (Westcott, The Epistle to the Hebrews, p. 122).

While there is more material in Waite on Westcott's view of Christ, it is doubtful that any profit is to be gained by further discussion. The pattern of false information has been clearly established, and any who do not see it by now never will. There are examples of other writers who have reproduced Waite's ramblings, but the material does not improve as it is copied.

Final quotations

The most important words in this discussion are those of B.F. Westcott himself, and thus an assemblage of them is offered. It seems fitting to first reproduce two quotations given earlier in this paper, one from Sorenson, one from Waite, to allow the reader to clearly compare truth with error:

Though Westcott stops short of outright denial of the Deity of Christ, he certainly does not affirm it either, (Sorenson, p. 116).

Westcott wants to use the term, [sic] "GOD" only for the Father, (Waite, p. 23).

I should be inclined to say that the conception of God as Love complete and self-sufficing includes a Trinity. We cannot, as far as I see, think of love without (so to speak) subject, object, and uniting power, (Westcott, Life and Letters, Vol. II, p. 75).

It is of interest to notice that 'love' is connected by St Paul with each Person of the Holy Trinity," (Westcott, The Epistles of St. John, p. 133).

It may be added that vv. 6—9 contain a testimony to the Holy Trinity in the several works of the Divine Persons: Christ 'comes,' the Spirit 'witnesses,' God (the Father) 'hath witnessed concerning His Son,' (Westcott, The Epistles of St. John, p. 186).

The maintenance of the supreme Sovereignty of One God (monarchia) in this tri-personality has to be guarded against a twofold tendency to error: (1) towards a distinction in essence between God and Christ (the Father and the Son); and (2) towards a confusion of the Persons of the Father and the Son and the Spirit. The first error found its typical expression in Arianism: the second in Sabellianism. The first has affinities with Polytheism by introducing the idea of a subordinate Divinity. The second has affinities with Pantheism, as seeing in things transitory manifestations of the Person of God. Both rest upon a false Neo-Judaic conception of Monotheism, (Westcott, The Epistles of St. John, p. 220).

Nothing less than this is the scope of His words: I am with you all the days, unto the end of the world. I — perfect God and perfect man — able to help and to sympathize to the uttermost—I am with you, (Westcott, The Revelation of the Risen Lord, p. 165, bold added).

The mode in which 'Jesus' — still truly man — was made known to him [St Paul] carried with it the conviction, complete at once, that He was also in nature truly Divine, (Westcott, The Revelation of the Risen Lord, p. 195, bold added).

As Christians we believe in God: we believe also in Jesus Christ. It is, let us boldly avow it, an amazing faith. We cast the burden of our lives upon Him Who, very man, had borne it upon earth, upon Him Who has fulfilled by living, dying, rising again, every promise to Jew or Greek through which the Father encouraged the world to look for redemption and consummation: upon Him Whom we confess in the fullness of His Deity as the only Son of God, and in the absoluteness of His sovereignty as our Lord, (Westcott, The Historic Faith, pp. 54-4. bold added).

It follows that the thought of Christ's glory is extended beyond the Incarnation. The glory which was consummated through the Incarnation he had with the Father before the world was (xvii. 5); and when the prophet was allowed to look upon the Lord, sitting upon a throne, high and lifted up (Is. vi. 1 ff.), what he saw was the glory of Christ (xii, 41), (Westcott, The Gospel According to St. John, p. xlviii).

He who "was God," became flesh: He who "was with God," tabernacled among us (comp. I John i. 2): He who "was in the beginning," became (in time), (Westcott, The Gospel According to St. John, p. 2, bold added).

No idea of inferiority of nature is suggested by the form of expression, which simply affirms the true deity of the Word, (Westcott, The Gospel According to St. John, p. 3, bold added).

[Commenting on John 14:28] . . . the Father is greater than the Son as Son, in Person but not in Essence, (Westcott, The Gospel According to St. John, p. 200).

[Commenting on John 17:3] . . . to regard the juxtaposition of thee, the only true God, and him whom thou didst send, as in any way impairing the true divinity of Christ, by contrast with the Father, is totally to misunderstand the passage, (Westcott, The Gospel According to St. John, p. 239, bold added).

He seems to me to deny the Virgin birth. In other words, he makes the Lord a man, one man in the race, and not the new man—the Son of man in whom the race is gathered up. To put the thought in another and a technical form, he makes the Lord’s personality human, which is, I think a fatal error . . . , (Westcott, Life and Letters, Vol. II, p. 308, bold added).

They offer the fullest view which man can gain of the Person of the Lord in its absolute unity, truly human and truly divine, (Westcott, The Epistles of St. John, p. 128, bold added).

To ‘confess Jesus,’ which in the connexion can only mean to confess ‘Jesus as Lord’ {I Cor. xii. 3, Rom. x. 9), is to recognize divine sovereignty in One Who is truly man, or, in other words, to recognize the union of the divine and human in one Person, a truth which finds its only adequate expression in the fact of the Incarnation, (Westcott, The Epistles of St. John, p. 142).

He [Christ] is at once Creator and Heir of all things, (Westcott, The Epistle to the Hebrews, p. 7, bold added).

By the ‘name’ we are to understand probably not the name of ‘Son’ simply, though this as applied to Christ in His humanity is part of it, but the Name which gathered up all that Christ was found to be by believers, Son, Sovereign and Creator, the Lord of the Old Covenant, as is shewn in the remainder of the chapter, (Westcott, The Epistle to the Hebrews, p. 17).

Let us cling to our faith in Him, Whom we openly confess, as truly human, truly divine, (Westcott, The Epistle to the Hebrews, p. 106, bold added).

He [Christ] is truly man and yet infinitely more than man, (Westcott, The Epistle to the Hebrews, p. 193, bold added).

Conclusion

Those of us involved in the King James Only issue sometimes refer to it as the “Bible version debate,” but in reality, there is no debate here: there are those who acknowledge what is obvious, and there are those who deny it. By way of clarification, there can be genuine debate about which English translation of the Bible is the very best, and the King James may be considered as a contender, but there is no debate about whether the King James Bible is the one and only perfect Bible with all others being satanic counterfeits. The latter position, with all of the baggage that goes along with it, is nothing but ridiculous nonsense that can only be supported by the most outlandish perversions of truth. Part of the baggage is the false teaching that Brooke Foss Westcott was in virtually every area of doctrine a heretic, including the doctrine of the deity of Jesus Christ. The New Testament teaches in many different ways and in a large variety of passages, the deity of our Savior, that is, that he is very God of very God, divine in the fullest sense of the term. To deny this teaching would immediately place one outside the realm of orthodox Christianity, and so without shame or hesitancy the King James Only leadership accuses Westcott of this error. And again, as is so often the case, they make their accusation against the clearest of evidence. They boldly deny that which Westcott certainly states, and so there is no need for debate. Westcott’s own words present the most powerful argument on this issue, and his accusers have already denied

what he most clearly said.

For more information on B.F. Westcott and the King James Only movement, visit www.KJVOnly.org.

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[2] Life and Letters of Brooke Foss Westcott (London: Macmillan and Co., 1903), Vol. I, pp. 73-74; The Gospel According to St. John (1881; rpt. Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1971), p. 10; The Gospel of Life (London: Macmillan and Co., 1892), p. 252; The Gospel According to St. John, p. xlv, bold added.

[3] David H. Sorenson, Touch Not The Unclean Thing (Duluth, MN: Northstar Baptist Ministries, 2001), p. 116.

[4] This author's enthusiasm is restricted to a few of the modern Bibles.

[5] As bishop of the episcopate of Durham, Westcott was a member of the British House of Lords.

[6] James Sightler, A Testimony Founded For Ever (Greenville, SC: Sightler Publications, 1999).

[7] See James May, B.F. Westcott and the Inspiration of the Bible at www.kjvonly.org.

[8] B.F. Westcott, Introduction to the Study of the Gospels (New York: The Macmillan Company, 1902), p. viii.

[9] B.F. Westcott, The Gospel of the Resurrection (4th ed. London: Macmillan and Co., 1879), p. 251.

[10] B.F. Westcott, The Epistles of St. John (3rd ed., 1892; rpt. Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1971), p. xxxix).

[11] B.F. Westcott, The Historic Faith (6th ed. London: Macmillan and Co., 1900), p. 147, bold added.

[12] B.F. Westcott, Christus Consummator (4th ed. London: Macmillan and Co., 1906), p. 104.

[13] B.F. Westcott, The Epistle to the Hebrews (2nd ed., 1892; rpt. Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1970), p. 344).

[14] Westcott believed in the false doctrine of baptismal regeneration, as did KJV Only favorite John Burgon.

[15] B.F. Westcott, The Revelation of the Risen Lord (6th ed. London: Macmillan and Co., 1898), pp. 83-84.

[16] This author's most ungracious review of Riplinger may be seen at www.kjvonly.org.

[17] Norman Geisler, Baker Encyclopedia of Christian Apologetics (Grand Rapids: Baker Books, 1999), p. 425.

[18] Kenneth Scott LaTourette, A History of Christianity (Peabody, MA: Prince Press, 1975), Vol. I, p. 145.

[19] D.S. Schaff, "Tertullian," The New Schaff-Herzog Encyclopedia of Religious Knowledge, ed. Samuel M. Jackson (1907; rpt. Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1977), Vol. XI, p. 306.

[20] Lewis Sperry Chafer, Systematic Theology (Dallas: Dallas Seminary Press, 1947), Vol. I, p. 265, bold added.

[21] Charles C. Ryrie, Basic Theology (Wheaton: Victor Books, 1986), pp. 53-54, bold added.

[22] Roland H. Bainton, The Reformation of the Sixteenth Century (Boston: Beacon Press, 1952), p. 126, bold added.

[23] Harold O.J. Brown, Heresies (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson Publishers, 1984, 1988), p. 146, bold added.

[24] It seems to us that Westcott's argument is only valid when applied to two beings of infinite power, which of course is how he applies it, but he fails to clearly note this limitation.

[25] Our authority for the readings of editions of the TR is F.H.A Scrivener, The Authorized Edition of the English Bible (1611) (Cambridge: 1884), pp. 242-63.