

# Studies in the Usage of the Greek Word Μονογενής

As Found in the Gospel of John, the Epistle to Hebrews,  
First Clement and Other Sources

*Variously Translated as Only-Begotten, One of a Kind, and One and Only*

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*“No one has seen God at any time; the only begotten God who  
is in the bosom of the Father, He has explained Him.”  
John 1:18*

#### The Nicene Creed

“We believe in one God, the Father Almighty, Maker of all things, visible and invisible, and in one Lord Jesus Christ, the **Only-Begotten** Son of God, Begotten of His Father before all time, Light of Light, true God of true God, begotten, not made, being of one substance with the Father, through whom all things were made; who for us men and for our salvation came down from the heavens, and was made flesh of the Holy Spirit and the Virgin Mary, and became Man, and was crucified for us under Pontius Pilate and suffered and was buried, and rose again on the third day according to the Scriptures, and ascended unto the heavens and sitteth on the right hand of the Father, and cometh again with glory to judge the living and the dead, of whose kingdom there shall be no end: and in the Holy Spirit, the Lord and the Life-giver, that proceeded from the Father, who with Father and Son is worshipped together.”

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# A Quiet Revisionism and Common Misunderstanding

## Concerning the Greek Word *Monogenes*

### A Quiet Revisionism

A quiet revision has occurred in a well-known Greek lexicon – Liddell and Scott – regarding the Greek word *monogenes* (μονογενής). In 1883 the Liddell and Scott Greek Lexicon, published by Harper & Brothers, glossed *monogenes* in this way:

“μονογενής, ἕς, Ep. and Ion. μουνογ-:—*only-begotten, single*, παῖς Hes. Op. 374, Th. 426, Hdt. 7. 221, etc.; μ. αἷμα *one and the same blood*, Eur. Hel. 1685. Adv. -νῶς, *growing alone*, Arr. Peripl. M. Rubri p. 11.”<sup>1</sup>

However, the newly revised Liddell and Scott Greek Lexicon that is now available online glosses *monogenes* in this way.

“μονο-γενής, ἕς, Ep. and Ion. μουνο-γενής, (γένος) *the only member of a kin or kind*: hence, generally, *only, single*, παῖς Hes.Op.376, Hdt.7.221, cf. Ev.Jo.1.14, Ant.Lib.32.1; of Hecate, Hes. Th.426. 2. *unique*, of τὸ ὄν, Parm. 8.4; εἷς ὅδε μ. οὐρανὸς γεγονώς Pl.Ti.31b, cf. Procl.Inst.22; θεὸς ὁ μ. Sammelb.4324.15. 3. μ. αἷμα *one and the same blood*, dub. l. in E, Hel.1685. 4. Gramm., *having one form for all genders*, A.D.Adv. 145.18. 5. name of the foot, Heph.3.3. II. Adv. μονογε-νῶς, φέρεται μ. ἐν ἐνὶ τόπῳ *grows only in one place*, Peripl.M.Rubr.56, cf. 11. 2. *in a unique manner*, Aët. 15.13,14.”<sup>2</sup>

As you can see, the glossed meaning of the word has changed, leaving not a trace of the original meaning of “only-begotten.” A modern reader would have no clue that originally Liddell and Scott understood the word to also mean *only-begotten*. And what is so ironic is that some of the same references that were used to show that the word meant *only-begotten* are now used to support the new gloss of *only member of a kin or kind*.

For instance, Hes. Op. 376 (374) is used to support both meanings. However, when we actually look at the text we find out it cannot support the new, underlying meaning which they have assigned to *monogenes*.

The Greek text is as follows.

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<sup>1</sup> Henry George Liddell, Robert Scott, *A Greek-English Lexicon, Seventh Edition* (Harper & Brothers, New York, 1883) pg. 976

<sup>2</sup>Sourced from: [www.perseus.tufts.edu/hopper/text?doc=Perseus%3Atext%3A1999.04.0057%3Aentry%3Dmonogenh%2Fs](http://www.perseus.tufts.edu/hopper/text?doc=Perseus%3Atext%3A1999.04.0057%3Aentry%3Dmonogenh%2Fs)

“...μουνογενῆς δὲ πάις εἴη πατρώϊον οἶκον φερβέμεν ὥς γὰρ πλοῦτος ἀέξεται ἐν μεγάροισιν. γηραιὸς δὲ θάνοις ἕτερον παῖδ’ ἐγκαταλείπων.”<sup>3</sup>

And in English it would read:

“And might there be an only-begotten son to feed his father’s house, for, as such, possessions will multiple in your dwelling. Moreover, by allowing another child, you may die [ripe] in old age.”<sup>4</sup>

A. W. Mair, Professor of Greek at Edinburgh University, translates it this way.

“May there be an **only born son** to feed his father’s house: for so is wealth increased in the halls. But late be thy death if thou leave a second son.”<sup>5</sup>

And, Willem Jacob Verdenius, professor of the Greek Language at the University of Utrecht, makes this comment as to whether the translation of *monogenes* should be “only-begotten” or “only member of its kin” in this passage.

“376: μουνογενῆς. Not ‘the only member of its kin’ (LSJ) but ‘**only-begotten**’: cf. A. Ag. 898 μουνογενὲς τέκνον πατρί, Pl. *Criti.* 113 d 2 μονογενῆ θυγατρεῖρα ἐγεννησάσθην. Although the advice has a general purport, Hes. may be thinking of the fact that his personal difficulties would not have arisen if he had been an only child himself.”<sup>6</sup>

*Monogenes* cannot mean “only member of a kin” in this context. Now, let’s leave aside the latter part of this text; it makes no difference if the advice is to only have one child, or to have more than one child. The point is if we translate *monogenes* by the new meaning it does not fit the context of the passage, for the first part of the passage would then read, “And might there be an “only member of a kin” to feed his father’s house.” If the son was the “only member of the kin,” who would be left for him to feed? Not only would his father’s household have to be dead, but his own father would also have to be dead, if, indeed, he was the *only member of the kin*!

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<sup>3</sup>Sourced from: [www.perseus.tufts.edu/hopper/text?doc=Perseus%3Atext%3A1999.01.0131%3Acard%3D370](http://www.perseus.tufts.edu/hopper/text?doc=Perseus%3Atext%3A1999.01.0131%3Acard%3D370) (Henry George Liddell. Robert Scott. A Greek-English Lexicon. revised and augmented throughout by Sir Henry Stuart Jones. with the assistance of. Roderick McKenzie. Oxford. Clarendon Press. 1940).

<sup>4</sup> The word I loosely translated “allowing,” is the Greek word ἐγκαταλείπων, which, within the context, I take to mean that one does not kill, but leaves, or allows a second child to live (perhaps, a daughter, though it does not specify). It must be remembered that sometimes infanticide was practiced. I think what this passage is saying is that if you allow yourself another child, then the other child would be there to help take care of the father in his old age, thus allowing him to live to a ripe old age. The broader context of the passage is talking about the proper way to gain wealth without offending the gods, especially Zeus. In either case, the context would nullify the thought of “only member of a kin.”

<sup>5</sup> Hesiod, A. W. Mair (Aberd. Et Cantab.) *Hesiod, the Poems and Fragments, Done into English Prose with Introductions and Appendices* (Clarendon Press, Oxford, 1908) pg. 14

<sup>6</sup> Willem Jacob Verdenius, *A Commentary on Hesiod: Works and Days*, Vv. 1-382 (E. J. Brill, Leiden, 1985) pg. 180

The only way this new meaning, which has been assigned to *monogenes* would work, would be for the son to be the only one that was living, and that, of course, would make the rest of the passage nonsensical. Nor would it make a difference if one just translated it as “only,” for the general meaning of “only” is still rooted in the meaning of “only member of a kin” according to the definition in Liddell and Scott. In other words, you might solve the problem from an English point of view, but it would do nothing from a Greek point of view. In Greek, the word would still carry the idea of “only member of a kin” (that is, according to the new revisers of Liddell and Scott).

Now I know some may say, “Well, yes but the word means the ‘only *other* member of a kin,’ i.e. it excludes the immediate family.” That is well and fine and that is what they would have to believe in order to make the new gloss make sense, but that is not how the revised Liddell & Scott lexicon define the word, and that is not what the word means. The lexicon says it means “only member of a kin.” There is no sense of “other” in the word.

If one wanted to clearly communicate the thought of “other” with their new understanding, perhaps it could have been written (if I might conjecture), ὁ μουνογενὴς σου δὲ εἴη πατρώιον οἶκον φερβέμεν (And might there be an only member of thy kindred to feed the father’s household). But, if you think about it, that still wouldn’t make sense. If “other” excludes the immediate family, it would mean that the “only other member of a kin” would have to be some distant relative. It could not even be the father’s own son! But the context contradicts that notion because it speaks of him as being the father’s child, as would be a second child.

So any somersault that is made, trying to make the new meaning fit, ends up contradicting the text.

*Monogenes*, as they gloss it, could only refer to someone like an orphan, one who had no mother, father, or other relative, one who was the “only member of a kin.” Yet, one finds that the usage of *monogenes*, in almost every occurrence, disallows such a meaning for there always seems to be other kindred involved. The word simply cannot mean “only member of a kin.”

The only way this passage in Hesiod can really make sense is if one understands *monogenes* as *only-begotten*, exactly as Liddell and Scott had originally first glossed the word; yet to the unsuspecting reader of the revised lexicon, this original meaning has been eliminated and the new meaning has replaced it. And, not only that, it claims support for the new meaning by a text that was used to support the old meaning, which in reality is a text that disproves the new meaning!

You can see for yourself, dear readers, a revisionism has occurred in the treatment of the Greek word *monogenes* but, unfortunately, many readers will not be able to look up the supposed references to see if the new meaning is

correct. (In fact, I was not able to locate the other references in Greek in order to ascertain their claim, and so we are at a disadvantage, but the one listed above is enough to demonstrate the fact of the matter since that passage was referenced for their new meaning).

## A Common Misunderstanding

But this negation of the meaning only-begotten is supposedly affirmed by even other literature. For example, another popular claim that is repeated over and over is that Josephus' use of *monogenes* in Ant. 20:20 (Book XX, Ch.2:1) precludes any meaning of only-begotten. The assertion is made that Monobazus, the king of Adiabene had a son named Izates who Josephus calls *monogenes*. Yet the passage plainly states that Monobazus had other children, therefore, *monogenes* could not mean "only-begotten."

The most common translation of this passage is that by William Whiston.

"18 Monobazus, the king of Adiabene, who had also the name of Bazeus, fell in love with his sister Helena, and took her to be his wife, and begat her with child. But as he was in bed with her one night, he laid his hand upon his wife's belly, and fell asleep, and seemed to hear a voice, which bade him take his hand off his wife's belly, and not harm the infant that was therein, which, by God's providence, would be safely born, and have a happy end.

19 This voice put him into disorder; so he awoke immediately, and told the story to his wife; and when his son was born, he called him Izates.

20 He had indeed Monobazus, his older brother, by Helena also, as he had other sons by other wives besides. Yet did he openly place all his affections on this his only-begotten son Izates,

21 which was the origin of that envy which his other brothers, by the same father, bore to him; while on this account they hated him more and more, and were all under great affliction that their father should prefer Izates before them all."<sup>7</sup>

The problem, however, is that Josephus does not exactly say what William Whiston translates! Let's examine the underlying Greek text.

"18 μονοβαζος ο των αδιαβηνων βασιλευς ω και βαζαιος επικλησις ην τῆς αδελφης ἑλενης ἄλους ερωτι τη προς γαμου κοινωνια αgetai και κατεστήσεν εγκυμονα συγκαθευδων δε ποτε τη γαστρι τῆς γυναικος την χειρα προσαναπαυσας ἥνικα καθυπνωσεν φωνης τινος εδοξεν ὑπακουειν κελευουσης αιρειν απο τῆς νηδους την χειρα και μη θλιβειν το εν αυτη βρεφος θεοῦ προνοια και αρχης τυχον και τελους ευτυχους τευξομενον

19 παραχθεις ουν ὑπο τῆς φωνης ευθυσ διεγερθεις εφραζε τη γυναικι ταυτα και γε τον υιον ιζατην επέκαλεσεν

20 ην δε αυτω μονοβαζος τουτου πρεσβυτερος εκ τῆς ἑλενης γενομενος αλλοι τε παιδες εξ ἑτερων γυναικων την μεντοι πασαν ευνοιαν ὡς εις μονογενῇ τον ιζατην εχων φανερος ην

21 φθονος δε τουντευθεν τω παιδι παρα των ὁμοπατριων αδελφων εφουετο κακ τουτου μισος ηυξετο λυπουμενων ἁπαντων οτι τον ιζατην αυτων ο πατηρ προτιμωῃ"<sup>8</sup>

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<sup>7</sup> William Whiston, Trans., *The Complete Works of Josephus* (Kregal Publications, Grand Rapids, MI 49501) pg. 415

<sup>8</sup> A confirmation for this Greek Text can be found at: [www.perseus.tufts.edu/](http://www.perseus.tufts.edu/)

When one looks closely at the Greek text one notices that the particle ὥς in the phrase ὥς εἰς μονογενῆ has been forgotten in William Whiston's translation. The little word ὥς is a particle denoting comparison. Josephus is simply saying Izates was being shown preference "as if" he was an only-begotten child. He is not declaring he was an only-begotten child.

Therefore, the phrase should be understood in this sense. "...however he was having open [love], [showing] Izates all favour, like unto an only-begotten son." Thus, if I was using, the traditional translation above, I would modify it to read,

"20 He had indeed Monobazus, "this older [child] of Helena also," as he had other sons by other wives besides. Yet did he openly place all his affections on Izates, as on an only-begotten son."

However, if one disagrees that ὥς is being used as a comparative, the context still indicates Izates may still have been "monogenes" in the traditional sense of *only-begotten* simply because it seems Monobazus was a half-brother of Izates.

Notice in the Greek that Josephus does not clearly say Monobazus (the sibling), was the elder *brother*, but simply the elder [child] of Helena. So when one reads the context it seems Izates is the only child of Monobazus (the father) with Helena together. The narrative implies Monobazus fell in love with his sister, married her, and then had their first and only child named Izates. Afterwards, Josephus adds some new information that Helena had another child also name Monobazus, more than likely, from a previous husband.

Therefore, it seems Monobazus may have been the adopted father of Monobazus (the half-brother) of Izates, and not the real father. In other words, even though Monobazus (the senior) had other children, Izates was indeed the "monogenes," the only-begotten child of Monobazus that he ever had with his wife (sister) Helena. Her other child Monobazus (probably named after another family member), would have been Helena's son from previous marriage.

In this sense, Josephus would be using "monogenes" the same way the writer of Hebrews may have used the word. Isaac, obviously, was not the only-begotten son of Abraham, but he surely was the only-begotten son of Abraham and Sarah together.

It should be remembered that "monogenes" was used from three different perspectives in the Bible, at least from the time period from the LXX to the GNT. 1) *Monogenes* was used "of a father – the father's perspective (e.g. Jud. 11:34). 2) *Monogenes* was used "of a mother" – a mother's perspective (Lu.



7:12). 3) *Monogenes* was used “of a father and mother together” – a husband and wife perspective (Heb. 11:17).

Obviously, Josephus was not using the first perspective, for he tells us that Monobazus had other sons by other wives, neither could he be using the second perspective for he tells us Helena had another child, also by the name of Monobazus. However, the context seems to imply Monobazus and Helena had only one child together – Izates, so he was more than likely using the third perspective if he was not using ὡς as a comparative. However, the more likely option is that he was simply using ὡς as a comparative.

Therefore, anyway you look at it; whether from the point of view of ὡς as a comparative, or from the context of the overall passage, Josephus is using *monogenes* with its traditional understanding of “only-begotten.” If nothing else, this passage does not negate the traditional understanding of the word.

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I purposely began this study with a quiet revisionism and a common misconception because it sets the stage for the rest of our study. Over the last hundred or so years there has been an attack upon the traditional meaning of *only-begotten* for *monogenes*. This meaning has fallen into disfavor and it has been replaced with such meanings as *only*, *one and only*, *one of a kind*, or *unique*. But the question that must be asked, “Has this change been based upon fact, or has it been based upon theological reasoning? I assert it has been based upon theological reasoning and not upon the facts, for the facts still support the meaning of *only-begotten*.

Why has this occurred? Simply because the modern Christian has not understood the Biblical doctrine of the Blessed Trinity, and so, in his ignorance, has attempted to understand the Trinity by his logic rather than by the revelation of God that is Scripture, rather than by the revelation of God that is seen in Creation (Rom. 1:20), or by the revelation of God that is seen in Man, he who was made in the image and likeness of God (Gen. 1:26).

The real problem is that man’s logic has failed him with regard to this doctrine. Just as Eve was deceived by the logic of the serpent, so too, the modern Evangelical (for this phenomenon regarding the meaning of *monogenes* is “largely” contained in the Evangelical world and not in the rest of Christendom) has been deceived.

Man’s logic cannot understand the Biblical assertion that time did not always exist, and so the concept of time is overlaid the ontological existence of the Father, Son and the Holy Spirit. This causes him to conclude that the Father

cannot possibly have an only-begotten Son, for then the Father would have to exist before his Son. Therefore *monogenes* cannot mean only-begotten.

How true is the Scripture that says the wisdom of man is foolishness before God. But has this not always been the case when men reject divine revelation? Because many modern teachers (Neo-Trinitarians)<sup>9</sup> do not believe the testimony of Scripture, which says that “time” did not always exist, they allow their logic to destroy one of the most precious doctrines in the Bible, the doctrine of the Only-begotten Son of God.

By their lack of faith they have fulfilled the proverb –

**Proverbs 21:20** There is precious treasure and oil in the dwelling of the wise, But a foolish man swallows it up. NASB

The doctrine of the Only-begotten is a treasure sweet upon the lips of the wise, but man’s wisdom, which is foolishness before God, swallows it up. Such a one is not able to savor its sweetness.

Yes, I realize that most who deny this doctrine do so out of a desire to protect the deity of our precious Lord Jesus Christ, but they do not realize they are actually doing the opposite and are actually harming the deity of our Lord and showing dishonor to the Father, Son and Holy Spirit.

I know such men love the Lord and are loved by those near them, but dear brethren, our love must first be to the Lord and our loyalty must first be to the One who died for us upon the tree.

It is my prayer that this study will direct the hearts of many back into the blessed doctrine of the Father, Son and the Holy Spirit, the doctrine of the Blessed Trinity, and that, once more, Christians will proclaim our Lord, He who is the Only-begotten Son of God, eternally begotten of the Father before all ages, He who was begotten, not made, being of the same substance of God the Father, the One, who in the last days, came down from heaven and was born of the virgin Mary, very God of very God, made in the likeness of sinful flesh, the One who died for our sins upon the cross, paying the debt we could not pay, and who then rose from the dead on the third day, and ascended back into heaven, one day to come back to receive us unto himself.

As we begin this study, one may find some parts devotional, some parts polemical, and some parts may appear didactical, but however those parts may appear, I pray that it all will be an edifying and illuminating study blessed by the gracious presence of the Holy Spirit.

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<sup>9</sup> Neo-Trinitarians, as used in this study, refers to those who deny the traditional meaning of *monogenes*, thereby rejecting the doctrine of the eternal generation of the Son of God from the Father; such rejection, in reality, is a departure from the Historic Christian Faith.

It should be noted that I proclaim no new doctrine. I claim no special insight. I am just one who has lifted up his head to the Revelation of God in Creation, Man and Scripture delighting to see his Divine, Processional, and Triune Nature clearly manifested in all He has made and inspired (c.f. Rom. 1:20).

I simply follow the Word of God as it has been understood by godly men throughout the last two thousand years in regard to this Faith that once and for all was delivered to the saints. I contend for that Historic Christian Faith. I am just one of the millions who have always clung to that Faith and that blessed doctrine of the Only-begotten.

It is not I, but it is the Neo-Trinitarians who are introducing a new doctrine. They are the ones who have left the Faith by obscuring the real meaning of *monogenes*; they are the ones who are obscuring the truth by changing its historic definition. I am content to remain within the fold of untold millions of Christians over the last two thousand years who have always believed in the Historic Christian Faith, especially in regard to the doctrine of the Only-Begotten Son of God. And so, it is with that doctrine that we would like to begin our study, as we see that μονογενής, *monogenes*, means *only-begotten*, and is the revelatory word of our Lord.

# MONOGENES –THE REVELATORY WORD OF OUR SAVIOUR<sup>10</sup>

While he yet spake, behold, a bright cloud overshadowed them: and behold a voice out of the cloud, which said, This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased; **hear ye him.** Matt. 17:5 (NASB)

For God so loved the world, that he gave his **only-begotten Son**, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life. John 3:16 (KJV)

All things have been handed over to Me by My Father; and no one knows the Son except the Father; nor does anyone know the Father except the Son, and anyone to whom the Son wills **to reveal Him.** Matt. 11:27 (NASB)

We are told in these precious portions of Scripture that the Lord Jesus was God's "beloved" and "only-begotten" Son. As such, the Father gives the disciples a command to "hear ye him." This is the heartfelt desire of the Heavenly Father to his children. The Father has many sons (Jn. 1:12), but only one "Only-begotten" Son, the Lord Jesus Christ. As such, the Son is the only one who can reveal the true nature, character and purpose of the Father. None other can show forth the Father, for He alone is in the image of the invisible God (Col. 1:15). He alone exists in the form of God (Phil. 2:6). He alone is the radiance of his glory (Heb. 1:3). And He alone is the exact representation of His Person (Heb. 1:3).

God the Father desires that we listen to the Son, for only by listening to the Son can the believer come to a full knowledge of who God is according to His nature. When a believer ignores something that the Lord Jesus says, he is restricting his own growth in the knowledge of God. And when a believer nullifies or alters the words of Jesus, he not only restricts his growth in the knowledge of God, he is also stultifying his own growth into Christian maturity. Why is this so? Because Peter tells us that the grace we need for spiritual growth is intimately tied to our knowledge of God Himself (II Pet. 1:2). It is as we grow in our knowledge of our God that His grace is multiplied to us, and it is only by such a multiplication of grace that a Christian can grow into full maturity (II Pet. 3:18; Acts 20:32; cf. Lu. 2:40).

Consequently, it is very important to listen carefully to the words of the Lord Jesus Christ, especially when He tells us that He is the "Only-begotten" Son of God (Jn. 3:16). These are revelatory words. Only He can give us those words of eternal life that leads to a full knowledge of God (Jn. 6:68; 17:3). Moreover, how important it is to accept them in their plain and normal sense.

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<sup>10</sup> This chapter is an excerpt from: B. P. Harris, *Understanding the Trinity: An Encouragement to Abide in the Doctrine in both Faith and Practice* (Assembly Bookshelf, Sacramento, 2006)

Only when one understands the words He gives to us, is one able to grow in life, for light and life are always closely linked together (Prov. 16:15; Jn. 1:4; 8:12). This is an important principle. Our spiritual well-being is at stake. One will never lose his salvation from such willful ignorance of the words of our Lord, but one will certainly hinder his spiritual growth by such willful ignorance. When we understand this spiritual principle, we can understand why it is so important to contend for the Faith in these last days when some are departing from the Faith.

Scripture warns us that in the last days some Christians will depart from the Faith, and one of the biggest departures from the Historic Christian Faith is being caused by a small group of modern Christian teachers who are altering this important revelatory word of Jesus regarding his relationship to God the Father. They are telling Christians (in books and in new translations of Scripture), that “monogenes” was misunderstood by the Greek speaking population of the early Church. They are saying that Christian ministers of the first three centuries of the Church did not understand their own mother tongue, and as such, misled generation after generation of Christians for almost 1900 years regarding this important aspect of the Faith.

What they are really claiming is that because they are now on the scene, the “true” Faith is being clarified because they have deciphered the true meaning of “monogenes.” Men, who for the most part, have English for their mother tongue are now telling us that men, whose mother tongue was Greek, did not understand their own language. Christian teachers of long ago, who grew up speaking the Greek language, who learned Greek from the time they were little children, are accused of misunderstanding their own native tongue. They are saying that for almost two thousand years the true Faith was withheld from the Church and that the Holy Spirit had to wait for the modern teachers to be born in order to reveal to Christians the “true” Faith.

They are in reality saying that for almost two thousand years the Church was teaching error regarding the revelatory word “monogenes,” and for two thousand years the Church did not correctly understand the true Faith! Their assertions really mean there have been no godly ministers for the last 1900 years to correctly teach the Church the truth about the Faith, but now that the new teachers are here, they are able to do so.

This betrays nothing but pride and a separation from those who have gone before. It betrays their belief that the Faith has been obscured for two thousand years and they alone are now teaching the true Faith. And it betrays their belief that our ancient brothers misunderstood the Greek word *monogenes*, thereby producing a false belief that our Lord was begotten of the Father before all time.

Dear brethren, do not be carried away by this new thinking. Hold fast to the Faith that the Holy Spirit has affirmed through untold godly men throughout

all of Church History. There is overwhelming historical and linguistic evidence that “monogenes” was used by the apostle John, indeed, by our Lord Himself, to mean “only-begotten” or “only born.” They claim otherwise, but the evidence contradicts their assertion.

Nevertheless, the new teachers continue to alter the historic definition of “monogenes,” knowing that if they successfully obscure the true meaning of this word they will be successful in obscuring the doctrine of the eternal generation of the Son from the Father. (Or, perhaps, they are doing it unknowingly, nevertheless, such a view is a departure from the Faith).

I am afraid the real reason behind this attempt by modern teachers to alter the true meaning of this word is because they have already altered the definition of the Historic Christian Faith in their own minds from an orthodox viewpoint to a heterodox viewpoint.

Many of the modern teachers (Neo-Trinitarians) do not believe (as the Nicene Creed affirms), that our Lord was begotten of the Father before all time. Perhaps, they think if they can convince Christians of this new definition and the error of the old definition, they can complete their transformation of the Historic Christian Faith into a faith of their own making.

As such, many think it is enough to say in their Statements of Faith regarding the Trinity, “We believe in one God eternally existing in Three Persons – the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit.” This is a sufficient affirmation of orthodoxy in their estimation. (It is admitted some maintain such a Statement of Faith, unwittingly, but others may do so purposely).

Dear brethren, such a statement is a **dilution** of the Historic Christian Faith. It is robbing Christians of important truths as to the eternal relationships of the Father, Son and the Holy Spirit. It is ignoring the words of our Saviour, the Lord Jesus Christ, who told us He was the “Only-begotten” of the Father.

Compare this new, generic, one sentence Statement of Faith, to the Statements of Faith regarding the Trinity that were utilized by most Christians for almost two thousand years and you will see for yourself what is being altered or left out. You will see what doctrine is being nullified by the Neo-Trinitarians who are trying to alter the meaning of “monogenes.”

### **The Common Statement of Faith used Today –**

“We believe in one God eternally existing in Three Persons – the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit,”

## **The Statements of Faith of Yesterday –**

### **The Nicene Creed**

“We believe in one God, the Father Almighty, Maker of all things, visible and invisible, and in one Lord Jesus Christ, the Only-Begotten Son of God, Begotten of His Father before all time, Light of Light, true God of true God, begotten, not made, being of one substance with the Father, through whom all things were made; who for us men and for our salvation came down from the heavens, and was made flesh of the Holy Spirit and the Virgin Mary, and became Man, and was crucified for us under Pontius Pilate and suffered and was buried, and rose again on the third day according to the Scriptures, and ascended unto the heavens and sitteth on the right hand of the Father, and cometh again with glory to judge the living and the dead, of whose kingdom there shall be no end: and in the Holy Spirit, the Lord and the Life-giver, that proceeded from the Father, who with Father and Son is worshipped together.”<sup>11</sup>

### **The Helvetica Confession**

“We believe and teach that the one God, without separation or confusion, is distinguished in the Persons, Father, Son, and Holy Spirit; so that the Father from eternity hath begotten the Son; the Son is begotten by an ineffable generation, the Holy Spirit proceeding from both.”<sup>12</sup>

### **The Gallic Confession**

“The Holy Scripture teaches us that in this singular and simple Divine essence there subsist three Persons, the Father, Son, and the Holy Spirit; the Father being, in order, the first cause and origin of all things, the Son begotten from eternity of the Father, the Holy Spirit from eternity proceeding from the Father and the Son; which three Persons are not confused, but distinct; not separated, but co-essential, co-eternal, and co-equal.”<sup>13</sup>

### **The Thirty Nine Articles of the Church of England**

“There is but one living and true God, everlasting, without body, parts, or passions; of infinite power, wisdom, and goodness; the Maker, and Preserver of all things both visible and invisible. And in unity of this Godhead there be three Persons, of one substance, power, and eternity; the Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost. The Son, which is the Word of the Father, begotten from everlasting of the Father, the very and eternal God, and of one substance with the Father, took Man's nature in the womb of the blessed Virgin, of her substance: so that two whole and perfect Natures, that is to say, the Godhead and Manhood, were joined together in one Person, never to be divided, whereof is one Christ, very God, and very Man; who truly suffered, was crucified, dead, and buried, to reconcile his Father to us, and to be a sacrifice, not only for original guilt, but also for actual sins of men. As Christ died for us, and was buried, so also is it to be believed, that he went down into Hell. Christ did truly rise

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<sup>11</sup> See *Documents of the Christian Church*, Henry Bettenson, ed. (Oxford University Press, London 1975)

<sup>12</sup> Richard Treffry, *An Inquiry into the Doctrine of The Eternal Sonship of our Lord Jesus Christ* (Wesleyan Conference Office, London, 1865) pg. 469

<sup>13</sup> *Ibid.*, pg. 469

again from death, and took again his body, with flesh, bones, and all things appertaining to the perfection of Man's nature; wherewith he ascended into Heaven, and there sitteth, until he return to judge all Men at the last day.

The Holy Ghost, proceeding from the Father and the Son, is of one substance, majesty, and glory, with the Father and the Son, very and eternal God."<sup>14</sup>

### **The Confession of the Church of Scotland**

"In the unity of the Godhead there are three Persons. Of one substance, power, and eternity, God the Father, God the Son, and God the Holy Ghost. The Father is of none, neither begotten nor proceeding; the Son is eternally begotten of the Father; the Holy Ghost eternally proceeding from the Father and the Son."<sup>15</sup>

### **The Westminster Confession of Faith**

"In the unity of the Godhead there be Three Persons, of one substance, power, and eternity: God the Father, God the Son, and God the Holy Spirit. The Father is of none, neither begotten nor proceeding, the Son is eternally begotten of the Father; the Holy Spirit eternally proceeding from the Father and the Son."<sup>16</sup>

### **The Baptist Confession – Philadelphia Confession of Faith**

"In this divine and infinite Being there are three subsistences (I John v.7; Matt. xxviii, 19; II Cor. XI. 14) the Father, the Word (or Son), and the Holy Spirit, of one substance, power, and eternity, each have the whole divine essence, yet the (Exod. iii. 14; John xiv. 11; I Cor. vii. 6) essence undivided: the Father is of none, neither begotten nor proceeding; the Son is (John I. 14,18) eternally begotten of the Father; the Holy Spirit (John xv. 26; Gal. Iv. 6) proceeding from the Father and the Son; all infinite, without beginning, therefore, but one God."<sup>17</sup>

Beloved, you can see for yourself what is being left out in most Statements of Faith today. What you see above is the Historic Christian Faith. It has always been affirmed as such. It has included the important doctrine of the Only-begotten because our Lord and the apostles revealed this truth to be part of the Faith. Now it is gone! It has disappeared from most Statements! The Faith has been transformed before your very eyes because Christians have been convinced that the doctrine of eternal generation is not biblical or, at least, not very important. However, two thousand years of Christian witness contradict such an assertion. Godly ministers generation after generation, century after century, and, indeed, millennium after millennium have declared otherwise. It is a biblical doctrine and is very important and has always been an integral part of the Christian Faith.

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<sup>14</sup> Philip Schaff, *The Creeds of Christendom, Vol. III* (Baker Books, Grand Rapids, MI, 1993) pg. 488

<sup>15</sup> Richard Treffry, *An Inquiry into the Doctrine of The Eternal Sonship of our Lord Jesus Christ* (Wesleyan Conference Office, London, 1865) pg. 470

<sup>16</sup> Ibid., pg. 607-608

<sup>17</sup> See, *The Philadelphia Confession of Faith* (Associated Publishers and Authors, Inc. Grand Rapids, MI)



Now, I know many of the modern teachers are true Christians. They love the Lord. I am sure they are very affable. Indeed, they more than likely wax eloquent on other doctrines and have been a great help to many Christians. I'm sure they are beloved by their students and by those in their churches. As such, I am sure they will be defended by such, because love produces loyalty and commitment. However, we must remember our loyalty and commitment must be first to the Lord and to His revelation. Why? Because love does, indeed, produce loyalty and commitment, and if the Lord Jesus is to be our first love, our loyalty and commitment must be first to Him.

“Nevertheless I have somewhat against thee, because thou hast left thy first love.” Rev. 2:4

In other words, we must be first faithful to Him and to the Faith that was delivered to the Church. We must put our respect for the Lord and His Faith before any respect we might have for our Christian leaders and teachers.

It is never pleasant to confront error. In fact, it is very difficult. No one loves contention, but we must realize the Church is under an obligation from the Scripture to remain faithful to the Lord as our first love and to “earnestly contend for the Faith which was once for all handed down to the saints” (Jude 1:3).

Remember the warning of the Holy Spirit. In the last day's men would depart from the Faith. This is the time when such contending is necessary. However, may we pray to the Lord that it ever be done with humility, forbearance, and most importantly with love, so that those who are in error may realize their mistake and realize that human pride is fleeting and guarded reputations are futile. May they repent of their departure.

Beloved, the Faith was already been handed down to the Church. She has affirmed it for going on two thousand years. It has never been lost. It does not need to be rediscovered.

I do not make this judgment alone. I make it as one of many who have always held to and confessed this precious doctrine of the Church down through the ages. I affirm it as one of untold millions of Christians who have always confessed this Faith. I take my stand with them.

I declare no new doctrine. I have not rediscovered some new truth. I speak with those who have gone on before me. My authority is the Word of God. My witness is the witness of tens of thousands of Christians in every generation of the history of the Church. Our confirmation is the witness of the apostles, and their confirmation is He who was from the beginning, the One who they heard, the One who they beheld, and the One who they handled with their very hands – the Word of life – the precious Lord Jesus Christ (I Jn. 1:1) – the One who revealed to them that He was the “Only-begotten” Son of God.

As for me, I will follow the teaching of the apostles and the witness of Christians for the past twenty centuries, not the teaching of modern teachers who have departed from the Faith.

May we remember the Word of God when He says, “This is my beloved Son, **hear ye him!**” And in our remembering, may we also obey His admonition, especially when He reveals to us that He is the Only-begotten “Son” of God, bespeaking His special, unique and eternal begetting from God the Father. He is the Son, begotten of the Father before all time!

Let us now look specifically at the word *monogenes*.

## Various Views on the Translation of Monogenes

A common statement made today is that the Greek word *monogenes* does not mean *only-begotten*, but (as is seen in many modern Bible translations), must mean *one and only*,<sup>18</sup> *unique*,<sup>19</sup> *one of a kind*,<sup>20</sup> or *only son*.<sup>21</sup> The common verse that is used to negate the meaning of *only-begotten* is Heb. 11:17. The reasoning goes that Isaac was not the only-begotten son of Abraham; he had other children; therefore, *monogenes* cannot mean *only-begotten*. Consequently, because of this one verse, they negate the meaning of *only-begotten* in every other verse.

This is how their view would be charted out.

Suggested meaning	Negated by the following verse	Therefore must mean
Only-Begotten	Heb. 11:17	Unique

Now leaving aside for a moment the inaccuracy of their viewpoint, let's use this same reasoning and see if any one verse would negate their chosen meaning. When we do so we find out that all the other suggested meanings also have verses that would negate that meaning. See the chart below.

Suggested meaning	Negated by the following verse	Therefore must mean
Unique	Judges 11:34 (LXX)	Only-begotten
One of a kind	John 1:18 (NA27)	Only-begotten
Only Son	John 3:16	Only-begotten
One and only	John 1:18	Only-begotten

Let us now look at each one individually and then explain why Heb. 11:17 does not negate the meaning of only-begotten.

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**Unique** – The meaning only-begotten is rejected because they say that Isaac in Heb. 11:17 was not the only-begotten son of Abraham; therefore they conclude *monogenes* must mean *unique*. Why? Because when compared with Abraham's other son, Ishmael, they say Isaac was, indeed, unique, since he was the only child of promise. They say the word *monogenes* is a comparative word. It makes a comparison with other siblings and then by some special characteristic the chosen sibling is designated *unique*, different in some way from the other siblings. Without this comparison between siblings or similar objects the meaning of "*unique*" cannot stand, for *uniqueness requires comparison*.

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<sup>18</sup> E.g. New International Version (Heb. 11:17) New Living Translation (John 3:16)

<sup>19</sup> E.g. International Standard Version (John 1:14,18) Holman Christian Standard Bible (Heb. 11:17)

<sup>20</sup> E.g. The Message (John 1:18) NET Bible (see footnote to John 1:14)

<sup>21</sup> E.g. English Standard Version (John 1:14) Contemporary English Version (John 1:18)

Thus, they say that the writer of Hebrews looked for a word to describe this *uniqueness*, and the word he chose was *monogenes*, thus proving the word did not mean *only-begotten*, since Isaac was not the only-begotten son of Abraham, but showing that it meant *unique*, since Isaac was the only son of Abraham that was a child of promise.

However, using that same logic, we will find there is one verse that would negate the meaning of *unique* for *monogenes*. It is Judges 11:34 in the LXX.

By their same logic, *monogenes* cannot mean *unique* because the same word is found in Judges 11:34 of the daughter of Jephthah, and, when we read Judges 11:34, we find the verse says that Jephthah had no other children!

**Judges 11:34** When Jephthah came to his house at Mizpah, behold, his daughter was coming out to meet him with tambourines and with dancing. Now she was his one *and* only child (μονογενής); besides her he had neither son nor daughter. (NASB)

Therefore, to say that *monogenes* is a word that means *unique* because the writer of Heb. 11:17 used that word to make comparison between Isaac and the other son of Abraham, Ishmael, does not hold up. Why? Simply because the daughter of Jephthah had no other siblings, which by comparison would make her *unique*. However, the understanding of *only-begotten* for *monogenes* fits perfectly; one could say she was Jephthah's *only-begotten* daughter, and not violate the context.

Therefore, the one verse of Judges 11:34 negates the understanding of *unique*. If they allow the one verse of Heb. 11:17 to negate the meaning of *only-begotten* in all other verses, they must allow the one verse of Judges 11:34 to negate the meaning of *unique* in all other verses.

One last thing must be said about this understanding of *monogenes* before we move to the next understanding for *monogenes*. Some may say, "Well, yes, *unique* does carry the meaning of *difference based upon comparison*, but *unique* also carries the meaning of *being the only one* or *sole one*. This meaning of the word carries no sense of comparison. Therefore, the reason the translator chose *monogenes* for Jephthah's daughter was for this very fact; she was the *only one* and had no other siblings. That was, indeed, the very reason why the word *monogenes* was chosen, it means *unique*, meaning *only one*, or *sole one*."

Now, that is all well and fine. The English word *unique* does carry that additional connotation. No one will argue with that. However, if that is the meaning one wants to assign to *unique* and conversely to *monogenes* in Heb. 11:17, one must realize they have not solved anything, for did not Neo-Trinitarians reject *only-begotten* in the first place, because Isaac was not the *sole one begotten* of Abraham? Abraham had other children. Well, if *only-begotten* must be rejected in their mind because Isaac was not the *only son* of

Abraham, there was Ishmael, would not also *unique* (with the understanding of *sole one* or *only son*), have to also be rejected for the very same reason? Isaac was not the *sole one* or *only son* of Abraham; there was Ishmael. Abraham had other sons! And if you say, “No, he was the *only son* of *promise*, you are back to comparison!”

Therefore, any way you look at it, the meaning of *unique* for *monogenes* does not fit (i.e. if we follow their same logic that one verse is enough to negate all others, as they do with Heb. 11:17). If you choose the meaning of uniqueness by comparison, it is negated by Judges 11:34. If you say, “No, no, it means *unique* by being the *sole one* in Judges 11:34,” then it is negated by the very same verse they say negates the meaning of only-begotten – Hebrews 11:17!

**One of a kind** – That brings us to the meaning of “one of a kind.” The meaning of *one of a kind* is negated by John 1:18, which says, “No one has seen God at any time; the only-begotten God who is in the bosom of the Father, He has explained Him.” It is negated simply because the Son is not a *one of a kind* God. One cannot speak of “the one of a kind God who is in the bosom of the Father,” for that would make him to be of a *different kind* than the Father, and that would be heresy. This would be the same as the heresy of Arianism, the common viewpoint of Jehovah’s Witness’ today. Rather, the Son is of the *same kind* as God the Father, not *one of a kind*. He is consubstantial with the Father. He is *homoousios*. He is not a one of a kind God.

This meaning is also negated by many other verses, including our previous example of Judges 11:34. The only way the daughter of Jephthah could be a *one of a kind* daughter, would be for her to be of a *different kind* than her father Jephthah. In other words, her father could not be human! He could not be of the same species.

Or consider another example. Neo-Trinitarians love to use the example of the Phoenix in Clement to prove the meaning of *one of a kind*. They say there was only one Phoenix in the entire world. There were no other Phoenixes. The parent Phoenix dies before the new Phoenix is born. Thus the Phoenix was *monogenes* – *one of a kind*. Using the same logic, if Jephthah’s daughter was “one of a kind,” then no other of her species could exist. The rest of the human race would have to vanish for her to be “one of a kind,” let alone her own parents. Obviously, *monogenes* does not mean “one of a kind.”<sup>22</sup>

They claim the meaning of *only-begotten* is negated by one verse, Heb. 11:17. Well, in the same way, the meaning of *one of a kind* would be negated by many verses, such as Jn. 1:18 and Judges 11:34. (To see why the Phoenix was

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<sup>22</sup> For a further treatment of this subject see pages 207-212 in *Understanding the Trinity*, by B.P. Harris. This book is available from the same publisher and is also available online website. [www.silicabiblechapel.com/attachments/File/Understanding\\_the\\_Trinity.pdf](http://www.silicabiblechapel.com/attachments/File/Understanding_the_Trinity.pdf)

called *only-begotten*, rather than *one of a kind*, see the following chapter, *The Phoenix, Ovid, Clement, Monogenes, and Metamorphoses, A Study of First Clement 25:2*)

**Only Son** – Some conclude *monogenes* means, in and of itself, “*only Son*.” This meaning is clearly negated by John 3:16. John uses not only the adjective *monogenes* in the text, but he also uses the Greek noun υἱός (son). The adjective *monogenes* modifies the noun υἱός. If *monogenes* means “*only son*,” the phrase becomes nonsensical because you would be saying the adjective “*only son*” modifies the noun “*son*,” so that John would be saying God gave “*his only Son Son*.” Why include υἱός? The only answer would have to be for emphasis, but that is highly unlikely.

Also, Luke 8:42 uses *monogenes* for the daughter of Jairus. Are we to believe Luke meant to write the “*only son daughter*?” Now, of course, one would say, “That is silly. When used with the feminine gender it would mean *only daughter*.” That is correct, but that still would not help us because Luke also includes the word θυγάτηρ, the noun for daughter. One still has the same problem as John 3:16. If *monogenes* in Luke 8:42 means *only daughter*, then Luke would still be writing “*only daughter daughter*. Nor would it help to change the meaning to “*only child*.” It still becomes nonsensical to say “*only child daughter*.”

However, since *monogenes* is an adjective, and sometimes in Greek an adjective can be used as a substantive, the noun “daughter” could be set in apposition. In that case it could work with the meaning of *only child* if that is the meaning one wished to assign to *monogenes*. It would then read “*only child, [his] daughter*. However, now you run into the same problem that Neo-Trinitarians have with Heb. 11:17, and the reason why they say it cannot mean *only-begotten*.

Neo-Trinitarians say *monogenes* cannot mean *only-begotten* because Abraham had other sons. Well, if you decide *monogenes* must mean *only child* because of the problem of John 3:16 and Luke 8:42, you do solve the problem for those verses, but now you create the same original problem Neo-Trinitarians had with Heb. 11:17 in the first place.

If you say *monogenes* cannot mean *only-begotten*, because Abraham had other children, well, certainly, you cannot now say *monogenes* means *only child*. Why? Because of the same reason, Abraham had other children! You have the same problem!

So if you reject, the meaning *only-begotten* for Isaac, you would have to reject the meaning *only child* for Isaac. Therefore one can see that *monogenes* does not mean *only son*, *only daughter*, or *only child*. The only meaning that fits is *only-begotten*. God so loved the world that he gave his only-begotten Son – the adjective, “*only-begotten*,” modifying the noun “*son*.”

**One and only** – This brings us back to the most common meaning suggested by Neo-Trinitarians for the word *monogenes* – *one and only*. But what is so ironic with this suggested meaning (if we follow their same logic) is that it must be rejected for the very same reason that only-begotten is rejected! They say Isaac could not be the “only-begotten” son of Abraham in Heb. 11:17, because Isaac was not the “only-begotten” son of Abraham! There was Ishmael! Well, using the same logic, *monogenes* could not mean *one and only* either, because Isaac was not “the one and only” son of Abraham! There was Ishmael!

But that is not all. The meaning of “one and only” is also negated by John 1:18 NASB (which reads in the NASB as the *only-begotten* God). Why?—because the Son is not the *one and only* God! To say that the Son is the *one and only* God would mean that God the Father could not be God, nor could the God the Holy Spirit be God, because if they were – God the Son would not be the *one and only* God! Thus, the meaning of one and only would make God, to be one God in one Person—the Son (that is, unless one rejects the doctrine of the Trinity and adopts the doctrine of Mormonism—belief in three gods. Then one could say the second god, the Son, is a *one and only* (kind) god different from the other two gods. But this, of course, is heresy). To say the Son is the one and only God destroys the fundamental doctrine that God subsists in Three Persons – the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit. It creates a huge theological problem. (See below why it must be understood in this way with the translation of *one and only*.)

To get around this problem, Neo-Trinitarians (who claim that the manuscripts that carry the variant “God” in John 1:18 are the better manuscripts than the manuscripts that carry the variant “Son”) re-introduce the concept of “Son” into the text and translate the adjective as a substantive and consider the noun, God, to be in apposition. Therefore, in the Greek they look at this way – Θεὸν οὐδεὶς ἑώρακεν πώποτε· μονογενὴς [υἱός], θεὸς, ὁ ὢν εἰς τὸν κόλπον τοῦ πατρὸς ἐκεῖνος ἐξηγήσατο. Therefore, they end up translating it as is done in the Today’s New International Version, “the one and only *Son*.” But because of their wrong understanding of *monogenes*, they are forced to re-introduce the variant “Son” into the text (which they formerly did not accept). Why?—because they are trying to get themselves out of their theological pickle.

But God warns us to not add to God’s Word, and that is what they have to do. Now, they may then say, “No, we are not introducing a new word to the text. It still should read – Θεὸν οὐδεὶς ἑώρακεν πώποτε· μονογενὴς [υἱός], θεὸς ὁ ὢν εἰς τὸν κόλπον τοῦ πατρὸς ἐκεῖνος ἐξηγήσατο. We are just saying the Greek word *monogenes* means *one and only Son*. It carries the additional meaning of “son” in the actual word, in and of itself.”

However, besides the fact of this not being true, it does not really help them, for now they are back to the same problem that occurs with the meaning of

“*only Son*.” If they believe *monogenes* now means “*one and only Son*,” John 3:16 once again, becomes nonsensical. It would have to be read as “God gave his *one and only Son Son*,” or Luke 8:42 becomes, the *one and only daughter daughter*.

Moreover, going back to the meaning *one and only* God, some may argue, saying, “I see no problem in saying that the Son is the *one and only* God. It does not mean that one then has to adopt the Mormon doctrine, or that one then has to say that God becomes *one God in one Person*. You are wrong to say the meaning *one and only* precludes the other two Persons to also be God, for does not John call the Father the *one and only* God in John 5:44, and, yet, no one claims that verse means the Son and the Holy Spirit are not also God.”

How can you believe, when you receive glory from one another, and you do not seek the glory that is from **the one and only God?** **John 5:44 NASB**

The answer to that question is, “Yes, he does call the Father a *one and only* God,” but there is one huge difference. John does not use the word *monogenes* in John 5:44. He does not call the Father (*monogenes*) *one and only* God, but rather (*monos*) *one and only* God.

Πῶς δύνασθε ὑμεῖς πιστεῦσαι δόξαν παρὰ ἀλλήλων λαμβάνοντες, καὶ τὴν δόξαν τὴν παρὰ τοῦ μόνου θεοῦ οὐ ζητεῖτε; **John 5:44**

This is a huge difference, as we will presently see, and to understand the difference one simply needs to ask one question, “What do Neo-Trinitarians mean by their phrase (*monogenes*) *one and only*?”

Repeatedly, Neo-Trinitarians have made the assertion that the “*genes*” in *monogenes* is related to “*genos*” meaning “kind.” (However, this is misleading; “*genos*” also means progeny or offspring. See the chapter “One of a Kind vs. Only-begotten”). For example, one of the leading proponents of this assertion is the Neo-Trinitarian Wayne Grudem, Research Professor, Theology and Biblical Studies at Phoenix Seminary. He says in his book on Systematic Theology the following.

“The controversy over the term ‘only-begotten’ was unnecessary because it was based on a misunderstanding of the meaning of the Greek word *monogenes* (used of Jesus in John 1:14, 18; 3:16, 18; and I John 4:9). For many years it was thought to be derived from two Greek terms: *mono*, meaning ‘only,’ and *gennao*, meaning ‘beget’ or ‘bear.’ Even the received version of the Nicene Creed understand it that way, since the explanatory phrases ‘begotten of the Father before all worlds’ and ‘begotten, not made’ both use the verb *gennao* (beget) to explain *monogenes*. But linguistic study in the twentieth century has shown that the second half of the word is not closely related to the verb *gennao* (beget, bear), but rather to the term *genos* (class, kind). Thus the word means rather the “one-of-a-kind” Son or the ‘unique’ Son. (See BAGD, 527; D. Moody, “The Translation of John 3:16 in the Revised Standard Version,” JBL 72 [1953], 213-19.) The idea of “only-begotten” in Greek would have been, not *monogenes*, but *monogennetos*. However, it is not impossible that the Nicene fathers in A.D. 325 and 381 would have understood *monogenes* to include the idea of “begetting,” since



the world is used several times elsewhere to refer to someone who is an “only” child, and the idea of begetting could commonly be assumed to be present.”

“The fact that the word does not mean ‘the only son that someone has begotten’ can be confirmed by noticing its use in Hebrews 11:17, where Isaac is called Abraham’s monogenes – but certainly Isaac was not the only son Abraham had begotten, for he had also begotten Ishmael.”<sup>23</sup>

This assertion, of course, is so common to Neo-Trinitarians that there is no need for more documentation, except to say that even Greek Lexicons are being changed to conform to this meaning as we have previously noted.

So we need to understand that Neo-Trinitarians have taken their stand behind the meaning “*one of a kind*.” That is their assertion as to what *monogenes* means. They claim the “genes” in *mono-genes* means “*kind*,” and *mono*-means “*one*,” “*only*,” or “*alone*.”

Therefore, with that realization, when we get back to our original question, one should realize that even though they might translate the word by “*one and only*,” they still understand it to mean “*one of a kind!*” To them Christ is “one and only” because he is “one of a kind!”

This point is so important. One must realize that *one and only*, when used by Neo-Trinitarians, cannot be understood to simply mean, *unique*. (That is, if they remain consistent to their claim.) They are not using it in that way; they believe the underlying meaning of *monogenes* relates to “*kind*.” So, even if they want to apply the connotation of *unique* to the phrase *one and only*, one must realize that what they really mean is “*unique kind!*”

This is a dilemma of their own making. They have insisted the *-genes* in *monogenes* relates to *kind*. They have rejected two thousand years of Christian witness that *monogenes* means *only-begotten*. They cannot now hide their theological dilemma by trying to make Christians think that what they now mean by *one and only* is simply *unique*. They reject only-begotten because they say *-genes* refers to *kind*. *One and only, when used by them, means one and only kind.* (Unless they wish to admit that they were wrong all along about *-genes*, in *monogenes*, referring to *kind*, in which case, they are left with the traditional meaning of *only-begotten!*)

This is why their use of “*one and only*” destroys the fundamental doctrine that God subsists in Three Persons – the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit. If the Son is *one and only* because he is “*one of a kind*,” then other two Persons of the Blessed Trinity cannot be of **the same kind**. It turns the Son into the *one and only* God of his *kind*. This is the same heresy of Arianism or the heresy of Jehovah Witnesses, as well the heresy of Mormonism.

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<sup>23</sup> Wayne Grudem, *Systematic Theology: An Introduction to Biblical Doctrine* (Zondervan, Grand Rapids, MI, 2009) pg. 1233

Therefore, if we return to John 5:44, we can now see this verse does not deliver them from their dilemma, because, even though in English it reads the same, it does not read the same in Greek. John 5:44 does not use *monogenes*, but simply *monos* and there is no problem using the Greek word *monos*. It can be translated as *one and only*, meaning simply *unique*, because it carries no connotation of kind in the word.

You see, dear reader, if John wanted to simply say that the Son was the “one and only (monos) God who dwelt in the bosom of his Father,” that would have been fine, because that phraseology of dwelling in the bosom is only used of the Son within the Blessed Trinity, and in that sense the Son is, indeed, unique, and is indeed God. The Father is God, the Son is God and the Holy Spirit is God, not three Gods but one God, and there is only one who is God that dwells in the bosom of the Father, the eternal Son.

But if that is all John wanted to say in John 1:18, he would have been careful to use the Greek word *monos*, a word that carries no sense of “kind.”

If he wanted to say that the one and only Son (using the variant Son), or the one and only God (using the variant God) dwelt in the bosom of the Father in John 1:18, he would have simply used the word *monos* as he did in John 5:44 and John 17:3.

In fact, other New Testament writers also use *monos* in this way.

“...μόνω σοφῷ θεῷ, διὰ Ἰησοῦ χριστοῦ, ᾧ ἡ δόξα εἰς τοὺς αἰῶνας. Ἀμήν.” **Rom. 16:27**

“To the only wise God, through Jesus Christ, be the glory forever. Amen.” **Rom. 16:27**

“Τῷ δὲ βασιλεῖ τῶν αἰώνων, ἀφθάρτῳ, ἀοράτῳ, μόνῳ σοφῷ θεῷ, τιμὴ καὶ δόξα εἰς τοὺς αἰῶνας τῶν αἰώνων. Ἀμήν.” **1 Timothy 1:17**

“Now to the King eternal, immortal, invisible, the only God, be honor and glory forever and ever. Amen.” **1 Timothy 1:17**

“ἦν καιροῖς ἰδίῳις δείξει ὁ μακάριος καὶ μόνος δυνάστης, ὁ βασιλεὺς τῶν βασιλευόντων, καὶ κύριος τῶν κυριευόντων.” **1 Timothy 6:15**

“Which He will bring about at the proper time-- He who is the blessed and only Sovereign, the King of kings and Lord of lords.” **1 Timothy 6:15**

“Παρεισέδυσαν γάρ τινες ἄνθρωποι, οἱ πάλαι προγεγραμμένοι εἰς τοῦτο τὸ κρίμα, ἀσεβεῖς, τὴν τοῦ θεοῦ ἡμῶν χάριν μετατιθέντες εἰς ἀσέλγειαν, καὶ τὸν μόνον δεσπότην θεὸν καὶ κύριον ἡμῶν Ἰησοῦν χριστὸν ἀρνούμενοι.” **Jude 1:4**

“For certain persons have crept in unnoticed, those who were long beforehand marked out for this condemnation, ungodly persons who turn the grace of our God into licentiousness and deny our only Master and Lord, Jesus Christ.” **Jude 1:4**

“μόνω σοφῶ θεῷ σωτῆρι ἡμῶν, δόξα καὶ μεγαλωσύνη, κράτος καὶ ἐξουσία, καὶ νῦν καὶ εἰς πάντας τοὺς αἰῶνας. Ἀμήν.” **Jude 1:25**

“To the only God our Savior, through Jesus Christ our Lord, *be* glory, majesty, dominion and authority, before all time and now and forever. Amen.” **Jude 1:25**

Or, let’s turn it around; if we look at it another way – if, and that is a big if, John understood *monogenes* to mean the same thing as *monos* (i.e. one and only), he would have then used *monogenes* in John 5:44 and 17:3 and not chosen a different word – *monos*.

So, the question must be asked, “If *monogenes* means *one and only*, why did he not use *monogenes* in these latter verses? If he used *monogenes* in John 1:14, 18; 3:16, 18, why not continue to use it in 5:44 and 17:3? Would he not have been consistent in his terminology if he did?” The reason he did not do so is because *monogenes* does not mean *one and only*, but rather means *only-begotten*! And because those later verses refer to the Father, and not to the Son, and because God the Father is unbegotten, it would have been incorrect to say the Father was *monogenes* (only-begotten), although it would be fine to say that God the Father was *monos* (one and only). Why?—because, indeed, he is the one and only Father who is unbegotten. The Son is not unbegotten, nor is the Holy Spirit unbegotten, only the Father is unbegotten and so can be called “monos” “one and only.” In this sense, *monos*, which carries no connotation of *kind*, simply means *unique*, or *one and only* and refers to his “subsistence,” not to his “substance,” which is perfectly orthodox.

You see, there is no problem using *monos* to refer to God the Father, God the Son, or God the Holy Spirit, because in those usages it refers to the Personhood (subsistence), and, indeed, there is *only one and only* God the Father, *only one and only* God the Son, and *only one and only* God the Holy Spirit. However, one can only use *monogenes*, only-begotten, of the Son.

Because there are only Three distinct Persons in the Blessed Trinity, *monos* can be used of any one of the Three Persons. But, because there is only “one substance” in the Blessed Trinity, *monogenes* could not be used for a Person if it meant *one and only*, i.e. *one and only kind*. It could never be used for a Person for that would destroy the oneness of substance – homoousios, and make the other Persons to be of a different kind or substance – homoiousios.

However, *monogenes*, meaning only-begotten, can and is used of “one” of the Three Persons – the Son, for while the Father is an unbegotten and is God, and the Holy Spirit is spirated and is God, the Son is, indeed, only-begotten and is God. All Three are God, not three Gods, meaning three Divine Beings, for

there is only One Divine Being, but Three who are called God because they all possess the one and the same substance – one Divine Being in whom subsists God the Father, God the Son, God the Holy Spirit. The Father being of none, thus unbegotten, the Son being eternally begotten of the Father, thus only-begotten, and the Holy Spirit proceeding from the Father through the Son, thus spirated.

Now, some other modern day translations, trying to get around their theological problem, are even more creative in masking the Neo-Trinitarian's heretical concept of the word in John 1:18. Some introduce the reflexive pronoun "himself" into the text in order to extricate themselves from their theological dilemma; they say something like "the one and only Son, who is himself God."

By reading it in that way they are using the adjective as a substantive to take the emphasis off substance and put it back on Personhood; but, dear reader, that is adding to God's Word. The Holy Spirit never inspired the reflexive pronoun *himself* in the text.

Michael W. Holmes wrote the following concerning this:

"In other instances, changes in the translation reflect a difference in judgment regarding how to punctuate the Greek text. In John 1:18 (*monogenes Theos*) both the 1973 ("God the only Son") and 1984 ("God the One and Only") versions of the NIV understand *monogenes* ("only" or "unique") as an adjective modifying the noun *Theos*. The TNIV places a comma between the two terms (understanding *monogenes* as an adjective functioning as a noun, with *Theos* in apposition with it): "the one and only Son, who is himself God."<sup>24</sup>

However, this does not alleviate the problem. Of course, the Son is God, but it is not enough to simply say Jesus is God. Arius could agree with that statement. Jehovah's Witnesses and Mormons could agree with that statement. The question remains, "What do you mean when you say, 'Jesus is God?'" If He is understood as a "one and only" God (meaning "one of a kind"), Arius, Jehovah Witnesses or Mormons could easily subscribe to such a statement. However, if He is understood to be of the "same kind" as the Father, the Only-begotten of the Father before all time, Arius, Jehovah's Witnesses, or Mormons could never agree with that statement.

It seems the revisers of the NIV understood their original problem and so retranslated the text twice, but in so doing, they have now introduced their own words into the text, and still have not resolved the original problem. John did not exactly write what they now translate. Instead of addressing the real problem – the wrong translation of *monogenes* – they are changing the normal Greek structure of the verse to defend a position which is indefensible.

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<sup>24</sup> [www.christianitytoday.com/bc/2002/sep/oct/2.25.html](http://www.christianitytoday.com/bc/2002/sep/oct/2.25.html) Copyright © 2002 by the author, Michael W. Holmes, or Christianity Today International/*Books & Culture* magazine.

First of all, even though they basically do not follow the Byzantine text as the underlying text of their translation, they reintroduce the word “Son” from the Byzantine text. The Byzantine text reads, “only-begotten Son.” Many earlier texts read, “only-begotten God.”

Now, the word, “Son,” may indeed be the correct variant, yet they did not follow that variant. They adopted the variant, “God.” But now it seems, because they have created a theological problem with their mistranslation of *monogenes*, they are now trying to soften their theological problem by the reintroduction of the concept of “Son” into the text, thereby taking the emphasis of “kind” off of God and putting the emphasis on the newly introduced concept of Son.

This is done, not by accepting the actual variant of *Son*, but by giving *monogenes* yet another new definition in verse 18. They turn *monogenes* from an adjective into a substantive, and give it a new meaning of “*one and only Son*.” Then they insert a comma after the word “Son” to complete the transformation.

Of course, what they are now doing is introducing a new definition of *monogenes*. They have already rejected the historic definition of *monogenes* as “only-begotten,” replacing it with a definition of “*one of a kind*” or “*one and only*,” as we have already mentioned.

Now, in this verse, they are rejecting their new definition of *monogenes*, and are introducing yet another completely different definition of *monogenes*, “*one and only Son*,” or “*unique Son*,” all because of the theological problem they created for themselves by abandoning the original meaning of “only-begotten.”

Now, of course, they are doing this in order to try to separate the two terms and make θεός in apposition. The problem is that in so doing, they are introducing more words into the text than John originally wrote. This is no mere introduction of words in order to facilitate translation. They are actually introducing words into God’s Sacred Word to change the Word, in order to try to free themselves from a theological problem they created for themselves by changing the meaning of *monogenes* from “only-begotten” to “*one of a kind*,” then to “*one and only*,” and then to “*one and only Son*.” And then they have to introduce the relative phrase, “who is himself” to convey the idea of apposition.

Beloved, the Holy Spirit did not inspire John to write the words, “who is himself.” They are not in the text. If this was the thought of the Holy Spirit, it would have been very easy to inspire John to add a relative phrase, “who being Himself,” which then, added with the rest of the phrase, would be translated as, “who being Himself, God, who is in the bosom of the Father,” or “who being Himself, God, the one being in the bosom of the Father.” The fact

of the matter is that such a phrase does not exist in the Word of God. It is a paraphrase of the text by modern translators to correct a theological problem of their own making.

Now, some will say the relative phrase is not added, but is taken from the relative phrase ὁ ὢν (who is), that is already in John 1:18. They say this should be applied to θεός, rather than to the prepositional phrase that follows, but this would be highly irregular. It seems in all cases when John introduces a relative phrase by the root ὁ ὢν, and a prepositional phrase is present, the phrase is completed by the prepositional phrase (Jn.3:13, 6:46, 9:40, and 11:31). Thus the relative phrase in Jn. 1:18 should be completed by the prepositional phrase, “in the bosom of the Father,” and should not be thought to refer back to θεός – “who is God.” Therefore, the words, “μονογενὴς θεός,” must remain a simple adjective noun combination, with μονογενὴς in the attributive position modifying the noun θεός. There simply is no reason to change it into a substantive adjective with a noun in apposition, unless one needs to protect themselves against a charge of heresy created by a faulty translation of *monogenes*.

It would be highly unusual for John to use such an awkward construction. He is using a normal adjective noun combination, which a normal Greek reader would understand as the adjective modifying the noun, “only-begotten God,” or “one and only God” (if one assumed their new definition of monogenes).

Additionally, if the word, “God,” was supposed to be understood in apposition to *monogenes*, without the use of a relative phrase, perhaps John could have used the article before the word “God,” as was done many times in the LXX when translating, “Lord God,” two words that, indeed, are in apposition. In the Greek, the LXX usually reads “κύριος ὁ θεός” when the two words are in apposition – by a ratio of almost five to one. That is not to say it cannot be in apposition without the article, but normally in the LXX it carries the article, especially if it is preceded by an adjective.

For instance, in John’s other writing, the book of Revelation, he always uses the article without fail. Consider Rev. 22:5—

**Revelation 22:5** Καὶ νύξ οὐκ ἔσται ἐκεῖ, καὶ χρεῖαν οὐκ ἔχουσιν λύχνου καὶ φωτὸς ἡλίου, ὅτι κύριος ὁ θεός φωτιεῖ αὐτούς· καὶ βασιλεύσουσιν εἰς τοὺς αἰῶνας τῶν αἰώνων.

**Revelation 22:5** And there shall be no night there; and they need no candle, neither light of the sun; for **the Lord God** giveth them light: and they shall reign for ever and ever. KJV

Perhaps, if θεός was articular in John 1:18 like it was in the book of Revelation, it might have given the sense of apposition so desired.

Therefore, grammatically, John 1:18 should be understood as the earlier versions of the NIV first understood the passage. *Monogenes* is a simple adjective modifying the noun *Theos*.

But then, with that grammatical construction, we are back to square one; we are back to the original theological problem. The Son is called a “one and only” God, a “one of a kind” God, which makes the Trinity into a Triad. It turns Trinitarianism into Tritheism.

The only way to clear oneself of the false theological implication, and remain faithful to the Greek syntax, is to understand *monogenes* as “only-begotten” rather than “one and only,” or “one of a kind.” Without such an understanding of *monogenes*, one is left with almost a “Tritheistic” viewpoint.

The newest definition of *monogenes* in *Today’s New International Version* is not correct, but is a theological definition adapted for the purpose of solving a theological problem of their own making. Anyway one wants to look at it, the only meaning that would fit with either variant, i.e. “God,” or the variant “Son,” would be the meaning only-begotten. It would then read as only-begotten God, as in the NASB, or only-begotten Son, as in the KJV or NKJV. In fact, it is only with the understanding of *monogenes* as “only-begotten”—an adjective modifying a noun—that all the occurrences of *monogenes* in the Gospel of John can be rightly understood without drifting off into heresy.

*Monogenes* in all its occurrences in the New Testament carries the meaning of only-begotten; it is the meaning that has been assigned to it for all of Church History. The modern attempt to change this meaning of the Greek word fails in every attempt.

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Therefore, because of their misunderstanding of how *monogenes* is being used in Heb. 11:17, as we will now demonstrate in the next chapter, the suggested meaning *only-begotten* for *monogenes* is, indeed, correct and is not negated by Heb. 11:17, nor any other verse. Thus, the original chart should now be charted as follows.

<b>Suggested meaning</b>	<b><u>Is not</u> negated by the following verse, or any other verse</b>	<b>And, therefore must <u>still</u> mean</b>
Only-Begotten	Heb. 11:17	Only-Begotten

Therefore, let us now explain, as we said we would, why only-begotten is not negated by Heb. 11:17.

## Contextual and Grammatical Considerations of Hebrew 11:17

In order for one to understand why the meaning of *only-begotten* is not negated by Heb. 11:17, one first has to understand how the word *monogenes* is used in Scripture, at least from the time of the Septuagint until the time of the New Testament. It is used from three perspectives.

First, it is used from the perspective of a father – the father’s perspective (Judges 11:34). Second, it is used from the perspective of a mother – the mother’s perspective (Luke 7:12). And, finally it is used from the perspective of a father and a mother together – the parent’s perspective (Heb. 11:17).

Ἀβραὰμ ἐγέννησεν τὸν Ἰσαὰκ· Ἰσαὰκ δὲ ἐγέννησεν τὸν Ἰακώβ· Ἰακώβ δὲ ἐγέννησεν τὸν Ἰούδαν καὶ τοὺς ἀδελφοὺς αὐτοῦ· **Matthew 1:2**

Abraham begot Isaac, Isaac begot Jacob, and Jacob begot Judas and his brethren. **Matthew 1:2 KJV**

However, this very same word is then used in verse 16 with Mary, the mother of our Lord. Young’s Literal Translation brings this out for the English reader.

Ἰακώβ δὲ ἐγέννησεν τὸν Ἰωσήφ τὸν ἄνδρα Μαρίας, ἐξ ἧς ἐγεννήθη Ἰησοῦς, ὁ λεγόμενος χριστός. **Matthew 1:16**

And Jacob begat Joseph, the husband of Mary, of whom was begotten Jesus, who is named Christ. **Matthew 1:16** Young’s Literal Translation

The first perspective is easy to understand because that is the most common perspective. A child can be the only-begotten of a father because Scripture usually speaks of a child being begotten by the father (e.g. the genealogies of Matt. 1). However, what many Christians do not realize is the biblical concept of begottenness is also used of a mother, the second perspective. The Greek word for begat is γεννάω which is repeatedly used in the genealogical records of Matthew. It appears throughout the first chapter of Matthew in its aorist form ἐγέννησεν.

Scripture is telling us that children are begotten by mothers also. It is not a concept that is only reserved for fathers. Obviously, with our Lord, it could not be a father’s perspective because Jesus was born of a virgin. He was not begotten by Joseph. All the other fathers in Matthew chapter one are shown to have begotten their sons, but, when we get to verse 16, Matthew tells us Jesus was not begotten by Joseph, but was begotten of Mary, literally “out” of Mary; he was not begotten of Joseph! So, according to Scriptures, a son can also be begotten of his mother. This is the second perspective—(also see the second perspective in Lu. 1: 57 with Elizabeth).



The third perspective is that used of a father and mother together. This is the parent's perspective. It speaks of parents being the begetters of a child. Xenophon uses this perspective in his work *Memorabilia*, 2.1.27, when he says, "...εἰδυῖα τοὺς γεννήσαντάς σε καὶ τὴν φύσιν τὴν σὴν ἐν τῇ παιδείᾳ καταμαθοῦσα"<sup>25</sup> ("...having known your parents and having observed your character in childhood"). The phrase I translated "your parents" (τοὺς γεννήσαντάς σε) literally means "the ones who begat you," i.e. your begetters.

I believe this is the perspective demonstrated for us in the passage before us – Heb. 11:17. Isaac was the only-begotten of Abraham and Sarah together. Yes, Abraham had other sons, but they were with other wives. With Sarah, he had only one son – Isaac. Isaac was the only-begotten son of "Abraham and Sarah" together.

This fact is all the more brought out when we realize that Heb. 11:17 is not necessarily translated correctly for the English reader. There is no possessive pronoun in the Greek text as is shown in most English translations. Literally, the text does not say that Abraham "offered up his only-begotten," but rather it says, Abraham "offered up the only-begotten." Below is the verse in Greek with Young's Literal Translation, one version which does bring this out.

"Πίστει προσενήνοχεν Ἀβραὰμ τὸν Ἰσαὰκ πειραζόμενος, καὶ τὸν μονογενὴ προσέφερεν ὁ τὰς ἐπαγγελίας ἀναδεξάμενος," **Hebrews 11:17**

"By faith Abraham hath offered up Isaac, being tried, and the only-begotten he did offer up who did receive the promises." **Hebrews 11:17**

Now the question might be asked, "Then why do most English translations say 'his only-begotten?'" The reason is because sometimes in Greek the definite article, in this case τὸν, is used as a possessive pronoun. For example, consider Mark 7:32.

"And they brought to Him one who was deaf and spoke with difficulty, and they entreated Him to lay His hand upon him." **Mark 7:32**

The last phrase reads, "ἵνα ἐπιθῇ αὐτῷ τὴν χεῖρα" ("to lay His hand upon him.") There is no personal pronoun present in the genitive, which is the most common way in the New Testament to show possession. All that is present in the phrase is the definite article. Literally, it could read "that he might lay the hand on him." But because the context clearly shows that it is the hand of Jesus, it is translated in English "his hand" rather than "the hand."

It is perfectly normal to understand the Greek in this way. Nevertheless, a common way to indicate possession is to use a personal pronoun in the

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<sup>25</sup> Xenophon, Raphael Kühner, Gustav Friedrich Wiggers, Friedrich Schleiermacher, Charles Anthon, Ed., William Smith, Connop Thirlwall, George Bomford Wheeler, Tr, *Xenophon's Memorabilia of Socrates: With English Notes, Critical and Explanatory* (Harper & brothers, New York 1876) pg. 40

genitive case, so that it would read ἵνα ἐπιθῇ αὐτῷ τὴν χεῖρα αὐτοῦ, “that he might lay his hand on him.”

It is important to realize that when the personal pronoun in the genitive is missing, one does not automatically translate the definite article as a possessive pronoun. Over and over it functions just like our definite article “the.” That is why Hebrews 11:17 should not automatically be translated as “his only-begotten son.” A personal pronoun is not present. Context should determine if the article is being used in a definite way or in a possessive way. To do that, we must consider many things, but the obvious thing to consider is how the writer is using the article in the immediate context. And when we do that, we realize that when the writer wished to show possession he repeatedly used the personal pronoun in the genitive case.

In 11:4 he says, τοῖς δώροις αὐτοῦ “his gifts” or literally, “the gifts of him.” In 11:7 he writes, τοῦ οἴκου αὐτοῦ “his household.” In 11:16 he writes θεὸς ἐπικαλεῖσθαι αὐτῶν “to be called their God.”

In every case, in the immediate context, we find that when the writer wished to show possession he would utilize the personal pronoun αὐτός. However, it is very important to realize, that when he comes to verse 17 he does not use a personal pronoun! Yet, immediately after verse 17, he begins using it again!

In 11:21 he writes, τῆς ῥάβδου αὐτοῦ “his staff,” or literally “the staff of him.” In 11:22 he writes, περὶ τῶν ὀστέων αὐτοῦ “concerning his bones.” And, finally in 11:23 he writes, τῶν πατέρων αὐτοῦ “his parents.”

This shows the writer was not speaking in the context of “his only-begotten,” but was speaking in the context of “**the** only-begotten.” Otherwise, he most likely would have written τὸν μονογενῆ αὐτοῦ προσέφερεν utilizing the personal pronoun αὐτοῦ like he consistently used in the verses leading up to verse 17 and in the verses following verse 17.

Therefore, because of the grammatical and contextual considerations, and because the passage is speaking about the faith of Abraham (and of Sarah, verse 11), the verse, translated into a very literal fashion, would read,

“By faith, Abraham, being tempted, had offered Isaac, and he was offering the only-begotten, the one having received the promise.”

If we adapted the New American Standard Bible it would read:

**Heb. 11:17** “By faith Abraham, when he was tested, offered up Isaac, and he who had received the promises was offering up [the] only-begotten.” (An adaption of the New American Standard Bible)

One of the earliest English translations of the Bible, the Wycliffe Bible, translated the verse in this way (although it was based on the Vulgate).

**Heb. 11:17** Bi feith Abraham offride Ysaac, whanne he was temptid; and he offride **the** oon bigetun, which had takun the biheestis.<sup>26</sup>

And two modern versions translate it in this way:

**Hebrews 11:17** By faith Abraham hath offered up Isaac, being tried, and **the only-begotten** he did offer up who did receive the promises. (Young's Literal Translation)

**Hebrews 11:17** By faith Abraham when tested offered up Isaac, And **the only-begotten**, would he have offered up, who the promises had acceted. (The Emphasised Bible)<sup>27</sup>

So we see Heb. 11:17 does not negate the use of “*only-begotten*” as the meaning for *monogenes*. The reason so many have not seen this truth is because the passage has been commonly translated in such way that renders the article as a possessive pronoun and not as the normal definite article plainly seen in the Greek. Unfortunately, there are not many English translations that bring this out.

Isaac was, indeed, the *only-begotten*, the *only-begotten* son of Abraham and Sarah together, and, indeed, if one prefers, the *only-begotten* of Sarah. It does not matter that Abraham had other sons. The passage is not saying that Isaac was Abraham's “*only-begotten*” son, in and of himself. The writer of Hebrews knows Abraham had other sons. He is not using the father's perspective. He is saying Isaac, as the child of promise, was the *only-begotten* son of Abraham and Sarah *together* (parent's perspective), or he was saying that Isaac was the *only-begotten* son of Sarah *alone* (mother's perspective).<sup>28</sup> Either way we see Abraham trusting God, being willing to offer up – the only-begotten – Isaac.

And so we can see that the use of this verse to negate the meaning of “*only-begotten*” for the Greek word “*monogenes*,” is based upon a misunderstanding of the concept of begottenness in Scripture and a misunderstanding of the grammatical usage of the definite article in the passage. There is nothing in the passage to negate the traditional understanding of *only-begotten*. In fact, the only translation that works with all the various uses of the Greek word *monogenes* in the New Testament is the translation “only-begotten.” It is the only understanding of the word that does not violate all the various contexts.

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<sup>26</sup> Taken from: [wesley.nnu.edu/fileadmin/imported\\_site/biblical\\_studies/wycliffe/wycbible-all.pdf](http://wesley.nnu.edu/fileadmin/imported_site/biblical_studies/wycliffe/wycbible-all.pdf)

<sup>27</sup> Joseph Bryant Rotherham, tr., ed., *The Emphasised Bible: A New Translation, Vol IV* (Standard Publishing Company, Cincinnati, 1916) pg. 231

<sup>28</sup> It should be noted that it is also possible that the second perspective is being used in Heb. 11:17, the mother's perspective. Since the writer says that Abraham offered up “the” only-begotten,” and not “his” only-begotten, he may have, indeed, been thinking of Isaac as the only-begotten son of his mother. Isaac was “the only-begotten son of Sarah.” She had no other children. Therefore, the writer may have also meant that Abraham offered up “the only-begotten son of his wife – Sarah.”

# THE PHOENIX, OVID, CLEMENT, MONOGENES AND METAMORPHOSES

## A Study of First Clement 25:2-3

“There is a bird, which is named the phoenix. This, being the (μονογενὲς) only one of its kind, liveth for five hundred years; and when it hath now reached the time of its dissolution that it should die, it maketh for itself a coffin of frankincense and myrrh and the other spices, into the which in the fullness of time it entereth, and so it dieth. But, as the flesh rotteth, a certain worm is engendered, which is nurtured from the moisture of the dead creature and putteth forth wings. Then, when it is grown lusty, it taketh up that coffin where are the bones of its parent, and carrying them journeyeth from the country of Arabia even unto Egypt, to the place called the City of the Sun.”<sup>29</sup>

**I Clement 25:2-3**  
(J.B. Lightfoot’s translation)

The Epistle of Clement was written by Clement, more than likely, the co-worker of the apostle Paul. He is mentioned in Philippians 4:3. This portion of his epistle is often appealed to by many Neo-Trinitarians to support the understanding of *one of a kind* for the Greek word *monogenes*. The first part of this passage is commonly translated something like, “There is a bird, which is called the Phoenix. This, being the *only one of its kind*, lives for five hundred years.” This is given a proof that *monogenes* should be understood as *one of a kind*. In the Greek the line appears as follows: “ὄρνειον γὰρ ἔστιν ὃ προσονομάζεται φοῖνιξ τοῦτο μονογενὲς ὑπάρχον ζῆ ἔτη πεντακόσια.”

This understanding of this passage is derived from the J.B. Lightfoot’s translation as is shown above and from his work on I Clement. This is his note justifying his understanding of *monogenes*.

“μονογενὲς - alone of its kind, unique'. This epithet is applied to the phoenix also in Origen, Cyril, and Apost. Const. v. 7, and doubtless assisted the symbolism mentioned in the last note. The statement about the phoenix in Apost. Const. φασὶ γὰρ ὄρνειόν τι μονογενὲς ὑπάρχειν κ.τ.λ.. is evidently founded on this passage of Clement; comp. e.g. εἰ τοίνυν...δι’ ἀλόγου ὄρνέου δεικνύται ἡ ἀνάστασις κ.τ.λ.. with Clement’s language in § 26. So also in Latin it is ‘unica’, ‘semper unica’, Mela iii. 9, Ovid Am. ii. 6. 54, Lactant. Phoen. 31, Claudian Laud. Stil. ii. 417. Thus Milton Samson Agonistes 1699 speaks of ‘that self-begotten bird...That no second knows nor third,’ and again Paradise Lost V. 272 ‘A phoenix gaz’d by all, as that sole bird, When to enshrine his reliques in the Sun’s Bright temple to Ægyptian Thebes he flies’. Why does Milton despatch his bird to Thebes rather than Heliopolis?”<sup>30</sup>

However, this is an incorrect translation of this passage, not because some syntactical rule is ignored, but because another important rule in the determination of meaning is ignored – context. Rather, as we will presently

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<sup>29</sup> J.B. Lightfoot, *The Apostolic Fathers, Part I, S. Clement of Rome* (Macmillan & Co. London, 1890) pg. 284-85

<sup>30</sup> Ibid., pg. 87

demonstrate, the line should be translated: “For there is a bird named the Phoenix – this one, being *only-begotten*, lives 500 years.”

As is seen in the note above, Lightfoot gives his reasoning as to why *monogenes* should be understood as *only one of its kind* by listing various references supporting his conclusion. However, even though a few pages earlier, he dissertates on many of the ancient sources leading up to the time of Clement, he completely ignores them in his note. (Some of these references will be found, translated into English, at the end of this chapter). In his note he ignores Tacitus (56 –117AD, and even the most important account of Ovid (43BC – 17AD) – *Metamorphoses*. Instead he references Ovid’s *Amores*.

Ovid’s *Metamorphoses* and Tacitus’ *Annals* are two of the fullest accounts by a near contemporary of Clement, and yet they are completely ignored in his note. Ovid’s *Metamorphoses* tells the story of the Phoenix as follows. This is taken from Thomas Bulfinch’s translation.

“Most beings spring from other individuals; but there is a certain kind which reproduces itself. The Assyrians call it the Phoenix. It does not live on fruit or flowers, but on frankincense and odoriferous gums. When it has lived five hundred years, it builds itself a nest in the branches of an oak, or on the top of a palm tree. In this it collects cinnamon, and spikenard, and myrrh, and of these materials builds a pile on which it deposits itself, and dying, breathes out its last breath amidst odors. From the body of the parent bird, a young Phoenix issues forth, destined to live as long a life as its predecessor. When this has grown up and gained sufficient strength, it lifts its nest from the tree, (its own cradle and its parent’s sepulcher,) and carries it to the city of Heliopolis in Egypt, and deposits it in the temple of the Sun.”<sup>31</sup>

Such is the account of the poet. Tacitus states the following in his *Annals*,

“A.D. 34 Paulus Fabius and Lucius Vitellius succeeded to the consulship. In the course of the year the miraculous bird, known to the world by the name of the Phoenix, after disappearing for a series of ages, revisited Egypt. A phenomenon so very extraordinary could not fail to produce abundance of speculation. The learning of Egypt was displayed, and Greece exhausted her ingenuity. The facts, about which there seems to be a concurrence of opinions, with other circumstances, in their nature doubtful yet worthy of notice, will not be unwelcome to the reader.

“That the Phoenix is sacred to the sun, and differs from the rest of the feathered species in the form of its head, and the tincture of its plumage, are points settled by the naturalists. Of its longevity the accounts are various. The common persuasion is that it lives five hundred years, though by some writers the date is extended to fourteen hundred and sixty-one. The several eras when the Phoenix has been seen are fixed by tradition. The first, we are told, was in the reign of Sesostri; the second in that of Amasis; and in the period when Ptolemy, the third of the Macedonian race, was seated on the throne of Egypt, another Phoenix directed his flight towards Heliopolis, attended by a group of various birds, all attracted by the novelty, and gazing with wonder at so beautiful an appearance. For the truth of this account we do not presume to answer. The facts lie too remote; and, covered as they are with the mists of antiquity, all further argument is suspended.

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<sup>31</sup> Thomas Bulfinch, *The Age of Fable or Beauties of Mythology* (Tilton and Co., Boston, 1872) pg. 413-415

“From the reign of Ptolemy to Tiberius, the intermediate space is not quite two hundred and fifty years. From that circumstance it has been inferred by many that the last Phoenix was neither of the genuine kind, nor came from the woods of Arabia. The instinctive qualities of the species were not observed to direct its motions. It is the genius, we are told, of the true Phoenix, when its course of years is finished, and the approach of death is felt, to build a nest in its native clime, and there deposit the principles of life, from which a new progeny arises. The first care of the young bird, as soon as fledged, and able to trust to its wings, is to perform the obsequies of its father. But this duty is not undertaken rashly. He collects a great quantity of myrrh, and to try his strength, makes frequent excursions with a load on his back. When he has made his experiment through a long tract of air, and gains sufficient confidence in his own vigour, he takes up the body of his father, and flies with it to the altar of the sun, where he leaves it to be consumed in flames of fragrance. Such is the account of this extraordinary bird. It has, no doubt, a mixture of fable; but that the Phoenix, from time to time, appears in Egypt, seems to be a fact satisfactorily ascertained.”<sup>32</sup>

What we see from these two accounts is the idea of *begottenness*, which we will presently see, is missing from Ovid’s *Amores*. Additionally, when we look at the greater context of Ovid’s account, we find that the story is placed within the greater context of fecundity, autogenesis and generation.

In his volume *Metamorphoses*, Book XV, Ovid states the following:

**“Bk XV: 361-390 Pythagoras’s Teachings: Autogenesis**

“However if trust is only placed in proven things, do you not see that whenever corpses putrefy, due to time or melting heat, they *generate* tiny creatures? Bury the carcasses of sacrificed bulls (it is a known experiment) in the ditch where you have thrown them, and flower-sipping bees, will be *born*, here and there, from the putrid entrails. After the custom of their parent bodies, they frequent the fields, are devoted to work, and labour in hope of harvest.

“A war-horse dug into the earth is the source of hornets: If you remove the hollow claws of land-crabs, and put the rest under the soil, a scorpion, with its curved and threatening tail, will emerge from the parts interred: and the caterpillars that are accustomed to weave their white cocoons, on uncultivated leaves (a thing observed by farmers) change to a butterfly’s form, symbol of the soul.

“Mud contains the *generative* seeds of green frogs, and *generates* them without legs, soon giving them legs for swimming, and, at the same time, with hind legs longer than their forelegs, so that they are fit to take long leaps. The cub that a she-bear has just *produced* is not a cub but a scarcely living lump of flesh: the mother gives it a body, by licking it, and shapes it into a form like that she has herself. Do you not see how the larvae of the honey-carrying bees, protected by the hexagonal waxen cells, are *born* as limbless bodies, and later acquire legs, and later still wings?

“Who would believe, if he did not know, that Juno’s bird, the peacock, that bears eyes, like stars, on its tail; and Jupiter’s eagle, carrying his lightning-bolt; and Cythera’s doves; all the bird species; are *born* from the inside of an egg? There are those who believe that when the spine decomposes, interred in the tomb, human marrow forms a snake.

**“Bk XV:391-417 Pythagoras’s Teachings: The Phoenix**

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<sup>32</sup> Cornelius Tacitus, Arthur Murphy, Tr., , *Murphy's Tacitus: the Eight Volumes Verbatim and Complete in One* (Jones & Co., Tinsbury Square, 1830) Pg. 167-68

“Yet these creatures receive their start in life from others: there is one, a bird, which renews itself, and **reproduces** from itself. The Assyrians call it the phoenix. It does not live on seeds and herbs, but on drops of incense, and the sap of the cardamom plant. When it has lived for five centuries, it then builds a nest for itself in the topmost branches of a swaying palm tree, using only its beak and talons. As soon as it has lined it with cassia bark, and smooth spikes of nard, cinnamon fragments and yellow myrrh, it settles on top, and ends its life among the perfumes.

“They say that, from the father’s body, a young phoenix is **reborn**, destined to live the same number of years. When age has given it strength, and it can carry burdens, it lightens the branches of the tall palm of the heavy nest, and piously carries its own cradle, that was its father’s tomb, and, reaching the city of Hyperion, the sun-god, through the clear air, lays it down in front of the sacred doors of Hyperion’s temple.”<sup>33</sup>

As one can see the whole story is set in the context of begetting, fecundity, and generation. As such one must ask, “Why is this ignored when one tries to determine the meaning of “*monogenes*” in Clement’s story of the Phoenix? In fact, in the very next sentence, Clement tells us the bird, indeed, is begotten! Lightfoot translates it “engendered,” but it is the Greek word γεννᾶται (begotten), the present passive form of γεννάω. *Monogenes* in this context must mean *only-begotten*. The Phoenix is the only-begotten offspring of its parent issuing forth from the body of its parent. It is set within Ovid’s concept of “autogenesis,” which section is prefaced with, “...do you not see that whenever corpses putrefy, due to time or melting heat, they **generate** tiny creatures?” Thus, in the greater literary context, “*monogenes*,” in Clement’s account, would not answer to the meaning “*one of a kind*,” as many claim, it would answer to the meaning of *only-begotten*.

In fact, when we consider Clement’s statement, “...For there is a bird named the Phoenix – this one, being only-begotten, lives 500 years,” we find this same thought of begottenness, in Ovid’s *Metamorphoses*, translated by Bulfinch as follows: “...from the body of the parent bird, a young Phoenix issues forth.” And Kline translated it as follows: “...they say that, from the father’s body, a young phoenix is reborn.”

The pertinent concept in Ovid is understood by Thomas Bulfinch as “issuing forth,” and by A.S. Kline as being “reborn.” There is no concept of “*one of a kind*” in the birth of the Phoenix in either Bulfinch’s translation or Kline’s translation of Ovid’s *Metamorphoses*.

Now, of course, we have been looking at English translations. Let’s look at the pertinent passage in Latin.

“Haec tamen ex aliis generis primordia ducunt, una est, quae reparet seque ipsa reseminet, ales: Assyrii phoenice vocant; non fruge neque herbis, sed turis lacrimis et suco vivit amomi. haec ubi quinque suae complevit saecula vitae, 395 ilicet in ramis tremulaeque cacumine

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<sup>33</sup> *Metamorphoses*, A. S. Kline's Version (emphasis in the text is mine)  
etext.virginia.edu/latin/ovid/trans/Metamorph15.htm#488378553

palmae unguibus et puro nidum sibi construit ore, quo simul ac casias et nardi lenis aristas quassaque cum fulva substravit cinnama murra, se super inponit finitque in odoribus aevum.400 inde ferunt, totidem qui vivere debeat annos, corpore de patrio parvum phoenica renasci; cum dedit huic aetas vires, onerique ferendo est, ponderibus nidi ramos levat arboris altae fertque pius cunasque suas patriumque sepulcrum405 perque leves auras Hyperionis urbe potitus ante fores sacras Hyperionis aede reponit.”<sup>34</sup>

In the Latin, we see that Latin words translated by Bulfinch and Kline are “phoenica renasci.” Renasci means “reborn.” As we said before, in this context it carries the idea of begottenness, not kind. Compare the use of ‘renasci’ in John 3:4 with the same sense of begottenness in the Latin Vulgate (1880 edition):

“Dicit ad eum Nicodemus: Quomodo potest homo nasci, cum sit senex? numquid potest in ventrem matris suae iterato introire et renasci? **John 3:4**

“Nicodemus saith unto him, How can a man be born when he is old? can he enter the second time into his mother's womb, and be born (reborn)?” **John 3:4 KJV**

In fact, in *Metamorphoses*, Ovid does not even use the word *unica*, when referring to the Phoenix, as he did in *Amores*, yet *Metamorphoses*, more than likely, is the account Clement was recalling, not *Amores*.

Therefore, if one wants to understand what meaning Clement had in mind when he used the Greek word *monogenes*, one should look to the fuller account in Ovid’s *Metamorphoses*, not to a lesser account that gives a brief reference to the bird.

Now that is not to deny that Ovid considered the Phoenix to be unique bird. He speaks of this uniqueness of the Phoenix when he uses the words *unica semper* in his work *Amores*. Below is the Latin text with the English translation.

“Siqua fides dubiis, volucrum locus ille piarum dicitur, obscenae quo prohibentur aves. illic innocui late pascuntur olores et vivax phoenix, unica semper avis; explicat ipsa suas ales Iunonia pinnae, oscula dat cupido blanda Columba mari. psittacus has inter nemorali sede receptus convertit volucres in sua verba pias.”<sup>35</sup>

“If you can believe it, they say there’s a place there for pious birds, from which ominous ones are barred. There innocuous swans browse far and wide and the phoenix lives there, unique immortal bird: There Juno’s peacock displays his tail-feathers, and the dove lovingly bills and coos.”<sup>36</sup>

But this brief account in *Amores* does not address any of the facts recounted in Clement’s story. And even if it did, *unica semper* does not mean *only one of his kind*. It simply means *unique, ever alone*. There is no connotation of *kind*

<sup>34</sup> [www.thelatinlibrary.com/ovid.html](http://www.thelatinlibrary.com/ovid.html)

<sup>35</sup> [www.thelatinlibrary.com/ovid.html](http://www.thelatinlibrary.com/ovid.html)

<sup>36</sup> [www.poetryintranslation.com/PITBR/Latin/AmoresBkII.htm#\\_Toc520535838](http://www.poetryintranslation.com/PITBR/Latin/AmoresBkII.htm#_Toc520535838)



(genus) in either word. Additionally, it is wrong to suggest that *unica semper* is a translation of *monogenes*, or that *monogenes* is a translation of *unica semper*; it is not. The question, therefore, one must ask, is, “Why then appeal to a Latin word in *Amores* to prove the meaning of *only one of a kind* for the Greek word *monogenes* when there is no connotation of *kind* (genus) in the Latin word and when neither is a translation of the other?”

Thus, when considering Lightfoot’s conclusion that *monogenes* should be translated as “*only one of a kind*” based upon the Latin words “*unica semper*” in Ovid’s *Amores* account, one has to ask why did Lightfoot utilize the minor reference to the Phoenix, as is found in Ovid’s *Amores*, and did not consider the Latin word *renasci* that is found in the primary account of the bird in Ovid’s *Metamorphoses*? In fact, why did not Lightfoot even include in his note the reference to the account in *Metamorphoses*; it clearly is the account most like the account of Clement?

Now, of course, we will never know, for he never explained his reasoning, but if we had to choose between Ovid’s *Amores* and Ovid’s *Metamorphoses* as the likely source for Clement’s understanding of the story, which do you suppose would be the likely candidate?

In Clement’s account, he declares the Phoenix lives 500 years. Does *Amores* speak about this fact? No, absolutely not, but Ovid’s *Metamorphoses* does. Clement speaks of the Phoenix building a nest of spices. Does *Amores* mention this aspect? No, but *Metamorphoses* does. Clement says that in the fullness of time the Phoenix enters the nest to die. *Amores* doesn’t mention this fact at all, but *Metamorphoses* most certainly does. Clement says that after the Phoenix dies another bird is begotten. Does *Amores* address this fact? No, but *Metamorphoses* does! And finally, Clement speaks the new Phoenix carrying the nest and the remains of its parent to a specific city – Heliopolis. *Amores* mentions nothing of the sort, but *Metamorphoses* not only speaks of the same phenomenon but even mentions the exact same city – Heliopolis!

So with this information before you, which account of Ovid do you think Clement would have had in mind, *Amores*, or *Metamorphoses*? *Metamorphoses*, of course, but if that is so obvious why does everyone ignore this reference when trying to determine Clement’s usage of *monogenes*?

Now we certainly know that Lightfoot was aware of this other account of Ovid, but let’s assume for a second that he didn’t; even without that account there still would be no reason for such a one to conclude that Clement understood *monogenes* to be an equivalent to the *unica semper* of *Amores*. Why? First, Clement was not translating Ovid’s *Amores*. There is absolutely no evidence to suggest such a thing. Therefore, it is totally false to conclude that he considered *monogenes* to be an equivalent word for *unica semper*. In fact, it is very unlikely that Clement had any text of Ovid in front of him when

he was composing his epistle to the Corinthians. In our modern age of the internet we can easily pull up the text when composing a letter and reference it directly in our composition. But it is very unlikely that Clement had a copy before him. Books were not mass published and only the rich were likely to have a private library with such a copy. As such, he must have been using his memory of the magnificent story of the Phoenix rising from the ashes, which means he was not reading, or translating, a copy of *Amores* with its use of *unica semper*. But if he did have some copy in front of him, it most certainly would have been *Metamorphoses* with its *phoenica renasci*, and not *Amores* with its *unica semper*, simply because (as we have already shown), the narrative of I Clement 24:1-4 follows the narrative of *Metamorphoses* and not the narrative of *Amores*.

The second reason is because the context of I Clement 25:1-4 does not allow for the understanding of “*only one of a kind*” for *monogenes*. Clement, in the whole context, is speaking of the resurrection of Christ Jesus from the dead, and since Paul (in one of the verse’s applications), equates the begetting of the Son in Psalm 2:7, with the resurrection of Christ Jesus in Acts 13:33, it is very likely that Clement would have had this thought in mind when he used the word *monogenes*.

“I will declare the decree: the LORD hath said unto me, Thou *art* my Son; this day have I begotten thee.” **Psalm 2:7** KJV

“God hath fulfilled the same unto us their children, in that he hath raised up Jesus again; as it is also written in the second psalm, Thou art my Son, this day have I begotten thee.” **Acts 13:33** KJV

This emphasis on resurrection is seen when we look at the fuller account in Clement.

“Let us understand, dearly beloved, how the Master continually showeth unto us the resurrection that shall be hereafter; whereof He made the Lord Jesus Christ the firstfruit, when He raised Him from the dead. Let us behold, dearly beloved, the resurrection which happeneth at its proper season. Day and night show unto us the resurrection. The night falleth asleep, and day ariseth; the day departeth, and night cometh on. Let us mark the fruits, how and in what manner the sowing taketh place. The sower goeth forth and casteth into the earth each of the seeds; and these falling into the earth dry and bare decay: then out of their decay the mightiness of the Master's providence raiseth them up, and from being one they increase manifold and bear fruit.” Let us consider the marvelous sign which is seen in the regions of the east, that is, in the parts about Arabia. There is a bird, which is named the phoenix. This [one], being ~~the only one of its kind~~ [only-begotten], liveth for five hundred years; and when it hath now reached the time of its dissolution that it should die, it maketh for itself a coffin of frankincense and myrrh and the other spices, into the which in the fullness of time it entereth, and so it dieth. But, as the flesh rotteth, a certain worm is engendered (begotten) which is nurtured from the moisture of the dead creature and putteth forth wings. Then, when it is grown lusty, it taketh up that coffin where are the bones of its parent, and carrying them journeyeth from the country of Arabia even unto Egypt, to the place called the City of the

Sun; and in the daytime in the sight of all, flying to the altar of the Sun, it layeth them thereupon; and this done, it setteth forth to return.” **1 Clement 24:1 - 25:4**<sup>37</sup>

Therefore, we see Clement would have understood *monogenes* as *only-begotten* simply because the understanding of *only one of a kind* would not fit the purpose of his story! Why? Because *only one of a kind* would contradict the entire Christian gospel! Christ was not the *only one of his kind* in his deity (he was of the same kind as God the Father – homoousios, not homoiousios); nor was he the *only one of his kind* when we look at his resurrection – he was the *first of his kind*!

“But each in his own order: Christ the first fruits, after that those who are Christ's at His coming.” **1 Cor. 15:23**

Indeed, he is called the “first-born” of many brethren.

“For whom He foreknew, He also predestined *to become* conformed to the image of His Son, that He might be the first-born among many brethren.” **Rom. 8:29**

And he is called the first-born of the dead,

“He is also head of the body, the church; and He is the beginning, the first-born from the dead; so that He Himself might come to have first place in everything.” **Col. 1:18**

Clement even prefaces his whole account with the statement that Christ was not the *only one of his kind*. He states in the first sentence:

“Let us understand, dearly beloved, how the Master continually showeth unto us the resurrection that shall be hereafter; whereof He made the Lord Jesus Christ the firstfruit, when He raised Him from the dead.”

Therefore, most assuredly, he would not contradict himself a few sentences later and say Christ was the *only one* of his kind when he was trying to demonstrate that Christ was the *first* of a kind!

There is no way Clement would have used *monogenes* of the Phoenix (if it meant the *only one of his kind*), either to represent the Christ who came from God, nor to represent the one who would rise from the dead, simply because Christ was of the same kind with God the Father in his divinity, not *the only one of a kind*, and he was the *first of a kind* in his resurrection, not the *only one of his kind*. He was the first-fruits! We are to be transformed into his image (II Cor. 3:18); we are to be transformed into conformity to the body of his glory (Phil. 3:21). He was never the *only one of his kind* in his resurrection. He was the beginning of a new creation. That is the message of the Gospel; it is the hope of our salvation!

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<sup>37</sup> J.B. Lightfoot, *The Apostolic Fathers, Part I, S. Clement of Rome* (Macmillan & Co. London, 1890) Pg. 284-85, alternate translation adapted in brackets and parenthesis.

However, even though he never was the *one of a kind* God (Jn. 1:18), who came from God, or a *one of a kind*, who would rise from the dead, he was certainly the *only-begotten* Son of God who came from God and the *only-begotten* Son who would rise from the dead. Nothing in Scripture would contradict the fact that Christ was the *only-begotten* Son of God who came from the bosom of the Father to die upon the cross, and that, as such, he was the *only-begotten* Son of God who would rise from the dead. The Phoenix would be the perfect picture of this.<sup>38</sup> The idea of *only-begotten* does not contradict the purpose of the story as does the meaning *only one of his kind*.

The Phoenix was an *only-begotten* bird when he died, and he was an *only-begotten* bird that was reborn from the ashes of death. Clement gives us various examples of resurrection and he gives us an example from each of the three kingdoms – the physical kingdom, the plant kingdom and the animal kingdom. He gives an example from the universe – day and night. He gives us one example from the plant kingdom – the sowing of seeds; and he gives the one example from the animal kingdom – the Phoenix.

Therefore, the question must be asked once more, “Why would one use this mention of the Phoenix in *Amores* to justify a new meaning for *monogenes* when *Amores* does not deal with any of the truths mentioned by Clement in his epistle, and, yet, *Metamorphoses* does.” Clement deals with resurrection, *Amores* does not. Clement speaks of begetting. *Amores* does not. Yet, the account in *Metamorphoses* is filled with the idea of begetting and rising from the dead. The account in *Amores* does not. It simply does not make sense!

When one realizes that *Metamorphoses* parallels the account in Clement, one then realizes that the context of *Metamorphoses* supports the meaning of *only-begotten* in I Clement and not the meaning *only one of its kind*.

Unfortunately, Lightfoot’s translation of I Clement 25:2-3 has misled generations of Christians into thinking *monogenes* must mean *alone of its kind*, or *unique*; it has misled many generations of Christians into thinking the context of the story must demand such an understanding. In fact, it has misled Christians into thinking that anyone who really knows the Greek language must obviously think the same way. This is just not true.

For example, long before J. B. Lightfoot first published his work on the subject, the passage was translated with an understanding of *only-begotten*. It was translated as such in William Hales’ book about the chronology of the ancients; his work was published in 1830. He was Rector of Killesandra in

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<sup>38</sup> However, one must always remember the Scriptural *doctrine of extent*. Analogies cannot be taken too far. The Phoenix does demonstrate our Lord’s resurrection, but it fails in analogy when one considers that the flesh of the Phoenix underwent decay before its resurrection. The body of our Lord did not (Acts 2:27).

Ireland, a Fellow of Trinity College and Professor of Oriental Languages in the University of Dublin. He relates the following:

“...The story of the Phoenix is thus related by Clemens Romanus, the friend of St. Paul:—

Let us consider that extraordinary sign (σημειον), which happens in the Eastern regions, namely, in Arabia. There is a bird called the Phoenix, which is **only begotten** (μονογενες), and lives five hundred years. When the time of its dissolution, by death, is at hand, it makes for itself a nest of frankincense, myrrh, and other spices, into which, when its time is fulfilled, it enters, and dies. From the corrupted flesh a worm issues, which is nourished by the moisture of the dead animal, and becomes fledged. Then, when grown to full strength, it takes up the nest, in which lie the bones of its parent, and carries them away from Arabia to Egypt, unto Heliopolis, (the city of the sun), and there, in open day, flying to the altar of the sun, places them upon it; and having so done, then departs. The priests therefore, computing the return of the times, discovered that it usually comes at the completion of the five hundredth year." See *Cotelerius, Patres Apostol. Vol. I.* p. 128, 161, 162.

The close analogy between the accounts of *Clemens Romanus* and *Tacitus*, is obvious. The latter evidently borrowed from the former, who wrote before him, and at Rome.”<sup>39</sup>

Or consider one who was actually a contemporary of J. B. Lightfoot – John Allen Giles, C. C. College at Oxford, Rector at Sutton, Surrey, Classical Historian and a Greek and Latin Scholar. His work, containing the passage before us, was published in 1886. Remember, J. B. Lightfoot first published his work on *Clement* in 1869. Yet what do we find all those years later? We find that John Allen Giles disagreed with J. B. Lightfoot and still understood the word *monogenes* to mean *only-begotten*. He writes:

“Let us consider a strange miracle which takes place in the regions of the East, that is in Arabia. For there is a bird called the Phoenix. This being the **only-begotten** [of its parents] lives 500 years, and when it arrives at its dissolution by death, it makes for itself a coffin out of frankincense and myrrh and the rest aromatics, into which, when its time is fulfilled, it enters and dies. From its flesh when rotten a worm is born, which is nourished from the moisture of the dead animal and generates wings. Afterwards when it becomes strong, it takes up that coffin, where the bones of its predecessor are, and carrying these completes the journey from the country of Arabia to Egypt into the city called Heliopolis [city of the Sun] and in the day-time, in the sight of all men, flying over the altar of the sun, it places them there, and so departs back again. Do we think then it is a great and marvellous thing if the Creator of all things shall bring about the resurrection of those who have served him righteously in the confidence of a good faith, when he shows to us even by a bird the greatness of his promise.”<sup>40</sup>

And so, once again, when one closely examines the historical facts and details, one discovers that the Neo-Trinitarian’s assertion that *monogenes* must mean “*one of a kind*,” or “*unique*” is actually false, and that the true

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<sup>39</sup> William, Rev. Hales, *A New Analysis of Chronology and Geography, History and Prophecy: In which Their Elements are Attempted to be Explained, Harmonized and Vindicated, Upon Scriptural and Scientific Principles, Vol. 4, 2<sup>nd</sup> Edition* (C.J.G. & F. Rivington, London, 1830) pg. 436

<sup>40</sup> John Allen Giles, *Apostolical Records of Early Christianity: From the Date of the Crucifixion to the Middle of the Second Century* (Reeves & Turner, London, 1886) pg. 64-65

meaning for *monogenes* remains *only-begotten*, which is the understanding of the word from the earliest times of the Church.

## Additional References Regarding the Phoenix Before and During the Time of Clement

“Then I said: ‘I shall die with my nest, and I shall multiply my days as the phoenix.’”

**Book of Job 29:18**

(Jewish Publication Society, 1917)

“The righteous shall flourish like the Phoenix.” <sup>41</sup>

**Psalms 92:12**

## Dryden’s Ovid Metamorphoses

“All these receive their birth from other things;  
But from himself the phoenix only springs:  
Self-born, begotten by the parent flame  
In which he burn’d, another, and the same;  
Who not by corn, or herbs his life sustains,  
But the sweet essence of amomum drains;  
And watches the rich gums Arabia bears,  
While yet in tender dew they drop their tears.  
He (his five centuries of life fulfill’d,)  
His nest on oaken boughs begins to build,  
Or trembling tops of palm; and first he draws  
The plan with his broad bill, and crooked claws,  
Nature’s artificers; on this the pile  
Is form’d, and rises round, then with the spoil

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<sup>41</sup> Based upon the LXX and understood as such by Tertullian, in his discourse: *Anti-Marcion: On the Resurrection of the Flesh*, Part VI, Chap. XIII – “God even in His own Scripture says: ‘The righteous shall flourish like the phoenix;’ that is, shall flourish or revive, from death, from the grave—to teach you to believe that a bodily substance may be recovered even from the fire. Our Lord has declared that we are ‘better than many sparrows:’ well, if not better than many a phoenix too, it were no great thing. But must men die once for all, while birds in Arabia are sure of a resurrection?” (Alexander Roberts, James Donaldson, ed., *The Ante-Nicene Fathers*, Vol. III, Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co, Grand Rapids, MI 1985, pg. 554)

Of cassia, cinnamon, and stems of nard  
 (For softness strew'd beneath), his funeral bed is rear'd:  
 Funeral and bridal both; and all around  
 The borders with corruptless myrrh are crown'd.  
 On this incumbent, till ethereal flame  
 First catches, then consumes the costly frame:  
 Consumes him too, as on the pile he lies;  
 He lived on odors, and in odors dies.  
 " An infant phoenix from the former springs,  
 His father's heir, and from his tender wings  
 Shakes off his parent dust, his method he pursues,  
 And the same lease of life on the same terms renews.  
 When grown to manhood he begins his reign,  
 And with stiff pinions can his flight sustain;  
 He lightens of its load the tree that bore  
 His father's royal sepulchre before,  
 And his own cradle: this with pious care  
 Placed on his back, he cuts the buxom air,  
 Seeks the sun's city, and his sacred church,  
 And decently lays down his burden in the porch."<sup>42</sup>

### Herodotus (circa 485-424BC)

"They have also another sacred bird, which, except in a picture, I have never seen: it is called the phoenix.<sup>43</sup> It is very uncommon even among themselves; for according to the Heliopolitans, it comes there but once in the course of five hundred years, and then- only at the decease of the parent bird.

"If it bear any resemblance to its picture, the wings are partly of a gold and partly of a ruby color, and its form and size perfectly like the eagle. They relate one thing of it which surpasses all credibility: they say that it comes from Arabia to the temple of the sun, bearing the dead body of its parent inclosed in myrrh, which it buries. It makes a ball of myrrh shaped like an egg, as large as it is able to carry, which it proves by experiment. This done, it excavates the mass, into which it introduces the body of the dead bird; it again closes the aperture with myrrh, and the whole becomes the same weight as when composed intirely of myrrh; it then proceeds to Egypt to the temple of the sun."<sup>44</sup>

### Pliny (23—79AD)

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<sup>42</sup> John Dryden, et al., *Ovid: The Metamorphoses, Book X-XV. The Epistles Volume 2 of Ovid* (A. J. Valpy, 1833) pg. 174

<sup>43</sup> Footnote from below referenced work. "From what is related of this bird the Phoenicians gave the name phoenix to the palm-tree, because, when burnt down to the ground, it springs up again fairer and stronger than ever. The ancient Christians also refer to the phoenix as a type of the resurrection."

<sup>44</sup> Rev. William Beloe, Tr., *Herodotus, Vol. I* (Henry Colburn and Richard Bentley, London, 1830) pg. 214-215

“The Birds of Ethiopia and India are for the most part of a variety of Colours, and such as can hardly be described: but the Phoenix of Arabia is more noble than all others. I can scarcely tell whether it be false or no, that there is never more than one of them in the whole World, and that it is very rarely seen. It is said to be of the size of an Eagle: as bright as Gold about the Neck; the rest of the Body purple: the Tail azure blue, with Feathers distinguished by being of a Rose-colour; and the Head and Face adorned with a Crest of Feathers on the top. Manilius, the noble Senator, excellently well verse in most kinds of Learning, by his own unassisted efforts was the first and most diligent of the long Robe (Toga), who wrote of this Bird; and he reporteth, that no Man was ever known to see him feeding: that in Arabia he is sacred to the Sun: that he liveth 660 Years: and when he groweth old, he builds a Nest with the Twigs of Cassia (Cinnamon) and Frankincense Trees: and when he hath filled it with Spices, he dieth upon it. He saith, also, that out of his Bones and Marrow there breedeth at first, as it were, a little Worm, from which proceeds a young Bird; and the first Thing this young one does, is to perform the Funeral Rites of the former Phoenix, and then to carry away the whole Nest to the City of the Sun, near Panchsea, and to lay it down ilpon the Altar. The same Manilius affirmeth, that the Revolution of the great Year agreeth with the Life of this Bird; in which Year the same Signification of the Times and Stars return again to their first Points: and that this should begin at Noon, that very Day when the Sun entereth the Sign Aries. And by his saying, the Year of that Revolution was by him showed when P. Licinius and M. Cornelius were Consuls. Cornelius Valerianus writeth, that while Q. Plautius and Sex. Papinius were Consuls, the Phoenix flew into Egypt. He was conveyed to the City (Rome) in the Time that Claudius the Prince was Censor, in the eight hundredth Year of the City, and was showed openly in the Assembly of the People, as appeareth in the Public Records; but no Man ever made any doubt that this was a counterfeit Phcenix.”<sup>45</sup>

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<sup>45</sup> Dr. Philemon Holland, Tr., *Pliny's, Natural History, Vol. 1* (George Barclay, Castle St., Leicester Sq., 1847-48) pg. 187-88



# Misconceptions and Misunderstandings

## *Regarding the Stem –genes in the Greek Word Monogenes in light of Extra-Biblical Usages*

Over and over the statement is commonly heard that the stem –genes in *monogenes* carries the idea of “kind” and has nothing to do with derivation or being born. Many examples are brought forward to prove this point one of the most common one being the use of the word by Parmenides, who lived around 500 B.C., in his poem sometimes entitled “On Nature.” This assertion is rarely questioned and the revisionist claim is rarely checked for accuracy. However, when one does so, one finds the claim is not based upon reality, but it is actually the result of a skewed analysis of the facts and the taking of out of context of certain texts.

One hears repeatedly the stem has nothing to do with derivation. But when one look at the evidence one finds it repeatedly has to do with derivation – the complete opposite of the truth. In Liddell and Scott, the stem “–genes” occurs 168 times in various Greek words.

In all these occurrences, the *overwhelming majority* carry the sense of “derivation.” Of the 168 occurrences, 111 times it is used with the sense of “derivation” or “born,” and only 17 times is it used with the sense of “class” or “kind!” Of the remaining uses, 28 times the definition is unavailable and the other 12 times miscellaneous meanings are assigned to the word.<sup>46</sup>

Look at the following chart which lists these occurrences.

### **Occurrences of the stem “-genes” in Ancient Greek as recorded in Liddell and Scott<sup>47</sup>**

Connotation of “derivation” or “born”	Connotation of “class” or “kind”	No translation available	Varied meanings	English Definition
			ἀειγενής	everlasting
			ἄετογενής	bearing a mark in the shape of an eagle
ἀφρογενής				foam-born
ἄγενής				unborn, uncreated
		αἰειγενής		
Αἰγυπιογενής				of Egyptian race
αιθηρηγενής				born in ether, sprung from ether

<sup>46</sup> Perseus Digital Library Project. Ed. Gregory R. Crane. Updated Mar. 31,2009. Tufts University. Accessed Oct. 1, 2009 [www.perseus.tufts.edu](http://www.perseus.tufts.edu)

<sup>47</sup> Sourced from – Perseus Digital Library Project. Ed. Gregory R. Crane. Updated Mar. 31,2009. Tufts University. Accessed Oct. 1, 2009 [www.perseus.tufts.edu](http://www.perseus.tufts.edu)

Connotation of “derivation” or “born”	Connotation of “class” or “kind”	No translation available	Varied meanings	English Definition
ἀλιγενής				sea-born
ἀλλογενής				of another race, a stranger
	ἀμφοιγενής			of doubtful gender,
	ἀμπελογενής			of vine kind,
	ἀνομογενής			of different kind,
	ἀνομοιογενής			of different kind,
	ἄρσενογενής			male,
ἄρτιγενής				just born
	ἄρτιογενής			of the even class
			ἀρχηγενής	causing the first beginning of
Ἀσιαγενής				of Asiatic descent,
Ἀσιατογενής				of Asian birth
	ἄσυγγενής			not akin,
Ἀτλαγενής				sprung from Atlas
αὐθιγενής				born on the spot, born in the country, native
αὐτογενής				self-produced,
βοιγενής				born of an ox
		βουγενής		
βραδυγενής				late born
		Βρησαγενής		
		Δαλογενής		
Δαρειογενής				born from Darius
δευτερογενής				produced later,
Δηλογενής				Delos-born
		διαγενής		
διδυμογενής				twin-born
	διγενής			of doubtful sex,
Διογενής				sprung from Zeus,
διογενής				descended from Zeus, Zeus-born
Διθυραμβογενής				Bacchus-born
δρακοντογενής				dragon-gendered,
δυσγενής				low-born
ἐβδομογενής				born on the seventh day
ἐγγενής				innate, belonging to one's family
		ἐκγενής		
ἐλειογενής				marsh-born
ἐνδογενής				born in the house
			ἐπιγενής	growing after
	ἐτερογενής			of different kinds
εὐγενής				well-born, of noble race, of high descent
			εὐηγενής	well
		εὐθυγενής		
	φιλοσυγγενής			loving one's relatives,
φοινικογενής				Phoenician born
	φθερσιγενής			destroying the race
φθορηγενής				breeding corruption
		γαίηνγενής		
γηγενής				earthborn
ἡπειρογενής				born
			ἡριγενής	a day
	ἰδιογενής			mating only with its kind
Ἴδογενής				born on Ida
Ἰνδογενής				born in India

Connotation of “derivation” or “born”	Connotation of “class” or “kind”	No translation available	Varied meanings	English Definition
ἰθαγενής				born in lawful wedlock, legitimate
Καδμογενής				Cadmus-born
κακογενής				base-born
		καταγενής		
κογχογενής				born from a shell
κοινογενής				hybridizing
Κοιογενής				born of Koios
κορυφαγενής				head-born
κρατογενής				head-born
Κρητογενής				born in Crete
		κριογενής		
κρυφογενής				secretly born
Κυπρογενής				the Cyprus born
κυθηγενής				born in secret,
		λαδωγενής		
		Λατογενής		
Λητογενής				born of Leto
		Λιβυαφιγενής		
λιμναγενής				born at
λινογενής				born
Λυκηγενής				Lycian-born
μελιπγενής				ash-born
			μεσσογενής	middle-aged
μεταγενής				born after
μηλογενής				sheep-born
μιξεριφαρνογενής				of kid and lamb mixed together
μιξογενής				of mixed descent
μοιρηγενής				child of destiny, Fortune's child
μονογενής				only-begotten, single
		μουνογενής		
		νεαγενής		
νεηγενής				just born
Νειλογενής				Nile-born
νεογενής				new-born
νοθαγενής				base-born
νυμφογενής				nymph-born
νυμφογενής				nymph-born
όφιογενής				serpent-gendered
οικογενής				born in the house, homebred
όμβρηγενής				rain-born,
όμηγενής				born together, twin,
	όμογενής			of the same race
	όμοιογενής			akin, of like kind
όνειρογενής				born of a dream,
όρειγενής				mountain-born,
	όρνιθογενής			bird kind,
όρογενής				productive of terms
όστεογενής				produced in the bones
όμιγενής				late-born
παλαιγενής				ancient - born, full of years.
		παλαιογενής		[unavailable]
παλιγενής				born again
			πανευγενής	most noble
		παντογενής		

Connotation of “derivation” or “born”	Connotation of “class” or “kind”	No translation available	Varied meanings	English Definition
πατρογενής				begotten of the father
Περσογενής				of Persian origin
πετρηγενής				rock-born
		πετρογενής		
πληγενής				half-brother, half-sister,
		ποικιλογενής		
πολυγενής				of many families,
ποντογενής				sea born,
πορνογενής				spurius,(illegitimate birth)
πρεσβυγενής				first-born
προγενής				born before, primaeval
	προσγενής			akin
			προσθαγενής	previous
προτερηγενής				born sooner, older
πρωτογενής				first-born, primeval
		Πυλληγενής		
Πυλοιγενής				born in Pylos, bred in Pylus
πυριγενής				born in fire
πυρογενής				fire-born
πυρογενής				made from wheat
πυρσογενής				fire-producing
θαλασσογενής				sea-born
		θεαγενής		
		θεηγενής		
		θειογενής		
θεογενής				born of God
			θερειγενής	growing in summer
Θηβαγενής				Theban born
		Θηβαιγενής		
θηλυγενής				of female sex, womanish
θνητογενής				of mortal race
Σινδογενής				Indus-produced
Σουσιγενής				born at Susa
σπαρταγενής				producing the shrub spartos
συγγενής				inherited, inborn
Συριηγενής				Syrian-born
Ταρσογενής				born at Tarsus,
		ταυρογενής		
		τετραγενής		
τριγενής				thrice-born,
τριταιογενής				produced by tertian fever,
		Τριτογενής		
τυφλογενής				born blind,
ύδογενής				sprung from the water,
		ύλληγενής		
ύλογενής				born in the forest
			ύπερευγενής	exceeding noble
ύστερογενής				not appearing until after the birth,
ὠογενής				born of an egg,
			ὠρογενής	who preside over the several hours of the day

Connotation of “derivation” or “born”	Connotation of “class” or “kind”	No translation available	Varied meanings	English Definition
χαμαιγενής				earth-born
Χιογενής				of Chian growth
ψαλληγενής				sprung from harp- playing,
	ζωογενής			of animate kind, mortal
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>TOTAL</b>	
<b>111</b>	<b>17</b>	<b>28</b>	<b>12</b>	

As one can see, the most common meaning of *-genes* is not “kind” or “class,” as is repeatedly claimed by Neo-Trinitarians, but rather, is “born,” or some sense of “derivation,” or a “bringing forth.” (And, as we will see later, even in those cases where “kind” is claimed, in reality, it is still related to derivation). Between the two usages the connotation of born or derivation is favored by a ratio of 6 to 1. It occurs a little less than 11% of the time with a connotation of class or kind, and occurs 66% of the time with the connotation of born or derivation! Yet what is the common definition given to the stem *-genes* in *monogenes* by Neo-Trinitarians, the majority or the minority definition? The minority definition is the one that is used and the majority definition is all but ignored. This is what I meant by a skewed analysis of the facts, as well as a skewed analysis of the context of the texts.

So with that in mind, let us now look at those who have been responsible for much of this confusion. We will first look at Dale Moody.

## Misconceptions and Misunderstandings

*Regarding the Greek Word Monogenes as found in Dale Moody's Paper, "God's Only Son: The Translation of John 3:16 in the Revised Standard Version"*

We would first like to look at some false assertions made by Dale Moody in his paper, *God's Only Son: The Translation of John 3:16 in the Revised Standard Version*. He was a Professor at Southern Baptist Theological Seminary.

Kevin Giles in his book, *The Eternal Generation of the Son, Maintaining Orthodoxy in Trinitarian Theology*, has this to say regarding this paper.

"The widespread evangelical opinion that the doctrine of the eternal generation of the Son has no biblical warrant finds its contemporary origin and basis in a 1953 journal article, "The Translation of John 3:16 in the Revises Standard Version," by the evangelical Dale Moody, longtime professor of theology at Southern Baptist Seminary. Virtually every evangelical who questions this doctrine appeals to this article. Moody's case is as follow. (1) the translators of the 1952 Revised Standard Version of the Bible were right in translating *monogenēs* in the Johannine literature as "only Son" rather than "only begotten Son" (see Jn. 1:14, 18; 3:16, 18; I Jn 3:9). Their motive was entirely linguistic, not an attempt "to water down a Bible doctrine." Indeed, he says, this translation of *monogenēs* is to be commended because it 'gives greater emphasis to the uniqueness and deity of Jesus Christ.' (2) The RSV translators render the Greek word this way because linguistic study in the twentieth century has shown that the word *monogenēs* is related not to *gennaō* ("beget") but to *genos* ("class of kind"). It thus means "one of a kind," "special" or "unique." (3) In our earliest Latin translation of John's Gospel, *monogenēs* in John 1:14, 18; 3:16, 18 is translated *unicus* ("only"), not *unigenitus* ("only begotten"). The translation *unigenitus* first appeared in the late fourth century and was adopted by Jerome. His use of this Latin word to translate *monogenēs* led the translators of the Authorized Version of 1611 to render this Greek word into English as "only begotten..."<sup>48</sup>

As one can see this paper is repeatedly referenced by Evangelicals and others when discussing this issue. One can also see above some of the assertions he makes. Unfortunately, however, many do not know that many of the facts presented in this paper are not facts at all, but rather are half-truths, errors and, in some cases, out and out distortions.

We will now look at some of these half-truths and false assertions in this paper, trying to give the reader all the facts, and not just facts that may support our particular view. We will attempt to do this so that our readers can decide for themselves.

It should first be reiterated that the whole purpose of Dale Moody's paper was to defend the RSV's choice of "only" as a meaning of *monogenes* rather than the traditional meaning of "only-begotten." And in defending that choice he

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<sup>48</sup> Kevin Giles, *The Eternal Generation of the Son, Maintaining Orthodoxy in Trinitarian Theology* (IVP Press, Downers Grove, IL, 2012) pg. 64

makes this startling statement "...the translators have simply corrected an error repeated for fifteen centuries..."<sup>49</sup>

Dear brethren, what audacity and arrogance! Yes, arrogance! Now, I would never make such a charge against someone who interpreted a passage of Scripture differently than I might, if it was dealing with a doctrine that was not essential to our Faith. On non-essential doctrines of the Faith we must forbear with each other in love, and sometimes admit we may be wrong, but when it comes to the essential doctrines of the Faith we must never let our love for someone take precedence over our love for the Lord and for His truth.

Let me mention what I once mentioned before in another book regarding the modern Neo-Trinitarian:

"I know many of the modern teachers are true Christians. They love the Lord. I am sure they are very affable. Indeed, they more than likely wax eloquent on other doctrines and have been a great help to many Christians. I'm sure they are beloved by their students and by those in their churches. As such, I am sure they will be defended by such, because love produces loyalty and commitment. However, we must remember our loyalty and commitment must be first to the Lord and to His revelation. Why? Because love does, indeed, produce loyalty and commitment, and if the Lord Jesus is to be our first love, our loyalty and commitment must be first to Him." Remember the warning of Rev. 2:4. 'Nevertheless I have somewhat against thee, because thou hast left thy first love.'"

"Consequently, we must first be faithful to Him and to the Faith that was delivered to the Church. We must put our respect for the Lord and His Faith before any respect we might have for our Christian leaders and teachers."

"It is never pleasant to confront error. In fact, it is very difficult. No one loves contention, but we must realize the Church is under an obligation from the Scripture to remain faithful to the Lord as our first love and to "earnestly contend for the Faith which was once for all handed down to the saints" (Jude 1:3)."

"Remember the warning of the Holy Spirit. In the last day's men would depart from the Faith. This is the time when such contending is necessary. However, may we pray to the Lord that it ever be done with humility, forbearance, and most importantly with love, so that those who are in error may realize their mistake and realize that human pride is fleeting and guarded reputations are futile. May they repent of their departure."<sup>50</sup>

Sometimes niceties must be set aside when dealing with such issues of the Faith. When necessary, our Saviour set aside such niceties, calling some of the Pharisees hypocrites and blind guides! If our Saviour, who was sinless, sometimes deemed it necessary to sometimes speak with such candidness, how much more should we, following his example, do so when confronting one who seeks to change the meaning of the most basic revelatory title given to us by the Lord Himself, a title that has been confirmed by the godly witness

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<sup>49</sup> Dale Moody, "God's Only Son: The Translation of John 3:16 in the Revised Standard Version" *Journal of Biblical Literature*, Vol. 72, No. 4; (Dec., 1953) pg. 213

<sup>50</sup> Harris, B. P., *Understanding the Trinity: An Encouragement to Abide in the Doctrine in both Faith and Practice* (Assembly Bookshelf, Sacramento, 2006) pgs. 128-129

of untold millions of Christians for almost two thousand years of Church History?

Dale Moody asserts in his paper that thousands upon thousands of godly Christians, including teachers, pastors and other translators, have been “mistaken” for fifteen centuries (most of church history!), and that he and others like him in the 19<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> century have now discovered the true meaning of *monogenes*!

Imagine it, for most of Church History untold millions of Christians have been misled in regard to an integral aspect of the True Faith. Imagine, the Historic Christian Faith has been wrong in its declarations regarding the true nature of Christ and now that modern teachers are on the scene, the Holy Spirit can correct the Church. Again, what audacity! What they are really saying is that the Holy Spirit has left the Church bereft of the true Faith until they arrived on the scene—the Holy Spirit had to wait fifteen centuries for them to appear.

Now I am the first to admit that certain truths of Scripture have been lost over the centuries. Who can deny that false doctrines have crept into the Church? And yes, who can deny that the Holy Spirit has raised up certain individuals, for instance, a man like Martin Luther, to recover certain truths that have been lost or nullified over the centuries by different teachings and traditions of men (Mk. 7: 8-13 ). But this has never happened in regard to the Faith!

The Faith has never been lost. It has been the special treasure of the Church for all her history. Every time heretics and apostates have tried to rob her of those precious truths, the Church has stood strong, “contending for the Faith once and for all delivered to the saints” (Jude 1:3). It has clung to that which was delivered to it from the beginning (I Jn. 2:24).

The Faith has never been lost, and for Dale Moody or anyone else to now arise and claim the true meaning of *monogenes* has been lost and the Church has followed an error for fifteen centuries shows that they themselves are misled and have departed themselves from the Faith in regard to this precious truth.

A good friend has addressed this important issue. Let me include his insight regarding those who affirm that *monogenes* does not mean only-begotten, and those who insist that such denial does no harm to the Historic Christian Faith.

“1. If you throw out the word *monogenes* (as do this class of Neo-Trinitarians) or marginalize the word, saying that it doesn't really matter what *monogenes* means, in that we can still hold to the Historic Faith regarding the eternal generation of the Son without it, what you have done in effect is to say you can hold to an orthodox doctrine regardless of any biblical support for the meaning of words. It's ok in that there are other biblical texts that can be cited to defend the doctrine of eternal sonship. No it's not ok. To do otherwise, is not according to the apostolic admonition to hold fast to that what has been delivered to the saints (2 Thess. 2:15), not to mention the words of our Lord who commanded His disciples to teach according to



what He had commanded them (Mt. 28:20). Now does Jn. 3:16 ring a bell? We do not get to pick and choose what words to use when speaking of God's self revelation, as though they are negotiable, without severe and dire consequences. Do not add – Do not take away – is the divine edict and standard! God used words to reveal Who He is, and the criteria for using certain words is not whether or not we can still maintain a doctrine with or without out specific words such as *monogenes*. Should not the criteria be – we use such words because God so chose to use them in revealing Himself? God chooses the vocabulary for revealing Himself to His people – it is not the people who choose. And to ignore God's chosen words, is to ignore God. God doesn't give us the option to choose or not to choose, to use or discard at will revelatory inspired words according to our whim, simply on the basis that they may or may not be helpful to defend or set forth a particular doctrine. He is the One who sets the parameters and the language for us to use... period.

“2. Furthermore, God did not have to give us the word *monogenes* in describing His Son. He could have just used the term *monos*, “only,” and left it that. However, as biblical and solid the word *monos* is in Scripture, it still doesn't approach nor convey the depth and beauty of the word *monogenes*. *Monos* tells us little to nothing regarding the eternal derivation of the Son from the Father. Nor does it give any insight into the Son's nature, his personal subsistence or absolute equality with the Father. As a matter of fact, as with the term son, the term *monos*, only lets us know that God, in some sense, has an “only” Son, but falls short in revealing exactly HOW the Son is God's “only” Son, let alone how His Son is His in the first place? Is it by creation? Is the Son unique in some special way as contrasted with angelic nature or human nature or some other living creature? Is the Son “only” because He is uniquely equal with God, yet without derivation? So even though the word *monos* is a good and revelatory word in Scripture, inspired by the Holy Spirit and used by Christians to describe Christ as the Son of God, nevertheless, it still lacks the clarity, precision and fullness that the *-genes*, in the word *monogenes*, affords by revealing the Son's unique relationship with His Father.

“3. The following summaries are given to help clarify the distinctions of terms:

**Summary A** – The term 'Son,' in and of itself, may or may not indicate that Christ is God's Son by nature. Men and angels are also referred to as sons. It would depend on the context.

**Summary B** – The Christian's use of the term “only Son of God” gives us further clarification; it indicates that his nature must be different and, in some way, unique. But how, and in what way would he be different and unique? Could not Adam also be considered an “only son of God,” albeit, for different reasons?

**Summary C** – The term “only-begotten Son of God” outright declares and defines precisely how the nature of God's Son is different from human and angelic natures and how he subsists within the Divine Being. While Adam might be considered an “only son of God,” he never could be considered the “only-begotten Son of God. The term only-begotten erases any lingering doubt as to HOW the Lord Jesus Christ is the Son of God

“4. The term *monogenes* is in truth a gift from God who loves and desires His people to know Him. Such an explicit word as *monogenes* offers further proof that God is truly a revelatory God as evidenced by a term that discloses so much direct and concrete insight into the intra-Trinitarian relations. God offers us a glimpse of Himself and of His divine nature by the word *monogenes*. He wants us to know Him and be able to identify with Him, so He gives a term that we human beings can relate to at the most fundamental core of our own being... our own fecundity. The word greatly aids our understanding of the divine relations between the Father and Son, that otherwise would pose unimaginable difficulties in comprehension, as well as the practical benefits associated with the word. *Monogenes*, understood with its meaning of “only-begotten,” gives a tangible and clear means for understanding divine Personhood, consubstantiality, equality, fecundity, not to mention the benefit it affords for understanding other revealed truths. So why would anyone want to discard such a heavenly gift?

“5. In the world that the apostle John grew up in and later wrote to fellow believers in our Lord Jesus Christ in, he spoke of Jesus as being the “only-begotten” Son. He said that Jesus was not merely God's Son (which in itself can suggest derivation), but that Jesus was God's only-begotten (born) Son. Now let's think about this for a moment. Here's John, writing to Christians living in a world of widespread polytheistic pagan idolatry with the commonly held belief that the gods mate with other gods producing sons and daughters, who in turn are considered to be gods. Now I have one little question for the apostle John given the state of such a worldwide religious environment, “WHAT WERE YOU THINKING?” “John, don't you know that polytheism is rampant. The common perception is that the god's produce offspring. What were you thinking?” “Do you not realize that by saying Jesus is the “only-begotten” Son of God you are playing right into the pagan mythology of gods producing gods?” “Why then would you use such a word as *monogenes* (so graphic, so utterly human) to describe the Son's eternal relationship with His Father?” The apostle, wise and tolerant as time, answers by a small still voice, like that of the evening breeze, “Because, my brother, it is the Truth and I bear witness to the Truth – Jesus is the Son of God, the very *monogenes* from His Father before all ages, and no pagan mythology can ever change or obscure that fact. He is begotten, not created nor formed nor made. He is very God of Very God. He is consubstantial, with His Father's very own Substance. He is equal to His Father in every possible conceivable way. His derivation from His Father is eternal and knows no end. He is the Lord God who created the world and made all things therein; who walked in the cool of the day with Adam; who spoke with Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. He is the Lord God who gave the Law to Moses lovingly inscribed with His own hand; and He shall sit upon the throne of David whose kingdom shall have no end. He is the Great I AM, for He alone is, The ONLY-BEGOTTEN SON OF THE LIVING GOD.”

“6. Our Lord's Sonship is indeed unique, not because that's what the word *monogenes* means, but because He is the *monogenes* Son. God has many who are called His son, but only the Lord Jesus Christ is His only-begotten. And the word *monogenes* clarifies and defines, beyond all doubt, the Son's uniqueness. It provides the only true and definitive answer to the question of the ages: “Who is Christ... Whose Son is He” – by the eternal response of, “He is The Only-Begotten Son of God.”

“7. To toss out or minimize the importance of the true meaning of the word *monogenes*, either for the sake of appeasement or pseudo scholarship, only invites the continued accusation that the Historic Christian Faith, regarding the eternal Sonship, though it “may be” true, nevertheless, doesn't have any real substantial biblical support in so far that *monogenes* doesn't mean only-begotten. Thus, the whole doctrine of the eternal generation of the Son comes into question from a biblical perspective. Its authority, they claim, lies vested in human tradition and not revealed Scriptures. It becomes clouded with doubt and suspicion as a legitimate biblical doctrine. And this is precisely where the enemy wants it to be: clouded, obscured, and marginalized, knowing full well that given enough time and persistence, human nature, being what it is, will eventual come to ignore and reject the doctrine altogether. Remember the vile words from the serpent mouth; “Hath God said?” These three words were the words that brought down the universe and all therein.”<sup>51</sup>

Indeed, words are so important and when we look closely at Dale Moody's paper we see that, even though he makes the assertion that Christians have been repeated an “error” for fifteen centuries, it is actually he who repeatedly makes statements that mislead and in some cases are outright errors! How sad it is that his paper is appealed to over and over, and no one checks his facts. He makes some statements and assertions that simply are not true, as we will now demonstrate. I make this charge not by my judgment alone, but by the

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<sup>51</sup> C. L. Moody, *On the Importance of God's Revelatory Title "Only-begotten"*

judgment of history and the judgment of two thousand years of Christian witness!

## Misconception One

The first misconception we would like to look at in Dale Moody's paper is his assertion regarding monogenes in a passage by Epiphanius. He states:

"Epiphanius (c. A.D. 315-403), bishop of Constantia (Salamis) in Cyprus was a violent opponent of every form of heresy, particularly those that pertained to the person of Christ. At the close of his work *Ancoratus* (the Anchored One) of A.D. 374, he gives two creeds as a summary of the orthodox teaching on the Holy Trinity. The second creed contains the significant phrase *gennēthenta ek theou patros monogenē* (the only-begotten Son of God the Father.) There in the accusative case it takes both the word *gennēthenta* (begotten) and the word *monogenē* (only) to say 'only-begotten,' because *monogenēs* there, as in the NT, has to do with uniqueness rather than conception."<sup>52</sup>

Now the first thing to notice is that he makes a translation of a Greek phrase that is taken out of context. When one looks at the English translation of the Greek phrase he provides, I do not know if it could be translated any other way than the way he provides (that is, unless one understands a comma after *patros*). But this is misleading to the reader because the Greek phrase is completely taken out of its fuller context. This is the phrase within its context. The phrase he lifts out is underlined.

"Καὶ εἰς ἓνα κύριον Ἰησοῦν Χριστὸν τὸν υἱὸν τοῦ θεοῦ γεννηθέντα ἐκ θεοῦ πατρὸς μονογενῆ τοῦτέστιν ἐκ τῆς οὐσίας τοῦ πατρὸς, θεὸν ἐκ θεοῦ, φῶς ἐκ φωτός, θεὸν ἀληθινὸν ἐκ θεοῦ ἀληθινοῦ, γεννηθέντα, οὐ ποιηθέντα, ὁμοούσιον τῷ πατρὶ."<sup>53</sup>

When we see the entire context the first thing we realize is that he is not clear as to the referent of "it," when he says the following in his paper, "There in the accusative case "it" takes both the word *gennēthenta* (begotten) and the word *monogenē* (only) to say 'only-begotten.'"<sup>54</sup> What word or phrase is "it"?

From one perspective he seems to indicate the referent of "it," is the phrase *γεννηθέντα ἐκ θεοῦ πατρὸς μονογενῆ*, itself, but then he contradicts that by his English translation, "the only-begotten Son of God the Father," which does not match the Greek text he provides—not having the word *υἱὸν*. (Unfortunately, he never translated anything further than that one phrase he offered above in his quote). And so it seems the referent in his mind was *τὸν υἱὸν τοῦ θεοῦ* (the Son of God). However, such an understanding would produce a supposed translation as follows –

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<sup>52</sup> Dale Moody, "God's Only Son: The Translation of John 3:16 in the Revised Standard Version" *Journal of Biblical Literature*, Vol. 72, No. 4; (Dec., 1953) pg. 214-215

<sup>53</sup> Epiphanius, G. Dindorfeus, Ed., *Anonymi vita Epiphani. Ancoratus. Anacephalaosis. Panarii libri I* (T.O. Weigel, Lipsiae, 1859) pg. 224

<sup>54</sup> Moody, op. cit., pg. 215

“And in one Lord Jesus Christ, the only (μονογενῆ) begotten (γεννηθέντα) Son of God the Father, from God, that is to say of the substance of the Father, God of God, Light of Light, true God of true God, begotten not made, the same substance with the Father.”

“Καὶ εἰς ἓνα κύριον Ἰησοῦν Χριστὸν τὸν υἱὸν τοῦ θεοῦ γεννηθέντα ἐκ θεοῦ πατρὸς μονογενῆ τοῦτέστιν ἐκ τῆς οὐσίας τοῦ πατρὸς, θεὸν ἐκ θεοῦ, φῶς ἐκ φωτός, θεὸν ἀληθινὸν ἐκ θεοῦ ἀληθινοῦ, γεννηθέντα, οὐ ποιηθέντα, ὁμοούσιον τῷ πατρί.”

Notice with this translation two words are left out. By putting μονογενῆ and γεννηθέντα into a simple attributive position (in his English translation) modifying the substantive υἱὸν (Son), and removing πατρὸς (Father) from the prepositional phrase “ἐκ θεοῦ πατρὸς (from God the Father) and construing it with θεοῦ it at the end of the phrase “τὸν υἱὸν τοῦ θεοῦ [πατρὸς]” (as he does with his translation), he leaves the remaining two words, ἐκ θεοῦ (from or out of God), dangling out there alone. And the phrase τοῦτέστιν ἐκ τῆς οὐσίας τοῦ πατρὸς (that is to say out of the substance of the Father) becomes kind of orphaned. What is it now clarifying without the word μονογενῆ or the participial phrase?

Moreover, if he takes the referent to be the participial phrase (in spite of his translation), it seems he would have to read it this way in English.

“And in one Lord Jesus Christ, the Son of God, the only Begotten One from God the Father, that is to say of the substance of the Father, God of God, Light of Light, true God of true God, begotten not made, the same substance with the Father.”

“Καὶ εἰς ἓνα κύριον Ἰησοῦν Χριστὸν τὸν υἱὸν τοῦ θεοῦ γεννηθέντα ἐκ θεοῦ πατρὸς μονογενῆ τοῦτέστιν ἐκ τῆς οὐσίας τοῦ πατρὸς, θεὸν ἐκ θεοῦ, φῶς ἐκ φωτός, θεὸν ἀληθινὸν ἐκ θεοῦ ἀληθινοῦ, γεννηθέντα, οὐ ποιηθέντα, ὁμοούσιον τῷ πατρί.”<sup>55</sup>

There seems to be a couple of problems with this. First, if it was to be understood this way, one would expect an articular γεννηθέντα. Secondly, if one takes γεννηθέντα as a substantive it loses its verbal force. As such it becomes a substantive that is modified (according to his understanding), by μονογενῆ. Now that would be fine if we were only dealing with the little snippet he gave us, however, when one sees the phrase within the entire context one sees how unlikely that is because it renders the following exegetical phrase, τοῦτέστιν ἐκ τῆς οὐσίας τοῦ πατρὸς, nonsensical. What is it now clarifying? With γεννηθέντα as a substantive, one changes ἐκ, in the phrase ἐκ θεοῦ πατρὸς, into a preposition of separation, rather than a preposition of source.

We must remember that prepositions naturally carry a stative or transitive force. Stative prepositions are such prepositions as *υπο* or *επι*, while transitive prepositions are prepositions that imply movement or motion, such as *ἐκ* or *εἰς*.<sup>56</sup> Now granted, verbs can sometimes overrule the natural force of the

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<sup>55</sup> Epiphanius, op. cit., pg. 224

<sup>56</sup> See Daniel Wallace’s *Greek Grammar Beyond the Basics*, pages 358-359

preposition, but when we understand γεννηθέντα in a substantival sense rather than a verbal sense, there is no verb to overrule the natural force of movement contained in ἐκ!

The context demands some verbal force to explain the following epexegetical phrase τοῦτέστιν ἐκ τῆς οὐσίας τοῦ πατρὸς. With the inclusion of that phrase, one sees that the context is demanding that some type of movement be understood in the preposition ἐκ (not only in the preceding phrase ἐκ θεοῦ πατρὸς, but also in the phrase τοῦτέστιν ἐκ τῆς οὐσίας τοῦ πατρὸς). It demands an understanding of the movement of something “out of the substance of the Father. And, since it is introduced with τοῦτέστιν, the antecedent of τοῦτέστιν must also be understood as the movement of something out of God.

This demonstrates that γεννηθέντα, with its sense of movement, must be understood as a verbal participle and not as a simple adjective. The phrase should be understood as it is normally translated, “begotten of God the Father, that is, of the substance of the Father.” Or, to bring out the underlying sense it could be translated very literally, “begotten out of God the Father, that is, out of the substance of the Father.” Other examples of this normal use of the participle are found in such verses as the following.

**Matthew 2:1** Τοῦ δὲ Ἰησοῦ γεννηθέντος ἐν Βηθλεὲμ τῆς Ἰουδαίας, ἐν ἡμέραις Ἡρώδου τοῦ βασιλέως, ἰδοὺ, μάγοι ἀπὸ ἀνατολῶν παρεγένοντο εἰς Ἱερουσόλυμα,

**Matthew 2:1** Now after Jesus was born in Bethlehem of Judea in the days of Herod the king, behold, magi from the east arrived in Jerusalem, saying (NASB)

**Acts 22:3** Εγὼ μὲν εἰμι ἀνὴρ Ἰουδαῖος, γεγεννημένος ἐν Ταρσῷ τῆς Κιλικίας, ἀνατεθραμμένος δὲ ἐν τῇ πόλει ταύτῃ παρὰ τοὺς πόδας Γαμαλιήλ, πεπαιδευμένος κατὰ ἀκρίβειαν τοῦ πατρῶου νόμου, ζηλωτὴς ὑπάρχων τοῦ θεοῦ, καθὼς πάντες ὑμεῖς ἐστε σήμερον·

**Acts 22:3** "I am a Jew, born in Tarsus of Cilicia, but brought up in this city, educated under Gamaliel, strictly according to the law of our fathers, being zealous for God, just as you all are today. (NASB)

In these examples it would be nonsensical and unnatural to take the participle as an adjective modifying the head noun, rather than a verbal participial phrase modifying the head noun. In other words, it would be unnatural for the text to say, “Now the begotten Jesus in Bethlehem...” or “I am a born Jewish man in Tarsus of Cilicia...” rather than the normal “Now after Jesus was “begotten” in Bethlehem of Judea...” and “I am a Jew, “born” in Tarsus of Cilicia...” It would destroy the natural flow of the text and render the rest of the verse nonsensical. This is also true with the text before us, as one can plainly see when the full portion is provided.

However, Dale Moody does not mention this or provide the reader with the full portion in Greek to allow the reader to see and decide for themselves. Why? His translation is assuredly wrong. (Now, of course, that cannot be stated unequivocally, for sometimes there are many possibilities with the Greek language, but being possible does not make it probable). Indeed, such

an understanding as his is contrived, for he separates γεννηθέντα from the prepositional phrase it is construed with (ἐκ θεοῦ πατρός), and then construes γεννηθέντα with Son of God (τον υἱὸν τοῦ θεοῦ). But let's continue.

He then takes the prepositional phrase that is left from the participial phrase γεννηθέντα ἐκ θεοῦ πατρός, i.e. ἐκ θεοῦ πατρός, and further divides it taking away the substantive πατρός, which is in apposition to ἐκ θεοῦ, and puts it in apposition to the phrase τον υἱὸν τοῦ θεοῦ [πατρός]! His whole take on the passage is most contrived and most unnatural.

Also, if we take his supposed translation of “only” for μονογενῆ and construe it further back with Son of God, like he desires to do, it would then read.

“And in one Lord Jesus Christ, the only (μονογενῆ) begotten (γεννηθέντα) Son of God [the Father], out of God, that is to say of the substance of the Father, God of God, Light of Light, true God of true God, begotten not made, the same substance with the Father.”

This too is contrived, for if this is what the writer meant, he most likely would have repeated the word he was trying to clarify to show consistency of flow, therefore, it would have read:

“Καὶ εἰς ἓνα κύριον Ἰησοῦν Χριστὸν τὸν υἱὸν τοῦ θεοῦ [πατρός] γεννηθέντα ἐκ θεοῦ μονογενῆ τοῦτέστιν ἐκ τῆς οὐσίας τοῦ πατρὸς [θεοῦ], θεὸν ἐκ θεοῦ, φῶς ἐκ φωτός, θεὸν ἀληθινὸν ἐκ θεοῦ ἀληθινοῦ, γεννηθέντα, οὐ ποιηθέντα, ὁμοούσιον τῷ πατρὶ.

“And in one Lord Jesus Christ, the only (μονογενῆ) begotten (γεννηθέντα) Son of God the [Father], out of God, that is to say out of the substance of ~~the Father~~ [God], God of God, Light of Light, true God of true God, begotten not made, the same substance with the Father.”

He creates this difficulty by switching πατρός from being in apposition with ἐκ θεοῦ and places it in apposition to τὸν υἱὸν τοῦ θεοῦ.

This whole topsy-turvy exercise is unnecessary if one reads it according to its natural flow and understanding, but he cannot read it that way for it would actually support the meaning of “only-begotten” for *monogenes* – the very meaning he is trying to negate!

Therefore, if we take this passage in context, this leaves us with two possibilities. The Greek word μονογενῆ is being used as a substantive, or it is being used as an adjective modifying the substantive υἱὸν. As for γεννηθέντα, it makes more sense to leave it as a verbal participle within its own group providing additional information regarding the phrase τον υἱὸν τοῦ θεοῦ.

Thus we would have two possible ways of understanding the text. First, it could be translated as follows.

“And in one Lord Jesus Christ, the Son of God, begotten of God the Father, **only-begotten**, that is of the substance of the Father, God of God, Light of Light, very God of very God, begotten not made, being of one substance with the Father.”

“Καὶ εἰς ἓνα κύριον Ἰησοῦν Χριστὸν τὸν υἱὸν τοῦ θεοῦ γεννηθέντα ἐκ θεοῦ πατρὸς, μονογενῆ, τοὔτέστιν ἐκ τῆς οὐσίας τοῦ πατρὸς, θεὸν ἐκ θεοῦ, φῶς ἐκ φωτός, θεὸν ἀληθινὸν ἐκ θεοῦ ἀληθινοῦ, γεννηθέντα, οὐ ποιηθέντα, ὁμοούσιον τῷ πατρὶ.”

In other words, γεννηθέντα ἐκ θεοῦ πατρὸς, is what Robertson calls, a participle of additional statement, modifying Son of God. Then **μονογενῆ** is placed as an adjectival substantive – an epithet. Now usually adjectival substantives are articular, but not always. For example, *μονογενῆς* is anarthrous in John 1:14 and is used as an adjectival substantive.

Then we have τοὔτέστιν ἐκ τῆς οὐσίας τοῦ πατρὸς (that is of the substance of the Father) clarifying how he is the only-begotten (*μονογενῆ*) of the Father. He is the only one that is begotten out of the substance of the Father. Also, now the word *πατρὸς* (Father), in the phrase *ἐκ τῆς οὐσίας τοῦ πατρὸς* (of the substance of the Father), makes more sense because it is being exegetically construed with the *πατρὸς* in the participial phrase *γεννηθέντα ἐκ θεοῦ πατρὸς* (begotten of God the Father).

Or, if we wish to take *μονογενῆ*, not as a substantive, but as a simple adjective modifying *τὸν υἱὸν τοῦ θεοῦ* it could be translated:

“And in one Lord Jesus Christ the **only-begotten** Son of God, begotten of God the Father, that is of the substance of the Father, God of God, Light of Light, very God of very God, begotten not made, being of one substance with the Father.”

“Καὶ εἰς ἓνα κύριον Ἰησοῦν Χριστὸν τὸν υἱὸν τοῦ θεοῦ *γεννηθέντα ἐκ θεοῦ πατρὸς* **μονογενῆ**, τοὔτέστιν ἐκ τῆς οὐσίας τοῦ πατρὸς, θεὸν ἐκ θεοῦ, φῶς ἐκ φωτός, θεὸν ἀληθινὸν ἐκ θεοῦ ἀληθινοῦ, γεννηθέντα, οὐ ποιηθέντα, ὁμοούσιον τῷ πατρὶ.”

And, as with the first translation, the exegetical phrase *τοὔτέστιν ἐκ τῆς οὐσίας τοῦ πατρὸς* (that is of the substance of the Father), still flows smoothly clarifying the participial phrase *γεννηθέντα ἐκ θεοῦ Πατρὸς* (begotten of God the Father).

If the writer of the creed wanted to state what Dale Moody wants it to state, it seems it should have been written in this way. (In this way it would flow naturally and still provide the understanding he wishes).

“Καὶ εἰς ἓνα κύριον Ἰησοῦν Χριστὸν τὸν υἱὸν τοῦ θεοῦ τὸν γεννηθέντα τὸν μονογενῆ ἐκ θεοῦ πατρὸς τοὔτέστιν ἐκ τῆς οὐσίας τοῦ πατρὸς, θεὸν ἐκ θεοῦ, φῶς ἐκ φωτός, θεὸν ἀληθινὸν ἐκ θεοῦ ἀληθινοῦ, γεννηθέντα, οὐ ποιηθέντα, ὁμοούσιον τῷ πατρὶ.”

Notice that *μονογενῆ* was placed before the prepositional phrase after *γεννηθέντα* that is now articular. In this way it would be understood as a modifier of a substantive *γεννηθέντα* and provide the meaning of “only” as he desires. It would then read “only (*μονογενῆ*) begotten (*γεννηθέντα*) from God the Father.” If *μονογενῆ* truly meant “only,” and not “only-begotten,” as he

claims, this would be a clear and simple way to write the phrase. In fact, it would be comparable to the way Philo wrote a very similar phrase.

“θαυμάσειε δ, ἂν τις τὸν τῆς ἐρμηνείας τρόπον, ὡς πολλάκις ἐπὶ πολλῶν ὁ νομοθέτης χρήται ἢ τὸ σύννηθες ἐξαλλάττων. μετὰ γὰρ τοὺς φύντας ἐκ γῆς ἀρχόμενος δηλοῦν **τὸν γεννηθέντα πρῶτον ἐξ ἀνθρώπων**, περὶ οὗ τὸ παράπαν οὐδὲν εἶρηκεν, ὡς ἡδὴ πολλάκις τοῦνομα αὐτοῦ προειπὼν ἀλλὰ μὴ νῦν αὐτὸ κατατάττων εἰς τὴν ἐν λόγῳ χρήσιν, φησὶν ὅτι ἔτεκε τὸν Κάιν.” **De Cherubim I, 53**<sup>57</sup>

“And one may wonder at the kind of narration which the Jewish lawgiver frequently employs in many instances, where he departs from the usual style. For after giving the history of those parents of the human race who were created out of the earth, he begins to relate the story of **the first-born of human parents**, concerning whom he says absolutely nothing, as if he had already frequently mentioned his name, and were not now bringing it forward for the first time. Accordingly, he simply says that “she brought forth Cain.” **De Cherubim Part II, XVI (I, 53)**<sup>58</sup>

Notice that Philo takes the adjective *πρῶτον* and places it immediately after the very same participle we have in *Ancoratus*, *γεννηθέντα*, and then follows it by a prepositional phrase *ἐξ ἀνθρώπων*. In this way it is understood as the “first-begotten of man (human parents).” Notice he also uses an articular participle *γεννηθέντα*, then the adjective, *πρῶτον*, and then a prepositional phrase, *ἐξ ἀνθρώπων*.

Our suggested text that would support his view follows the same order: the articular participle *γεννηθέντα*, the adjective *μονογενῆ*, and then a prepositional phrase, *ἐκ θεοῦ πατρὸς*. If the text says what Dale Moody claims it says, it would have more than likely been written in such a way. Only then would it make sense. Only then would it support his claim that *μονογενῆ* means “only.” *Μονογενῆ* would then be an adjective like *πρῶτον*, modifying *γεννηθέντα* like it does in Philo.

But the fact of the matter it was not written in that way. Why? Simply because it would become nonsensical if it was written that way because *μονογενῆ* does not mean “only,” but means “only-begotten!” The way this creed was written actually supports a meaning of only-begotten and not, as Dale Moody suggests a meaning of “only.”

If *μονογενῆ* was placed after the articular participle like the reading above (*τον γεννηθέντα μονογενῆ*), the phrase would become redundant. It would be saying the “only-begotten begotten.” It would be the same as if Philo had used *πρωτότοκον* instead of *πρῶτον* with *γεννηθέντα*, i.e. *τὸν γεννηθέντα πρωτότοκον*, that too would have had a redundant meaning, “first-born born” or “first-begotten begotten.”

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<sup>57</sup> Philonis Alexandrini, *Opera quae supersunt*, Vol. 1 (Typis et impensis G. Reimeri, Berolini 1896) pg. 181

<sup>58</sup> Philo of Alexandria, *The Works of Philo Judaeus: The Contemporary of Josephus*, Vol. 1 (George Bell and Sons, London, 1890) pg. 188



But the fact that the writer of the creed did not write it in this manner gives evidence that μονογενῆ did not mean “only,” but truly meant “only-begotten.” If he wanted to say “only” begotten of God the Father, with the adjective modifying the participle, in order to get the meaning “only-begotten,” as Dale Moody suggests, he could have used μόνον instead of μονογενῆ as Philo used πρῶτον instead of πρωτότοκον. It then would have read: τὸν γεννηθέντα τὸν μόνον ἐκ θεοῦ πατρὸς. Then it truly would have read: the “only” begotten of God the Father.

Μονός means “only.” Μονογενῆς does not. Μονογενῆς means “only-begotten.” The grammatical structure of this creed demonstrates this fact.

But even apart from the clear grammatical considerations, the fallacy of Dale Moody’s claim is clearly seen when the greater context of the creed is considered, specifically, when one considers the inclusion of the little word ὁμοούσιος later in the text—but this will be discussed under Misconception Three after we first discuss a few other points.

Therefore, we see that the assertion of Dale Moody that this creed proves the meaning of “only” for μονογενῆς is not only unfounded but is also misleading. He “edits” the text, not allowing the reader to see the entire Greek phrase in its context; then he incorrectly translates the Greek phrase he does provide (by adding the word Son) which when combined, prevents the reader from seeing that it actually makes perfectly good sense to understand *monogenes* as “only-begotten.”

Consequently, any way one wants to look at it, this passage, at the minimum, certainly does not negate the meaning of “only-begotten” for μονογενῆς. In fact, as we will see later, it actually supports the meaning of “only-begotten.” But whether one believes so or not, it is totally misleading for Dale Moody to lift the phrase from the text, translate it outside its context, and then use it to say it “takes both the word gennēthenta (begotten) and the word monogenē (only) to say ‘only-begotten.’” Such an unequivocal statement is most misleading. In fact, such an unequivocal statement is not true.

## Misconception Two

To demonstrate this fact further – that it is a misconception to regard “only-begotten” as a combination of two words, γεννηθέντα meaning “begotten” and μονογενῆ meaning “only”—let’s look at a quote made by B. F. Westcott (who Moody later quotes in regard to another matter).

This quote will direct our thoughts back a hundred years before the creed mention by Dale Moody in the writing of *Ancoratus*. Let’s see if it took two words to say only-begotten back then. He says.

“The earliest certain example of the word in this connexion brings out its force very plainly. The Synod of Antioch (269), which condemned Paul of Samosata, in giving the exposition of

their ancient belief which they addressed to him, write: 'We confess and proclaim the Son as begotten, 'an only Son (γεννητόν, υἱὸν μονογενῆ), the image of the unseen God, the 'firstborn of all creation, the Wisdom and Word and Power of God, who was 'before the ages not by foreknowledge but by essence and subsistence, 'God, Son of God, having recognised Him as such both in the Old and New 'Testament' (Routh, Rell. Sacr. iii. 290; comp. Alex. Alexandr. ap. Theodor. H. E. I. 4. 45, φθισις μονογενῆς).”<sup>59</sup>

Unfortunately, Westcott does not provide the reader with more of the quote. When we see the fuller quote we see that the noun υἱὸν is repeated and that we actually have two nouns (υἱὸν) in the context rather than just the one he shows. Here is the full Greek text of the phrase he quotes which is from a letter sent to Paul of Samosata by the orthodox bishops of the synod. I have underlined the phrase he lifted out.

“Τοῦτο δὲ τὸν υἱὸν γεννητόν, μονογενῆ υἱόν, εἰκόνα τοῦ ἀοράτου θεοῦ τυγχάνοντα, πρωτότοκον πάσης κτίσεως, σοφίαν καὶ λόγον καὶ δύναμιν θεοῦ, πρὸ αἰώνων ὄντα, οὐ προγινώσκει, ἀλλ’ οὐσία καὶ ὑποστάσει θεόν, θεοῦ υἱόν, ἐν τε παλαιᾷ καὶ νέᾳ διαθήκῃ ἐγνωκότες ὁμολογοῦμεν καὶ κηρύσσομεν.”<sup>60</sup>

A very literal English translation would be: “Now this—the Son begotten, an Only-Begotten Son, being the image of the invisible God, the first-born of all creation, Wisdom and Word and Power of God, existing before time not foreknown, but to substance and to subsistence God, Son of God, and known both in the Old and New Testaments – we both confess and preach.”

When we see the full quote we see that τὸν υἱὸν γεννητόν construes together and that μονογενῆ υἱόν is an anarthrous first attributive position with μονογενῆ modifying the repeated noun υἱόν. The structure is similar to the expression in *Ancoratus*, in that we have the noun υἱόν followed by the adjective γεννητόν (begotten), followed by another adjective (μονογενῆ). (One must remember that Dale Moody regarded the participle γεννηθέντα in *Ancoratus* as an adjective modifying the preceding noun υἱόν). However, there is one important difference with the adjective μονογενῆ in this quote before us. It has its own immediate noun it is modifying. It is not construing with the preceding υἱόν, but is construing with the repeated noun υἱόν following, thereby being in an attributive position with that noun.

In other words, if what Dale Moody claims was true, i.e. that it takes two words, “begotten” and “only,” to say “only-begotten,” this statement, one hundred years earlier, certainly does not demonstrate such a fact, because μονογενῆ is not being construed with the adjective γεννητόν in the phrase τὸν υἱὸν γεννητόν in order to say “only-begotten.” Μονογενῆ is modifying its own noun υἱόν. If what Dale Moody claimed was true, the phrase could have easily been written: Τοῦτο δὲ τὸν υἱὸν γεννητόν μονογενῆ εἰκόνα τοῦ ἀοράτου θεοῦ... κ.τ.λ. without the use of the following υἱόν. That would clearly show forth such an understanding.

The fact that it does not, demonstrates the bishops were not taking the two adjectives together. (As flexible as the Greek language can sometimes be, it is most unlikely the

<sup>59</sup> Westcott, B. F., *The Epistles St. John: the Greek text with notes and essays* (MacMillan & Co., London, 1883) Pgs. 163

<sup>60</sup> Routh, Martinus Josephus, *Reliquiae sacrae: sive auctorum fere jam perditorum secundi tertiiue saeculi post Christum natum quae supersunt.... Ed. II, Volume 3* (E Typographeo Academico, 1846) Pgs. 290-291

two adjectives could ever be construed together in such a manner, i.e. as the text stands; the only way it might work is if one takes the phrase γεννητὸν μονογενῆ υἱὸν in apposition to the previous τὸν υἱὸν, but then, more than likely, an articular adjective would have been used to clearly differentiate for the reader the appositional phrase from the previous τὸν υἱὸν.)

Additionally, we see that the demonstrative pronoun τοῦτο points to the completed statement regarding the Son of God. That is, it points to the statement that follows concerning the Son “Begotten,” that being what they confess and preach. This explains the neuter gender for the demonstrative pronoun. The pronoun points forward to the coming statement regarding the Son and it emphasizes the statement as something very important. Why? Because they were combatting the heresy of Sabellianism which did away with Persons within the Godhead, believing the one God manifested himself in three successive modes of manifestation – first the Father, then the Son and then the Holy Spirit.

The synod was wishing to show personal distinctions within the Godhead. They did this by showing the supposed second mode of manifestation of the Son was not simply the Father changing His mode of manifestation, but was the Son who was “begotten” of God the Father. He was not like other sons of God who were sons through a temporal and creative act of God, but rather was an Only-Begotten Son (μονογενῆ υἱὸν) because he was begotten by an eternal and necessary act of the Father (before time). Thus he was known as the image of the invisible God the Father, the first-born of all creation, Wisdom and Word and Power of God, existing before time, not foreknown, but to substance and to subsistence, God, Son of God. The emphasis is first on the fact that He was τὸν υἱὸν γεννητὸν the begotten Son, because if He is begotten He cannot be the same Person of the Father who begot Him. This negates Sabellianism. Then because He was God of God, the image of the invisible God, He was μονογενῆ υἱὸν, an Only-Begotten Son.

Now while this proves that Dale Moody’s assertion is not as clear cut as he suggests, and while this also demonstrates that monogenes was not clearly combined with another adjective to say only-begotten, one could still argue that even though monogenes modifies its own noun and is not directly construed with γεννητὸν, it still should be understood as “only” (that is, if one was predisposed to believe that monogenes meant only). Therefore, μονογενῆ υἱὸν could be understood as an “Only Son.”

Therefore, it would help if one had further evidence to show that *monogenes* was not being understood as “Only” at that time in history. Fortunately, we have that evidence. It is another creed written approximately at the same time, which, when compared with this statement, demonstrates that *monogenes* was not being understood as “only” as Dale Moody suggests.

This other creed, written around the same time (one year later), was a private creed written by Gregory Thaumaturgus. He was one of the main participants in that same Synod we have been discussing—the Synod of Antioch. This is what Philip Schaff has to say concerning him in his book *The Creeds of Christendom*.

“Gregorius Thaumaturgus, of Neo-Caesarea. About A.D. 270. Gregory, surnamed the Great or Thaumaturgus, i.e., the Wonderworker (from his supposed power of miracles), was a pupil

and admirer of Origen (on whom he wrote an eloquent panegyric), and Bishop of Neo-Cæsarea in Pontus (from about 240 to 270), which he changed from a heathen into a Christian city. He took a prominent part in the Synod of Antioch (A.D. 269), which condemned the errors of Paul of Samosata, and issued a lengthy creed. He was held in the highest esteem, as we learn from Basil the Great, his successor in office (*De Spiritu Sancto*, cap. 29, § 74, where he is compared to the apostles and prophets, and called a 'second Moses'), and from Gregory of Nyssa (*Vita Gregorii*). The following creed (ἐκθεσις πίστεως κατὰ ἀποκάλυψιν Γρηγορίου ἐπισκόπου Νεοκαισαρείας) was, according to the legend related by Gregory of Nyssa a hundred years later, revealed to him by the Apostle John in a vision, at the request of the Virgin Mary. It is somewhat rhetorical, but more explicit on the doctrine of the Trinity than any other ante-Nicene creed, and approaches in this respect the Symbolum Quicunque. The Greek text in Gallandi, *Vet. PP. Bibl.* p. 385; in Mansi, *Tom. I.* p. 1030, and Hahn, p. 97. Hahn gives also two Latin versions, one by Rufinus. Two other creeds ascribed to him are not genuine. An English translation of his writings by S. D. F. Salmond, in the *Ante-Nicene Christian Library*, Vol. XX. (Edinb. 1871).<sup>61</sup>

This is a most interesting creed to order to help determine the true meaning of *monogenes* at that time. As was indicated before, Gregory was one of the major participants of the Synod. As such, it is reasonable to conclude that Gregory's understanding of *monogenes* would be exactly the same as the Synod's understanding of *monogenes* just one year earlier. This creed was written approximately 270 A.D., and, of course, the creed of the Synod of Antioch was written at 269 A.D.

Below is the first portion of Gregory's creed reproduced in the original Greek Text with an English translation and a Latin translation following.

Greek Text <sup>62</sup>	English Translation <sup>63</sup>	Translation of Rufinus <sup>64</sup>
Εἷς θεὸς πατὴρ λόγου ζῶντος, σοφίας ὑφεστῶσης καὶ δυνάμεως καὶ χαρακτῆρος αἰδίου, τέλειος τελείου γεννήτωρ, πατὴρ υἱοῦ μονογενοῦς.	There is one God, the Father of the living Word, who is the substantive wisdom and eternal power and image of God: the perfect origin (begetter) of the perfect (begotten): the Father of the only-begotten Son	Unus Deus Pater verbi viventis, sapientiae subsistentis et virtutis suae et figurae, perfectus perfecti genitor, pater. Filii unigeniti.
Εἷς κύριος μόνος ἐκ μόνου, θεὸς ἐκ θεοῦ, χαρακτὴρ καὶ εἰκὼν τῆς θεότητος, λόγος ἐνεργός, σοφία τῆς τῶν ὅλων συστάσεως περιέκτικὴ καὶ δύναμις τῆς ὅλης κτίσεως ποιητικὴ, υἱὸς ἀληθινὸς ἀληθινοῦ πατρὸς, ἀόρατος	There is one Lord, one of one (only of the only), God of God, the image and likeness of the Godhead, the mighty Word, the wisdom which comprehends the constitution of all things, and the power which produces all creation; the true Son of the true Father, Invisible of Invisible, and Incorruptible of Incorruptible, and	Unus Dominus, solus ex solo, figura et imago deitatis, verbum perpetrans, sapientia comprehendens omnia et virtus, qua tota creatura fieri potuit, Filius verus very et invisibilis ex invisibili et incorruptibilis ex incorruptibili et immortalis ex immortali et sempiternus ex sempiterno.

<sup>61</sup> Philip Schaff, *The Creeds of Christendom, with a History and Critical Notes, Vol.2* (Baker Books, Grand Rapids MI, 1993) , pg. 24

<sup>62</sup> Ibid. pg. 24

<sup>63</sup> Ibid. pg. 24

<sup>64</sup> August Hahn, *Bibliothek der Symbole und Glaubensregeln der apostolisch-katholischen Kirche* (Verlag Von E. Morgenstern, Breslau, 1897) pg. 253-254

	Immortal of Immortal, and Everlasting of Everlasting.	
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In this creed we see that Gregory calls the Son the Only-begotten (υἱοῦ μονογενοῦς). But then he follows it with the phrase Εἷς κύριος **μόνος ἐκ μόνου**, θεὸς ἐκ θεοῦ. He states that the μονογενὴς Son is μόνος (only) of μόνου (only)! How can this be if *monogenes* also means *only*? Obviously, in Gregory’s mind the Greek word *monogenes* must carry a different connotation than *monos*, otherwise he would have simply repeated the word.

If *monogenes* was never understood as *only-begotten*, but rather was understood as *only* (as Dale Moody suggests) why would Gregory then follow up his use of *monogenes* with the phrase μόνος ἐκ μόνου? If *monogenes* truly meant “only,” why did he not then write μονογενὴς ἐκ μονογενοῦς? In other words, if *monogenes* simply meant “only,” why did he not continue with the same thought and the same word and write that the Son was *monogenes* of *monogenous*, thereby, explaining his previous phrase?

Obviously, in Gregory’s mind *monogenes* carried a different meaning than *monos*. This shows that *monos* is the Greek word for *only*, not *monogenes*. *Monogenes* means *only-begotten*. And since *monogenes* does not mean *only*, it does not need another adjective, *begotten*, to say *only-begotten*; it means *only-begotten* in and of itself. The connotation of “only” is found in the first part “mono,” and the connotation of “begotten” is found in the ending *-genes*.

If *monogenes* was a simple adjective meaning *only*, then, most assuredly, it could have been used of any of the Three Persons of the Blessed Trinity, but the matter of the fact is, *monogenes* is never used of any of the Persons but the Son! Why? Why not call the Father in the creed, μονογενὴς πατὴρ? Or, why not say that the Son was μονογενὴς **ἐκ** μονογενοῦς, that he was *only* Son of the *only* Father (using Dale Moody’s supposed definition of *only* for *monogenes*)? The reason is because *monogenes* does not mean *only*, but means *only-begotten*, and it would be **wrong** to say he was μονογενὴς **ἐκ** μονογενοῦς, i.e. that he was *only-begotten* Son out of the *only-begotten* Father. That is why he had to switch from *monogenes* to *monos*. In the creeds the Father is Unbegotten (ἀγέννητος), and He is the only (*monos*) Father (cf. Jn. 5:44; 17:3), but He is never the *monogenes* Father. If *monogenes* meant *only* there would be no problem saying *monogenes* Father. The fact of the matter is *monogenes* does not mean *only*; it means *only-begotten*.

This private creed also confirms, contrary to Dale Moody’s assertion, that it “always” took two words to say *only-begotten*. Obviously at that time it did not. For if it was true, it is inconceivable that one of the primary framers of the creed at Antioch would contradict that creed one year later by using *monogenes* in a different sense. In other words, this shows that Gregory’s understanding of *monogenes* was no different than the Synod’s understanding of *monogenes*.

It is simply wrong for Dale Moody to categorically state that μονογενὴς was always understood as *only* and that it was always combined with another word to say *only-begotten*. The truth is, when one examines the evidence closely, the evidence actually leads one into the opposite conclusion, i.e. μονογενὴς does not mean *only*, but rather means what it has always meant – *only-begotten*—and that in and of itself!

And so we see that 100 years before *Ancoratus*, the Greek word *monogenes*, by itself, was understood as *only-begotten*; it did not take two words to make up that title.

### Misconception Three

Continuing with this line of thought, and coming back to the time period of *Ancoratus*, we now find Dale Moody stating this:

“It is the word *gennēthentos* that means “begotten,” but it does not appear with *monogenēs* in the NT. Now Jerome too was an advocate of the Nicene creed, and it seems clear that his orthodox zeal tempted him to read his creed which required two words (*gennēthenta monogenē*) into the one word (*monogenēs*) found in John 1:14, 18; 3:16, 18; 1 John 4:9; Heb. 11:17. These facts may be easily checked in Philip Schaff, *The Creeds of Christendom*, Vol. II, pg. 35.”<sup>65</sup>

He continues with his thought that it took two words to say *only-begotten* making the observation that *gennēthentos* and *monogenē* were never used together in the New Testament. This implies, of course, that *monogenēs* in the New Testament could never mean “only-begotten,” but must mean “only,” because it was never used in combination with *gennēthentos*.

A couple of things need to be said in regard to this implication. First he says that the word *gennēthentos* means *begotten*. Of course, that is true; but he makes it seem that because it does not occur with the word *monogenes* in the New Testament it is somehow significant. Why would that be significant?! Why does he make this additional implication to the reader that *monogenēs* cannot mean *only-begotten* simply because *monogenēs* does not occur with the word *gennēthentos* in the N.T. Why would that make any difference?

Using his same logic one could just as easily make the following statement to disprove the common Neo-Trinitarians meaning of *one of a kind* for *monogenes*!

Dale Moody says *monogenēs* means “only.” Fine—let’s accept his supposed definition of *only*, especially since Neo-Trinitarians are always appealing to Dale Moody as an authority. Now, Dale Moody and Neo-Trinitarians also believe *genos* means *kind*, which is true, but it is equally true that *genos* (kind) never appears with *monogenes* (only) in the New Testament! So, using Dale Moody’s same logic, *monogenes* could never mean “one of a kind,” (i.e. only kind) unless it appears with *genos* in the New Testament! So, if that is true, why does Dale Moody conclude that *monogenes* can, indeed, also mean *one of a kind*?<sup>66</sup> How could it mean “one of a kind” since the word *monogenes* never appears with *genos* in the New Testament? In other words, if it takes both

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<sup>65</sup> Dale Moody, “God’s Only Son: The Translation of John 3:16 in the Revised Standard Version” *Journal of Biblical Literature*, Vol. 72, No. 4; (Dec., 1953) pg. 215

<sup>66</sup> His whole paper is to defend the meaning of *only* for *monogenes* as found in the RSV, but later in his paper, he concludes *monogenes* also means *only one of a kind*, as we will see later.

words, *monogenes* (only) and *gennēthentos* (begotten) to say *only-begotten*, then it must take *monogenes* (only) and *genos* (kind) to say *only one of a kind* (i.e. using his same logic)!

Let me chart out his logic below. I will use the exact same sentence he used, except I will substitute *genos* for *gennēthentos*, and *kind* for *begotten*. I will compare them side by side with my concluding sentence added to show you the misdirection of his claim.

Dale Moody's Claim	Alternate Claim
It is the word <i>gennēthentos</i> that means "begotten," but it does not appear with <i>monogenēs</i> in the NT.	It is the word <i>genos</i> that means "kind," but it does not appear with <i>monogenēs</i> in the NT.
His Conclusion	Alternate Conclusion
Therefore he concludes that such a fact must mean—that only when <i>monogenēs</i> is used with <i>gennēthentos</i> does one arrive with the meaning <i>only-begotten</i> —therefore, <i>monogenes</i> cannot mean <i>only-begotten</i> in the NT; it simply means <i>only</i> .	Thus, using his same logic, could I not equally conclude—that only when <i>monogenēs</i> is used with <i>genos</i> does one arrive with the meaning <i>one of a kind</i> —therefore, <i>monogenes</i> cannot mean <i>one of a kind</i> in the NT; it simply means <i>only</i> .

By using his same logic, one could equally disprove his meaning of "only one of a kind" for *monogenes*.

Now, obviously, he would object and say something like this (if I may speak for him), "It does not matter that the two words do not appear together because the meaning of **kind** is found in the stem **–genes** of *monogenes*. Thus it makes no difference that *monogenes* does not appear with *genos*. *Monogenes* means **only one of a kind** in and of itself.

Ah! But, could I not say the same thing? I again will use the same sentence above, but substitute "begotten" for "kind" and *gennēthentos* for *genos*, and "only-begotten" for "only one of a kind." It would then read: "It does not matter that the two words do not appear together because the meaning of **begotten** is found in the stem **–genes** of *monogenes*. Thus it makes no difference that *monogenēs* does not appear with *gennēthentos*. *Monogenes* means **only-begotten** in and of itself" (especially, in light of the fact that the stem **–genes** carries this idea of "derivation" over "kind" by a ratio of 6 to 1.)

This is the type of double-speak and straw man arguments that Dale Moody repeatedly uses in his paper; it is most misleading to the student of Scripture. He will repeatedly set up these presuppositions to prove his point, but his presuppositions are simply irrelevant. Rather than examining the evidence he resorts to a presuppositional language that confuses the issue.

Yet, is any of this significant as to the real meaning of *monogenes*? No! And neither is the fact that because *gennēthentos* does not appear with *monogenes* in the New Testament *monogenes* can never mean *only-begotten*. These are simply empty arguments that distract from the real issue at hand.

Secondly, when we look closer at his claim, he also says that Jerome was clearly tempted to read two words (*gennethenta monogenē*) into the one word, only-begotten (*monogenēs*). Where is the evidence for this statement? There is no evidence! Let me state it again, “There is no evidence!” It simply is not true. Jerome accepted the Nicene Creed which was composed long before the creed in *Ancoratus*. And the Nicene Creed used *monogenes*, in and of itself, to mean “only-begotten” long before the time in question. The meaning of *monogenes* was not changed by Jerome! It meant “only-begotten” before Jerome was even born!

Dale Moody makes up these assertions that have no factual basis, but then presents them as being facts. Why is it that the Evangelicals, who always appeal to Dale Moody’s paper as proof for the real meaning of *monogenes*, have never checked the veracity of his claims? He is simply misleading the Christian!

If Dale Moody’s assertion is true, then let me ask, “Where is the documentation?” Most assuredly, if Jerome or any other early Christian decided to change the meaning of *monogenes* from Dale Moody’s assumed meaning of *only*, or, *only one of a kind*, to the new meaning, *only-begotten*, then most assuredly they would have left ample evidence explaining their reason for changing the meaning of such an important word in their creeds. Why? Because the Church was being inundated with many heresies during those centuries.

To say that the Son was “only one of a kind” would have been absolute heresy, for it would have contradicted the meaning of *homoousios*, as found in the Nicene Creed (and in the creed of Epiphanius). If the Son was *one of a kind* he could not be consubstantial with the Father—i.e. *homoousios*—of the same substance. He would have to be *homoiousios*—of a similar substance in order to be *one of a kind*, and that would have been nothing but heresy.

It would have been absolute folly for the Church to adopt a word meaning *only one of a kind* in their creeds and then attempt to change its meaning to *only-begotten* so that they could keep the creed free from heresy because every Greek speaking person would naturally think that the creed was saying the Son was “*one of a kind*,” unless, somehow, they had received some type of information telling them that the word that they always understood from their childhood to mean *one of a kind*, was now being redefined to mean *only-begotten*. It would be as if they were being told, “Do not understand *monogenes* in the creed as you have always understood the word for it is heresy to think the Son is *only one of a kind*; He is not *one of a kind*; He is



*homoousios*, the same substance; He and the Father are of the *same kind*, so the Son could not be *one of a kind*. So forget what you ever known about the word *monogenes*; we are now changing the word to mean *only-begotten*.”

Not only that, I am sure there would have been many who would have protested this adoption of a word that means *one of a kind* for the very same reason listed above (look how they fought over the one word *homoousios*). They would have not wanted to cause the saints confusion and they certainly would not have wanted to utilize a word in their creed that might lead believers into heresy regarding the truth unless Christians first received a massive re-education of the word. So where is evidence of such a vast re-education?

If the early Church Fathers or Jerome did what Dale Moody suggested they did—change the word *monogenes* from meaning *one of a kind* to the meaning *only-begotten*—we would have had ample evidence indicating such a change. But guess what? There is no such evidence. There is not one document that even hints that anyone changed the meaning of *monogenes* to only-begotten. This is just something Dale Moody dreamed up in his own mind. And look at the harm this fabrication has done to the spiritual lives of untold Christians. Look at the harm this has done to the Faith.

If I was alive when Dale Moody was alive, I would have asked him, “Where, O brother Moody, is your evidence for this?” And if he provided it and I found out I was wrong in accusing him of making it up in his mind, I would most assuredly have asked for his forgiveness. But alas, he is gone and he cannot answer us, so all we have left is to make our judgment based upon his paper. But such a judgment needs to be made because his assertion is harming the spiritual lives of so many Christians!

But someone might say, “Did not Dale Moody say that Philip Schaff supports all these assertions?” “Did he not say that Philip Schaff backs up his claim that it takes two words to say only-begotten and also that Jerome read the two words (*gennethenta monogenē*) into the one word (*monogenēs*)?” Well, yes, he did; that is exactly what he said. But guess what? This too is made up. There is no such confirmation!

The reader can check this out for himself. Dale Moody even gives us the page number; he lists page thirty-five for Philip Schaff’s confirmation of all these facts,<sup>67</sup> but the reader will search to no avail to find such a confirmation. The only thing on that page that corroborates anything Dale Moody affirms is that he accurately quotes the Greek line in the creed he mentions, and also the English translation of that line he adapts. But other than that, nothing confirms his claims; assertions which he identifies as “these facts.” (As for the faulty

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<sup>67</sup> See Philip Schaff, *The Creeds of Christendom, with a History and Critical Notes*, Vol.2 (Harper & Brothers, Publishers, New York, 1877) pg. 35

English translation of that line, we have already covered that previously in the sub-chapter Misconception One).

As an aside, it is a mystery why Philip Schaff translates those Greek words the way he does, because it is very clear that he never believed it took those two words to say *only-begotten*, nor, as a matter of fact, did Epiphanius. If one looks two pages earlier, on pages 33 of the same book, one will find the first formula of Epiphanius; Schaff reproduces it on pages 33-34. Below is the beginning of this first formula of the creed that Schaff provides with a Greek Text and English Translation.<sup>68</sup>

<b>Creed of Epiphanius –First Formula</b>	
<b>Greek Text</b>	<b>English Translation</b>
Καί εἰς ἓνα Κύριον Ἰησοῦν χριστόν,	And in one Lord Jesus Christ,
τόν Υἱόν τοῦ θεοῦ τόν μονογενῆ,	the only-begotten Son of God,
τόν ἐκ τοῦ Πατρὸς γεννηθέντα πρὸ πάντων τῶν αἰώνων,	begotten of the Father before all worlds,
τοῦτέστιν ἐκ τῆς οὐσίας τοῦ πατρὸς,	that is, of the substance of the Father,
φῶς ἐκ φωτός,	Light of Light,
θεὸν ἀληθινόν ἐκ θεοῦ ἀληθινοῦ,	very God of very God,
γεννηθέντα, οὐ ποιηθέντα,	begotten, not made,
ὁμοούσιον τῷ πατρὶ	being of one substance (consubstantial) with the Father;

As one can see, *μονογενῆ* is written in a completely different phrase than the phrase containing *γεννηθέντα*. There is absolutely no way the two can be construed together to say *only-begotten*. *Monogenē* (*μονογενῆ*) is not modifying *gennethenta* (*γεννηθέντα*) to say *only-begotten* in this first formula. And Philip Schaff provides an English translation that confirming his view on this, translating *monogenē*, as “*only-begotten*,” not as *only*.

Also, when we get back to page thirty-five, we see that Dale Moody does not mention the fact that Philip Schaff, himself, states that Epiphanius (who wrote the second formula) testifies that his second composition agrees with the “first formula” provided above. Philip Schaff says this:

<sup>68</sup> Philip Schaff, *The Creeds of Christendom, with a History and Critical Notes, Vol.2* (Harper & Brothers, Publishers, New York, 1877) pg. 33

The second formula of Epiphanius is his own production, **and is an enlargement or paraphrase of the first**...He [Epiphanius] introduces it by the remark: ‘Inasmuch as several other heresies, one after another, have appeared in this our generation...you as well as we, and all the orthodox bishops—in one word, the whole Catholic Church, especially those who come to holy baptism—**make the following confession in agreement with the faith of those holy fathers above set forth,**’ etc. [i.e. the first formula].<sup>69</sup>

In other words, Epiphanius is saying that his creed is saying the same thing as the first, albeit with different wording and structure. This means that Epiphanius is not altering the meaning of the phrase—τὸν Υἱὸν τοῦ θεοῦ τὸν μονογενῆ, τὸν ἐκ τοῦ Πατρὸς γεννηθέντα—from the first formula, with his wording in the second formula—τὸν υἱὸν τοῦ θεοῦ γεννηθέντα ἐκ θεοῦ πατρὸς μονογενῆ.

Therefore, since it is an absolute impossibility for γεννηθέντα and μονογενῆ to be construed together to say *only-begotten* in the first formula, it is wrong to say they are being construed together in the second formula to say *only-begotten*. The second formula is affirming the same truth as the first formula. It is affirming that the Son is begotten “out of the Father,” and, as such, He is the Only-Begotten.

This is all the more confirmed for us because of a little word included in the middle of both formulas. Both formulas include the word ὁμοούσιος (homoousios) in the little phrase ὁμοούσιον τῷ πατρὶ. Let me once again give the full portion of the second formula that Dale Moody claims shows that it take two words to say “only-begotten.”

“Καὶ εἰς ἓνα κύριον Ἰησοῦν Χριστὸν τὸν υἱὸν τοῦ θεοῦ γεννηθέντα ἐκ θεοῦ πατρὸς μονογενῆ τοῦτέστιν ἐκ τῆς οὐσίας τοῦ πατρὸς, θεὸν ἐκ θεοῦ, φῶς ἐκ φωτός, θεὸν ἀληθινὸν ἐκ θεοῦ ἀληθινοῦ, γεννηθέντα, οὐ ποιηθέντα, ὁμοούσιον τῷ πατρὶ.”<sup>70</sup>

And here is the first formula which contains the very same phrase.

Καὶ εἰς ἓνα Κύριον Ἰησοῦν χριστόν, τὸν Υἱὸν τοῦ θεοῦ τὸν μονογενῆ, τὸν ἐκ τοῦ Πατρὸς γεννηθέντα πρὸ πάντων τῶν αἰώνων, τοῦτέστιν ἐκ τῆς οὐσίας τοῦ πατρὸς, φῶς ἐκ φωτός, θεὸν ἀληθινὸν ἐκ θεοῦ ἀληθινοῦ, γεννηθέντα, οὐ ποιηθέντα, ὁμοούσιον τῷ πατρὶ.<sup>71</sup>

In reality, *monogenes* could not mean anything but *only-begotten* in the second formula because of this little word. It must be remembered that Dale Moody not only believed *monogenes* meant “only,” but also meant *only one of a kind* because of the stem *-genes* in *monogenes*. His entire affirmation is completely refuted, as we have already said, by this little word because the Son could not be ὁμοούσιος (homoousios) if he was the “only one of his kind,” or as Moody quotes from the revised Liddell & Scott Greek Lexicon

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<sup>69</sup> Ibid., pg. 35

<sup>70</sup> Epiphanius, G. Dindorfeus, Ed., *Anonymi vita Epiphani. Ancoratus. Anacephalaosis. Panarii libri I* (T.O. Weigel, Lipsiae, 1859) pg. 224

<sup>71</sup> Philip Schaff, *The Creeds of Christendom, with a History and Critical Notes, Vol.2* (Harper & Brothers, Publishers, New York, 1877) pg. 33

(1940) which says of *monogenes*—the “only member of a kin” (if the Son was the “only member of a kin” the Father would have to be dead!).

If the Son of God the Father is the “only one of a kind” then how could He be ὁμοούσιον? If He was one of a kind, Epiphanius would not have included the phrase ὁμοούσιον τῷ πατρὶ in his confession. The reason, of course, would be because the little word ὁμοούσιον, twenty-one words later, would completely contradict the use of the word *monogenes* if it meant *one of a kind*, or *only member of a kin*! If the Son is *one of a kind*, then he cannot be *homoousios* with the Father. Instead He would be, what the semi-Arians termed, *homoiousios* (of similar substance), which, of course, is heresy.<sup>72</sup>

Thus the use of ὁμοούσιον τῷ πατρὶ in both formulas prove that *monogenes* was being used to mean *only-begotten* and it proves that Epiphanius was understanding γεννηθέντα and μονογενῆ the same way in each formula.

The first formula declares the Son of God is *homoousios* (of the same substance with the Father), and that He is *monogenes*. In the first formula there is no connecting of μονογενῆ with γεννηθέντα. Μονογενῆ is connected with τὸν Υἱὸν τοῦ θεοῦ, declaring the Lord Jesus Christ is the Only-Begotten Son of God, begotten of the Father before all time, and, as such, He is ὁμοούσιον τῷ πατρὶ. Therefore, since Epiphanius testifies that he is saying the same thing in his second formula as in the first, albeit in a different manner, there is no way μονογενῆ could mean anything other than what it meant in the first formula, i.e. Only-Begotten.

But Dale Moody does not let the reader know about this testimony of Epiphanius regarding the second formula having the same meaning as the first. He uses the second formula of Epiphanius in order to bolster his theory that *monogenes* does not mean *only-begotten*, but then ignores the very testimony of the Greek author who wrote the formula in the first place! Who better to know how the words are being used in the confession than the one who wrote the words? In other words, since γεννηθέντα and μονογενῆ are not being construed together in the first formula to say *only-begotten*, and Epiphanius is simply enlarging the first formula with his second, they should not be construed together in the second formula to now say *only-begotten*.

Another way we can look at this, to see if the claim made by Dale Moody was really true, i.e. his assertion that Philip Schaff backs up his claim that it takes two words to say *only-begotten*, would be to look at the English translation of *monogenes* provided in the first formula. If Philip Schaff supports Dale Moody’s belief that *monogenes* means “only” or “one of a kind,” then we

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<sup>72</sup> If one wishes to further understand the significance of homoousios, one might desire examine— Harris, B. P., *Understanding the Trinity: An Encouragement to Abide in the Doctrine in both Faith and Practice* (Assembly Bookshelf, Sacramento, 2006) pgs. 205-212

should expect to find *monogenes* translated the same way in the first formula. But when we look at the first formula, what do we find? We find Philip Schaff providing an English translation of “*only-begotten*” for *monogenes*!

Not only that, on page twenty-six of the same book, he even makes this statement in a footnote regarding another use of *monogenes* in a different creed:

“I connect μονογενῆ with θεον, which accords with the reading of some of the oldest MSS. (the Sinaitic and the Vatican), in John i.18 (μονογενῆς θεός instead of υἱός). But according to the usual punctuation adopted by Hahn we must translate, “his **only-begotten** Son, God.”<sup>73</sup>

This is a clear statement that shows that Philip Schaff understood *monogenes* to mean “only-begotten,” and not to mean “only,” or “only one of a kind.” Philip Schaff did not say, “...but according to the usual punctuation adopted by Hahn we must translate, “his **only** Son, God.” But rather he said, “...but according to the usual punctuation adopted by Hahn we must translate, “his **only-begotten** Son, God.”

As to why, when we get to the second formula of the creed of Epiphanius, he translates it the way he does, I do not know. It certainly was not because he thought that *monogenes* does not mean *only-begotten*. As such, it was wrong for Dale Moody to clearly suggest he did.

Let me provide for you one more piece of evidence to prove this fact. Look at Philip Schaff’s statement in a book defending the deity of the Lord Jesus Christ. He says this regarding the title “Only-begotten” used for our Lord by the disciple John.

“Thus the manhood of Christ, rising far above all ordinary manhood, though freely coming down to its lowest ranks, with the view to their elevation and redemption, is already the portal of his Godhead. But he calls himself at the same time, as he is most frequently called by his disciples, the Son of God in an equally emphatic sense. He is not merely a son of God among others, angels, archangels, princes, and judges, and redeemed men, but the Son of God as no other being ever was, is, or can be, all others being sons or children of God only by derivation or adoption, after a new spiritual birth, and in dependence on his absolute and eternal Sonship. He is, as his favourite disciple calls him, the “only-begotten” Son, or as the old catholic theology expresses it, eternally begotten of the substance of the Father.”<sup>74</sup>

He makes the statement, “as his favourite disciple calls him, the “only-begotten Son.” Now, John never called Christ in Scripture “the only-begotten” Son by combining the two words *gennethenta* and *monogenes* together in his Gospel, epistles, nor in the book of Revelation. He never combined those words at all, nor are they combined anywhere in Scripture. Yet, Philip Schaff says that the apostle John called him the “only-begotten Son.” How could the

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<sup>73</sup> Ibid., pg. 26

<sup>74</sup> Philip Schaff, Napoleon Roussel, Joseph Ernest Renan, *The Christ of the Gospels and the Romance of M. Renan, Three Essays*, by Rev. Dr..Schaff and N. Roussel (The Religious Tract Society, London) pg. 53-54

apostle John ever do that, if Dale Moody's assertion is true that it takes the two words *gennethenta monogenes* to say only-begotten? Obviously, Dale Moody's assertion is wrong. So, what word did John use in his Gospel to call Him "only-begotten" Son? John used the one word—μονογενῆ (only-begotten)! Consequently, since that is the word used by the apostle John, and Philip Schaff says that our Lord's favorite disciple calls him *only-begotten*, then obviously, Philip Schaff believed *monogenes* meant *only-begotten*, contrary to Dale Moody's assertion.

Dale Moody is wrong to claim an authority like Philip Schaff to support his theories regarding the meaning of *monogenes*. Philip Schaff believed nothing of the kind. He believed the opposite of Dale Moody. He believed *monogenes*, indeed, meant "*only-begotten*," in and of itself.

As for, the rest of his statements regarding Jerome and the Old Latin MSS and the Vulgate, which are equally misleading and, in some cases completely false, please see the following chapter on *The Testimony of Old Latin Versions, Jerome and the Latin Vulgate*. Once again his assertions are totally without foundation, and sadly these false assertions are repeated as fact over and over by many believers. And what is even sadder, is such false assertions are accepted as true by many Christians.

## Misconception Four

Dale Moody states:

"As long ago as 1883 B. F. Westcott, in *The Epistles of St. John*, pp. 162-165, made clear that the meaning of monogenēs **"is centered in the Personal existence of the Son, and not in the Generation of the Son"** and concluded that **"the grand simplicity of the original idea of the word was lost...towards the close of the fourth century."** Efforts to refute these conclusions from such references as Ignatius (*Eph.* VII.2), *Epistle of Diognetus* 10:2, *Martyrdom of Polycarp* 20:2, and Justin Martyr (*Dial.* 105) are fruitless. This discussion may be closed with a quotation from a writing contemporary with *The Gospel According to John* which shows clearly that the above conclusions on monogenēs are correct.

There is a bird which is called the Phoenix.  
This being the only one of its kind (monogenēs) lives 500 years.  
I Clement XXV.2.

Now the Phoenix was neither born nor begotten, but it could be *monogenēs*, the only one of its kind!"<sup>75</sup>

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<sup>75</sup> Dale Moody, "God's Only Son: The Translation of John 3:16 in the Revised Standard Version" *Journal of Biblical Literature*, Vol. 72, No. 4; (Dec., 1953) pg. 219

There is so much that is wrong and misleading with this statement. In the first place, he leaves out an important part of his quote from Westcott. These are the three quotes he takes from Westcott:

“...is centered in the Personal existence of the Son, and not in the Generation of the Son”

and,

“the grand simplicity of the original idea of the word was lost...”

and,

“...towards the close of the fourth century.”

But he takes these quotes completely out of context thereby giving the impression to the reader that Westcott believed the meaning of *monogenes* had nothing *ever to do* with the meaning of “only-begotten” or “only born.”

But the fact of the matter is, Westcott was not making such a “broad” conclusion. I will reproduce the greater part of the quote below to let the reader see for himself how the quotes are taken out of context. I will underline and put in bold print the quotes that Dale Moody pieced together.

“These mystical speculations fixed attention upon the term; but perhaps at the same time they checked its technical use in the Church. It does not in fact occur in the earlier types of the Creed, which are found in Irenaeus, Tertullian and Novatian; and in Tertullian the corresponding Latin term *unicus* is used of God (the Father): *de virg. vel. 1; adv. Prax. 2*. But it is worthy of notice that in the confession of Ignatius before Trajan, which follows the great lines of a Baptismal Symbol, the phrase is found: εἰς ἔστιν θεὸς...καὶ εἰς Χριστὸς Ἰησοῦς ὁ υἱὸς τοῦ θεοῦ ὁ μονογενής (Ignat. Mart. 2; comp. Polyc. Mart. 20). And it was apparently from Antioch that the term spread as an element of the expression of the Catholic Faith.

“In the second half of the third century the word appears in the Confessions of Syria and Asia Minor (Syn. Ant. A.D. 269, Routh, iii. p. 290; Greg. Thaum. ap. Greg. Nyss. 3, p. 912; Lucian, Socr. 2, 10, 7; Apost. Const. 7, 41; Marcellus, Epiph. Host. 72, p. 836); and from that time it gradually obtained a permanent place in the Creeds of the East and the West

“The earliest certain example of the word in this connexion brings out its force very plainly. The Synod of Antioch (269), which condemned Paul of Samosata, in giving the exposition of their ancient belief which they addressed to him, write: 'We confess and proclaim the Son as begotten, 'an only Son (γενντόν, υἱὸν μονογενῆ), the image of the unseen God, the 'firstborn of all creation, the Wisdom and Word and Power of God, who was 'before the ages not by foreknowledge but by essence and subsistence, 'God, Son of God, having recognised Him as such both in the Old and New 'Testament' (Routh, Rell. Sacr. iii. 290; comp. Alex. Alexandr. ap. Theodor. H. E. I. 4. 45, φύσις μονογενής).”

“The point which is emphasised by the word here is evidently the absolute oneness of the Being of the Son. He stands to the Father in a relation wholly singular. He is the one only Son, the one to whom the title belongs in a sense completely unique and peculiar. The thought **is centred in the Personal existence of the Son, and not in the Generation of the Son.** That mystery is dealt with in another phrase. Consistently with this view the earliest Latin forms of the Creed uniformly represent the word by *unicus*, the only son, and not by *unigenitus* the only-begotten son, and this rendering has maintained its place in the Apostles' Creed and in

our English version of it. But **towards the close of the fourth century** in translations from the Greek, unigenitus came to be substituted for unicus, and this interpretation has passed into our version of the Constantinopolitan Creed (only-begotten).”

“The sense of only Son is preserved by the Syriac versions of the Nicene Creed, which go back to the original word which was rendered in the LXX. μονογενής and ἀγαπητός [a word from the Syriac v. is included here]<sup>76</sup> following in this the example of the Syriac translation of the N. T., where the word μονογενής is so rendered uniformly: Caspari, pp. 101,116.

“The exact phraseology of the true Nicene Creed separates distinctly these two thoughts of the generation of the Son, and of the unique being of the Son. 'We believe...in one Lord Jesus Christ, begotten of the Father 'an only Son' (γεννηθέντα ἐκ πατρὸς μονογενῆ), where the uniqueness of nature is further defined by the addition 'that is to say of the essence of 'the Father.' And this proper sense of the word μονογενῆς, as marking the oneness of the sonship, preserves a close affinity in idea with ἀγαπητός well-beloved, the second translation of ٠١٦. Both words define that which is essentially singular in filial relationship: 'Only son and well-beloved,' Athanasius writes, 'are the same' (Or. c. Ar. iv. 24).

“But in the interval which elapsed before the Council of Constantinople the important distinction between the sonship and the generation of the Son was beginning to be obscured, and μονογενής was treated as equivalent μόνος γεννηθείς, so as to include both the fact of the uniqueness of the Nature of the Son and the ground (if we may so speak) of His uniqueness.

“In this way **the grand simplicity of the original idea of the word was lost.** Other thoughts, true in themselves, were gathered round it, and at last the sense was given by Gregory of Nazianzus as describing 'not the 'only Son of an only Parent, at one only time, but also that He was (begotten) in a singular way (μονοτρόπως)' (Orat. xxx. 20). And this conception, with which no fault can be found except that it is not contained in the word, became popularly current afterwards and was admirably expressed by John of Damascus: Μονογενής δὲ ὅτι μόνος ἐκ μόνου τοῦ πατρὸς μόνως ἐγεννήθη) (De Fid. Orthod. i. 8. 135).<sup>77</sup>

As can be seen above, he takes the first line from the fourth paragraph, “**is centred in the Personal existence of the Son, and not in the Generation of the Son.**” Then he skips down a few paragraphs and takes a line from the last paragraph, “**the grand simplicity of the original idea of the word was lost,**” and then he goes back up and takes a line from the fourth paragraph, “**towards the close of the fourth century,**” attaching it to that line from the last paragraph as if it was a part of the sentence!

This completely misrepresents what B.F. Westcott actually declared (although, Westcott must have known people would make that conclusion). Dale Moody takes a narrow conclusion regarding the use of *monogenes* in a particular creed at a certain time, and turns it into a “broad” conclusion regarding the use of *monogenes* **at any time, in any usage!** To be fair to B. F. Westcott, he does not make such a broad conclusion! He is very careful in the words he chooses, as we will presently see. In fact, in another writing of B. F. Westcott on the Gospel of John, he admits *monogenes* originally meant “only born,” although he then diffuses that meaning by emphasizing the “unique” or

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<sup>76</sup> We are sorry; we were not able to reproduce the Syriac word.

<sup>77</sup> Brooke Foss Westcott, *The Epistles St. John: the Greek text with notes and essays* (MacMillan & Co., London, 1883) Pgs. 163-164 (pgs. 169-172 in 1886 edition)



“only” side of the word to the negation of the “generation” side. However, how can one be born if one is not generated?

He states this in his commentary on the Gospel of John.

“The rendering “only-begotten” somewhat obscures the exact sense of μονογενής, **which is rather “only-born.”** That is, the thought in the original is centred in the personal Being of the Son and not in His generation. Christ is the One only Son, the One to whom the title belongs in a sense completely unique and singular, as distinguished from that in which there are many children of God.”<sup>78</sup>

And so we see, Westcott is not so clear cut as Dale Moody suggests. Westcott takes great care in his words, as he should, but, like Dale Moody, one sees that he leaves out some important information regarding the usage of *monogenes* that would greatly aid the student of God’s Word in determining the proper meaning of the Greek Word *monogenes*. So with that in mind let’s now continue.

As we already showed, Westcott admitted *monogenes* originally carried the idea of “only born,” although, he immediately seeks to prove otherwise. But a careful reader will notice that he limits his examples of the word to the “creeds!” Notice what he said in his comments from the First Epistle of John.

“These mystical speculations fixed attention upon the term; but perhaps at the same time they checked its technical use in the Church. It does not in fact occur in the earlier types of the Creed, which are found in Irenaeus, Tertullian and Novatian; and in Tertullian the corresponding Latin term unicus is used of God (the Father): de virg. vel. 1; adv. Prax.”<sup>79</sup>

and,

“The thought is centred in the Personal existence of the Son, and not in the Generation of the Son. That mystery is dealt with in another phrase. Consistently with this view the earliest Latin forms of the Creed uniformly represent the word by unicus, the only son, and not by unigenitus the only-begotten son, and this rendering has maintained its place in the Apostles’ Creed and in our English version of it.”<sup>80</sup>

and, finally,

“But towards the close of the fourth century in translations from the Greek, unigenitus came to be substituted for unicus, and this interpretation has passed into our version of the Constantinopolitan Creed (only-begotten).”<sup>81</sup>

As one can see Westcott is speaking in regard to the creeds in the Church and not to the general usage of the word by other Greek speaking people. In fact, when he states in the above paragraph that, “these mystical speculations fixed

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<sup>78</sup> B. F. Westcott, *The Gospel according to St. John: the Greek text with introduction and notes, Vol. 1* (John Murray, London, 1908) pg. 23

<sup>79</sup> Westcott, op. cit., *The Epistle of St. John*, , pg. 163

<sup>80</sup> Ibid., pg. 163

<sup>81</sup> Ibid., pg. 163

attention upon the term; but perhaps at the same time they checked its technical use in the Church,” he is referring to those “speculations” from the 2<sup>nd</sup> century that used *monogenes*, not with a meaning of “only,” as per Dale Moody, nor with a meaning of “one of a kind,” but with the meaning of “only born (which really is no different than the meaning of only-begotten). This is what he said in the paragraph immediately preceding the above sentence:

The word next appears prominently in the system of Valentinus. The Mind (Νοῦς) **the offspring** of the ineffable Depth (βυθός) and Silence (Σιγή), which alone embraced the greatness of the First Father, itself 'the Father and beginning of all things,' was also called ὁ μονογενής, **the only-born**. And from this Being 'like and equal' to its Author, in conjunction with Truth the other Æons proceeded (Iren. i. I, 2).<sup>82</sup>

Valentinus (c.100-160 AD) was a Greek speaking heretic born shortly after the death of the apostle John. He was using *monogenes* in his heretical system with the meaning of *only begotten* simply because that is what the Greek word meant. Yet Dale Moody, through his editing, made it seem that Westcott was saying that the word never carried that meaning till the end of the 4<sup>th</sup> century, but, as you can see, Westcott never made such a claim! He carefully limited his statements to the creeds (but he must have known it would be taken otherwise).

Of course, in reality, the word was used as *only-begotten* all the time before the fourth century, yet neither B. F. Westcott, nor Dale Moody let the reader to know this. The word *monogenes* is found repeatedly in the writings of the Church Fathers and in places that are not a part of a “creed” with the sense of *only-begotten*! Why do Westcott and Moody ignore this important fact? Could it not be because this fact does not agree with their narrative?

Consequently, we can now see that it is a misconception by Dale Moody to declare that B. F. Westcott stated that *monogenes* was never was used at any time, in any way, as bespeaking the generation of the Son (as only-begotten). He never makes such a broad declaration, even admitting in his commentary that *monogenes* meant “only born.” And yet, one cannot but wonder if Westcott was hoping his readers would make the same conclusion Dale Moody made, for after he admits that *monogenes* meant “only born,” he then, in the next breath, says that it has nothing to do with generation! How is one *only born* if one is not *generated*? If *monogenes* means “only born” it certainly has to do with generation, derivation, and begottenness.

And so we can see how this quote concerning B. F. Westcott is misleading, but let’s read it again so we can examine the remaining claims made by Dale Moody regarding this issue.

“As long ago as 1883 B. F. Westcott, in *The Epistles of St. John*, pp. 162-165, made clear that the meaning of *monogenēs* “is centered in the Personal existence of the Son, and not in the

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<sup>82</sup> Ibid., pg. 162-163

Generation of the Son” and concluded that “the grand simplicity of the original idea of the word was lost...towards the close of the fourth century.” Efforts to refute these conclusions from such references as Ignatius (*Eph.* VII.2), *Epistle of Diognetus* 10:2, *Martyrdom of Polycarp* 20:2, and Justin Martyr (*Dial.* 105) are fruitless. This discussion may be closed with a quotation from a writing contemporary with *The Gospel According to John* which shows clearly that the above conclusions on monogenēs are correct.

There is a bird which is called the Phoenix.  
This being the only one of its kind (monogenēs) lives 500 years.  
I Clement XXV.2.

Now the Phoenix was neither born nor begotten, but it could be *monogenēs*, the only one of its kind!”<sup>83</sup>

After making the claim that B. F. Westcott stated that *monogenes* never meant “only-begotten” until the close of the fourth century, when the grand simplicity of the word was lost, he then states that efforts to refute those conclusions by references from the Church Fathers are fruitless.

And yet, even though he dismisses the evidence of the “Fathers” as fruitless, he ends up with a quote from one of the sub-apostolic Fathers! He provides a quote from Clement because he thinks it supports his view, but in reality it disproves his view. And not only that, his very last statement regarding that quote from Clement is patently false! He completely misleads the reader. Christians should ask, “Why?” “What is going on with such disinformation?”

We do not need to go into the story of the Phoenix again since we have already addressed this issue in a previous chapter, but for Dale Moody to blatantly tell the reader in the last sentence that the “Phoenix was neither *born* nor *begotten*” is totally incredulous! Clement, himself, clearly states the complete opposite; he states the Phoenix was begotten!

He declares in chapter twenty five, verse 3 that the Phoenix was γεννᾶται (begotten). The line reads, “and, as the flesh decays, a certain worm is begotten” (σηπομένης δὲ τῆς σαρκὸς σκώληξ τις γεννᾶται).

The word γεννᾶται (begotten) is the 3<sup>rd</sup> person, single, present indicative of γεννᾷω. The meaning of γεννᾷω, of course, is beget, give birth, or be born!

It is inconceivable that Dale Moody could make such a misleading statement telling the reader that the Phoenix was neither “born” nor “begotten,” when the truth was the exact opposite! And it is equally inconceivable that he would then have the gumption to actually use that text to prove to the unsuspecting reader that *monogenes* never had anything to do with begetting or generation. This is most disconcerting.

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<sup>83</sup> Moody, op. cit., pg. 219

Now, before we look at the final misleading statement in this quote, perhaps, one thing must be said to be fair to Dale Moody. He also chooses his words carefully like Westcott. Notice he says in the final portion of this quote that an effort to refute these conclusions from such Patristic writings as Ignatius, the Epistle of Diognetus, the Martyrdom of Polycarp and Justin Martyr would be fruitless. He does not mention other Patristics as Irenaeus, Tertullian, or Athanasius or many others. So in one sense he was partially correct because the texts he chooses, those of Diognetus and Polycarp are texts that do not give enough information to determine the true meaning of *monogenes*, one way or the other.

But he was only partially correct—in so far as he was careful to only choose such texts that were so nebulous that it would be true to say they were fruitless. He was careful to not include such writings as those of Tertullian or Athanasius or others in his statement, because they are not unfruitful, but are very fruitful (as we will see in the later chapter entitled the Patristics)!

But why would he not tell the reader that there are other texts from this time period that are very fruitful—that there are texts which show that the meaning of *monogenes* was understood to be *only-begotten* or *only born* well before the close of the fourth century?

He claims the true meaning of *monogenes* was known in the first four centuries of the Church, that is, until the grand simplicity of the meaning was lost toward the close of the fourth century. So if that is true, why not then examine the evidence from the first, second, third and fourth centuries? If his assertion is true, would not those references help prove his claim? Why ignore that evidence? Again I ask why? The answer is simply because they do the opposite; they disprove his claim!

He creates this entire narrative by taking Westcott's' quotes out of order, then pastes them together in such a way as to "suggest" that *everyone* understood the word in its grand simplicity of "unique" or "only" in those first four centuries, until the latter end of the fourth century, when Christians began to assign the meaning of *only-begotten* to the word. This simply is not true! It is an absolute fabrication! Why does he not provide evidence for his claim? He does not because there is no such evidence. In fact, not only is there fruitful evidence in the first four centuries of Church witness, there is a total of "harvest" of fruit that totally disprove his claim as we will see under the chapter entitled *The Patristics*.

Yet in spite of his careful language to limit his examples to those certain references such as Ignatius (*Eph.* VII.2), *Epistle of Diognetus* 10:2, *Martyrdom of Polycarp* 20:2, and Justin Martyr (*Dial.* 105), he still ends up being incorrect! The two references of Ignatius and Justin Martyr are, indeed, very fruitful in disproving his conclusion that *monogenes* was never used with the meaning of "only-begotten," or "only born" in those first four centuries.

Rather they prove *monogenes* was understood as only-begotten in those centuries.

In the very same reference of Ignatius (Eph. VII.2), that Dale Moody claims was fruitless, we find Ignatius making this statement.

“Ἰατρὸς δὲ ἡμῶν ἐστὶν ὁ μόνος ἀληθεὺς θεὸς, ὁ ἀγέννητος καὶ ἀπόσιτος, ὁ τῶν ὅλων κύριος, τοῦ δὲ μονογενοῦς πατὴρ καὶ γεννήτωρ ἔχομεν ἱατρὸν καὶ τὸν Κύριον ἡμῶν θεὸν Ἰησοῦν τὸν Χριστόν τὸν πρὸ αἰώνων υἱὸν **μονογενῆ** καὶ λόγον, ὕστερον δὲ καὶ ἄνθρωπον ἐκ Μαρίας τῆς παρθένου ὁ λόγος γὰρ σὰρξ ἐγένετο.”<sup>84</sup>

“But our Physician is the **only** true God, the unbegotten and unapproachable, the Lord of all, the Father and **Begetter of the only-begotten** Son. We have also as a Physician the Lord our God, Jesus the Christ, the **only-begotten** Son and Word, before time began, but who afterwards became also man, of Mary the virgin.”<sup>85</sup>

Now, it makes no difference if this quote is from the shorter or longer recension, or whether the epistles of Ignatius are spurious or genuine for we are simply looking for evidence if the word *monogenes* was ever used by someone as “only-begotten” or “only born” in the first four centuries of the Church.

This quote is from the longer recension, which many consider to be a later interpolation of the epistle. (The shorter recension is different because it does not even use the word *monogenes*, let alone some of the other words in the longer recension). Now some believe it was written in the middle of the second century, others in the middle of the fourth century. It makes no difference, but if the earlier date is true it becomes even more significant because it would have been written a mere fifty years or so after the death of the apostle John.

The passage clearly affirms the traditional meaning of *monogenes*. The meanings of “only member of a kin,” or the meaning of “only” simply would not fit the context. However, the meaning of “only-begotten” fits nicely within the context.

First, Ignatius declares that God the Father is ὁ μόνος ἀληθεὺς θεός, “the only true God.” He uses the Greek word μόνος to declare this. Now, if *monogenes* means “only” as Dale Moody asserts, why then did not Ignatius write ὁ μονογενὴς ἀληθεὺς θεός? Now some may say, “Well he just chose to use the word μόνος instead, since it also means *only*.” Well, enough. But why then did he not continue with his chosen word and use μόνος again when

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<sup>84</sup> Saint Ignatius (Bishop of Antioch) William Cureton, Tr. *Corpus Ignatianum: a complete collection of the Ignatian epistles, genuine, interpolated and spurious, together with numerous extracts from them, as quoted by ecclesiastical writers down to the tenth century, in Syriac, Greek, and Latin* (Asher and Co., Berlin, 1849) pg.23

<sup>85</sup> Alexander Roberts, James Donaldson, eds., *The Ante-Nicene Fathers, Vol. I* (Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co, Grand Rapids, MI 1985) pg. 52

referring to the Son? Or why did he not simply use *monogenes* for both the Father and the Son together if it simply means “only?”

I think the answer is simply because *μόνος* and *μονογενής* do not mean the same thing. *Monos* means “only,” and *monogenes* means “only-begotten,” or “only born.” Ignatius could not use *monogenes* of the Father because he calls the Father, *ἀγέννητος* (unbegotten) and the *γεννήτωρ* (begetter) of the Only-Begotten. The Father is the only one unbegotten and the Son is the only one begotten, *monogenes* – the Only-begotten.

*Monogenes* is never used of the Father in the Bible or in these writings, yet *monos* is used repeatedly for the Father. Why? If *monogenes* means “only” and not “only-begotten,” why then is it never used of the Father?

Second, if *monogenes* means “only member of a kin,” how could that be true if the Father is also a member of a kin? The Son would not then be the only member of the kin. (Such a thought has all kinds of theological problems. The Father, Son and Holy Spirit are not members of a kin, but I am simply demonstrating – apart from the theological problems – that linguistically, the Son could not be considered to be the only member of a kin, if his Father was still alive!).

Nor, if we chose the meaning adopted by Dale Moody for the word *monogenes*, i.e. meaning of “only,” would it work within the context? (One has to notice in the Greek the first use of *monogenes* does not include the word *υἱός*—Son, despite the Roberts/Donaldson English translation provided above). So if *monogenes* simply meant *only*, one has to ask, “Only what? The text would then read, “God is the Father and Begetter of *Only*?” It makes no sense. But it does make sense to say “God is the Father and Begetter of the *Only-Begotten*.”

So we see that this is a very significant passage that is not fruitless in regard as to whether *monogenes* was ever understood as *only-begotten* in the first four centuries of the Church. It is *very fruitful* in showing it meant *only-begotten*. However it must be noted that assigning an earlier date to the longer recension is a minority opinion. The general consensus is that the longer recension was composed in the middle of the fourth century and I would tend to agree with the later date.

But does that make any difference? I do not think so for it is still in the fourth century and Dale Moody claims the “grand simplicity” of the world was not lost until the “close” of the fourth century.

Now, I know some will dismiss even this and say it was written at the “close” of the fourth century. Now that is certainly up for debate, but let’s assume they are correct. Let’s give them the benefit of the doubt. Why should that cause this reference to be so curtly dismissed? Does this not still provide

evidence as to how *monogenes* was understood? Certainly it would carry more weight if it was written at the early date, but why should it be dismissed out of hand as fruitless, as it was done by Dale Moody? Are we not simply looking for evidence as to how the word *monogenes* was understood in the first four centuries following the time of our Lord? Is this still not within that time period?

Plainly stated, a later date for this reference should not disqualify it for consideration, for if one is willing to look back to Parmenides, to approximately the fifth century before Christ, for help in understanding the meaning of *monogenes*, why would one not be willing to look forward to approximately the fourth century after Christ for help in understanding the meaning of *monogenes*?

At least the evidence should be provided to the Christian so that one can decide for one's self as to whether the passage has any significance—a thing Dale Moody was not willing to do, because he considered such an exercise fruitless, which I hope you can now see is not the case.

The next reference will not be so controversial, for all agree to an early date. Justin Martyr (A.D. 110-165) was born just a few years after the apostle John's death. In his Dialogue with Trypho, while commenting on Christ's suffering being predicted in Psalm 22, he makes this important declaration regarding Christ.

“Μονογενῆς γὰρ ὅτι ἦν τῷ πατρὶ τῶν ὅλων οὗτος, ἰδίως ἐξ αὐτοῦ λόγος καὶ δύναμις γεγενημένος, καὶ ὕστερον ἄνθρωπος διὰ τῆς παρθένου γενόμενος, ὡς, ἀπὸ τῶν ἀπομνημονευμάτων ἐμάθομεν, προεδήλωσα.<sup>86</sup>

“For I have already proved that He was the only-begotten of the Father of all things, being begotten in a peculiar manner Word and Power by Him, and having afterwards become man through the Virgin, as we have learned from the memoirs.”<sup>87</sup>

We can take this portion a couple ways. We can treat the participle as a periphrastic participle and translate the first part as follows:

“For I made clear before that the Only-begotten to the Father of all things, the Word and the Power, was begotten privately out of him, and he afterwards became man through the virgin, just as we have learned from the memoirs.”

Or we can take the first part as an expegetical participle in which case we could translate it thus:

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<sup>86</sup> Justin Martyr, Trollope, Rev. W., tr., *S. Justini philosophi et martyris, cum Trypnone Judaeo dialogus*. Edited with a corrected text and English introduction and notes, Vol. II (Printed by and for J. Hall, Opposite the Pitt Press; and G. Bell, Cambridge, 1847) pg. 71-72

<sup>87</sup> Alexander Roberts, James Donaldson, eds., *The Ante-Nicene Fathers, Vol. I* (Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co, Grand Rapids, MI 1985) pg. 251

“For I have made clear before that he was Only-begotten to the Father of all things, Word and Power, being begotten out of him privately.”

The latter translation is probably the better for λόγος καὶ δύναμις are anarthrous. But in either case we have *monogenes* being defined by the participle, explaining why he is the only-begotten.

Additionally, we also have an adverb, ἰδίως, which we find fronted, also emphasizing why he is only-begotten. The adverb carries the idea of privacy, peculiarity, or uniqueness. Thus the phrase could be rendered,

“For I have made clear before that he was Only-Begotten to the Father of all things, Word and Power, being uniquely begotten out of him,”

or

“For I made clear before that the Only-begotten to the Father of all things, the Word and the Power, was uniquely begotten out of him.”

In essence, with the adverb, Justin is giving further definition to the Greek participle and thus the word it is construed with by explaining how he was begotten and thus only-begotten. In this case, the term *monogenes* is being further explained by the adverb as one who is *only-begotten* because he is ἰδίως—*uniquely* begotten from the Father of all things.

In addition, he is also affirming the meaning of *only-begotten* by saying he had already made this point clear. When did he make it clear? For such a statement to make sense he must have said something before where he had affirmed the same thing; he must have already demonstrated that Christ was the only-begotten of the Father of all things. He did. And it is found in this portion of his Dialogue with Trypho.

“ ‘I shall give you another testimony, my friends,’ said I, ‘from the Scriptures, that God begat before all creatures a Beginning, [who was] a certain rational power [proceeding ] from Himself, who is called by the Holy Spirit, now the Glory of the Lord, now the Son, again Wisdom, again an Angel, then God, then Lord and Logos; and on another occasion He call Himself Captain, when He appeared in human form to Joshua the son of Nave (Nun). For He can be called by all those names, since He ministers to the Father’s will, and since He was begotten of the Father by an act of will; just as we see happening among ourselves: for when we give out some word, we beget the word; yet not by abscission, so as to lessen the word [which remains] in us, when we give it out: and Just as we see also happening in the case of a fire, which is not lessened when it has kindled [another], but remains the same; and that which has been kindled by it likewise appears to exist by itself, not diminishing that from which it was kindled. The word of Wisdom, who is Himself this God begotten of the Father of all things, and Word, and Wisdom, and Power and the Glory of the Begetter, will bear evidence to me when He speaks.’”<sup>88</sup>

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<sup>88</sup> Alexander Roberts, James Donaldson, eds., *The Ante-Nicene Fathers, Vol. I* (Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co, Grand Rapids, MI 1985) pg, 227



This, most likely, is the portion to which he is referring, and in this portion near the end of the paragraph we find him calling Christ, "...the Word of Wisdom, who is Himself this God begotten of the Father of all things"

The pertinent part in Greek is this.

"...ὁ λόγος τῆς σοφίας, αὐτὸς ὧν οὗτος ὁ θεὸς ἀπὸ τοῦ πατρὸς τῶν ὅλων γεννηθεῖς..."<sup>89</sup>

"...the Word of Wisdom being Himself this God having been begotten from the Father of all things..."

In the litany of titles given to Christ in the Old Testament, one of which is his being "God," and "Lord," Justin now states that this same God is this "God Begotten." Notice that he even uses the same imagery as he did in our first quote. He bespeaks of the Father that begat him as being the Father of all things (τῶν ὅλων).

In the first quote he says he had already proven that Christ was the *monogenes* to the Father of all things (τῶν ὅλων). In this quote he says that he "is this God begotten" from the Father of all things (τῶν ὅλων). Obviously, this suggests that in Justin's mind, the phrase "God Begotten," explains why He is known as *monogenes* – Only-Begotten.

However, to define *monogenes* by "only" makes the text nonsensical. The first quote would then be modified to read:

"For I have already proved that He was the **"Only"** of the Father of all things, being begotten in a peculiar manner Word and Power by Him, and having afterwards become man through the Virgin, as we have learned from the memoirs."<sup>90</sup>

Justin would then be saying that he had already proved that he was the "Only?" What does that mean? Of course, those who believe *monogenes* means *only* would say, "No, no, it means "Only Son." Well, we have already proved the word does not mean "only Son." There is no connotation of "son" in the word.

Now, of course, in certain contexts we know it can refer to a son or to a daughter, but that is **not** because there is some connotation of "son" or "daughter" in the word; we know it because of contextual constraints. The connotation that is in the word is "born" or "begotten."

Neither could *monogenes* mean "*only member of a kin*" for, obviously, Justin

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<sup>89</sup> Justin Martyr, Rev. W. Trollope, tr., *S. Justini philosophi et martyris, cum Trypnone Judaeo dialogus. Edited with a corrected text and English introduction and notes, Vol. I* (Printed by and for J. Hall, Opposite the Pitt Press; and G. Bell, Cambridge, 1846) pg. 124

<sup>90</sup> Modified from, Alexander Roberts, James Donaldson, eds., *The Ante-Nicene Fathers, Vol. I* (Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co, Grand Rapids, MI 1985) pg. 251

would not be telling Trypho, a Jew, that God the Father was dead and that only the Son was alive, being the *only member of a kin*. Therefore, the only meaning that works in Justin's writings is the meaning "*only-begotten*."

And so I hope one can see that what is really fruitless is Dale Moody's claim that, "...efforts to refute these conclusions from such references as Ignatius (Eph. VII.2), Epistle of Diognetus 10:2, Martyrdom of Polycarp 20:2, and Justin Martyr (Dial. 105) are fruitless."

He may not agree with the conclusion made above, but he is certainly incorrect to suggest to the reader that evidence from Ignatius and Justin Martyr is certainly not worth one's time for it is fruitless.

The writer of the longer recension of Ignatius understood *monogenes* as "only-begotten." And most certainly Justin Martyr understood *monogenes* as "only-begotten," and there are many more references that prove the same thing in those first four centuries after the writing of the New Testament, but we will look at those in a separate sub-chapter entitled *The Patristics*.

## Misconception Five

The fifth common misconception is derived from another startling statement made by Dale Moody's in his article as found in the quote below.

"Monogenēs is a meaningful word in the teachings of the New Testament, both outside and within the Johannine writings. Outside the Johannine writings it is found in Luke 7:12; 8:42; 9:38 and Heb. 11:17. Even in the passages in Luke, in which monogenēs is translated "only" in the King James Version and all other English translations, to my knowledge, same Rotherham and the Geneva translation (1557) of Luke 7:12, the use of the term is illuminating for the understanding of Johannine Christology. The widow's son a Nain is called "the only (monogenēs) son of his mother," and surely no one would insist that she begat him! That, according to Webster, the Bible (Matt 1: 1-16), and biology is a male function!"<sup>91</sup>

The startling statement is found in the last two sentences. He uses Luke 7:12 to demonstrate for the reader that *monogenes* cannot carry the meaning of only-begotten because women do not beget children!

He makes the conclusion for the reader that since the word *monogenes* is used in relationship with a woman, then, obviously, the word *monogenes* cannot mean *only-begotten* but must mean "*only*." This is the verse he quotes.

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<sup>91</sup> Dale Moody, "God's Only Son: The Translation of John 3:16 in the Revised Standard Version" *Journal of Biblical Literature*, Vol. 72, No. 4; (Dec., 1953)pg. 216-217

**Luke 7:12** Now when he came nigh to the gate of the city, behold, there was a dead man carried out, the only son of his mother, and she was a widow: and much people of the city was with her. KJV

Now while he is right that Webster's assigns begetting to the male, Webster's is not the final authority on the meaning of biblical words!<sup>92</sup> It is startling that Dale Moody would make such a statement regarding the meaning of "beget!" Beget is not the sole function of the male. The Bible says that begetting is also a function of women! Scripture even says so in the very verse he references to prove that it does not!

**Matthew 1:16** Ἰακώβ δὲ ἐγέννησεν τὸν Ἰωσήφ τὸν ἄνδρα Μαρίας, ἐξ ἧς ἐγεννήθη Ἰησοῦς, ὁ λεγόμενος χριστός

**Matthew 1:16** And Jacob begat Joseph the husband of Mary, of whom was born Jesus, who is called Christ. KJV

The Bible tells us in this verse that Mary begat Jesus. The very same Greek word that is used in the preceding verses of males is also used in this verse of Mary, a woman. It would be perfectly legitimate to translate this passage as: "And Jacob begat Joseph the husband of Mary, from whom was **begat** Jesus, the one called Christ." The same word is also used in Luke 1:57—

**Luke 1:57** Τῇ δὲ Ἐλισάβετ ἐπλήσθη ὁ χρόνος τοῦ τεκεῖν αὐτήν, καὶ ἐγέννησεν υἱόν.

**Luke 1:57** Now Elisabeth's full time came that she should be delivered; and she **brought forth** a son. KJV

If we were to translate the verse literally it would read: "Now Elisabeth's full time came that she should be delivered; and she **begat** a son."

Now, it must be admitted that there is no English Bible translation of the Greek above that uses the English word "beget," but that does not mean the Greek text does not clearly declare that fact. Nor should a translation take precedence over the original language utilized by the Holy Spirit.

This understanding is not some new and strange interpretation. It has long been acknowledged by the Greek Lexicons. This is how both *Liddell and Scott* and *Bauer, Arndt and Gingrich* define the word.

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<sup>92</sup> However, it should be noted that even in English "beget" is recognized as a more inclusive term. This website provides a very good definition: "To beget means to generate something, usually children, and it can be used to refer to the role of either a mother or a father. If we analyze the word beget, we get the prefix be-, which tends to intensify the meaning of the following verb, and get, which means to cause something to enter one's possession. The word is usually used to refer to having children, although it can be used to refer to anything that generates something else – for example, an inspiration can beget a brilliant idea." [www.vocabulary.com/dictionary/beget](http://www.vocabulary.com/dictionary/beget)

**γεννάω**, fut. ἴσω... (γέννα) Causal of γίγνομαι (cf. γείνομαι), **mostly of the father, to beget, engender**, Aesch., Supp. 48 Soph. El. 1412; οἱ γεννήσαντες **the parents**, Xen. Mem. 2.1, 27,, **but also of the mother, to bring forth, bear**, Aesch. Supp. 47, Arist. G.A, 3.5.6...<sup>93</sup>

**γεννάω**—**1. lit. become the father of...** Mt 1:2ff; Ac 7:8, 29. w. gen. of the mother (Eur., fgm. 479...) ... **2. of women: bear** Lk 1:13, 35, 57; 23:29.....Luke 1:35...a.v.1. [=variant readings, i.e. Scrivener, Lachmann, Ephraemi-Rescriptus (a)] adds ἐκ σοῦ, which can be rendered ‘that which is born of you’ and ‘that which **begotten** w. you.’<sup>94</sup>

The basal meaning is to “bring forth.” When it is used of the male it is referring to his part in conception (cf. II Sam. 16:11 KJV). When it is used of the female it refers to being born, or in a general sense, being “brought forth.” It was very appropriate for Luke to state that the widow’s son was the “only-begotten” of his mother. She begat him! And he was her “only-begotten.”

As I mentioned before, the word *monogenes* can be used from three perspectives—the perspective of a father (Judges 11:34), the perspective of a mother (Luke 7:12), and, finally it is used from the perspective of a father and a mother together, or parents (Heb. 11:17).” This is because γεννάω is also used from three perspectives. It is used from a male perspective, so that a child would be known as one who was begotten. It is used with a female perspective, so that a child would be known as one who was “born” (Lu. 7:12). And it was used from a parent’s perspective, so that a child could be known as one who was “begotten” from both together. In fact, this general connotation of “bringing forth” is even used with inanimate objects (cf. II Tim. 2:23).

Now, while Mr. Moody might not believe women can beget children, a Greek writer had no problem with such a concept. It is totally incredulous that Mr. Moody would make such a statement. Even in English we sometimes use the word of a mother.

Now that is not to deny that the word in English is used more often for a man, than a woman. But it can be used in English of a woman! In fact, it is even used in an English translation of something as strict as a legal code. In the book, *The Code of Napoleon: verbally translated from the French, Vol. 1*, an ancient custom in Saxon territory is referenced. It states, “...the woman who begets children shall have her dower for life... [and] ...the woman, after she had begotten children became entitled to the dower for her life.”<sup>95</sup>

Also, it was perfectly appropriate to use the word in the English language from a parent’s perspective, that of a man and a woman together. A sermon in

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<sup>93</sup> Henry George Liddell, Robert Scott, *Greek-English Lexicon, Seventh Edition* (Harper & Brothers, New York, 1883) pg. 305

<sup>94</sup> Walter Bauer, William F. Arndt, F. Wilbur Gingrich, *A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament and other Early Christian Literature* (The University of Chicago Press, Chicago, IL, 1957) pg. 154

<sup>95</sup> Bryant Barret, *The Code Napoléon, verbally translated from the French, Vol. 1* (Printed for W. Reed, London 1811) pg. ccxlviii (248)

Old English given by Aelfric, Abbot of Eynsham, is rendered in Modern English as follows: “Adam was continuing then in this life with toil, and he and his wife begat children, both sons and daughters.”<sup>96</sup>

So even in the English language, let alone the Greek language the word begat was used for more than just men.

It is disturbing that so many Neo-Trinitarians appeal to Dale Moody as an authority for the true meaning of *monogenes*, and yet Dale Moody continues to make misleading statements, even as to something as basic as the usage of beget—γεννάω. We all make mistakes; that is understandable. But he repeatedly makes these false assertions in his attempt to nullify the traditional understanding of *monogenes*. He confuses the issue by making assertions that simply are not true! And if he is wrong in something as fundamental as this, it makes one wonder if he really understood the traditional meaning of “only-begotten.” How can he write a paper against the traditional meaning of only-begotten if he does not even understand the basic concept of begottenness?

*Monogenes*, as traditionally understood, means “only-begotten,” “only born,” the “only one brought forth.” Surely he must know this. Yet, he obscures this truth from the reader by using the passage in Luke 7:12 to supposedly prove his point that *monogenes* cannot mean *only-begotten* because the widow’s son was the *monogenes* of his mother, and women do not beget children! — Thus, the meaning of *monogenes* must be “only,” and not “only-begotten.” Unbelievable! This is completely misleading and a bit disturbing. It betrays an “ignorance,” or, if not an ignorance, an “ignoring” of the true meaning of “only-begotten” simply to prove a point.

Apparently, he did not know that when Christians spoke in creedal fashion concerning Son of God, who was begotten of the Father before all ages, that they could understand him as, the “Only-begotten Son of God,” or the “Only Born” Son of God, or even the “Only One brought forth” of the Father before all ages.

They could understand *monogenes* as “Only-begotten” of the Father as seen in John 1:14.

**John 1:14** And the Word was made flesh, and dwelt among us (and we beheld his glory, the glory as of the only-begotten of the Father,) full of grace and truth. KJV

They could understand *monogenes* with a sense of the “Only Born” Son of God because Psalm 110: 1-3 points to the Son as being “born” of God.

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<sup>96</sup> Benjamin Thorpe, *The Homilies of the Anglo-Saxon Church: The First Part, Containing the Sermones Catholici, or Homilies of Ælfric, in the Original Anglo-Saxon, with an English Version, Vol. I* (Printed for Aelfric Society, London, 1844) pg.21

**Psalms 110:1-3** A Psalm of David. The Lord said to my Lord, Sit thou on my right hand, until I make thine enemies thy footstool. The Lord shall send out a rod of power for thee out of Sion: rule thou in the midst of thine enemies. With thee is dominion in the day of thy power, in the splendours of thy saints: I have begotten thee from the womb before the morning. Brenton's LXX Version

Early Christians routinely understood this LXX version of Psalms 110:1-3, which uses the imagery of a womb, to be speaking of the eternal begetting of the Son of God from the Father, and so they would have no problem with the concept of the Son being the “Only Born” of the Father.<sup>97</sup> *Monogenes*, in their mind, would in no way negate this thought.

And, finally, they could understand *monogenes* with a sense of the “Only Brought Forth One,” for Micah 5:2 points to the Son as “going forth” from eternity and John speaks of Him as being eternally “brought forth” from the Father. This bespeaks his eternal procession from the Father.

**John 8:42** Jesus said to them, "If God were your Father, you would love Me; for I proceeded forth and have come from God, for I have not even come on My own initiative, but He sent Me.

How can Dale Moody write a paper trying to disprove the traditional meaning of *monogenes* and not know (or if he did know, ignore) the traditional understanding of *monogenes*? Indeed, the use of *monogenes*, in Lu. 7:12 is a very illuminating verse in understanding Johannine Christology, and it actually confirms the traditional meaning of *monogenes*, bringing to mind all its varied nuances based upon the basal meaning of “bringing forth” within the word. It brings to the forefront the beautiful picture of the Son’s eternal procession from the Father from every perspective, using all the imagery—He is the “Only Born” Son of God, the “Only-begotten” Son of God, and the “Only Brought Forth” Son of God—Very God “of” Very God!

## Misconception Six

Another common misunderstanding relates to a claim, made by Dale Moody in his paper that Tyndale knew the true meaning of *monogenes* and corrected the error of Jerome in his translation. He suggests that William Tyndale was correcting an error made long ago by Jerome regarding the meaning of *monogenes*. This creates the impression in the readers mind that Tyndale thought *only begotten* was an incorrect translation. There is no evidence that Tyndale believed this! Not any evidence at all!

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<sup>97</sup> Perhaps, it would be important to mention that God is never spoken of in the female gender (unlike the pagan gods and goddesses). He is always spoken of in the masculine gender. This is very revelatory and should never be abandoned. Yet it is God Himself who sometimes employs female imagery to bespeak certain truths about Himself, while never compromising the masculine analogy he has provided to mankind (e.g. Ps. 110:3 LXX; and Lu. 13:34).

This is what Dale Moody states, first regarding Jerome.

“The jumble of Jerome remains in the Latin Vulgate, and from the Latin Vulgate translation “only-begotten” got into the King James Version of 1611, the English Revised Version of 1881, and other translations, with a partial exception, until the error was removed in *The Twentieth Century New Testament* in 1898.”<sup>98</sup>

Then he addresses the partial exception.

“It is hoped the furious discussion over the RSV will spread enough knowledge to bring an error to an end! The “partial exception” between Jerome’s Latin Vulgate and *The Twentieth Century New Testament* was no less a person than William Tyndale, the first translator of the NT from Greek to English. He failed to correct Jerome in John 1:14, 18; Heb. 11:17; I John 4:9, but his editions of 1526 and 1534 correct the error in John 3:16, 18.”<sup>99</sup>

Before we examine William Tyndale, however, one thing needs to be said. Dale Moody indicts Jerome with jumbling up the truth about *monogenes*. Then he indicts the translators of the King James Version with simple ignorance as to the correct meaning of the word. What arrogance to imply that the translators of the King James Version were not educated enough to realize the true meaning of the word, as if the translators were not aware of the varied uses of *monogenes* in ancient literature, and so, were so ignorant of the matter, that it takes one like Dale Moody to show the Church the error of her way. Again what arrogance to declare that the Church for all those centuries had been ignorant of an essential doctrine of the Faith, because of one man – Jerome, but now that Dale Moody is on the scene the Holy Spirit is able to shed light on the truth!

Dear reader, do not be misled. Dale Moody is wrong. Jerome was correct in his understanding and the King James translators were correct in their understanding of the word. The true Faith was never lost, and it has continued to be borne witness to by godly men throughout the history of the Church.

Now, let’s turn our attention to William Tyndale. There is no evidence that William Tyndale considered Jerome’s translation of “unigenitus” *only begotten* an error. Dale Moody couches his phraseology in such a war to suggest this. One could just as easily look at the same facts and state the complete opposite of Dale Moody’s conclusion.

<b>These are the facts</b>	
Tyndale’s Bible has only begotten in John 1:14, 18; Heb. 11:17; I John 4:9, and “only” in John 3:16, 18.	
<b>Dale Moody’s conclusion</b>	<b>Using the same facts, but with an</b>

<sup>98</sup> Dale Moody, “God’s Only Son: The Translation of John 3:16 in the Revised Standard Version” *Journal of Biblical Literature*, Vol. 72, No. 4; (Dec., 1953) pg. 215-216

<sup>99</sup> *Ibid.*, pg. 216

to those facts	alternate conclusion
He “failed to correct” Jerome in John 1:14, 18; Heb. 11:17; I John 4:9, but his editions of 1526 and 1534 correct the error in John 3:16, 18.	He “affirmed” Jerome’s use of unigenitus (only begotten) in John 1:14,18; Heb. 11:17; I John 4:9, but his editions of 1526 and 1534 failed to endorse him in John 3:16,18.

It is all a matter of one’s perspective, isn’t it? The fact of the matter is, if one simply looks at Tyndale’s translation of *monogenes* in the verses listed by Dale Moody – John 1:14,18; 3: 16,18; Heb. 11:17; and I John 4:9 – one would have to conclude that William Tyndale primarily understood the meaning of *monogenes* to be “only begotten!” Why? Because 4 out of 6 times he translates *monogenes* as “only begotten.” Only two times does he translate it “only!” In the majority of the cases, when used of Christ or a picture of Christ, he translates it as “only begotten,” as can be seen below in Tyndale New Testament, 1534 edition.

**John 1:14** – And the worde was made flesshe and dwelt amonge vs and we sawe the glory of it as the glory of the only begotten sonne of the father which worde was full of grace and verite.

**John 1:18** – No man hath sene God at eny tyme. The only begotte sonne which is in the bosome of the father he hath declared him.

**John 3:16** – For God so loveth the worlde that he hath geven his only sonne that none that beleve in him shuld perisshe: but shuld have everlastinge lyfe.

**John 3:18** – He that beleveth on him shall not be condempned. But he that beleveth not is condempned all redy be cause he beleveth not in the name of the only sonne of God.

**Hebrews 11:17** – In fayth Abraham offered vp Isaac when he was tempted and he offered him beinge his only begotten sonne which had receaved the promyses

**1 John 4:9** – In this appered the love of god to vs ward because that god sent his only begotten sonne into the worlde that we myght live thorow him.

So if anything, Tyndale actually supports the traditional understanding of *monogenes* as “only begotten” four out of six times, at least, in regard to its usage with Christ. It is wrong to imply that he really knew the word meant “only” but failed to correct it in four of the six places.

In the two of the three other places where the word is used in the New Testament, i.e. in the gospel of Luke (regarding the children of a mother or father, and not of Christ), he uses “only” as did Jerome and as did the subsequent translations of the King James Version. However, in Luke 9:38 he uses a paraphrase of the word not even used by Jerome or the King James Version. He translates *monogenes* as “all that I have.”



Now let's assume that one believed *monogenes* meant "*all that I have*" rather than "only begotten." And let's assume Dale Moody, also believed this, and therefore he believed Jerome made an error by translating it as "only" and "only begotten" in the Bible. Using Dale Moody's same logic and assuming one believed *monogenes* truly meant "*all that I have*," could not one make the same claim using Tyndale and imply that because he translated it once in Luke 9:38 as "all that I have" he must have been correcting an error made by Jerome.

Therefore, we could take Dale Moody's same sentence above and rewrite it this way.

"It is hoped the furious discussion over the RSV will spread enough knowledge to bring an error to an end! The "partial exception" between Jerome's Latin Vulgate and *The Twentieth Century New Testament*, was no less a person than William Tyndale, the first translator of the NT from Greek to English. He "failed to correct" Jerome in Luke 7:12 and 8:42, John 1:14, 18; 3:16, 18; Heb. 11:17; I John 4:9, but his editions of 1526 and 1534 **correct the error in Luke 9:38.**"

We are using the same logic of Dale Moody, and yet, I do not think anyone would ever claim that Tyndale believed the true meaning for *monogenes* was actually "*all that I have*" and not "*only*," or "*only begotten*" simply because he translated it that way in one verse in his New Testament.

In the same way, in regard to the verses relating to Christ, why do we assume that William Tyndale really believed the true meaning of *monogenes* was "only" and not "only begotten" simply because he translated it that way in two verses?

One does not take a minority understanding of a word to establish the primary understanding of a word. Rather, one takes the majority understanding of a word to set forth its primary meaning. It is misleading for Dale Moody to imply that William Tyndale supported his view of *monogenes*.

So what is the conclusion? When used of the eternal Son, or when used of one that was a type of the Son (i.e. Isaac), Tyndale understood *monogenes* as *only begotten* four out of six times. That is the fact. He definitely supports the traditional meaning of *only begotten* for *monogenes*.

Now, it is fair to ask, "Well, why then did he decide to translate the word as "only" in John 3:16, 18?" That is a good question. What is the answer? I do not know, and I do not think anyone knows. We would have to discover somewhere in his writings where he gives us the answer to this question, or, perhaps, find some translation notes of his on the subject. But as far as I know, no one has ever discovered such translation evidence.

The matter of fact is we do not know the explanation for the change to “only” in John 3:16, 18.

That being said, as long as we are not dogmatic, we can make some conjectures as to the reason for this change. It certainly is an interesting question, but we must be careful not to make any dogmatic conclusions regarding this anomaly, simply because we do not know the real reason and it would not be right to make a conjecture and then claim that conjecture as an established fact!

Therefore, with that in mind, let’s consider some possible reasons for this change?

1) Dale Moody was correct and William Tyndale really believed the word meant *only*, but was *afraid* to change it in all verses relating to Christ because he thought he would be persecuted by the Church for changing such a common nomenclature for the Lord, therefore, he tried to introduce the change slowly.

This possibility would be very unlikely because he was already being persecuted simply for translating the Scripture into the English! Also it is unlikely because he was a man of great courage and integrity! Consider what he once wrote to John Fryth regarding the principles guiding his translation.

"I call God to record against the day we shall appear before our Lord Jesus, to give a reckoning of our doings, *that I never altered one syllable of God's Word against my conscience, nor would this day if all that is in the earth, whether it be pleasure, honour, or riches, might be given me.*"<sup>100</sup>

Therefore, unless, one wants to impute a disingenuous spirit to William Tyndale, he consistently translated *monogenes* as *only begotten* in John 1:14, John 1:18, Heb. 11:17 and I John 4:9 because he really believed that was what the word meant in those particular contexts.

Equally so, according to his above statement, we must believe he translated the word as *only* in John 3:16 & 18 because he really believed that is what the word meant in that context (unless he did not translate it by *only* but really by *only begotten*, as we shall later consider).

2) For some contextual reasons he believed *monogenes* would be better understood just by *only* rather than *only begotten*. This certainly would be a possibility, but without more information, it would be impossible to explain. Perhaps, since the context was the love of God in giving his Son, rather than the nature of the Son, as in John 1:14, 18, he thought that *only* would better

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<sup>100</sup> James Joseph Ellis, *William Tyndale, Men with a Mission*, (Thomas Whittaker, New York 1890) pg. 92

emphasize the love of God, much in the same way Paul uses the expression, τοῦ ἰδίου υἱοῦ, his own Son (Rom. 8:32), to emphasize the nearness and dearness of the Son to God the Father in the giving of him to be a sacrifice for us. Nevertheless, this would be all speculation, because Tyndale does not explain his decision.

3) The word “only begotten” became a title reserved exclusively for the Lord. Therefore, the word was translated “only” when used of others than Christ, and “only begotten” when used for Christ.

Today, if we wanted to make this type of distinction we would probably capitalize “Only Begotten” when referring to the Son and use “only begotten” when referring to an ordinary child of a mother or father.

This point is not without merit. For example, the same thinking was applied to the Greek word κύριος. When it is used of Christ, it is generally translated (in the current versions of the King James Bible and not by Tyndale), as “Lord” using an upper case “L.” When it is used of earthly rulers it is generally printed with a lower case “l,” lord. By this distinction, the title “Lord” was reserved for our Saviour.

“And, behold, two blind men sitting by the way side, when they heard that Jesus passed by, cried out, saying, Have mercy on us, O **Lord**, thou Son of David. Matt. 20:30 KJV

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

“Of whom I have no certain thing to write unto my **lord**. Wherefore I have brought him forth before you, and specially before thee, O king Agrippa, that, after examination had, I might have somewhat to write. Acts 25:26 KJV

“But forasmuch as he had not to pay, his **lord** commanded him to be sold, and his wife, and children, and all that he had, and payment to be made. Mat 18:25 KJV

The same thing is generally done today with Greek word βασιλεύς – king.

“And they sing the song of Moses the servant of God, and the song of the Lamb, saying, Great and marvellous are thy works, Lord God Almighty; just and true are thy ways, thou **King of saints**. Rev. 15:3 KJV

“But they cried out, Away with him, away with him, crucify him. Pilate saith unto them, Shall I crucify your **King**? The chief priests answered, We have no **king** but Caesar. John 19:15 KJV

But, if this distinction was true, it might explain the verses in Luke, but what of the verses in question, John 3:16 & 18? It would not explain those two verses, for they clearly refer to the Lord.

(Also, it should be made clear, Tyndale did not use this method of distinction. This is a modern day method of distinction. The only point in bringing up this method is to show that there are ways of emphasizing different uses of the

same word, and Tyndale and the King James Translators may have done this in regard to the different uses of *monogenes* in Luke and John).

Now, it should also be mentioned, as it now stands, this solution cannot be correct, and it is so unlikely that I even hesitated to mention it, if not for the final point. For, if the final point is true, then this point may, indeed, be valid, because it would only then apply to the verses in Luke (which all refer to ordinary children), and the two other verses in John, which refer to our Lord, would then be explained by other means. If the next point is true, then, indeed, the distinction of point three may be valid, at least, it would be worthy of mention.

4) The use of *only* in John 3:16 and 18 is a printing error.

In order to illustrate this point, let's look at the King James 1611 edition of the Bible. After the 1611 edition there were many subsequent printings. Editions were published in 1612, 1616, 1617, etc. And then, in 1629 and 1638, two very significant editions were printed where many changes were made in relation to the 1611 edition. These changes can only be explained by either corrected mistakes made in translation, or corrected mistakes made in printing. However, this is not without precedence.

Everyone remembers the famous example called *The Wicked Bible*. It was a 1631 edition of the King James Version of the Bible. In this edition the printer inadvertently left out the little word "not" in Exodus 20:14! Rather than reading as, "Thou shalt not commit adultery," it read, "Thou shalt commit adultery." What a terrible printing mistake! It is interesting to note that the printers, Robert Barker and Martin Lucas were, by some accounts, fined £3000 for such a grievous error, which in those days was a large sum.<sup>101</sup>

So we see that even though great improvements were made in the copying of material by the invention of the printing press, mistakes were still made by the printers that were not the fault of the translators.

This could have been what happened with Tyndale's English Bible. This would make perfect sense since he consistently translated *monogenes* as only begotten when referring to Christ in all the other verses in the Gospel of John. So if this is true, what may have happened is that a printer, when setting the type from the handwritten copy, inadvertently left out the word begotten of "only begotten" thereby creating the misprint.

Now, someone may say, "Well, I guess that would be a possibility, but it would be unlikely, for if that was the case, why would not the subsequent editions of his Bible have the error corrected?"

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<sup>101</sup> See, *A Dictionary of Printers and Printing* by Charles Henry Timperley, Published by H. Johnson, 1839, pg. 484

That is a good question, but one must remember that even today mistakes are made and not caught by proof readers. That is why some books have a page called *errata*. How much more would it have been true when printing was in its early stages?

For example, consider these mistakes that were made either by the translators or by the printers of the 1611 edition of the King James Version, but were not noticed and corrected till many editions later.

This is how II Cor. 11:32 read in the original KJV 1611 edition.

“In Damascus the governor under Aretas the king kept the city with a garrison, desirous to apprehend me.” II Cor. 11:32

It was not noticed till 1629 that the words “of the Damascenes” were left out. This is how it now reads.

“In Damascus the governor under Aretas the king kept the city of the Damascenes with a garrison, desirous to apprehend me.” II Cor. 11:32

Now other editions had been printed in between those two dates but that mistake had not been noticed. Let me give a couple more examples.

The original reading of Psalms 69:32 was as follows.

“The humble shall see this, and be glad: and your heart shall live that **seek good**.” Psalms 69:32

Notice the last two words that read “seek good.” In this case, the printer did not leave out a word but added an extra letter! It was corrected in the 1617 edition to read “seek God!”

“The humble shall see this, and be glad: and your heart shall live that **seek God**.” Psalms 69:32

And, finally, we have an example from I John 5:12 which originally read:

“He that hath the Son hath life; and he that hath not the Son hath not life.” I Jn. 5:12

The original printing left out the important words “of God.”

It was corrected in 1629 in one edition, but even so, it continued to be misprinted in many other editions, not being fully noticed in those other editions, apparently, until 1681! The correct reading is now as follows.

“He that hath the Son hath life; and he that hath not the Son of God hath not life.”

This mistake by the printer would be a very similar mistake that might have been made in Tyndale's Bible. The handwritten copy of Tyndale's Bible may have had "only begotten" in John 3:16 and 18, just it had "only begotten" in John 1:14 and John 1:18, but the printer may have overlooked it and left out the word "begotten," thus printing "only" rather than "only begotten. In the same way, the handwritten copy of the King James Bible may have had "Son of God" in I John 5:12, but the printer overlooked it and left out the two words "of God" of the phrase "Son of God," thus printing only the word "Son."

Let me give one more example from the different editions of the King James Bible. This is how Deuteronomy 26:1 read in the original KJV 1611 edition.

"And it shall be, when thou art come in unto the land which the LORD giveth thee for an inheritance, and possessest it, and dwellest therein." Deut. 26:1 KJV 1629, 1637

It left out the words "thy God" after the LORD. It was not noticed and so corrected in subsequent editions until the 1629 and 1637 editions!

It now reads correctly as follows.

"And it shall be, when thou art come in unto the land which the LORD thy God giveth thee for an inheritance, and possessest it, and dwellest therein."<sup>102</sup>

If the printers, apparently, left out an important part of the text, indeed, an important part of the name of God, not noticing it for many years, why could not the same thing have happened in William Tyndale's English Bible? In fact, this was an error that parallels our example in many ways. The full name was "the LORD thy God," yet for years it was missed and was printed simply as "the LORD."

In the same way, the full title of our Lord was "the only begotten Son," yet for years it could have been missed, being printed simply as "the only Son." We know it continued to read this way in many subsequent editions.

However, finally, in what was considered to be the final revision of Tyndale's New Testament in 1552, by Richard Jugge, John 3:16 and 18 were changed to read "only begotten Son." This was either a correction like the example above or was a change according to the opinion of Richard Jugge. One must remember this 1552 edition was not edited by William Tyndale. He had died many years before.

J. R. Dore has this to say about this edition.

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<sup>102</sup> All these examples are taken from the Appendix A of *The Authorized Edition of the English Bible (1611): Its Subsequent Reprints and Modern representatives*, by F.H.A. Scrivener (Wipf & Stock Publishers, Eugene, OR) pgs. 147-202

“Perhaps the best known of all Tyndale's Testaments are the two quartos printed by Richard Jugge in 1552 and 1553, which, although similar in general appearance, may be easily distinguished from each other, as in the 1552 edition Italic type is used for the headlines, and contents in the margins, while in the 1553 edition the references in the margins are in black letter.”<sup>103</sup>

However, it should be noted that J.R. Dore also has this to say.

“Not only were new marginal notes added to this Testament, but the text itself was so much altered in many places that it should be called Jugge's revision of Tyndale.”<sup>104</sup>

Nevertheless, it cannot be denied that in this edition, John 3:16 18 were changed to read “only begotten son” and not just “only son.”

Let me give one more example as to how printers could make mistakes leaving out a word or two. In fact, in this example, a whole phrase was consistently left out.

According to J.R. Dore, some editions of Tyndale's Bible printed in 1536 were missing an important part of I Cor. 11:25, which read in Tyndale's 1534 edition, read as follows:

**1 Corinthians 11:25** After the same maner he toke the cup when sopper was done sayinge. **This cup is the newe testament in my bloude.** This do as oft as ye drynke it in the remembraunce of me.

He says the entire phrase, *this cup is the new testament in my blood*, was left out in many subsequent printings. This is what he tells us.

“Beside the folio, and three quarto, there were also four octavo editions of Tyndale's Testament published in the year 1536. Three of them are dated, and they all so much resemble each other that there can be little doubt that all four were issued from the same press, and were most likely printed at Antwerp.

“All of them have woodcuts, and are printed in black letter without imprints; and, as some of the copies of each edition are perfect, it is certain they were published anonymously. They have all the same number of lines to a page, and the leaves of all four editions are not numbered.

“All four follow the last Testament revised by the translator in omitting the words: ‘this cup is the new testament in my blood,’ I. Corinthians xi. and 25th verse.”<sup>105</sup>

This mistake can even be found in the well-known Matthew's Bible of 1537 that brought together all of William Tyndale's translations and revisions. This is how it reads.

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<sup>103</sup> J.R. Dore, *Old Bible: an account of the early versions of the English Bible, 2<sup>nd</sup> edition* (Eyre and Spottiswoode, His Majesty's Printers, 1888) pg. 61

<sup>104</sup> Ibid., pg. 63

<sup>105</sup> Ibid., pg. 45

**1 Corinthians 11:25** After the same maner he toke the cup when sopper was done saying: This do as oft as ye drynke it in the remembraunce of me.<sup>106</sup>

Imagine that, an entire portion of the verse left out, even though Tyndale's earlier editions contained it. This could be none other than the inadvertent error of a printer.

So it is wrong to conclude that because John 3:16, 18 reads the way it does in the Tyndale's Bible 1526 and 1534 edition, it must have been because Tyndale corrected the error of Jerome and so translated it as "only Son." It could have very likely been an error of a printer and so it should have read:

**John 3:16** – For God so loveth the worlde that he hast geven his only begotten sonne that none that beleve in him shuld perisshe; but shuld have everlastinge lyfe.

**John 3:18** – He that beleveth on him shall not be condempned. But he that beleveth not is condempned all redy be cause he beleveth not in the name of the only begotten sonne of God.

This explanation becomes all the more possible because we have these comments made by Tyndale himself in his prologues to other books. In his prologue to the Book of Exodus he says this.

"For it is not said of that Testament, He that worketh shall live; but "he that believeth shall live:" as thou readest, John iii. "God so loved the world that he gave his **only begotten Son**, that none which believe in him should perish, but have life everlasting."<sup>107</sup>

In this prologue Tyndale quotes John 3:16, and guess what? He quotes the verse as "God so loved the world that he gave his **only begotten Son**" and not as it appears in the printed edition of his Bible, "God so loved the world that he gave his only Son." Could this not indicate that a printer left out *begotten* in the printed edition of Tyndale's Bible and this explains why in every other case (Jn. 1:14,18, Heb. 11:17, and I Jn. 4:9) he translates *monogenes* as "only begotten" in reference to Christ.

At the minimum, this proves that Tyndale believed the Greek text of John 3:16, 18 could be understood as "only begotten." Why did not Dale Moody mention this? Perhaps, he did not know, but if that is true, at least it shows that one cannot make a dogmatic assertion that Tyndale corrected an error made by Jerome in John 3:16 and 18. There simply is not any evidence that suggests such a thing, although we do have the evidence shown above that demonstrates that Tyndale understood *monogenes* in John 3:16 to mean "only begotten." This suggests the Bible's use of *only* was simply a printing error!

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<sup>106</sup> Sourced from: [www.bibles-online.net/](http://www.bibles-online.net/) August 2012

<sup>107</sup> Thomas Russel, ed. *The Works of the English Reformers: William Tyndale and John Frith, Vol. I* (Printed for Ebenezer Palmer, London, 1831) pg. 23



Let me give another example to illustrate how printers may have made mistakes – this time a reverse example of the example above. In I John 4:9, in his English Bible, Tyndale translates *monogenes* as “only begotten.”

“In this appeared the love of God to us ward, because that God sent his **only begotten son** into the world, that we might live through him.” I John 4:9

However, in his exposition on the First Epistle to First John, Vol. II, where each verse is listed before he makes his comments on the verse, it appears this way!

“Herein appeared the love of God unto usward, because God sent his **only son** into the world, that we should live through him.”<sup>108</sup>

He translates it by “only begotten son” in his Bible, but in his exposition it appears as “only son!” Why? Well, again it could be a printers error for look how William Tyndale quotes the same verse in his Vol. I of the same book in the Parable of the Wicked Mammon (1528).

“I Jn. 4:9 In this (saith he) appeareth the love of God to usward, because that God sent his **only begotten** Son into the world that we might live through him. Herein is love, not that we loved God, but that he loved us, and sent his Son to make agreement for our sins.”<sup>109</sup>

In this exposition he follows the text just as it appears in his Bible, so he definitely believed *monogenes* meant *only begotten*. We have two witnesses to that fact – his New Testament and his commentary on the Parable of the Wicked Mammon. So what explains the anomaly in his exposition of First Epistle of John? Another printing error, perhaps? The reader will have to decide.

So in conclusion, what do we see? In most cases William Tyndale translated *monogenes* as *only begotten* in relation to our Lord. In two places he translates it by *only* in regard to Christ. Those are the facts. Anything beyond this is conjecture. Plus, there is no evidence that he ever considered *only begotten* to be an error of translation, rather he affirms it four times out of six when used with the Lord.

Equally, however, we have to admit, it would be a conjecture to state that the reason it appears as *only* in John 3:16 and 18 is because it was a printing error – even though we have other works of Tyndale where he translates that verse as *only begotten*. A printing error may indeed be the reason the second half of the title is missing, but it is only a conjecture and it would be wrong to “dogmatically” conclude that was the real reason, no matter how likely it appears to be so!

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<sup>108</sup> Thomas Russel, ed. *The Works of the English Reformers: William Tyndale and John Frith, Vol. I* (Printed for Ebenezer Palmer, London, 1831) pg. 456

<sup>109</sup> Russel, op. cit., Vol. I, pg. 144

But, equally, it was wrong for Dale Moody to conclude that this is evidence that Tyndale understood *monogenes* as *only* and so corrected the error of Jerome in these two verses. It is all conjecture, pure and simple.

I have attempted to give you all the facts. The readers will have to decide for themselves.

## Misconception Seven

“Furthermore, Schaff’s comparative table of the gradual formation of the Apostles’ Creed reveals the fact that the word unigenitum as the Latin translation of monogenes is found only in Augustine (A.D. 400) and the Sacramentarium Gallicanum (A.D. 650), and that ultimate text of the Western Creed (A.D. 750) had unicum (only), not unigenitum (only-begotten). Even Augustine at first said unicum! (Philip Schaff, op. cit., pg. 52).<sup>110</sup>

As for this misconception, please see following chapter on *The Apostles’ Creed*. But, for now, let me just say in passing, that Dale Moody misleads the unsuspecting reader by asserting that the Apostles’ Creed was basically a Greek text that was “translated” over time into Latin, and, as such, the reason the Latin Versions had *unicus* is because it was a “translation” of the Greek word *monogenes*. This is patently false! Now this is not to say that no one never made a translation from a Greek Text, indeed, we know some translations were made, some from Greek to Latin and some from Latin to Greek, but that is not how the Latin Creeds were originally formulated. There were multiple variations formulated in the Latin language of the people by various churches in different parts of the Empire at different times, not as translations of a Greek original. Many arose from the baptismal formulas that were used in individual churches. Even the examples he refers to in Philip Schaff table were not considered translations of one standardized Greek text. Philip Schaff never made such a claim, nor was his table created to “reveal” this fact as Dale Moody asserts.

In fact, in 200 A.D., the time when Schaff’s table begins, there was no standardized Greek text of the Apostles’ Creed used in the churches throughout the empire; such a thing did not exist. So it is wrong to imply that those later Latin Creeds listed by Schaff in his table were simply a “translation” from an original Greek Version and that the inclusion of *unicus* was because it was translation of an earlier Creed that had *monogenes*. For Dale Moody to make such a statement is most misleading.

There is a completely different reason why many of the Latin Creeds had *unicus* in their Creeds. That reason is covered in the subsequent chapter entitled *The Apostle’s Creed*.

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<sup>110</sup> Dale Moody, “God’s Only Son: The Translation of John 3:16 in the Revised Standard Version” *Journal of Biblical Literature*, Vol. 72, No. 4; (Dec., 1953) pg. 215

One other thing must also be mentioned before moving on. He makes the implication that Augustine first used *unicum* for *monogenes*, but later used *unigenitus*. This leaves the reader with the impression that Augustine translated *monogenes* as *unicus*, but later changed his mind and adopted *unigenitus* as the meaning. This too, is patently false!

Augustine did not change his understanding of *monogenes* from *unicus* (only) to *unigenitus* (only-begotten), nor was he translating *monogenes* as *unicus*. *Unicus* was an additional word, in and of itself, that was used for our Lord by those early Christians. *Unicus* was not in competition against *unigenitus* as a translation of *monogenes*. *Unicus* was a perfectly fine word to use in regard to our Lord. He also was known as the “only” Son. Anybody that believes the Son was *unigenitus* (only-begotten), had no problem in also affirming the Son was also *unicus* (only). In fact, he was the *only* Son because he was the *only-begotten* Son; both words were true of our Lord, and this is exactly what Augustine affirmed. In his writings he says,

“Since this is the case, I repeat, we believe also in Jesus Christ, the Son of God, the Only-begotten [*unigenitum*] of the Father, that is to say, His only [*unicum*] Son, our Lord.”<sup>111</sup>

He clearly calls him first, the *unigenitum* of the Father which can only mean “only-begotten.” Yet, in his next breath, he also calls him *unicus*, which can only mean “only.” He believed both words to be true of our Lord! In other words, if *monogenes* meant “only” (*unicus*), why would he first use *unigenitum* (only-begotten) in reference to the Son rather than just *unicum* (if, indeed, that is what he believed *monogenes* meant)? Obviously, he understood *monogenes* to mean *unigenitum* (only-begotten), not *unicus*, and so had to add an additional phrase that he was also known as the *unicum* (only) Son. The reason for this use of *unicus* is explained in the subsequent chapter.

And so, again, Dale Moody is misleading his readers. It is wrong of him to imply that “even Augustine” understood *monogenes* to mean *unicus*, but later changed his mind to believe it meant *unigenitus*. It simply is not true. Augustine used both words at the same time of our Lord. They are two different words with two different meanings, both appropriate, the former meaning *only*, and the latter meaning *only-begotten*, as with the Greek, *monos* meaning *only* and *monogenes* meaning *only-begotten*. Both words were in use by early Christians regarding our Saviour in a multitude of writings and just because *unicus* was used in creeds does not prove anything regarding the original understanding of *monogenes* by those very same early Christians.

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<sup>111</sup> Philip Schaff, ed. *Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers, First Series Vol. III* (T&T Clark, Edinburgh; Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., Grand Rapids, MI 1993) page 323

## Misconceptions and Misunderstandings

### *Regarding the Dissertation of Francis Marion Warden Entitled, “MONOGENEΣ In The Johannine Literature”*

Dale Moody, apparently, was greatly impressed by a doctrinal dissertation by a professor of Southern Baptist Theological Seminary by the name of Francis Marion Warden. This is what Dale Moody relates regarding this professor:

“However, the most thorough study of monogenēs is a doctoral dissertation by Francis Marion Warden, *Monogenēs in the Johannine Literature* (1938). This exhaustive study, written under the direction of the late W. Hersey Davis of Southern Baptist Theological Seminary, demonstrates beyond reasonable doubt that monogenēs means “uniqueness of being, rather than any remarkableness of manner of coming into being, or yet uniqueness resulting from any manner of ‘coming into being’ (pp. 35ff). Unfortunately, this thesis had never been published, but it is available in the Library of Southern Baptist Theological Seminary, Louisville, Kentucky...”<sup>112</sup>

In the quote above, we find that Dale Moody uses certain legal jargon. He says the evidence presented by Francis Warden proves “beyond a reasonable doubt” that *monogenes* means “uniqueness of being” rather than “any uniqueness resulting from any manner of “coming into being” (by which phrase, he wants the reader to think – the traditional understanding of only-begotten). So let us look at the evidence presented by Francis Warden and see if we can make the same judgment that *monogenes*, beyond a reasonable doubt, means “uniqueness of being,” and not “only-begotten.” But, before we begin, one point should be made.

Here we go again. Dale Moody sets up a presupposition to make his point, but his presupposition is “misleading.” Perhaps, he does this unwittingly. I do not know; but he does do it! His whole paper is to prove that the RSV was right in translating *monogenes* as “only,” rather than “only-begotten.” In proving this point he appeals to a dissertation written by Francis Marion Warden. But when he sets the parameters to defend his position, he defines the meaning of “only-begotten” by quoting Francis Warden’s definition of *monogenes* – “uniqueness of being, rather than any remarkableness of manner of coming into being, or yet uniqueness resulting from any manner of ‘coming into being.’”

The problem with this is that he assigns, like Warden before him, a definition to *monogenes* that it never carried! *Monogenes* never meant “uniqueness of being, rather than any remarkableness of manner of coming into being.” It never has. He subtly affirms a meaning of the word to more easily prove his assertion, for it is easy to disprove a meaning that he asserts has never been a meaning in the first place!

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<sup>112</sup> Dale Moody, “God’s Only Son: The Translation of John 3:16 in the Revised Standard Version” *Journal of Biblical Literature*, Vol. 72, No. 4; (Dec., 1953) pg. 214

It would be as if I was trying to prove that the traditional meaning of “anointed one” for the word Χριστός (Christ) was a wrong, and that the real meaning of the word was, let’s say, “chief.” So, in order to prove my point, I began by making the following statement: “The word “Χριστός” in the Greek language never meant ‘the righteous one that was anointed.’” Notice the slight change I made to the traditional meaning of “anointed one.” My statement does not say it never meant “anointed one”, but it says it never meant “the righteous one that was anointed.” What I did by this subtle change is that I added a slight nuance to the meaning of the word that it never carried, i.e. “righteous one,” in order to make it easier for me to deny the true meaning of the word.

And, so, in order to disprove that nuanced meaning I now assigned to the word Christ (Χριστός), I then state that Saul was called “Χριστός,” but he certainly was not a “righteous man” as seen in I Sam. 26:16-21 LXX. So the word Christ (Χριστός) cannot mean “the righteous one that was anointed,” but must simply mean “chief” (for who can deny the passage says he was a chief one!).

Then, someone else, upon analyzing my evidence, concludes, “Well, I see your point; yes, you’re right, Saul was not a righteous man, so you must be correct. The word must not mean “anointed,” but must mean “chief!”

What has this proved? Nothing! Such an exercise is fruitless because the whole exercise is based upon a false presupposition. Yes, it demonstrates the word does not mean “the righteous one who was anointed,” but that is not hard to prove because the word never carried that meaning in the first place!

The word simply meant “anointed one,” irrespective of the personal state of the person. My evidence did nothing to disprove the traditional meaning of the word; my evidence simply proved it did not mean “the righteous one that was anointed,” something it never meant anyway. But by changing the real meaning of the word into something it never meant, I can now do away with the real part of that nuanced meaning it did carry, i.e. anointed! And now I can also substitute my desired meaning of “chief” for the word. This is all smoke and mirrors.

In the same way, only-begotten has never carried the meaning of a “uniqueness of being, rather than any remarkableness of manner of coming into being.” That is a false presupposition. To disprove that meaning is easy because *monogenes* never had that meaning in the first place! What they need to do, if they are trying to disprove the traditional meaning of only-begotten, is to disprove the “traditional meaning” and not some pseudo-definition they assign to the word.

Only-begotten means just what it says. The one who is begotten, is the only one begotten! He is the only one begotten of his father in conception or the only one born of his mother in birth, or the only one brought forth from his or her parents. Its basal meaning means the only one brought forth. It means no more and no less. Now such a one may end up being unique, but that is not gleaned from the meaning of the word. Uniqueness would be based upon some other reason.

The real agenda of Dale Moody is to prove that *monogenes* never meant “only-begotten.” He is misdirecting the thoughts of Christians by setting up a straw man argument, a presuppositional statement or definition that never existed. However, we will not take the bait and run down a rabbit trail, set up by him, and try to defend a pseudo-definition of the word that it never carried in the first place. We will keep our focus on the facts. And, so, with that in mind, let’s continue.

At the conclusion of the first part of Warden’s dissertation he provides us a chart pulling together all the usages of *monogenes* that he examines. The chart he provides appears as below.<sup>113</sup>

How Used	Sources				
	Ex-Bibl.	Old Test.	Apoc.	New Test.	Total
Of an only child	16 (a)	5 (b)	4	4 (b)	29
Of a single fact	4	2	2	-	7
Of solitariness, desolateness	-	2	1	-	3
Of pagan divinities	4 (c)	-	-	-	4
Of miscellaneous singularity	7 (d)	-	-	-	7
Total	31	9	6	4	50

(a) Including μονογενες, “only born.” Six of these sixteen citations denote pagan goddesses who were “only daughters.”

(b) Including the references to Isaac.

(c) With possible exception in P. Leid. V. (See page 30).

(d) Including the substantival and adverbial forms, etc.

It should be noted, that in this chart he does not give us a list of where he would place each reference in each column. Nevertheless, with a little bit of analysis, I believe the references, as listed below, would reflect his thinking. I have placed numbers after each reference referring to the number of times that particular usage of the word occurs in that particular column. The designation “OB,” which stands for “only-begotten or born,” is my designation indicating as to how that word should really be understood. The references lined out are ones that are not applicable and so should not be included in the chart. They

<sup>113</sup> Francis Marion Warden, *MONOGENES IN THE JOHANNINE LITERATURE* (Southern Baptist Theological Seminary, Louisville, KY, 1938) pg. 34

are indicated by “N/A.” The designation “I/E” indicates the evidence is inconclusive, and “U/V” indicates that I was unable to verify the reference.

How Used	Sources				
	Ex. Biblical	Old Test.	Apoc.	New Test	Total
Of an only child	Hesiod: 3OB Aeschylus: 1OB Herodotus: 1OB Plato: 1OB Josephus: 2OB Arrian: 1OB Oppianus, Anazarbensis:1OB Papyri: 4OB Euripides: 1OB Apollonius Rhodius: 1OB TOTAL:16	Genesis:2OB Judges: 1OB Prov:1OB Jer: 1OB	Tobit:4OB	Luke:3OB Heb. 1OB	29
Of a single fact	Parmenides:1 I/E Plato:3OB	Psalms:2 OB	Wisdom of Solomon: 1OB	—	7
Of solitariness, desolateness	—	Psalms: 2 OB	Baruch:1OB	—	3
Of Pagan Deities	Oppianus, Anazarbensis:1 OB Orphic Hymns: 1OB Papyri:2 OB	—	—	—	4
Of Miscellaneous singularity	<del>Hephaestio:1N/A</del> Philodemus:1 U/V <del>Periplus Maris Rubri:1N/A</del> <del>Periplus Maris Erythryes:1N/A</del> Papyri (Clement): 1OB Apollonius Dyscolus:1U/V Epiphenius:1OB	—	—	—	7
<b>Sub Total</b>	31				50
Minus uses not applicable —.	Hephaestio:1N/A Periplus Maris Rubri:1 N/A Periplus Maris Erythryes: 1N/A MINUS: -3				-3
<b>Total</b>	28	9	6	4	47

(OB) This is a designation to indicate that, contrary to his analysis, the usage of the word still indicates only-begotten or only born.

(N/A) This indicates that the usage of the word is not applicable for reasons which will be discussed under each appropriate reference.

(I/E) This indicates inconclusive evidence.

(U/V) This indicates unable to verify; the reference could not be located.

Therefore, after one goes through all his evidence, as we are about to do, this is how the chart should really appear. (See below why we changed the heading “only child” of his original chart).

How Used	Sources				
	Ex-Biblical	Old Test.	Apoc.	New Test	Total
<del>Of an only child</del> Of Only-begotten, Only Born	25	9	6	4	44
Of a single fact	1(inconclusive)				1
Of solitariness, desolateness					
Of Miscellaneous, singularity	2(unable to verify)				2
<b>Total</b>	28	9	6	4	47

After removing the three references that are not applicable, we are left with forty-seven uses. After examining all the evidence we will find out that actually *monogenes* carries the meaning of “only-begotten” or “only born” 44 times and not 29 times as he claimed in his original chart. Of these forty-seven only three are used in a way other than only-begotten or only born.

Therefore, the evidence really shows us that about 94% of the references carry the meaning of *only-begotten* or *only born*. And yet Warden’s claims the complete opposite and claims the evidence suggests that *monogenes* cannot possibly mean *only-begotten*.

As in any court of law (continuing with Dale Moody’s terminology), each juror is called to make his own judgment based upon the evidence; so let’s now look at the evidence that Warden provides and let the reader, or I should say, juror, make his own decision.

We will not spend time on the original 29 usages he listed under “only child” that goes across the chart horizontally, for by his own admission it carries the meaning of “only born” and “only-begotten.” His column heading of “only child” obscures this fact, but he admits it is so, as can be seen in his quote below, and is the reason why we changed the heading from “of an only child” to “of only-begotten, only born.

But, before we look at this admission, what is so amazing is that his whole dissertation is to disprove the meaning of only-begotten for *monogenes*, yet in the beginning of his paper he admits the following.



“The following statements are appropriate here: Μονογενής is literally ‘one of a kind,’ ‘only,’ ‘unique’ (unicus), not ‘only-begotten’ which would be μονογέννητος (unigenitus).<sup>114</sup> “The word γίγνεσθαι has in general usage lost entirely the early sexual sense of the root γεν. It means simply ‘to arise,’ ‘to become.’ It signifies ‘that which previously was not there and had no existence comes into being;’ μονογενής is ‘what alone acquires or has existence...When we have to do with living beings – men or animals – the meaning ‘born,’ ‘begotten,’ is of course congruous, but there is no emphasis whatever attached to his side.”<sup>115, 116</sup>

In other words, in this quote he begins by saying *monogenes* does not mean “only-begotten” but then he admits at the end of the quote it does mean only-begotten! He says that with living beings the meaning of born or begotten is congruous!

Now what does he mean by “congruous?” I tried to find a dictionary close to the time of his writing (1938), in order to see how that word was defined at that time so we can ascertain his actual meaning. I could not find a dictionary from that decade but I did find the Webster’s Collegiate Dictionary from 1898. This is how they defined the word.

“**Con'gru-ous** (kSn'gru-tts), a. [L. congruus, fr. congruere to come together, to coincide, to agree ; of uncertain origin.] Suitable or concordant; accordant; fit; harmonious; consistent. — Con'gro OUB ly. adv.”<sup>117</sup>

And “concordant” in that dictionary means,

“**Con-cord'ant** (-ant), a. Agreeing; correspondent; harmonious; consonant. — Con cord'ant-ly. adv.”<sup>118</sup>

Today “congruous” is defined as follows by Webster,

“**Congruous** 1a : being in agreement, harmony, or correspondence b : conforming to the circumstances or requirements of a situation : appropriate <a congruous room to work in — G. B. Shaw>  
2: marked or enhanced by harmonious agreement among constituent elements <a congruous theme>”<sup>119</sup>

Congruous, then, means to “coincide,” to “agree,” to be “harmonious!” Any way you look at it, he is admitting that *monogenes* and the meaning of only-begotten or only- born completely “agree” with each other! He admits that the meaning of *only-begotten* or *only born* is perfectly “harmonious” with the Greek word *monogenes*! The two “coincide!”

<sup>114</sup> He makes a footnote here and this is his reference: Moulton and Milligan. Vocabulary of the Greek New Testament, p. 416

<sup>115</sup> He makes a footnote here referencing this as a quote, with ellipsis, from: Kattenbusch, F. *Only-Begotten*, Hastings Dictionary of Christ and the Gospels, vol. 2., p. 281

<sup>116</sup> Francis Marion Warden, *MONOGENES IN THE JOHANNINE LITERATURE* (Southern Baptist Theological Seminary, Louisville, KY, 1938) pg. 24-25

<sup>117</sup> Noah Webster, *Webster's Collegiate Dictionary: A Dictionary of the English Language* (G. & C. Merriam Co., Springfield, 1898) pg. 180

<sup>118</sup> Ibid., pg. 176

<sup>119</sup> www.merriam-webster.com © 2012 Merriam-Webster, Incorporated

Here he is out to disprove the meaning of *only-begotten* but at the beginning of his study he quietly admits that with living beings it means *only-begotten*!

This is why we need not look at his original 29 references in the column listed as “only child,” for a child is a living being and so, by his own admission, the word means “only-begotten” in such cases. That is also the reason why in my chart I renamed the column from “only child” to “only-begotten,” or “only born,” He admits the word means “only-begotten” in those cases, so let’s name the column appropriately.

(Dear reader, is this not amazing that before we even begin this study, by using his “own chart,” he admits that out of 50 times, the word *monogenes* is used 29 of those times with the meaning of *only-begotten* or *only born*! That means that 58% of the time *monogenes* means “only-begotten,” and 42% of the time he claims it means otherwise. And of those 21 times, where it is used otherwise, we must take out those 4 usages that are used of pagan deities, because they too were considered living beings by the Greeks, and, as such, by his own admission, it carries the connotation of *only-begotten*. Therefore that leaves us with only 17 times out of 50 that it is used otherwise (i.e. according to his claim). That means, by his own definition, 66% of the time it carries the meaning of “only begotten” or “only born” and only 34% of the time is it used otherwise. And yet, he takes that minority meaning (34%) and claims it is the primary meaning of *monogenes*. He ignores the primary or majority meaning and utilizes the minority meaning. Something, dear reader, is askew with his analysis, and we have not even started our study!)

Therefore, with all this laid out for the reader, let’s begin our study of the evidence provided by Francis Warden.

He divides his evidence into three headings within two historical periods. First, the age of the dialects, 1000-300 B.C., second, the age of the Koine, 300 B.C. to 330 A.D., and finally, he looks specifically at the Greek Old Testament from the period of the Koine (in which category he also includes the New Testament).

## The Age of the Dialects

### Parmenides

His first assertion as to a different meaning for *monogenes* is the passage from Parmenides. Now, Parmenides is one of the main Greek texts used to negate the traditional meaning of only-begotten for *monogenes*. The reason is because the word occurs along with the word “unbegotten,” and so, in the

mind of many, this demonstrates the word could not possibly mean “only-begotten,” for that would be a contradiction of terms.

In light of this, Warden makes this statement regarding this passage in his introduction.

“An examination of the word as it has been used in all its discoverable sources will do more, perhaps, to bring to light its precise meaning than will lexical and grammatical consideration alone. For the final conclusion must be made in the light of the ways in which the word has been used, never in terms of what any one should like to have it mean.”<sup>120</sup>

Now we must say, we heartily agree with such a conclusion. The problem, however, is he concentrates on the usage of the word up to five centuries before the New Testament was written, yet ignores those usages that occur just a few decades after the New Testament was written. But we will address that issue later.

The exercise before us is to examine the evidence that Warden provides, the evidence that Dale Moody claims proves beyond a reasonable doubt that *monogenes* does not mean “only-begotten.” And the first such evidence is the Poem of Parmenides written around the year 500 B.C.<sup>121</sup> Below is the Greek phrase as Warden gives it and the translation he assigns to it.

“οὐδὸν μουννογενές τε καὶ ἀτρεμὲς ἡδ’ ἀτέλεστον (Reality is uncreated and indestructible,) both complete and unique, unmoved and eternal”<sup>122</sup>

Based upon this text, Warden claims *monogenes* cannot mean only-begotten because it is used in conjunction with the word unbegotten (uncreated). However, as we will find in many of his examples, he does not provide the reader with all the evidence. Many of his quotes are taken out of context. He does not even provide the reader the full Greek text of the English translation he provides! Nevertheless, let’s continue in examining this text with one quick observation.

The usage of this text may be much ado about nothing because many Neo-Trinitarians may not realize that the word μουννογενές is a variant in the text and may not even be the word Parmenides adopted! So this reference really does not prove anything and should not be used as evidence either way because we are unsure of the exact wording. The poem has been handed down to us, not in the original, but in copies found in the various writings of other authors. Thus there are differences between the texts.

In speaking of these variants, John Palmer in his book, *Parmenides and Presocratic Philosophy* tells us this.

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<sup>120</sup> Ibid., pg. 25

<sup>121</sup> There is disagreement, not only as to when this poem was written, but also, as to when Parmenides was born. Most assign a date for his birth from 540 B.C. to 515B.C.

<sup>122</sup> Ibid., pg. 26

“Later authors such as these would have transcribed either from a copy of the poem to which they had access, from an anthology of some type in which certain verses appeared already excerpted, or simply from memory (as Plato and, much later, Proclus often seem to do). It is hardly surprising, therefore, that already in antiquity quotations of Parmenides’ poem in different authors and sources should have contained different reports of a word or two here and there. Furthermore, each of the ancient works containing these excerpts has come down to us in multiple medieval manuscripts. Centuries of copying and recopying inevitably produced even more discrepant readings, especially in places where the copyists may have had difficulty understanding the sense of Parmenides’ archaic phraseology or were unfamiliar with his epic morphology. The historical vagaries of the poem’s partial preservation via an entirely indirect, lengthy, and often conflicting tradition have presented modern editors with the task of trying to determine as best they can what words Parmenides himself actually wrote.”<sup>123</sup>

As such, the true reading of this portion may not even include the reading of οὐλον μουνογενές. Some believe the true reading is what is found in Plutarch’s copy of the poem. He reads ἔστι γὰρ οὐλομελές rather than οὐλον μουνογενές. In Plutarch’s copy of the poem the word *monogenes* does not even appear! Consequently, the whole use of the text of Parmenides to prove that *monogenes* cannot possibly mean only-begotten actually becomes mute.

Below one will find two charts showing the Greek Text of each variant.

Parmenides as found in Plutarch			
Greek Text	English Translation	John Burnet’s Translation	
Μόνος δ’ ἔτι μῦθος ὁδοῖο λείπεται ὥς ἔστιν·	But still only one story of a way is left —that “it is.”	One path only is left for us to speak of, namely, that It is.	
ταύτη δ’ ἐπὶ σήματ’ ἔασι πολλὰ μάλ’	And in this way, on very many signposts it might leave—	In it are very many tokens that what is,	
ὥς ἀγένητον ἐὸν καὶ ἀνώλεθρόν ἔστιν ἔστι γὰρ οὐλομελές τε καὶ ἀτρεμὲς ἢ δ’ ἀτέλεστον. <sup>124</sup>	it is—as being unbegotten and indestructible—for it is complete as well as unmovable, and without end.	is uncreated and indestructible, for it is complete, immovable and without end. <sup>125</sup>	

<sup>123</sup> John Palmer, *Parmenides and Presocratic Philosophy* (Oxford University Press, Oxford, 2009) pg. 350

<sup>124</sup> Samuel Béreau, Le poème de Parménide: <http://philoctetes.free.fr/parmenidesunicode.htm>

<sup>125</sup> John Burnet, *Early Greek Philosophy*, 2<sup>nd</sup>. Edition, (Adam and Charles Black, London, 1908) pg. 199

Parmenides as found in Simplicius			
Greek Text	English Translation		John Palmer's Edition
Μόνος δ' ἔτι μῦθος ὁδοῖο λείπεται ὥς ἔστιν·	But still only one story of a way is left – that “it is.”		As yet a single tale of a way remains, that it is;
ταύτῃ δ' ἐπὶ σήματ' ἔασι πολλὰ μάλ'	And in this way, on very many signposts it might leave—		and along this path markers are there very many, that What Is
ὥς ἀγέννητον ἐὸν καὶ ἀνώλεθρόν ἐστιν οὐλον μουνογενές τε καὶ ἀτρεμές ἡδ' ἀτέλεστον. <sup>126</sup>	it is—as being unbegotten and indestructible— complete, [and] only-begotten, as well as unmovable, and without end.		is ungenerated and deathless, whole and uniform, and still and perfect. <sup>127</sup>

In addition to the variants above, some even believe the true reading is μονομελής (single-limbed), rather than οὐλομελής (complete), or μουνογενές (only-begotten).

Therefore, one can see Parmenides is not a reliable text in determining the true meaning of *monogenes*.

Nevertheless, for the sake of argument, let's assume the true reading for the text is μουνογενές. Does its appearance with unbegotten preclude a meaning of only-begotten as Neo-Trinitarians claim? I do not think so; let me explain.

The problem with this text, as it is quoted by many Neo-Trinitarians, is they only give you a small snippet of the text, usually the word μουνογενές and a few surrounding words; for instance, they might present the phrase as: ὥς ἀγέννητον ἐὸν καὶ ἀνώλεθρόν ἐστιν οὐλον μουνογενές. Now, of course, with such a small fragment, it should not surprise us that one would conclude that μουνογενές cannot mean only-begotten, for it says in one breath the reality of things is ἀγέννητον (unbegotten) and then, in the next breath it says that it is μουνογενές (only-begotten). How could it mean only-begotten, if it was

<sup>126</sup> Henn, Martin J. *Parmenides, Parmenides of Elea: A Verse Translation With Interpretative Essays and Commentary to the Text Issue 88 of Contributions in Philosophy* (Greenwood Publishing Group, Westport, CT 2003) Pg, 111

<sup>127</sup> John Palmer, *Parmenides and Presocratic Philosophy* (Oxford University Press, Oxford, 2009) Pgs. 368-369

unbegotten? They conclude it must mean “one of a kind” or unique because of this fact.

But the problem with using this small snippet is that it does not give the reader the full context. When one sees the fuller context, one actually realizes, more than likely, it should be understood as *only-begotten* and not “one of a kind” or “unique.”

Let me give you John Burnet’s English translation of this work for the fuller context. The fragment in question is underlined.

“Fragment IV & V – Come now, I will tell thee — and do thou hearken to my saying and carry it away — the only two ways of search that can be thought of. The first, namely, that It is, and that it is impossible for it not to be, is the way of belief, for truth is its companion. The other, namely, that It is not, and that it must needs not be,—that, I tell thee, is a path that none can learn of at all. For thou canst not know what is not—that is impossible—nor utter it; for it is the same thing that can be thought and that can be.

“Fragment VI – It needs must be that what can be thought and spoken of is; for it is possible for it to be, and it is not possible for what is nothing to be. This is what I bid thee ponder. I hold thee back from this first way of inquiry, and from this other also, upon which mortals knowing naught wander two-faced; for helplessness guides the wandering thought in their breasts, so that they are borne along stupefied like men deaf and blind. Undiscerning crowds, in whose eyes it is, and is not, the same and not the same, and all things travel in opposite directions!

“Fragment VII – For this shall never be proved, that the things that are not are; and do thou restrain thy thought from this way of inquiry.

“Fragment VIII – One path only is left for us to speak of, namely, that It is. In it are very many tokens that what is is uncreated and indestructible; for it is complete, immovable, and without end. Nor was it ever, nor will it be; for now it is, all at once, a continuous one. For what kind of origin for it wilt thou look for? In what way and from what source could it have drawn its increase? I shall not let thee say nor think that it came from what is not; for it can neither be thought nor uttered that anything is not. And, if it came from nothing, what need could have made it arise later rather than sooner? Therefore must it either be altogether or be not at all. Nor will the force of truth suffer aught to arise besides itself from that which is not. Wherefore, Justice doth not loose her fetters and let anything come into being or pass away, but holds it fast. Our judgment thereon depends on this: “Is it, or is it not?” Surely it is adjudged, as it needs must be, that we are to set aside the one way as unthinkable and nameless (for it is no true way), and that the other path is real and true. How, then, can what is be going to be in the future? Or how could it come into being? If it came into being, it is not; nor is it if it is going to be in the future. Thus is becoming extinguished and passing away not to be heard of. Nor is it divisible, since it is all alike, and there is no more of it in one place than in another, to hinder it from holding together, nor less of it, but everything is full of what is. Wherefore it is wholly continuous; for what is, is in contact with what is. Moreover, it is immovable in the bonds of mighty chains, without beginning and without end; since coming into being and passing away have been driven afar, and true belief has cast them away. It is the same, and it rests in the self-same place, abiding in itself. And thus it remaineth constant in its place; for hard necessity keeps it in the bonds of the limit that holds it fast on every side.

Wherefore it is not permitted to what is to be infinite; for it is in need of nothing; while, if it were infinite, it would stand in need of everything.<sup>128</sup>

What we find in the fuller context is that Parmenides is speaking of the true nature of things personified as Being. John Burnet continues:

“He goes on to develop all the consequences of the admission that it is. It must be uncreated and indestructible. It cannot have arisen out of nothing; for there is no such thing as nothing. Nor can it have arisen from something; for there is no room for anything but itself. **What is cannot have beside it any empty space in which something else might arise;** for empty space is nothing, nothing cannot be thought, and therefore cannot exist. **What is, never came into being, nor is anything going to come into being in the future.** "Is it or is it not?" If it is, then it is now, all at once.

“That Parmenides was really denying the existence of empty space was quite well known to Plato. He says that Parmenides held "all things were one, and that the one remains at rest in itself, having no place in which to move." Aristotle is no less clear. In the *de Caelo* he lays it down that Parmenides was driven to take up the position that the One was immovable just because no one had yet imagined that there was any reality other than sensible reality.

“That which is, is; and it cannot be more or less. There is, therefore, as much of it in one place as in another, and the world is a continuous, indivisible plenum. From this it follows at once that it must be immovable. If it moved, it must move into an empty space, and there is no empty space.”<sup>129</sup>

Burnet makes the observation that Parmenides believed that “what is cannot have beside it any empty space in which something else might arise.” Therefore, “what is, never came into being, nor is anything going to come into being in the future.” This last observation, in my opinion, explains why Parmenides makes the statement about “reality” that it is both ἀγένητον (unbegotten), and μουννογενές (only-begotten).

Reality, which is personified as Being, is unbegotten because it has always been, never coming into being, and it is only-begotten because there can be no other. It is saying “it is what it is,” so do not search for anything else. Unbegotten shows it did not come out of nothing but always was, and only-begotten shows it remains immutable, the same – that there can be no other reality for there is no other empty space for another to come into being. It is being looked at from both perspectives. The one rules out a past and the other rules out a future. Reality simply “is.” It never was not, nor never will be anything other than it is.

This fact that it is and will be no other, explains the use of μουννογενές (only-begotten). This concept is reinforced a few lines later when he says, Οὐδὲ ποτ' ἐκ μὴ ἐόντος ἐρήσει πίστιος ἰσχύς γίνεσθαι τι παρ' αὐτό· τοῦ εἶνέκεν οὔτε

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<sup>128</sup> John Burnet, *Early Greek Philosophy*, 2<sup>nd</sup> Edition (Adam and Charles Black, London, 1908) pgs. 197-200 (Only the text is quoted without the footnotes and verse numbers.)

<sup>129</sup> Ibid., pg. 206-207

γενέσθαι οὐτ' ὄλλυσθαι ἀνῆκε Δίκη χαλάσασα πέδησιν, ἀλλ' ἔχει<sup>130</sup> (Nor will the force of truth suffer aught to arise besides itself from that which is not. Wherefore, Justice doth not loose her fetters and let anything come into being or pass away, but holds it fast.).<sup>131</sup>

The Greek words Burnet translates as “arise” and “come into being” are respectively γίγνεσθαι, and γενέσθαι. The first, γίγνεσθαι, is a present infinitive of γίγνομαι and the second γενέσθαι is an aorist infinitive of the same verb. The verb γίγνομαι is translated in many different ways as is seen in the translation above, yet it must be admitted that it is also understood with the concept of being born or begotten. It is used in this sense in the following verses in Scripture.

**Genesis 6:1** And it came to pass when men began to be numerous upon the earth, and daughters were born to them (Brenton's LXX Version)

**Genesis 17:17** Then Abraham fell upon his face, and laughed, and said in his heart, Shall *a child* be born unto him that is an hundred years old? and shall Sarah, that is ninety years old, bear? KJV

**Genesis 21:3** And Abraam called the name of his son that was born to him, whom Sarrha bore to him, Isaac. (Brenton's LXX Version)

**John 8:58** Jesus said to them, "Truly, truly, I say to you, before Abraham was born, I am." NASB

**Romans 1:3** concerning His Son Jesus Christ our Lord, who was born of the seed of David according to the flesh. NKJV

**Galatians 4:4** But when the fulness of the time came, God sent forth His Son, born of a woman, born under the Law,

Parmenides is looking at reality as “being” so it is perfectly congruous to understand the idea of “born” or “begotten.”

Consequently, if one accepts the variant μόνονγενέξ (only-begotten) in Parmenides, we find he is simply saying that there is only one reality and that there can be no other reality than what is. I would modify John Burnet's translation to read: “Nor will the force of truth suffer aught to “be born” besides itself from that which is not. Wherefore, Justice doth not loose her fetters and let anything come into being or pass away, but holds it fast.” Or, one could read it, “the force of truth will not allow anything to be “begotten” alongside itself.” In other words, Parmenides is saying that reality is like one that is “only-begotten!”

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<sup>130</sup> Parmenides, Martin J. Henn, *Parmenides of Elea: A Verse Translation With Interpretative Essays and Commentary to the Text Issue 88 of Contributions in Philosophy* (Greenwood Publishing Group, Westport, CT 2003) pg., 111

<sup>131</sup> Burnet, op. cit., pg., 199



The adjectives unbegotten and indestructible, complete and only-begotten, as well as unmovable and without end, while on the surface appear contradictory, are not really. Parmenides is using a paradox! Its purpose is to appear contradictory! However, the thought is perfectly understood once one contemplates the entire phrase within the greater context, i.e. when one contemplates “reality (it is), from a perspective of the past and a perspective of the future, from a perspective of “nothing,” and the perspective of “everything.”

Based upon the thinking of Parmenides, since nothingness could never exist, our reality is “unbegotten.” And since, our reality is what it is, it will remain alone like one “only-begotten,” for there is not empty space, nothingness, for anything else to be begotten. “What is” cannot have siblings for “What is,” simply *is*.

Let us continue. After he makes that paradoxical statement, he then goes and explains what he means by that statement. First he addresses the concept of “unbegotten” by saying,

“For what kind of origin for it wilt thou look for? In what way and from what source could it have drawn its increase? I shall not let thee say nor think that it came from what is not; for it can neither be thought nor uttered that anything is not. And, if it came from nothing, what need could have made it arise later rather than sooner? Therefore must it either be altogether or be not at all.”<sup>132</sup>

Then he explains the concept of “only-begotten” as follows,

“Nor will the force of truth suffer aught to arise (to be begotten) besides itself (παρ’ αὐτό) from that which in any way is. Wherefore, Justice does not loose her fetters and let anything come into being or pass away, but holds it fast.”<sup>133</sup>

Parmenides is using paradoxical language. In other words, the use of ἀγένητον (unbegotten), does not negate the use of μουννογενές (only-begotten), it actually reinforces it, for he creating a paradox.

Paradoxical language is used many times in literary pieces. For example, one might recall Charles Dickens’ famous use of paradoxical language in the opening sentence of his *The Tale of Two Cities*. He begins his story,

“It was the best of times, it was the worst of times, it was the age of wisdom, it was the age of foolishness, it was the epoch of belief, it was the epoch of incredulity, it was the season of Light, it was the season of Darkness, it was the spring of hope, it was the winter of despair, we had everything before us, we had nothing before us, we were all going direct to Heaven, we were all going direct the other way...”<sup>134</sup>

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<sup>132</sup>Burnet, op. cit., pg., 199

<sup>133</sup>Burnet, op. cit., pg., 199

<sup>134</sup> Charles Dickens, *A Tale of Two Cities* (James Nisbet & Company, London, 1902) pg. 3

The purpose of paradoxical language is to get one's attention, so that a person will be forced to delve deeper into the subject in order to understand the subject. This literary technique is not an invention of modern times. Another philosopher, Heraclitus, who was a contemporary of Parmenides, also used paradoxical language. "He believed in the unity of opposites, stating that "the path up and down are one and the same", all existing entities... [are]...characterized by pairs of contrary properties."<sup>135</sup> In one of his paradoxes he states: "εἶμὲν τε καὶ οὐκ εἶμεν we exist and do not exist." Obviously, this was meant to be a paradox and wasn't meant to be taken literally. The same was true of Parmenides use of unbegotten and only-begotten.

Another famous example of the use of paradox as a literary device is used by William Shakespeare in his play *As You Like It*. It is found in Act Three, Scene Two.

"Truly, shepherd, in respect of itself, it is a good life,  
but in respect that it is a shepherd's life, it is naught.  
In respect that it is solitary, I like it very well;  
but in respect that it is private, it is a very vile life.  
Now, in respect it is in the fields, it pleaseth me well;  
but in respect it is not in the court, it is tedious.  
As is it a spare life, look you, it fits my humour well;  
but as there is no more plenty in it, it goes much against my stomach."<sup>136</sup>

What we see here is that the character Touchstone thought such life as good, yet bad, liked very well, yet hated much. It was a pleasing life, but a tedious life; it fit his desires well, yet turned his stomach. This is the use of paradox and this is what Parmenides is employing.

There are many others who have recognized this fact (once one examines the fuller context). For example, considering the following from *Johnson's New universal cyclopædia: a scientific and popular treasury of useful knowledge*.

"Parmenides, the Spinoza of ancient philosophy, was, with the exception perhaps of Herakleitos, the greatest of the pre-Socratic thinkers. The kernel of his thought is the notion of pure Being, which...is

"...**Birthless** and deathless, Whole and **only-begotten**, and moveless and ever-enduring: Never it was or shall be, but the all simultaneously now is, One continuous one."<sup>137</sup>

Or consider William Leonard Courtney's understanding of the passage.

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<sup>135</sup> Heraclitus: [en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Heraclitus](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Heraclitus)

<sup>136</sup> William Shakespeare, Charles Knight, ed., *The Pictorial Edition of the Works of Shakspeare, Comedies, Vol. 1*, 2<sup>nd</sup> Edition (G. Routledge & Sons, London 1867) pg. 257

<sup>137</sup> Frederick Augustus Porter Barnard, Arnold Guyot, ed. *Johnson's New universal cyclopædia: a scientific and popular treasury of useful knowledge Volume 3, Part II* (A.J. Johnson & Co., New York, 1880) pg. 1098

“And for this there are many tokens to prove that Being is **birthless** and deathless, whole and **only-begotten**, and unmoved and unending. It never was, it never will be, since it is a universal now, one and continuous. For what birth shalt thou find for it? How and whence hath it gained increase? I will not let thee say or think that it came from non Being, for it can neither be said nor thought how Not is becomes Is. What need can have stirred it, earlier or later, to issue and grow from non-Being? Thus Being must either wholly be, or wholly not be. Nor yet will the force of conviction suffer that from Being there should grow anything other than itself. Wherefore, Justice relaxes not its fetters to let it either have become or perish, but holds it fast.<sup>138</sup>

And so one can see how the use of *monogenes*, with the meaning of *only-begotten*, is perfectly appropriate in this passage and, indeed, is necessary for the paradox to work. The meaning of “one of a kind” actually destroys the paradox!

Nevertheless, in spite of all this, I am sure there will still be some Neo-Trinitarians who will say, “No that is all wrong. The fact that Parmenides uses *μουνογενές* with *ἀγένητον* (unbegotten) proves *monogenes* cannot mean only-begotten, but must mean unique or one of a kind.”

Now if one wishes to believe this, and if one concludes that *monogenes* cannot mean only-begotten in the Gospel of John, because of this ancient text, that is fine, but then let me ask one question.

Why would someone take a usage of *monogenes* from a pagan philosopher, living some 600 years before the apostle John wrote his Gospel, and then seek to impose that meaning upon his usage of *monogenes*? And yet, at the same time, ignore the contemporary witness of Christians living within a mere 60 years of the apostle John, who affirm the complete opposite, who affirm that the word did mean only-begotten? Something is askew.

Why would a pagan’s witness be taken over a Christian’s witness? Why would a pagan’s usage bear more weight than a Christian’s usage? Why would a pagan’s use of the word, almost six hundred years before, better reflect the true meaning of the word than a Christian’s use of the word a mere sixty years later? (It is, of course, found in the writings of Justin Martyr, and in the contemporary writings of such ones as Luke, the writer of Hebrews, Josephus, and Clement)!

I hope the discerning Christian will realize that current context is what defines a word and not its etymology or previous usage (even though in this case, i.e., in this portion of Parmenides, I think we found that *monogenes*, indeed, still meant only-begotten). But, again, for those who want to disagree, surely you know that a word must be understood by its current context and usage. Many,

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<sup>138</sup> William Leonard Courtney, *Studies in philosophy: ancient and modern* (Rivingtons, London, 1882) pg. 9

many words are always undergoing change in all language groups. Let us consider the English language.

If we were to live six hundred years from now, would we automatically define the word “gay” in the twenty-first century, by the usage of the word in the nineteenth century? Of course we would not. The word has drastically changed its meaning. To say, “a person is gay,” in the nineteenth century, meant he was happy and carefree, but to say, “a person is gay,” in the twenty-first century, more than likely will mean he is a homosexual! The meaning of a word must be defined by the current context and usage of its day and not by a usage centuries before.

When one does that, whether in the case of Parmenides or in the case of Justin Martyr, one finds that *monogenes* means only-begotten. And in the case of the *Poem of Parmenides*, one finds the meaning of “only-begotten” actually fits in better within the fuller context of the passage than say the meaning “unique,” or “one of a kind.”

Let us now proceed to Warden’s next example.

## Plato

### Timaeus

After a few more references the next reference Warden claims clearly shows *monogenes* does not mean only-begotten is that of Plato. Francis Warden states the following regarding the usage of the word in Plato’s *Timaeus*.

“...ἀλλ’ εἷς ὃδε μονογενὴς οὐρανὸς γεγονὼς ἔστιν καὶ ἔτ’ ἔσται (The creator made neither two nor countless worlds), but this one and only universe, having come into existence, both is and will be; εἷς οὐρανὸς ὃδε μονογενὴς ὢν, ‘This one and only universe.’ The two virtually identical citations from the *Timaeus* indicate Plato’s striving for (possibly a revelation of) the knowledge of the One cause for the unique universe. The singularity of the universe is grounded in the fact of its being the only universe created; the unique manner of its coming into being, if present at all, is surely not emphasized.” (Francis Warden)<sup>139</sup>

On the surface, with the Greek text above, and the translation he made, one would assume his point is well taken. However, as we will find with many of his other quotations, he takes them out of context. He does not give the reader all the evidence. And when we look at the fuller context and see all the evidence, we find that he is wrong and the word *monogenes* is being used in its traditional sense of “only-begotten.”

The fuller quote would be this.

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<sup>139</sup> Francis Marion Warden, *MONOTENES IN THE JOHANNINE LITERATURE* (Southern Baptist Theological Seminary, Louisville, KY, 1938) pg. 27

“ἵνα οὖν τόδε κατὰ τὴν μόνωσιν ὁμοιον ἦ τῷ παντελεῖ ζῳῷ, διὰ ταῦτα οὔτε δύο οὔτ’ ἀπείρους ἐποίησεν ὁ ποιὼν κόσμους, ἀλλ’ εἷς ὁδε μονογενὴς οὐρανὸς γεγονὼς ἔστιν καὶ ἔτ’ ἔσται.”<sup>140</sup>

“Consequently, in order that this [heaven] might be in accordance to the singular one, similar to the perfect living being – on account of these things he did not make two universes, nor did he make many worlds, but this one only begotten heaven having been brought forth is and will yet be.”

What we see by the fuller context is that the universe is made after what Plato calls a “living being.” As such, he uses words associated with fecundity, i.e. μονογενὴς and γεγονὼς. If one remembers, Warden already admitted that *monogenes* when used of living beings carries the sense of “only born,” or “only-begotten.” Well, guess what? Plato is placing this text within the context of a living being! This is not brought out by Warden, and he leaves out the part of the text that refers to a living being, κατὰ τὴν μόνωσιν ὁμοιον ἦ τῷ παντελεῖ ζῳῷ (in accordance to the singular one, similar to the perfect living being). The word we find a few words before the beginning of his quote is the word ζῳῷ, which means a living creature, being, or animal.

Regarding this analogy to a living being, James Adam says this,

“In the *Timaeus* there is abundant evidence that Plato regarded the World as a divine creature.”<sup>141</sup>

In fact, this is specifically stated in the section right before the section where Warden obtains his quote. The section, *Timaeus* 30a, states:

“In this way then we ought to affirm according to the probable account that this universe is a living creature in very truth possessing soul and reason by the providence of God.”<sup>142</sup>

But Warden does not take this fact into account in his translation.

According to *Timaeus*, the Maker of all things made this “cosmos” to be like a living being or animal; it was made like that eternal and perfect living being which existed in the mind of the Maker. As such, the cosmos is seen as that which has been begotten, as, indeed, any living creature is so known. This explains why this one and singular cosmos is called “only-begotten.”

Archer-Hind translates this portion before us as follows.

“To the end then that in its solitude this universe might be like the all-perfect animal, the maker made neither two universes nor an infinite number; but as it has come into being, this universe one and only-begotten, so it is and shall be forever.”<sup>143</sup>

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<sup>140</sup> Plato, *Timaeus*, 31b, Sourced from: [www.perseus.tufts.edu](http://www.perseus.tufts.edu) 2012

<sup>141</sup> Plato, James Adam, ed., *The Republic of Plato: Books Volume 2* (At the University Press, Cambridge, 1902) pg. 290

<sup>142</sup> Plato, R.D. Archer-Hind, *The Timaeus of Plato* (Macmillan and Co., London, 1888) pg.

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<sup>143</sup> Ibid., pg. 95-96

Warden then continues and references the second use of *monogenes* in Timaeus which reads, εἷς οὐρανὸς ὅδε μονογενὴς ὢν. Warden then translates it and claims it also means, “this one and only universe.”

But again, he takes that small phrase out of context. The entire context reads as follows:

“And now let us declare that our discourse concerning this all has reached its end. Having received all mortal and immortal creatures and being therewithal replenished, this universe hath thus come into being, living and visible, containing all things that are visible, the image of its maker, a god perceptible, most mighty and good, most fair and perfect, even this one and only-begotten world that is.”<sup>144</sup>

Notice how Archer-Hind translated the same phrase that Warden translated as “this one and only universe.” He translates the same phrase as follows: “this one and only-begotten world that is.” Why? Because he understands the philosophical issues in Timaeus. He understands the fuller context. He did not lift that little line, which Warden quotes, out of its context.

He even includes this comment on line 10, starting on page 338 of his book.

“And so was the universe completed and all that is therein, one and only-begotten, the most fair and perfect image of its eternal maker.”<sup>145</sup>

Other secular writers understood the same thing.

For example, in commenting on the philosophy of Timaeus as understood by that Neo-Platonist Proclus (412 A.D. -485A.D.), Thomas Taylor says this –

“For as the intelligible paradigm was generated one from the one which is the good, so likewise with reference to itself being one, it constituted the world only-begotten. Hence the world is one. And neither are there many worlds; for there are not many first paradigms; nor infinite worlds...”<sup>146</sup>

He then continues commenting specifically on this line:

"But this heaven [or universe] was generated, is, and will be one and only-begotten." The only-begotten indeed, adumbrates the monadic cause, and indicates an essence which is comprehensive of all secondary natures, and has dominion over wholes.”<sup>147</sup>

So we see, when we are presented with the fuller context, that it is misleading for Warden to state that *monogenes* does not mean “only-begotten” in this particular portion of Plato. And, not only that, it is beyond misleading, but absolutely wrong when he implies a traditional understanding of only-

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<sup>144</sup> Ibid., pg. 345

<sup>145</sup> Ibid., pg. 339

<sup>146</sup> Thomas Taylor, *The Commentaries of Proclus on the Timaeus of Plato, in Five Books Containing a Treasury of Pythagoric and Platonic Physiology, Vol. 1* (Printed for the author by A.J. Valpy, London, 1820) Pg. 385

<sup>147</sup> Ibid., pg. 386

begotten is not present in this text, nor emphasized. Even philosophical writers, who have no dog in this fight, have understood such an emphasis and so have understood *monogenes* to mean only-begotten within the context.

Finally, before leaving this portion of Plato two more observation need to be made. First, some may be confused as to the use of such human terms for what was considered to be an act of material creation. But this should not surprise us. Does not Scripture itself use such terminology in describing creation of the world?

The Psalmist speaks of God begetting that which he creates.

**Psalm 90:2** Before the mountains were born, Or Thou didst give birth to the earth and the world, Even from everlasting to everlasting, Thou art God.

Of course, in Scripture, this must be understood as analogy, for unlike Plato, Scripture never views the heavens and the earth as a living being. But the conceptual language should not surprise us.

Second, one final look must be made at the text quoted by Warden, but with that portion of the text Warden ignored. Back in Timaeus 31a Plato says this:

“...ἵνα οὖν τόδε κατὰ τὴν μόνωσιν ὁμοιον ἦ τῷ παντελεῖ ζῳῷ, διὰ ταῦτα οὔτε δύο οὔτ’ ἀπείρους ἐποίησεν ὁ ποιῶν κόσμους, ἀλλ’ εἰς ὃδε μονογενὴς οὐρανὸς γεγονῶς ἔστιν καὶ ἔτ’ ἔσται.”<sup>148</sup>

And Archer-Hind translated it as follows.

“To the end then that in its solitude this universe might be like the all-perfect animal, the maker made neither two universes nor an infinite number; but as it has come into being, this universe one and only-begotten, so it is and shall be forever.”<sup>149</sup>

The second and last point which I wish to make (one which is most significant), is about a little word that Warden ignored in his translation. It is the little word Plato uses in the beginning of the sentence, the Greek word μόνωσιν. It is the Greek word which I underlined, and the Greek word which Archer-Hind translated as “solitude.” Liddell and Scott define it as follows.

“**A.** solitariness, singleness, Pl.Ti.31 b, Ph.1.559; ἡ ἀπ’ αὐτοῦ μ. separation from . . . , Plu. Them. 10, cf. Porph.Abst.4.20.”<sup>150</sup>

Why did not Plato, when he got to the end of his sentence, simply use the very same word he used in the beginning of his sentence – μόνωσιν? If he wanted to conclude that the universe was, as Warden says, “one and only,” or “one of a kind,” he already used a word that carried such a meaning, the word

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<sup>148</sup> Archer-Hind, op. cit., pg. 94-95

<sup>149</sup> Ibid., pg. 95-96

<sup>150</sup> Henry George Liddell, Robert Scott, *Greek-English Lexicon, Seventh Edition* (Harper & Brothers, New York, 1883) pg. 978

μόνωσιν! The word carried the connotation of “one and only,” “alone,” “single,” “solitary.” In fact, Archer-Hind made this comment about the word.

“κατὰ τὴν μόνωσιν i.e. respect of its isolation, of being the only one of its kind.”<sup>151</sup>

This fact alone would demonstrate that in Plato’s mind μονογενὴς carried a different meaning than μόνωσιν. If Plato wanted to conclude and say again the universe was “one and only,” or “one of a kind,” he could have simply used the same word, μόνωσιν, again. But he did not.

Unless it was for the sake of euphony, the only reason why he would not use the same word again was because it would communicate the wrong idea. He did not want to just say that the universe is and ever will be the one “solitary,” the “one of a kind,” or the “one and only” heaven. If he did he could have used μόνωσιν again. Rather, he wanted to say the universe was μονογενὴς (only-begotten); he wanted to emphasize that the only one universe was “generated,” that it was “brought forth.” Μόνωσιν could not have communicated this thought, whereas μονογενὴς could.

*Monogenes*, contrary to Warden’s assertion, does not mean “one and only” in *Timaeus*; it means *only-begotten*.

I hope one begins to see that this evidence, rather than demonstrating beyond a reasonable doubt that *monogenes* cannot mean “only-begotten,” actually affirms the meaning of only-begotten for *monogenes*!” Neo-Trinitarians have perpetuated a linguistic myth regarding this word. I hope the readers are beginning to see the truth of the matter.

*Monogenes* is a word chosen by the Holy Spirit to bespeak the beauties of our Saviour in his eternal relationship to the eternal Father as the only one begotten before all time; it bespeaks the one who was eternally generated by the Father and so is truly very God of very God. He is eternal, unlike the claim of Arians, Jehovah’s Witnesses or Mormons, and he is also eternally begotten, unlike the claims of Neo-Trinitarians. *Monogenes* is a compound word that emphasizes this singularity and begottenness; it was used that way in Plato and it was used that way in Scripture.

Let us now move on to the next quote he gives from Plato.

## The Laws

Warden also provides the following quote in his effort to demonstrate that *monogenes* does not mean only-begotten. He states:

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<sup>151</sup> Archer-Hind, op. cit., pg. 95



“Plato gives one further use of μονογενής : τὴν τῶν βασιλέων γένεσιν ἐκ μονογενοῦς, ‘the twofold generation of kings descended from one.’”<sup>152</sup>

However, the full sentence reads as follows.

“Θεὸς εἶναι κηδόμενος ὑμῶν τις, ὃς τα μέλλοντα προορῶν, δίδυμον ὑμῖν φυτεύσας τὴν τῶν βασιλέων γένεσιν ἐκ μονογενοῦς.”<sup>153</sup>

And a possible English translation would be: A god who [seems] to be troubled for you, who foreseeing the future, planted a double generation of kings for you out of one begotten (begetting).

The first thing that needs to be said is that Warden’s translation does not match the Greek text he provides. With the text he provides it should simply read, using his definition, “The generation of kings from one.” He left out the Greek text that included the Greek word for twofold – δίδυμον.

Why did he do that? We will never know. Perhaps, it was an oversight. But in so doing he also left out another important word in order to properly understand the text. He left out the word φυτεύσας which was word that was used for the planting of something, especially fruit trees.

Liddell and Scott define φυτεύσας this way.

“I. c. acc. of the thing planted, plant trees, esp. fruit-trees, “οὔτε φυτεύουσιν χερσὶν φυτὸν οὔτ’ ὑπόωσιν” Od.9.108; “δένδρεα φ.” 18.359, cf. περιφθεύω; ...2. metaph., beget, engender, Hes.Op.812, Sc.29, Hdt.4.145, Pind.,...—Pass., to be begotten, spring from parents, τινος, ἐκ or απο τινος Pind. P.4.256, N. 5. 13...”<sup>154</sup>

But notice it was also used metaphorically in the passive voice of begetting! This may be the key to understanding this text (even though we do not have the passive voice in the text). Plato is giving us a parallel thought between planting or sowing seed to that of conception or begetting. Perhaps, Plato is relating to us that a god “planted a double generation of kings out of one begotten (in the womb).” Or, perhaps, it might be translated a god “brought forth a double generation of kings out of one begotten (in the womb).

Warden’s translation ignores this context of the passage. Plato is not simply saying that a twofold generation of kings descended from “one person,” as Warden suggests. If he wanted to say that, perhaps he might have written something like: τὴν τῶν βασιλέων γένεσιν ἐκ τοῦ ἐνὸς, or perhaps ἐκ τοῦ ἐνὸς ἀνθρώπου, rather than his ἐκ μονογενοῦς.

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<sup>152</sup> Warden, op. cit., pg. 27

<sup>153</sup> Plato, E. B. England, *The Laws of Plato: The Text Ed. with Introduction, Notes, Etc. Classical series III, Vol. 1, Book I-VI* (University Press, Manchester, Longmans, Green & Co., London, 1921) pg. 105

<sup>154</sup> Henry George Liddell, Robert Scott, *Greek-English Lexicon, Seventh Edition* (Harper & Brothers, New York, 1883) pg. 1702

The sense of the text is telling us that a god, acting in a providential manner, did something extra-special or unusual for Sparta. That which was extra-special may have been engendering a double generation of kings from one begotten (i.e, in one begetting, which is similar to that of planting or sowing). This passage must be understood from the ancient Greeks understanding of embryology and their theory of epigenesis. In other words, Plato was saying that the god caused the twins to be monozygotic. The god made sure the seed that was sown or “planted” in conception resulted in twins. The two were out of one begotten, out of one fertilized egg.

Historically these twins were Eurysthenes and Procles, who were the two sons of Aritodemus and Argia. They were considered the heads of the two Spartan dynasties of kings.

So we see that in this text *monogenes* is being used from a father’s perspective with its basal sense of bringing forth or begetting in the initial stages of conception, rather than from the mother’s perspective of one brought forth or “born.”

However, it must be admitted this is a difficult text. And even with Warden’s understanding of *monogenes*, it still is a difficult text. Even he does not use his supposed understanding of “one of a kind” for *monogenes*. In other words, he does not translate the passage as “a double generation of kings out of one of a kind.”

That translation would not make sense either. That is why he ends up with the translation of simply “one” for *monogenes*. But that would be an unusual way for Plato to say it (if that is what he wanted to say), since he could have simply used the numeral ἑνός (of one) in the text, or as we suggested τοῦ ἑνὸς ἀνθρώπου.

Consider this similar example from the LXX.

**Gen. 42:11** πάντες ἐσμεν υἱοὶ ἑνὸς ἀνθρώπου εἰρηνηκοί ἐσμεν οὐκ εἰσὶν οἱ παῖδες σου κατὰσκοποι<sup>155</sup>

**Genesis 42:11** we are all sons of one man; we are peaceable, thy servants are not spies. (Brenton’s Translation)

E. B. England tries to solve the problem of this passage by understanding ἐκ μονογενούς as “instead of a single born king.” He says in his note on the passage,

“e.1. ἐκ μονογενοῦς as ‘instead of a single born king’ as there had been before. This seems better than to take ἐκ as merely ‘from,’ i.e. born from.”<sup>156</sup>

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<sup>155</sup> Sir Lancelot C. L. Brenton, *The Septuagint with Apocrypha: Greek and English* (Zondervan Publishing House, Grand Rapids, 1985) pg. 57

While I am not sure of his solution, it is interesting that he retains the basic sense of begetting in his translation.

The only other solution that might be plausible is to understand μονογενους with its normal sense of only-begotten so that it would be translated: “A god who [seems] to be troubled for you, who foreseeing the future, planted a double generation of kings for you out from a single born” (or, “out from an only-begotten”).

If Plato was using the word in this manner, then, more than likely, he had Heracles in mind, since he was the only-begotten son of Zeus and Alcmene together; he was also the head of their lineage.

It must be remembered that the Greeks were patronymic. As such, certain lineages were known and named after an important ancestor. A lineage was identified by adding -ίδης to the name. Thus, these twin kings of Sparta were known by the patronymic name, Ηρακλείδης (Heraclides), because of their famous ancestor Heracles (Άλκαῖος). And since that was their patronymic heritage, Plato may simply have been referring to the fact that they were descended from Heracles, an only-begotten.

In any case, there is nothing in this text that would preclude an understanding of “one begotten,” or an “only begotten.”

## The Age of the Koine

The next historical period, according to his reckoning, is the Koine period – 300 B.C. to 330 A.D. He begins with some quotes from the Orphic Hymns, where he allows the translation of only-begotten to stand and then makes some quotes from Josephus where he also lets stand a meaning of only-begotten. He does question, however, the one quote regarding Josephus’ use of *monogenes* with Isaac, but we have already dealt with that under a previous chapter.

The first references he really uses to prove his point is a quote by Arrian which we will now examine.

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<sup>156</sup> Plato, E. B. England, ed., *The Laws of Plato: The Text Ed. with Introduction, Notes, Etc. Classical series III, Vol. 1, Book I-VI* (University Press, Manchester, Longmans, Green & Co., London, 1921) pg. 385

## Arrian

Warden states the following from Arriani Historia Indica (VIII.15):

“Arrian, sometimes called the ‘second Xenophon,’ uses the term thus: ἄρσενας μὲν παῖδας πολλοὺς θυγατέρα δὲ μουνογενήν, ‘Very many male children, but only one daughter.’ The fundamental meaning of the word appears here, for the one daughter was truly unique, but her relation to her father did not exclude the presence of other children of the same father.”<sup>157</sup>

On the surface, this seems to be one of Warden’s strongest arguments that *monogenes* cannot possibly mean only-begotten since there were many children from the same father – as the Greek text states, “very many male children, but only one daughter.” However, again, the Greek text he provides is taken out of context; he leaves out some very pertinent information.

Let me give you the fuller text.

“...καὶ τοῦτω ἄρσενας μὲν παῖδας πολλοὺς κάρτα γενέσθαι ἐν τῇ Ἰνδῶν γῇ πολλῇσι γὰρ δὴ γυναιξίν ἐς γάμον ελθεῖν καὶ τοῦτον τὸν Ἡρακλέα<sup>158</sup> θυγατέρα δὲ μουνογενήν οὖνομα δὲ εἶναι τῇ παιδί Παναδαίην...”<sup>159</sup>

As you can see, Warden provides ἄρσενας μὲν παῖδας πολλοὺς from the beginning of the sentence, then joins it with θυγατέρα δὲ μουνογενήν from the end of the sentence making it seem as if that was the phrase written by Arrian. But that is not true! Warden leaves out the entire middle part of the sentence which gives context to the statement. This totally misleads the reader. Let me provide a suggested English translation of the passage.

“...and to this one, very many male children were born in the land of India (for, indeed, he entered into marriage with many women), and as for this Hercules, *there was also born to him* an only-begotten daughter, and the name [given] to the child was Pandaea.”

The “edited text” provided by Warden implies that someone (who we find out is Hercules) and his wife had many children, with only one of them being a daughter. This text is then used to prove that *monogenes* cannot mean only-begotten because the daughter obviously had many male siblings. How could *monogenes* mean “only-begotten” if that same father had many other children

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<sup>157</sup> Francis Marion Warden, *MONOGENES IN THE JOHANNINE LITERATURE* (Southern Baptist Theological Seminary, Louisville, KY, 1938) pg. 28

<sup>158</sup> καὶ τοῦτον τὸν Ἡρακλέα...κ. τ. λ. I took this as an accusative of respect construed with θυγατέρα δὲ μουνογενήν and the implied infinitive γενέσθαι. The demonstrative pronoun is used because a comparison is made with the Theban Hercules. Either way, it implies his daughter was the only-begotten daughter of one of his other wives. See the reference below.

<sup>159</sup> Arrian, Friedrich Dubner, Karl Muller, *Arrianus, Fragmenta Scriptorum de Rebus Alexandri M. Pseudo-callisthenes, Anabasis et Indica, Vol. 26 of Scriptorum Graecorum Bibliotheca* (Editore Ambrosio Firmin Didot, Parisiis, 1846) pg. 210

with this wife? But the passage says the complete opposite! As one can see, the context of the passage says that Hercules had “many wives,” and by those wives he had many male children, but out of all those wives he had only one daughter. Apparently, one of the wives of Hercules gave birth to a daughter, and that daughter was the only child she ever had with Hercules. She never had any other children. As such, Arrian called the child *monogenes*, the “only-begotten” daughter of Hercules and this one particular wife! And this only-begotten daughter was eventually made a ruler in India.

Perhaps, it might be helpful to the reader to also see the broader context. I will supply a fuller narrative as is found in Edward James Chinnock’s translation.

“When Dionysus had arranged these affairs and was about to leave India, he appointed as king of the land Spatembas, one of his companions, the man most versed in the mysteries of Bacchus. When this man died his son Boudyas succeeded to his kingdom. The father reigned fifty-two years, and the son twenty years. Cradeuas, the son of Boudyas, succeeded to the throne. From this time for the most part the kingdom passed in regular succession from father to son. If at any time direct heirs were wanting, then the Indians appointed kings according to merit. The Heracles, who according to the current report came to India (from Greece), is said, among the Indians themselves, to have sprung from the earth. This Heracles is especially worshipped by the Sourasenians, an Indian nation, in whose land are two great cities, Methora and Cleisobora, and through it flows the navigable river Jobares. Megasthenes says, as the Indians themselves assert, that this Heracles wore a similar dress to that of the Theban Heracles. Very many male children, but only one daughter were born to him in India, for he married many women. The daughter’s name was Pandaea, and the land where she was born, and over which Heracles placed her as ruler, was named Pandaea after her. From her father she received 500 elephants, 4,000 cavalry, and 130,000 infantry.<sup>160</sup>

This passage does not detract from the traditional meaning of *monogenes* at all and Warden was misleading to imply otherwise. However, to be fair to him since he is not here to defend himself, he does include an asterisk at the end of the Greek text which says in the footnote: “citations so indicated are unavailable in the in the original contexts.”<sup>161</sup> I am not sure what he meant by that statement, for he obtained the Greek text from somewhere, but, perhaps he meant he only had that one small snippet of Greek as he provided. If so, maybe someone else did the editing of the text and he simply was not aware of the fuller Greek quote. But then one must ask, “Why use that Greek text to **prove** his point if he was **unsure of the veracity** of the text or quote?” That is a legitimate question.

One fact remains, even though he may not have been aware of the fuller Greek text, he was certainly aware of the fuller English context, for he references the English translation of E. J. Chinnock above in his footnotes with the same page number that I provide in my footnote below. So he did

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<sup>160</sup> Edward James Chinnock, tr., *Arrian’s Anabasis of Alexander and Indica* (G. Bell & Sons, London, 1893) pg. 408-409

<sup>161</sup> Francis Marion Warden, *MONOGENES IN THE JOHANNINE LITERATURE* (Southern Baptist Theological Seminary, Louisville, KY, 1938) pg. 28

know that the greater context said that Heracles had many wives, and yet, he did not provide that information to the reader. Why?

## Hephaestio

The next reference given as evidence is Hephaestio, in his work entitled “On Feet.” Warden declares:

“Hephaestio offers an unusual citation: ὁ ἐπίτριτος τέταρτος, ὁ καὶ μονογενὴς ---“ ‘the foot (in which the ratio of θέσις to ἄρσις is 4:3), which is also single (unique.)’ ”<sup>162</sup>

Again, he makes the same notation about citations not being available in the original contexts. And so, again, one should ask, “Then why reference it at all? Why use it to prove a point, if you are unsure of the veracity of the quote? The fuller Greek text is provided below and once again the context will disprove his assertion.

“ἐκ τριῶν μακρῶν καὶ βραχείας, ὁ ἐπίτριτος τέταρτος, ἡ ἀντισπαστικὴ ἐπτάσημος, ὁ καὶ μονογενὴς \_ \_ \_ ”<sup>163</sup>

And now J. M. Ophuijsen’s translation—

“Out of three long (syllables) and a short (one) a fourth epitrite or seven time-unit antispastic (syzygy) which (is) also (called) **monogenes**.”<sup>164</sup>

Because Warden misunderstood this reference, I removed it from the chart at the beginning of this chapter as being non-applicable. (It should be noted; the passage is not dealing with a human foot, but is dealing with certain combination of syllables known as “feet.”). He attempted to translate the word *monogenes* from the text, but his translation does not make sense because the word μονογενὴς was never meant to be translated.

According to Ophuijsen’s work on Hephaestio, the word *monogenes* was a designation of a specific seven time-unit. The section deals with words containing four syllables, three long and one short. *Monogenes* was the name for one of those units. So, since the word was never meant to be translated, what is presented as evidence is, once again, no evidence at all.

This whole work is dealing with Greek meter. Consider the following information regarding Hephaestio and this work.

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<sup>162</sup> Ibid., pg. 29

<sup>163</sup> Hephaestio Grammaticus, R. Westphal, ed., *Scriptores metrici graeci: Hephaestionis De metris enchiridion et De poemate libellus cum scholiis et Trichae epitomis. Adjecta Procli Chrestomathia grammatical Bibliotheca scriptorum Graecorum et Romanorum Teubneriana* (In Aedibus B. G. Teubneri, Lipsiae 1866) pg. 14

<sup>164</sup> J. M. Ophuijsen, *Hephaestio on Metre* ( Brill, Netherlands, 1987) pg. 54

“Hephaestion (flourished 2nd century ad, Alexandria), Greek metrist, author of a work on metre in 48 books, which was reduced, by successive abridgments, to form a manual (Greek *encheiridion*). The manual became a popular school book, and it alone survives. It is the only complete ancient work on metrics extant. Appendixes dealing with poetic structure and with metrical notations may have been added by another hand.”<sup>165</sup>

And,

“Ancient metricians such as Hephaestion give us a long list of names for various Aeolic lengths, to which modern scholars have added. For the most part, these names are arbitrary or even misleading, but they are widely used in scholarly writing.”<sup>166</sup>

This work by Hephaestio was, essentially, a school book explaining different meters. J. M. Van Ophuijsen has this to say about this section of his work.

“Chapter III: Feet – The account of feet is basically the same in both our authors. In H.[Hephaestio] (E.iii/10.11-12) it is reduced to a strictly formulaic catalogue of all the possible combinations of long and short syllables up to a total length of four syllables, in a determined order from fewer to more syllables and within each number of syllables from fewer to more time-units.”<sup>167</sup>

“Now H.[Hephaestio] has a good reason to end his enumeration of feet with those of four syllables, and this is the fact that the longest feet which, in his phrase, ‘constitute a metre’ (ὁ πρὸς ὁ τὸ μέτρον συνιστάς iv. 2/13.10-1) number four syllables. The sole use of the names of the feet which do not constitute a metre, e.g. the spondee, is to provide a label for certain variations of these which do, e.g. the dactyl, and since these variation most often contain either the same number of syllables as, or a smaller number than, the ‘pure’ (καθαρός) foot they replace, the need to refer to a foot of more than four syllables seldom arises.”<sup>168</sup>

“... the foot is not defined by H.; feet have been said to be systems of syllables according to A.Q. [Aristides Quintilianus] (i22/44.12 συστήματα συλλαβών), the Greek word ‘system’ denoting something which consists of certain parts. The present chapter of H. and the corresponding section in A. Q. each furnish a complete catalogue of all conceivable combinations of syllables long and short up to a total length of four syllables (the common syllable, being not in the metrical structure but in the language material, has no place here). Several of their names are applied to other feet by other authors – and indeed by A. Q. in his account of rhythmic...”<sup>169</sup>

This tells us that the text of Hephaestio is a catalog, a listing of different combinations of various long and short syllables in various Greek words and that, as such, some of the Greek words used in the catalog were not meant to be translated but were simply the nomenclatures given for certain combinations. This was the case for the word *monogenes* in this passage, which, again, was translated by J. M. Ophuijsen as follows: “Out of three long

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<sup>165</sup> [www.britannica.com/EBchecked/topic/1359955/Hephaestion](http://www.britannica.com/EBchecked/topic/1359955/Hephaestion) 2012

<sup>166</sup> [en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Aeolic\\_verse](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Aeolic_verse) 2012

<sup>167</sup> J. M. Ophuijsen, *Hephaestion on Metre* ( Brill, Netherlands, 1987) pg. 14

<sup>168</sup> *Ibid.*, pg. 15

<sup>169</sup> *Ibid.*, pg. 55

(syllables) and a short (one) a fourth epitrite or seven time-unit antispastic (syzygy) which (is) also (called) **monogenes**.”<sup>170</sup>

And so, *monogenes* was never meant to be taken semantically in this passage. The word should have simply been transliterated. As such, it does not mean “single” or “unique” in this passage as purported by Warden. It was used as a title of a specific seven-time unit within the category of four syllable words.<sup>171</sup> Perhaps, it was randomly chosen as an example and designation of this category simply because it, too, was a four syllable word.

### Periplus Maris Erythryea

The Greek text provided by Warden in this work is different than the actual text in Periplus Maris Erythryea. He writes the following in his dissertation: γίνεται μονογενῶς ὁ λίβανος.<sup>172</sup> And he translates it as, “The frankincense comes into being alone.” He then uses this as evidence to negate the traditional meaning of only-begotten for *monogenes*.

However, a few things need to be mentioned. This text, again, is a text taken out of context. It also has been edited and changed. In the quote he provides, γίνεται is taken from the end of the real phrase and is placed in front of μονογενῶς. Then the article ὁ, which is really before another word, is changed and placed before λίβανος. But, once again, after providing this edited text, he includes the disclaimer that the citations “are unavailable in the original contexts.” But someone edited the text, and, as such, the Greek text that is provided is wrong. It ignores the entire middle portion of the phrase thereby making the phrase say something it does not even say.

This misleads the reader. If his disclaimer meant that he was unsure of the Greek text, then he should not have made a dogmatic statement to the reader that this was what the Greek text said! He asserts that the Greek text was exactly as he provided. Yet that is not true! This is exactly what he wrote.

“ ‘Periplus Maris Rubri,’ (56, p. 11) shows: μονογενῶς ἐν ἐνὶ τόπῳ φέρεται means ‘grows in one place only,’ and ‘Periplus Maris Erythryea; (p. 149, 173) has: γίνεται μονογενῶς ὁ λίβανος, “The frankincense comes into being alone.”’<sup>173</sup>

Notice he declares that Periplus Maris Rubri (56, p.11) “shows” the Greek text he provides. It does not! And he says Periplus Maris Erythryea “has” the Greek text he provides. It does not! He makes a statement of fact. But the statement is not accurate. The Greek text does not appear as he claims. Let us

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<sup>170</sup> Ibid., pg. 54

<sup>171</sup> Online Liddell & Scott glosses the word—“name of the foot\_\_” See [www.perseus.tufts.edu/hopper/morph?l=monogenes&la=greek#lexicon](http://www.perseus.tufts.edu/hopper/morph?l=monogenes&la=greek#lexicon)

<sup>172</sup> Francis Marion Warden, *MONOGENES IN THE JOHANNINE LITERATURE* (Southern Baptist Theological Seminary, Louisville, KY, 1938) pg. 29

<sup>173</sup> Ibid., pg. 29



first look at the latter, *Periplus Maris Erythryea*, and then at *Periplus Maris Rubri*. This is how the Greek text really appears in *Periplus Maris Erythryea*.

“Ἐν ἧ μονογενῶς λίβανος ὁ περατικὸς, πλᾶτος καὶ<sup>174</sup> διάφορος γίνεται.”<sup>175</sup>

As one can clearly see, unlike the Greek text that was provided by Warden, γίνεται is at the end of the portion and the article is before περατικὸς (foreign),<sup>176</sup> not before λίβανος (frankincense). Plus one can now see the rest of the text that is not provided in his quote. By leaving out the middle portion of the text and changing the position of γίνεται, he causes the verb to only construe with μονογενῶς. Plus, by removing the article from περατικὸς and placing it with λίβανος, he obscures the fact that περατικὸς might be understood as a substantive. As far as μονογενῶς goes, I believe the adverbial form retains the basal sense of “bringing forth” in its stem. Before it was revised in the new edition of Liddell and Scott, this is how the adverb appeared in the seventh edition,

“μονογενής...Adv. -νῶς, *growing alone*.”<sup>177</sup>

And this is how the revised edition now glosses the adverb:

“Π. Adv. -νῶς, φέρεται μ. ἐν ἐνὶ τόπῳ grows *only* in one place, *Periplus Maris Rubri*.56, cf. 11.”<sup>178</sup>

Notice the revised lexicon only italicizes the word *only* (a common method to indicate the meaning or gloss of a word), thereby indicating the word “*only*” as the actual meaning for μονογενῶς, whereas, in the seventh edition *growing alone* is italicized, thereby indicating that “*growing alone*” was the nuanced meaning for μονογενῶς. I believe the seventh edition is correct, for “*growing alone*” retains the basal sense of “bringing forth alone,” or “only produced.”

Thus, in the texts before us, I believe that μονογενῶς should be taken as a compound adverb, meaning “*growing alone*,” as it was originally understood in the seventh edition, and not with a single meaning of “*only*,” or “*alone*.”

If the writer had wanted to simply say that frankincense was “*alone*” produced, perhaps he could have written something like, Ἐν ἧ λίβανος ὁ περατικὸς, πλᾶτος καὶ διάφορος μόνον γίνεται (in which area frankincense, the greatest and best far-side brand is alone produced).<sup>179</sup> Or if he had wanted to say that “only” frankincense was produced, or procured in that part of the

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<sup>174</sup> A Greek ligature for καὶ is used in the printed text.

<sup>175</sup> Arrian, William Vincent, tr., *Voyage of Nearchus, and the Periplus of the Erythrean Sea* (At the University Press, London, 1809) pg. 77

<sup>176</sup> This adjective, meaning foreign, became a brand name product known as the “far-side” brand of frankincense in the markets of Alexandria.

<sup>177</sup> Henry George Liddell, Robert Scott, *Greek-English Lexicon, Seventh Edition* (Harper & Brothers, New York, 1883) pg. 976

<sup>178</sup> [www.perseus.tufts.edu/](http://www.perseus.tufts.edu/)

<sup>179</sup> E.g. cf. μόνον in Ex. 12:16 LXX; Acts 21:13 and Jam.1: 22 . Also see Robertson pg. 549.

country, perhaps he could have written, Ἐν ἧ ὁ μόνος λίβανος ὁ περατικός, πλᾶτος καὶ διάφορος γίνεται. (in which place only frankincense is procured, the greatest and best far side brand). In fact, just a few paragraphs before, the writer uses μόνον and μονη in this way and it would have been natural to use it that way again in this portion before us. In section three he says, “Ὁ δὲ τόπος ἀλίμενος, καὶ σκάφους μόνον τὴν ἀποδρομὴν ἔχων.”<sup>180</sup> And in section five he says, “ἐν ἐκείνῃ μονῇ τοπικῶς γεννώμενος.”<sup>181</sup>

This is Wilfred Schoff’s account and translation of those sections. His translation of the Greek text is underlined.

3. Below the Calf-Eaters there is a little markettown on the shore after sailing about four thousand stadia from Berenice, called Ptolemais of the Hunts, from which the hunters started for the interior under the dynasty of the Ptolemies. This market-town has the true land-tortoise in small quantity; it is white and smaller in the shells. And here also is found a little ivory, like that of Adulis. But the place has no harbor and is reached only by small boats.

5. And about eight hundred stadia beyond there is another very deep bay, with a great mound of sand piled up at the right of the entrance; at the bottom of which the opian stone is found, and this is the only place where it is produced. These places, from the Calf-Eaters to the other Berber country, are governed by Zoscales; who is miserly in his ways and always striving for more, but otherwise upright, and acquainted with Greek literature.<sup>182</sup>

So we see; if the writer wanted to convey the meaning of “alone” or “only,” I think he would have used the Greek word μόνος again. The fact that he chose not to use that word in our text suggests he understood μονογενῶς with a heightened meaning. In other words, he did not believe μονογενῶς meant the same thing as μόνον.

This difference in meaning between these two words is also demonstrated in another Greek text. In a letter to Gregory, Basil wrote the following.

“Ὁ δὲ Υἱὸς ὁ τὸ ἐκ τοῦ Πατρὸς ἐκπορευόμενον Πνεῦμα δι’ ἑαυτοῦ καὶ μεθ’ ἑαυτοῦ γνωρίζων, μόνος μονογενῶς ἐκ τοῦ ἀγεννήτου φωτὸς ἐκλάμπας” (Letter XXXVIII)<sup>183</sup>

Here you will notice that μόνος and μονογενῶς are back to back in the same sentence! Obviously, the two words did not carry the same meaning; μονογενῶς includes the heightened nuance of “bringing forth.”

In the context of a growing plant, or a growing tree this heightened sense carries the nuance of “growing alone,” whereas, when it is used of a being, it

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<sup>180</sup> Arrian, William Vincent, tr., *Voyage of Nearchus, and the Periplus of the Erythrean Sea* (At the University Press, London, 1809) pg. 72

<sup>181</sup> Ibid., pg. 73

<sup>182</sup> Wilfred H. Schoff, trans. & ed., *The Periplus of the Erythraean Sea: Travel and Trade in the Indian Ocean by a Merchant of the First Century* (Longmans, Green, and Company, New York, 1912) pg. 22-23

<sup>183</sup> Saint Basil, *The Letters*, Vol. 1 (William Heinemann, London, 1926) pg. 206

carries the heightened sense of “bringing forth alone.” This is how the sentence above is translated in the Nicene and Post Nicene Series.

“The Son, Who declares the Spirit proceeding from the Father through Himself and with Himself, shining forth alone (μόνος) and by only-begetting (μόνογενῶς) from unbegotten light...”<sup>184</sup>

Therefore, if we keep this in mind, we can now understand why Warden’s translation is insufficient, and, actually, may be misleading; especially since he desires to use it to negate the traditional understanding of *monogenes*.

The context of our passage describes the various trading posts along the Indian and Red Sea. Then it describes along this coast a place called “Cape Elephant,” where one obtains a special grade of frankincense. Apparently, this was a special place where only the finest frankincense was grown or produced. Within this area, near a laurel-grove, there was a place where it grew by itself. (Sometimes frankincense trees would be found growing alone in some remote location). This seems to be what the writer is saying, albeit, he states this location was near a laurel-grove along the river named Elephant.

I do not believe he was saying, as Warden suggests, that “frankincense comes into being *alone*.” What would that mean? How can frankincense come into being alone? He arrives at this understanding by construing μόνογενῶς with γίνεται, which he defines as “*come into being*.” But as we said, his editing has forced this understanding. The verb may actually construe with the latter part of the text, and we may have an ellipsis in the first part.

It seems there are a number of ways this phrase could be understood. The verb γίνεται may, indeed, construe with μόνογενῶς, as he suggests, but it could carry a stative sense and so the phrase might be translated as follows: “In which area, frankincense exists, growing alone, the far-side brand, the greatest and the best.” Or we might have an ellipsis in the first part of the phrase, in which case γίνεται would construe with the latter part. The text might then be translated: “In which area, frankincense *is* growing alone; the greatest and best far-side brand is produced.” Or, if we take γίνεται as “procure,” it might be translated, “In which area, the only produced *product is* frankincense, the greatest and best far-side brand is procured.” A very, very, literal translation might render: In which [place], growing alone, *is* frankincense; the greatest and best far-side brand is produced.<sup>185</sup>

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<sup>184</sup> Philip Schaff, Henry Wace, *Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers, Second Series Vol. VIII* (T&T Clark, Edinburgh; Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., Grand Rapids, MI 1989) pg.138 (parentheses mine).

<sup>185</sup> It should be noted that in Greek an adverb in the attributive position may sometimes act like an adjective. As to whether such is the case in this example, the reader will have to decide. (See Smyth §1096, §1097)

The next to the last translation might be the best for it fits in with the greater context of the passage. Let me provide you an English translation of the fuller text by Wilfred Schoff, so you can see the context for yourself.

“9. Two days' sail, or three, beyond Malao is the market-town of Mundus, where the ships lie at anchor more safely behind a projecting island close to the shore. There are imported into this place the things previously set forth, and from it likewise are exported the merchandise already stated, and the incense called mocrotu. And the traders living here are more quarrelsome.

“10. Beyond Mundus, sailing toward the east, after another two days' sail, or three, you reach Mosyllum, on a beach, with a bad anchorage. There are imported here the same things already mentioned, also silver plate, a very little iron, and glass. There are shipped from the place a great *quantity of* cinnamon, (so that this market-town requires ships of larger size), and fragrant gums, spices, a little tortoise shell, and mocrotu, (poorer, than that of Mundus), frankincense, (the far-side), ivory and myrrh in small quantities.

“11. Sailing along the coast beyond Mosyllum, after a two days' course you come to the so-called Little Nile River, and a fine spring, and a small laurel-grove, and Cape Elephant. Then the shore recedes into a bay, and has a river, called Elephant, and a large laurel-grove called Acannae; where alone is produced the far-side frankincense, in great quantity and of the best grade.<sup>186</sup>”

The story is about the various trading posts in the Red Sea where many different products were obtained for export. Before coming to our portion of the text, the writer says that in Mosyllum many different products were procured for export – cinnamon, spices, ivory, myrrh, etc. Thus, the focus is on exports and what is procured at different areas. So when we get to our portion of the passage, it seems the writer is saying that an excellent grade of frankincense was obtained for export, from some remote location near the Elephant River where it was growing alone, i.e. by itself, or where it was the only product being produced for export.

Warden's translation ignores this. The context is about goods that were produced for export. By construing γίvetαι with the first part of the phrase, he changes the text into a story about the “nature” of frankincense, stating that it “comes into being alone,” rather than being about goods or products that were available for export.

He seems to take γίvetαι as a verb bespeaking the “nature” of frankincense, rather than being a verb bespeaking the “production” or “procurement” of that special brand of frankincense.

However, Wilfred Schoff's translation above rightly retains this verbal and contextual emphasis on production in γίvetαι. But his translation, in my

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<sup>186</sup> Wilfred H. Schoff, trans. & ed., *The Periplus of the Erythraean Sea: Travel and Trade in the Indian Ocean by a Merchant of the First Century* (Longmans, Green, and Company, New York, 1912) pg. 26

opinion, falls short because it ignores the nuanced meaning of “bringing forth” in μονογενῶς.

Another famous translation is that of William Vincent; he also retains this contextual sense of export or procurement in γίνεταί but he completely ignores μονογενῶς in his translation, not even translating the word at all. This is how he translated the text: “In these parts the best and greatest quantity of frankincense is procured.”<sup>187</sup>

What we are finding in our study of *monogenes* is that two basic meanings are attached to the word as a compound word – *only*, *singularity or aloneness*, and *bringing forth*. When used of beings it bespeaks of one who is the *only one* having been *brought forth* through conception or birth, and, in its adverbial form, it means something that is *only produced*, or, *alone brought forth*, in other words “*growing alone*.”

Thus it seems the best way to understand this text would be either as: “In which area frankincense *is* growing alone; the greatest and best far-side brand is produced,” where μονογενῶς has the nuance of “growing alone,” and γίνεταί is understood as “produced.” Or as, “In which area, the only produced *product is* frankincense, the greatest and best far-side brand is procured,” where μονογενῶς has the nuance of “only produced,” and γίνεταί has the meaning of “procured.” In these two translations the contextual emphasis of production, procurement or export is retained, along with the full nuance of μονογενῶς.

The story is not about the “nature of things” and how they “come into being,” as Warden seems to suggest. But it is about the production of goods for export. The writer is simply saying that at this port of call only frankincense is grown or produced for export, unlike the other trading ports where many items, like cinnamon, ivory, spices, etc., are procured. The reason for this is because, at this particular location, only the best type of frankincense tree was growing, i.e. it was “growing alone,” or, it was because the only product they produced in this area for export was frankincense, i.e. the whole area was given over to its sole production, being a place where the greatest and best far-side brand was procured.

## Periplus Maris Rubri

In the next quote, from Periplus Maris Rubri, Warden provides the following Greek text and English translation. He states, “μονογενῶς ἐν ἐνὶ τόπῳ φέρεται means “grow in one place only.”<sup>188</sup> It is unfortunate that he once again

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<sup>187</sup> Arrian, William Vincent, tr., *Voyage of Nearchus, and the Periplus of the Erythrean Sea* (At the University Press, London, 1809) pg. 77

<sup>188</sup> Warden, op. cit., pg. 29

provides an incorrect Greek text. The words are placed out of order. The verb φέρεται is taken and placed at the end of the phrase giving the impression that μονογενῶς should then be understood as “only,” and φέρεται should be understood as “grow.” This is misleading because the verb φέρεται bespeaks something quite different when one sees it in its proper context. The verb means to “bear along,” or to “convey.” It refers to the pepper being brought by farmers or merchants to a trading station or port. This is how the Greek text really appears, along with a possible translation, with the words he edits being underlined.

“φέρεται δὲ πέπερι, μονογενῶς ἐν ἐνὶ τόπῳ τοῦτῳ τῷ ἐμπορίῳ γεννώμενον πολὺ,<sup>189</sup> λεγόμενον Κοτοναρικόν.”<sup>190</sup>

And pepper, growing alone in one place, is conveyed to this portcalled Cotonarikon, being produced in great quantities<sup>191</sup>.

As one can see, the context shows that the writer is saying that the pepper is procured from one place, being the only place that it is grown. In other words, μονογενῶς is being used with the understanding of “growing alone,” with a basal sense of “brought forth.” And because it only grows in one place, being produced in great quantities, or being produced far away (presumably somewhere in the interior), it has to be conveyed or transported (φέρεται) to market for sale.

Apparently, there was a certain place in the interior where only pepper grew. No other crops were grown in that area. It was an area completely given over to the production of pepper and, as such, it was, apparently, produced in great quantities. This large crop was then transported (φέρεται) to a port called Cotonarikon.

And so once again, we see that the Greek text, when seen in its full context, does not demand a meaning of “only,” or “alone” for μονογενῶς. It remains a compound word with a basal meaning of *growing alone, brought forth alone, or only produced*. And we also see that the Greek word φέρεται is not being construed with μονογενῶς to give a meaning of *grow*. Instead, it means *convey*, much like our English word “ferry.” I do not believe it should be understood as *grow* in this context, as suggested by Francis Warden.

And so, in conclusion, we see that these two references do not support the conclusions made by Francis Warden. The adverbial form of *monogenes* does not mean “only,” or “alone,” but, rather means “growing alone,” “only

<sup>189</sup> It seems πολὺ might be understood adverbially or adjectively (see Liddell & Scott, III,c).

<sup>190</sup> Arrian, William Vincent, tr., *Voyage of Nearchus, and the Periplus of the Erythrean Sea* (At the University Press, London, 1809) pg. 107

<sup>191</sup> It should be noted that it does not matter if one prefers an adverbial understanding for πολὺ. Our purpose is simply to understand the meaning of μονογενῶς within the context. If πολὺ is taken as an adverb, meaning, *far away*, I do not believe it changes the meaning of μονογενῶς.

*produced,*” or “*alone brought forth.*” Yet, in the final analysis, it probably should also be noted that it is an adverb, and in this book we are dealing with the adjective *monogenes*. Adverbs and adjectives might not always mean the same thing. This is why I removed it from Warden’s chart. But, even though I removed it from his chart (in order to keep the focus solely on the adjective *monogenes*), it is still interesting to note that the adverb retains the basic meaning of something “brought forth alone.” So, even though one could not use these examples to prove the traditional meaning of only-begotten for *monogenes*, they do not negate the traditional meaning either, for the word still retains the basic meaning of “brought forth alone.”

## Greek Papyri

Warden next gives an example from a Greek Papyrus which he indicates is taken from a citation in Goodspeed and Colwell’s Greek Papyrus Reader. The text can be found in *Antike Fluchtafeln*, edited by Richard Wunsch.

Warden provides the following Greek text and English translation: ὀρκίζω σε τὸν θεὸν ...τὸν μονογενῆ, I adjure thee by the god...the only one.”<sup>192</sup>

The problem is he once again takes things out of context. He stops at μονογενῆ and does not provide the reader the next three words. They are the words τὸν ἐξ αὐτοῦ (the one out of him). Below is the fuller text.

“...ὀρκίζω σε τὸν θεὸν...τὸν μονογενῆ τὸν ἐξ αὐτοῦ ἀναφανέντα...”<sup>193</sup>

The additional three words τὸν ἐξ αὐτοῦ supply the contextual sense of derivation, the one out of him, which when we construe it with the following participle would give a translation as follows:

“I adjure you, the god...the only-begotten, the one brought to light out of him...”

Therefore, when we see μονογενῆ within its context of derivation, we see the traditional meaning of “only-begotten” actually fits the context better than simply “only one.”

The next text he gives from the papyri is as follows: “ἑισάκοθσόν μου ὁ εἰς μονογενής, ‘Hearken unto me, thou who art one and unique.”<sup>194</sup>

I was not able to obtain the Greek text to see the fuller context, but there is nothing in the texts he supplies that would demand a translation of *monogenes*

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<sup>192</sup> Warden, op. cit., pg. 30

<sup>193</sup> Richard Wunsch, ed., *Antike Fluchtafeln*, Vol. 20 (A. Marcus und E. Weber, Bonn, 1907)

pg. 18

<sup>194</sup> Warden, op. cit., pg. 30

as *only one* or *unique*. It could just as well be translated as *only born* or *only-begotten*. For instance, consider this English translation of the same text by Hans Dieter Betz—"Give heed to me, O one only-begotten."<sup>195</sup>

So we see these two quotes will not help us either way in determining the true meaning of *monogenes*. However, it is disheartening that he presents them to the reader as "proof" that *monogenes* does not mean only-begotten, because there is no conclusive proof in the texts to support either reading (although in the first one there is compelling evidence for "only-begotten," simply because of the connotation of derivation is introduced with the two words he leaves out after μονογενῆ, the two words ἐξ αὐτοῦ (out of him).

The next three quotes he provides from the papyri fall into the same category. From the Greek texts he provides one finds they are nebulous texts that provide no evidence either way. However, the last reference he provides for evidence is from the First Epistle of Clement to Rome. And, as we have already demonstrated, that which he asserts as being absolute proof for the meaning of "one of a kind," is actually proof for the meaning of "only-begotten," that is, once one sees the greater context.

And so, as we have found in most of his references, once one sees the fuller contexts, his arguments fade away and in some cases the reference that was supposed to be proof for a meaning other than "only born" or "only-begotten," actually becomes a reference that actually proves the meaning of only-begotten. It is most unfortunate that he does not provide the reader this greater context in many of his quotes.

## The Greek Old Testament

Francis Warden continues his list of evidence, which Dale Moody claims, demonstrates beyond a reasonable doubt that *monogenes* cannot be understood in its traditional of only-begotten, by next appealing to the Greek Old Testament.

I hope the reader is beginning to see that if we were in a court of law, there would not only be reasonable doubt. as to Dale Moody's claims, there would actually be a mountain of evidence to prove the opposite, that *monogenes* does mean *only born* or *only-begotten* and always did!

But let us continue the examination of Warden's evidence. He first mentions the few Septuagint texts that translate the Hebrew in Genesis chapter 22 by *monogenes*. He really does not make any definite conclusions to this, so we

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<sup>195</sup> Hans Dieter Betz, ed., *The Greek Magical Papyri in Translation, Including the Demotic Spells, Volume 1, 2<sup>nd</sup> Edition* (University of Chicago, Chicago, 1997) pg. 67



will refrain from commenting on this portion at this time and will, instead, devote an entire separate chapter to this issue. We will treat his references to Psalms in the same way. However, a few passages from the Septuagint we would now like to address are his statements regarding a few passages from the Old Testament Apocrypha. We will begin with his comment on Tobit.

## Tobit

Warden quotes three of four occurrences of *monogenes* in Tobit as “only,” and the last as “only-begotten.” As we have said before, he already admitted that the meaning of “only-begotten” is appropriate in those cases where it is speaking of “only children,” so we do not, necessarily, have to address each verse individually. So it really makes no difference that the first three verses are translated as “only,” rather than “only-begotten.” It is all arbitrary. They just as easily could have been translated as the fourth verse was translated, as “only-begotten.” There is nothing in the text that would require “only.”

In fact, the King James Version also translated the first three as “only” but then translated the fourth verse as “only-begotten.” The verse reads as follows.

**Tobit 8:17** Thou art to be praised because thou hast had mercy of two that were the only-begotten children of their fathers: grant them mercy, O Lord, and finish their life in health with joy and mercy. KJV

This in itself shows that Sara and Tobit were considered to be “only-begotten” by the translators of the King James Version, even though they translated *monogenes* by “only” in 3:15; 6:11,15 when it referred to them individually. If *monogenes* meant “only-begotten” in 8:17 when referring to Tobias and Sara together, then certainly *monogenes* meant “only-begotten” in regard to Tobias and Sara in verses 3:15; 6:11, 15 when it referred to them individually. (The same thing can be said of the New Testament and the Kings James translators’ use of “only” in the Gospel of Luke and “only-begotten” in all other verses. Just because they chose “only” in some verses does not mean it negates the meaning of “only-begotten” for *monogenes*).

Warden simply quotes all four occurrences and leaves it at that, making no comment on the verses. But I would like to make a comment on one of the verses because I think it demonstrates why *monogenes* should be understood as only-begotten in all four verses.

Tobit 6:10-11 says the following. I will give the Greek and then the English from the King James Version, but remember the LXX and the King James Version follow a different verse division.

**Tobit 6:11 (10a KJV)** εἶπεν ὁ ἄγγελος τῷ παιδαρίῳ ἄδελφε σήμερον αὐλισθησόμεθα παρα Παρουηλ καὶ αὐτὸς συγγενῆς σου ἐστὶν καὶ ἐστὶν αὐτῷ θυγάτηρ μονογενῆς ὀνόματι Σαρρα

**Tobit 6:12 (10b – 11 KJV)** λαλήσω περὶ αὐτῆς τοῦ δοθῆναι σοὶ αὐτήν εἰς γυναῖκα ὅτι σοὶ ἐπιβάλλει ἡ κληρονομία αὐτῆς καὶ σὺ μόνος εἶ ἐκ τοῦ γένους αὐτῆς (and you are the only one of her kin καὶ τὸ κοράσιον καλὸν καὶ φρόνιμόν ἐστιν<sup>196</sup>)

**Tobit 6:10-11a** The angel said to the young man, Brother, today we shall lodge with Raguel, who is thy cousin; he also hath one only [begotten] daughter, named Sara; I will speak for her, that she may be given thee for a wife. <sup>11</sup> For to thee doth the right of her appertain, seeing thou only art of her kindred. <sup>12</sup> And the maid is fair and wise. KJV

In Tobit 6:10 in the KJV (verse 11 in the Greek) we see that Sara is called the only-begotten daughter of Raguel, the cousin of Tobias. There is nothing in the text to negate the meaning of “only-begotten” as we have already mentioned. But then in the next verse, verse 11, we see an interesting fact. The verse reads, “For to thee doth the right of her appertain, seeing thou only art of her kindred.” That last phrase in the Greek reads, καὶ σὺ μόνος εἶ ἐκ τοῦ γένους αὐτῆς. Now the question must be asked, “If *monogenes* means “only member of a kin,” as is claimed in the revised edition of Liddell and Scott, or as “one of a kind” as claimed by Warden, then why not use *monogenes* again since it was used of the Sara in the previous verse? Contextually, it would make perfect sense if *monogenes*, indeed, meant “only member of a kin.”

However, instead of using *monogenes* again, the writer makes the statement, καὶ σὺ μόνος εἶ ἐκ τοῦ γένους αὐτῆς. Literally, it would read, “and you are the only one out of her kin.” The King James Version smooths it out and says, “seeing thou only art of her kindred.” Why not just use *monogenes* again, if *monogenes* meant “only member of a kin,” which would then give a reading of, “seeing thou art the only member of her kin?”

In other words, why not write it as follows: “καὶ σὺ ὁ μονογενὴς αὐτῆς εἶ” (and you are the only member of the kin of her)? We would have the pronoun αὐτῆς present to nullify any idea that no other kin were alive (which “only member of a kin” would require in and of itself).<sup>197</sup> If the writer would have utilized *monogenes* again, would it not have flowed with the text and would it not have shown consistency with the word? So why did not the writer use the word again to say “seeing thou only art the member of her kin?” Well, the simple answer is, because *monogenes* does not mean “only member of a kin,” but means “only-begotten,” and if the writer had written it that way with its real meaning he would have been saying Tobias was the “only-begotten of her!” He would have been saying that Tobias was Sara’s son and would have been saying he was going to marry his mother! Of course, this also would have contradicted the storyline since it was already declared that Tobias was the only son of his mother, Anna, and his father, Tobit (Tobit 1:9, 20; 8:17).

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<sup>196</sup> Brenton, op.cit., pg. 28 (Apocrypha)

<sup>197</sup> This fact also shows that *monogenes* cannot mean “only member of a kin,” for if Sara was μονογενὴς, the “only member of her kin,” Tobias could not be alive!

This is pretty compelling evidence that shows that *monogenes* never meant “only member of a kin.”

*Monogenes* could be used of Tobias being the only-begotten son of Tobit, and it could be used of Sara, being the only-begotten daughter of Raguel (Tobit 8:17), but it could not be used of Tobias in Tobit 6:12 LXX, to say “only member of a kin” because the word did not mean that and if the writer had used it in that verse he would have been declaring to his readers that Tobias was the *monogenes* (only-begotten) of Sara; it would make Tobias the son of Sara!

## Baruch

The next reference given by Warden is Baruch 4:16. He says,

“καὶ ἀπὸ τῶν θυγατέρων τὴν μόνην ἠρήμωσαν (A, μονογενὴν, R, ἥ), ‘and left her that was alone desolate of her daughters.’”<sup>198</sup>

First we should mention the text he provides does not contain the word *μονογενής*. It is a variation.<sup>199</sup> Warden shows this in the parenthesis at the end. So this verse does not prove anything in and of itself. He makes no comment on the text, but, presumably, since he is trying to justify the meaning of “only” or “alone” for *monogenes*, he provided this reference because he believed that *μόνην* (only or alone) in the text, is equivalent to the variant *μονογενήν*. The Greek text he provides reads like this.

**Baruch 4:16** καὶ ἀπήγαγον τοὺς ἀγαπητοὺς τῆς χήρας καὶ ἀπὸ τῶν θυγατέρων τὴν μόνην ἠρήμωσαν<sup>200</sup>

**Baruch 4:16** These have carried away the dear beloved children of the widow, and left her that was alone desolate without daughters KJV

There is really not much need to go into this verse with any depth, if the reason that Warden provided this reference was because he was trying to demonstrate that *monos* and *monogenes* are equivalent terms because one is a variant. Why? Simply because a variant is not automatically equivalent to a word it is replacing.

For example, in Matt. 27:34 we have a variant between wine and a sour wine (vinegar) in the text. The Byzantine text has ὄξος (which is a sour wine or vinegar), while NA27 has οἶνον (wine). The two are completely different drinks, and so just because one of the two is a variant, one cannot conclude that ὄξος must mean the same thing as the variant οἶνον. They do not.

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<sup>198</sup> Warden, op. cit., pg. 38

<sup>199</sup> See *Vetus Testamentum*, Vol. III (Ex Officina Joannis Heideggeri & Soc., 1732) pg. 285

<sup>200</sup> Brenton, op.cit., pg. 126 (Apocrypha)

Therefore, if that is the point that Warden was trying to make, it cannot stand and should not be used as an absolute proof either way.

But that still leaves the question. Why would there be a variant *μονογενής* in the text and how should it be understood if *μονογενής* was the original word?

In the story, Jerusalem, which was the capital of Judea, was left desolate and all alone after the captivity and deportation of the Jews. Because of this, Jerusalem was likened to a widow who was only-begotten. She not only was alone because she was a widow, she was also alone because she was an only-begotten child; she could not even be comforted by a sibling. Her only comfort, her children, had all been taken captive. She was left alone and had no others, a widow with no one to turn to and be comforted. Her husband was dead, she had no siblings to turn to, and her children had been taken away from her. She was a widow, who also had been an only-begotten child, being now left desolate without her children. It is highly picturesque and symbolic language and should not be taken too literally.

As such, some prefer the translation of “lonely” or “alone.” However, that really is an interpolation. The literal rendering would be only-begotten. Nevertheless, if one wishes to use a less than literal translation, preferring “lonely” or “alone,” such a one must remember that that nuance is rooted in the meaning of the *monogenes* as “only-begotten.” With the translation of only-begotten the King James Version would then read this way.

**Baruch 4:16** These have carried away the dear beloved children of the widow, and left her that was [only-begotten] desolate without daughters

Or the RSV would then read this way, if only-begotten was used to translate.

**Baruch 4:16** They led away the widow's beloved sons, and bereaved the [only-begotten] of her daughters.

But this whole discussion is rather mute, for we do not know which variant was original. Was *monogenes* original and a scribe decided that because an only-begotten child is alone, and the idea of being alone is the main thought of the text, the text would be better served by using *monos*; and so he changed it?<sup>201</sup> Or was, perhaps, *monos* the original and a scribe saw the word but thought *monogenes* would better serve the purpose of being completely alone, for a widow bereft of her children could still have many brothers and sisters and nieces and nephews, but if the widow was only-begotten, she would have no other siblings, and so no nieces or nephews, and would truly be desolate, completely alone; and so the scribe changed it, wishing to show how utterly desolate Jerusalem was? Either way, we do not know which was original and so this reference cannot prove the case one way or the other.

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<sup>201</sup> Infallibility, of course, only applies to Scripture, and not to the Apocrypha, of which Baruch is a part.

## Wisdom of Solomon

The final extra-Biblical example Warden gives is found in the Wisdom of Solomon. This is what he says.

“A different conception is found in Wisdom of Solomon 7.22: ἔστιν ἐν αὐτῇ πνεῦμα νοερόν ἅγιον μονογενές πολυμερές λεπτόν, ‘For there is in her (Wisdom) a spirit quick of understanding, holy, alone in kind (Greek: sole-born), subtil. ‘Wisdom was the only one of her kind.’<sup>202,,,203</sup>

This is the full verse.

**Wisdom 7:22** ἔστιν γὰρ ἐν αὐτῇ πνεῦμα νοερόν ἅγιον μονογενές πολυμερές λεπτόν εὐκίνητον τρανόν ἀμόλυντον σαφές ἀπήμαντον φιλόγαθον ὄξυ<sup>204</sup>

**Wisdom 7:22** For wisdom, which is the worker of all things, taught me: for in her is an understanding spirit holy, one only, manifold, subtil, lively, clear, undefiled, plain, not subject to hurt, loving the thing that is good quick, which cannot be letted, ready to do good. KJV

Warden seeks to demonstrate that *monogenes* in Wisdom of Solomon 7:22 should be understood as “only one of her kind,” and not as “only-begotten.” But this again is totally arbitrary. In fact, if one searches Scripture one will find that Scripture, itself, assigns the connotation of begottenness to wisdom. Scripture tells us that wisdom was begotten! The LXX version of Prov. 8:25 reads:

**Prov. 8:25** πρὸ τοῦ ὄρη ἐδρασθῆναι πρὸ δὲ πάντων βουνῶν γεννᾶ με

**Proverbs 8:25** before the mountains were settled, and before all hills, he begets me. (Brenton’s LXX English Version)

The King James Version translates the Hebrew text thus:

**Proverbs 8:25** Before the mountains were settled, before the hills was I brought forth: KJV

And the Geneva Bible translated it as follows:

**Proverbs 8:25** Before the mountaines were settled: and before the hilles, was I begotten.

And what is interesting is Warden even admits as much, even though, he ends up assigning *monogenes* a different meaning. If you notice in his quote above he puts “sole-born” in parenthesis.

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<sup>202</sup> Warden’s footnote, at this point, references the following: Harris. op. cit., p.13 (Harris, R. Origin of the Prologue to John’s Gospel, p. 13)

<sup>203</sup> Warden, op. cit., pg. 32

<sup>204</sup> Brenton, op.cit., pg. 61 (Apocrypha)

Now, of course, the Wisdom of Solomon is an apocryphal writing and should not take precedence over Scripture, but it is plain to see that the concept of begetting was fully conjoined with wisdom and it would be completely normal that a writer would use *monogenes*, meaning only-begotten, with wisdom personified. So in reality, this text could actually support the traditional meaning of only-begotten for *monogenes*.

## The Patristics

We are doing this as a separate chapter, rather than a sub-chapter under Misconceptions and Misunderstandings because it is such an important part of the evidence in determining the true meaning of *monogenes* as understood by those Christians that lived nearest to the time of the New Testament. However, this chapter will still be the conclusion to all that was covered in Misconceptions and Misunderstandings. So with that in mind let's begin.

Warden basically ignored the use of *monogenes* in the Patristics. The question must be asked, "Why?" This becomes an even more important question when we remember he made this statement at the beginning of his dissertation.

"An examination of the word as it has been used **in all its discoverable sources** will do more, perhaps, to bring to light its precise meaning than will lexical and grammatical considerations alone. For **the final conclusion must be made in the light of the ways in which the word has been used, never in terms of what any one should like to have it mean.**"<sup>205</sup>

He says the examination of the word should be found in "all" its discoverable sources, but then ignores one the major sources for the meaning of the word – the Patristics. How can he make a reasoned judgment as to the proper meaning of the word when he ignores one of the primary sources for the word? He clearly admonishes the reader that "all" sources should be examined in determining the meaning of a word, but then he writes his dissertation, ignoring his own admonition.

He freely examined sources up to five centuries before the New Testament was written, but ignored those sources that were in the five centuries after the New Testament was written. He even ignored those sources that were just one century after the New Testament was written, and even a few sources that were only a few decades after New Testament was written!

He stated, "the final conclusion must be made in the light of the ways in which the word has been used, never in terms of what any one should like to have it mean." And yet, he ignores how the word was used by fellow Christians in those times closest to the time of the New Testament. Why?

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<sup>205</sup> Francis Marion Warden, *MONOTENEΣ IN THE JOHANNINE LITERATURE* (Southern Baptist Theological Seminary, Louisville, KY, 1938) pg. 25

The evidence overwhelming supports the meaning of “only-begotten” among the Patristics. Indeed, the traditional understanding of “only-begotten” was the accepted definition of the word by all Christians holding to the Historic Christian Faith during those first eighteen centuries of Church History. The meaning of “one of a kind” for the word *monogenes* was a novel idea introduced, as far as I have been able to determine, in the 19th century. So the question must be asked again, “Why was this evidence ignored?” Listen to what he says regarding the use of the Patristics for evidence.

“The patristic usage of *μονογενής* has been omitted from the survey, because of the fact that the Fathers’ employment of the term is with reference to its meaning in the Johannine literature. Therefore, the Fathers are not especially good witnesses for the meaning of the word in any other connection. Some account of the patristic usage will naturally appear in the last two chapters of this study.”<sup>206</sup>

His reasoning does not make sense! If one wants to determine what John meant by his use of *monogenes* in his Gospel, would not one examine how that word was used during that same time period? One wouldn’t ignore that evidence if one was truly desirous of the truth. Words change meaning over time and so when one wants to determine a meaning of the word one does not rely solely on etymology, but one looks to see how the word is used in the time period in question.

His dissertation is called *MONOTENEΣ in the Johannine Literature*! Is that not the purpose of his research – to find out how John understood *monogenes*? Why then would he say that the Patristics are not good witnesses as to the meaning of *monogenes* in Johannine literature? Incredible! Was not Greek their mother tongue? Did they not know what the word *monogenes* meant? Did they not even understand their own language, the very language they were taught since they were children?

Were they not Christians, who were capable of being illuminated by the Holy Spirit as to the meaning of *monogenes* as recorded in the Gospel of John, unlike the pagans and heathens who were dead in their trespasses and sin and who were darkened in their understanding as to the truth of God? Are pagans and heathens “good witnesses” in ascertaining the meaning of *monogenes* in the Gospel of John, but Christians are “poor witnesses” in ascertaining the meaning of *monogenes* in the Gospel of John? Again, incredible! Is it better to look to witnesses who are darkened in their understanding, or is it better to look to witnesses who are enlightened in their understanding? His rationale does not make sense.

He says “some account of patristic usage” will appear in his last two chapters, but that is misleading also, for he does not use them in determining the true

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<sup>206</sup> Ibid., pg. 35

meaning of *monogenes* at all. Rather, he primarily uses them in reference to the variant θεός in John 1:18.

Is this not interesting? He has no problem using the Patristics to determine whether the variant “Son” or “God” is the correct word in John 1:18; they have enough illumination for that purpose. But they are dismissed when help is needed in understanding the word that preceded the variant – the word “μονογενής!”

Again, his reasoning does not make sense. He is the one that said,

“An examination of the word as it has been used in all its discoverable sources will do more, perhaps, to bring to light its precise meaning than will lexical and grammatical considerations alone.”

Therefore, let’s ignore his practice, and rather, follow his preaching. Let’s follow his admonition and look to all the evidence, especially the evidence from those Christians who lived nearest to the time of the New Testament – the Patristics – and let us see how they understood the word.

We will first include that portion of the Patristics we have already discussed in regard to Dale Moody’s claim. We will not include Clement, of course, as we already devoted a complete chapter to his evidence. But his evidence is certainly important, but we will begin with the evidence from Ignatius and Justin Martyr.

## Ignatius

Ignatius makes this statement in his Epistle to the Ephesians, chapter VII, verse 2.

“Ἰατρός δὲ ἡμῶν ἐστὶν ὁ μόνος ἀληθεὶς θεός, ὁ ἀγέννητος καὶ ἀπόσιτος, ὁ τῶν ὅλων κύριος, τοῦ δὲ μονογενοῦς πατὴρ καὶ γεννήτωρ ἔχομεν ἱατρὸν καὶ τὸν Κύριον ἡμῶν θεὸν Ἰησοῦν τὸν Χριστόν τὸν πρὸ αἰώνων υἱὸν μονογενῆ καὶ λόγον, ὕστερον δὲ καὶ ἄνθρωπον ἐκ Μαρίας τῆς παρθένου ὁ λόγος γὰρ σὰρξ ἐγένετο.”<sup>207</sup>

“But our Physician is the only true God, the unbegotten and unapproachable, the Lord of all, the Father and Begetter of the only-begotten Son. We have also as a Physician the Lord our God, Jesus the Christ, the only-begotten Son and Word, before time began, but who afterwards became also man, of Mary the virgin.”<sup>208</sup>

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<sup>207</sup> Saint Ignatius (Bishop of Antioch) William Cureton, tr., *Corpus Ignatianum: a complete collection of the Ignatian epistles, genuine, interpolated and spurious, together with numerous extracts from them, as quoted by ecclesiastical writers down to the tenth century, in Syriac, Greek, and Latin* (Asher and Co., Berlin, 1849) pg.23

<sup>208</sup> Alexander Roberts, James Donaldson, ed., *The Ante-Nicene Fathers, Vol. I* (Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co, Grand Rapids, MI 1985) pg. 52



Now, it makes no difference if this quote is from the shorter or longer recension, or whether the epistles of Ignatius are spurious or genuine for we are simply looking for evidence as to whether the word *monogenes* was used as “only-begotten” or “only born” by the Patristics in the first four centuries of the Church.

This quote is from the longer recension, which many consider to be a later interpolation of the epistle. (The shorter recension is different because it does not even use the word *monogenes*, let alone many of the other words in the longer recension). Now some believe it was written in the middle of the second century, others in the middle of the fourth century. It makes no difference, but if the earlier date is true it becomes even more significant because it would have been written a mere fifty years or so after the death of the apostle John.

The passage clearly affirms the traditional meaning of *monogenes*. The meanings of “only member of a kin,” or the meaning of “only” simply would not fit the context. However, the meaning of “only-begotten” fits nicely within the context.

First, Ignatius declares that God the Father is the “only true God.” He uses the Greek word *μόνος* to declare this. Now, if *monogenes* means “only,” why then did not Ignatius write *ὁ μονογενὴς ἀληθεὺς θεὸς*? Now some may say, “Well he just chose to use the word *μόνος* instead, since it also means only.” Well, enough. But why then did he not continue with his chosen word and use *μόνος* again when referring to the Son? Or why did he not simply use *monogenes* for both the Father and the Son together if it simply means “only?”

I think the answer is simply because *μόνος* and *μονογενὴς* do not mean the same thing. *Monos* means “only,” and *monogenes* means “only-begotten,” or “only born.” Ignatius could not use *monogenes* of the Father because he calls the Father, *ἀγέννητος* (unbegotten) and the *γεννήτωρ* (begetter) of the Only-Begotten. The Father is the only one unbegotten and the Son is the only one begotten, *monogenes* – the Only-begotten.

*Monogenes* is never used of the Father in the Bible or in these writings, yet *monos* is used repeatedly for the Father. Let me repeat that statement. *Monogenes* is never used of the Father in the Bible or in any of these writings! Why? If *monogenes* means “only,” and not “only-begotten,” why then is it never used of the Father? The answer of course is that while the Father is the “only” (*monos*) Father, he cannot be the *monogenes* Father because he is unbegotten, and not “only begotten.” *Monogenes* means “only-begotten” and that is why it is never used of the Father. If it simply meant “only” as claimed by Dale Moody, or “one and only” as claimed by Francis Warden, it could have been used for the Father.

Second, if *monogenes*, as used for the Son by Ignatius, means “only member of a kin,” how could that be true if the Father is also a member of a kin? The Son could not then be the “only” member of the kin. (Such a thought has all kinds of theological problems. The Father, Son and Holy Spirit are not members of a kin, but I am simply demonstrating – apart from the theological problems – that linguistically, the Son could not be considered to be the only member of a kin, if his Father was still alive!).

Nor, if we chose the meaning adopted by Dale Moody for the word *monogenes*, i.e. meaning “only,” would it work within the context? (One has to notice in the Greek the first use of *monogenes* does not include the word υἱός—Son, despite the Roberts/Donaldson English translation provided above). So if *monogenes* simply meant *only*, one has to ask, “Only what? The text would then read, “God is the Father and Begetter of *Only*?” It makes no sense. But it does make sense to say “God is the Father and Begetter of the *Only-Begotten*.”

So we see that this is a very significant reference that should be used as evidence in determining how the word *monogenes* was understood in Johannine literature. It clearly shows it was understood as only-begotten in those first few centuries. However it must be noted that assigning an earlier date to the longer recension is a minority opinion. The general consensus is that the longer recension was composed in the middle of the fourth century and I would tend to agree with the later date. But should that make any difference for our study? I do not think so, for it would still be in those first four centuries.

Now, I know some will still dismiss this as evidence, but why? Why should this reference to be so curtly dismissed? Does this not still provide evidence as to how *monogenes* was understood? Certainly it would carry more weight if it was written at the early date, but why should it be dismissed out of hand? Are we not simply looking for evidence as to how the word *monogenes* was understood in those first few centuries following the time of our Lord? Is this still not within that time period?

Plainly stated, a later date for this reference should not disqualify it for consideration, for if one is willing to look back to Parmenides, to approximately the fifth century before Christ, for help in understanding the meaning of *monogenes*, why would one not be willing to look forward to approximately the fourth century after Christ for help in understanding the meaning of *monogenes*?

At least the evidence should be provided to the Christian so that such a one can decide for themselves as to whether the passage has any significance – a thing Francis Warden was not willing to do.

Clearly, the writer of Ignatius understood *monogenes* to mean “only-begotten.”

## Justin Martyr

Justin Martyr (A.D. 110-165), was born just a few years after the apostle John’s death. In his *Dialogue with Trypho*, while commenting on Christ’s suffering being predicted in Psalm 22, he makes this important declaration regarding Christ.

“...μονογενῆς γὰρ ὅτι ἦν τῷ πατρὶ τῶν ὅλων οὗτος, ἰδίως ἐξ αὐτοῦ λόγος καὶ δύναμις γεγενημένος, καὶ ὕστερον ἄνθρωπος διὰ τῆς παρθένου γενόμενος, ὡς, ἀπὸ τῶν ἀπομνημονευμάτων ἐμάθομεν, προεδήλωσα.<sup>209</sup>

“For I have already proved that He was the only-begotten of the Father of all things, being begotten in a peculiar manner Word and Power by Him, and having afterwards become man through the Virgin, as we have learned from the memoirs.”<sup>210</sup>

We can take this portion a couple ways. We can treat the participle as a periphrastic participle and translate the first part as follows:

“For I made clear before that the Only-begotten to the Father of all things, the Word and the Power, was begotten privately out of him, and he afterwards became man through the virgin, just as we have learned from the memoirs.”

Or we can take the first part as an exegetical participle in which case we could translate it thus:

“For I have made clear before that he was Only-begotten to the Father of all things, Word and Power, being begotten out of him privately.”

The latter translation is probably the better for λόγος καὶ δύναμις are anarthrous. But in either case we have *monogenes* being defined by the participle, explaining why he is the only-begotten.

We also have an adverb, ἰδίως, which we find fronted, also emphasizing why he is only-begotten. The adverb carries the idea of privacy, peculiarity, or uniqueness. Thus the phrase could be rendered,

“For I have made clear before that he was only-begotten to the Father of all things, word and power, being uniquely begotten out of him,”

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<sup>209</sup> Justin Martyr, Rev. W. Trollope, tr., *S. Justini philosophi et martyris, cum Tryphone Judaeo dialogus*. Edited with a corrected text and English introduction and notes, Vol. II (Printed by and for J. Hall, Opposite the Pitt Press; and G. Bell, Cambridge, 1847) pg. 71-72

<sup>210</sup> Alexander Roberts, James Donaldson, ed., *The Ante-Nicene Fathers, Vol. I* (Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co, Grand Rapids, MI 1985) pg. 251

“For I made clear before that the Only-begotten to the Father of all things, the Word and the Power, was uniquely begotten out of him.”

In essence, with the adverb, Justin is giving further definition to the Greek participle and thus the word it is construed with by explaining how he was begotten and thus only-begotten. In this case, with ἰδίως, the term *monogenes* is being further explained by the adverb as one who is *only-begotten* because he is ἰδίως—*uniquely begotten* from the Father of all things.

In addition, he is also affirming the meaning of *only-begotten* by saying he had already made this point clear. When did he make it clear? For such a statement to make sense he must have said something before where he had affirmed the same thing; he must have already demonstrated that Christ was the only-begotten of the Father of all things.

He did. And it is found in this portion of his Dialogue with Trypho.

“ ‘I shall give you another testimony, my friends,’ said I, ‘from the Scriptures, that God begat before all creatures a Beginning, [who was] a certain rational power [proceeding ] from Himself, who is called by the Holy Spirit, now the Glory of the Lord, now the Son, again Wisdom, again an Angel, then God, then Lord and Logos; and on another occasion He call Himself Captain, when He appeared in human form to Joshua the son of Nave (Nun). For He can be called by all those names, since He ministers to the Father’s will, and since He was begotten of the Father by an act of will; just as we see happening among ourselves: for when we give out some word, we beget the word; yet not by abscission, so as to lessen the word [which remains] in us, when we give it out: and Just as we see also happening in the case of a fire, which is not lessened when it has kindled [another], but remains the same; and that which has been kindled by it likewise appears to exist by itself, not diminishing that from which it was kindled. The word of Wisdom, who is Himself this God begotten of the Father of all things, and Word, and Wisdom, and Power and the Glory of the Begetter, will bear evidence to me when He speaks..”<sup>211</sup>

This, most likely, is the portion to which he is referring, and in this portion near the end of the paragraph we find him calling Christ, “...the Word of Wisdom, who is Himself this God begotten of the Father of all things”

The pertinent part in Greek is this.

“...ὁ λόγος τῆς σοφίας, αὐτὸς ὢν οὗτος ὁ θεὸς ἀπὸ τοῦ πατρὸς τῶν ὅλων γεννηθεὶς...”<sup>212</sup>

“...the Word of Wisdom being Himself this God having been begotten from the Father of all things...”

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<sup>211</sup> Alexander Roberts, James Donaldson, ed., *The Ante-Nicene Fathers, Vol. I* (Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co, Grand Rapids, MI 1985) pg, 227

<sup>212</sup> Justin Martyr, Rev. W. Trollope, tr., *S. Justini philosophi et martyris, cum Tryphone Judaeo dialogus. Edited with a corrected text and English introduction and notes, Vol. I* (Printed by and for J. Hall, Opposite the Pitt Press; and G. Bell, Cambridge, 1846) pg. 124

In the litany of titles given to Christ in the Old Testament, one of which is his being “God,” and “Lord,” Justin now states that this same God is this “God Begotten.” Notice that he even uses the same imagery as he did in our first quote. He bespeaks of the Father that begat him as being the Father of all things (τῶν ὅλων).

In the first quote he says he had already proven that Christ was the *monogenes* to the Father of all things (τῶν ὅλων). In this quote he says that he “is this God begotten” from the Father of all things (τῶν ὅλων). Obviously, this suggests that in Justin’s mind, he who is this “God Begotten,” is also he who is this *monogenes* – Only-begotten.

However, if one defines *monogenes* by “only,” as Dale Moody desires, would this not make the text nonsensical? The first quote would then read:

“For I have already proved that He was the “**Only**” of the Father of all things, being begotten in a peculiar manner Word and Power by Him, and having afterwards become man through the Virgin, as we have learned from the memoirs.”<sup>213</sup>

Justin would then be saying that he had already proved that he was the “Only?” What does that mean? Of course, those who believe *monogenes* means *only* would say, “No, no, it means “only Son.” Well, we have already proved the word did not mean “only Son” for when we get to verses like John 3:16, which include the Greek word Son after *monogenes*, the verse would become nonsensical for John would then be declaring that God gave his “Only Son Son.”

Now, of course, in certain contexts we know it can refer to a son or to a daughter, but that is **not** because there is some connotation of “son” or “daughter” in the word; we know it because of contextual constraints. The connotation that is in the word is “born” or “begotten.”

Neither could *monogenes* mean “*only member of a kin*” for, obviously, Justin would not be telling Trypho, a Jew, that God the Father was dead and that only the Son was alive, being the *only member of a kin*. Therefore, the only meaning that works in Justin’s writings is the meaning “*only-begotten*.”

The only meaning that works in Justin’s writings is the meaning “only-begotten.”

## Irenaeus

With Irenaeus, we have a little different situation. We do not have any extant Greek writings of Irenaeus, but we do have his writings in Latin. When

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<sup>213</sup> Alexander Roberts, James Donaldson, ed., *The Ante-Nicene Fathers, Vol. I* (Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co, Grand Rapids, MI 1985) pg. 251

discussing the Only-Begotten this is what he says:

“If any one, therefore says to us, 'How then was the Son produced by the Father?' we reply to him, that no man understands that production, or generation, or calling, or revelation, or by whatever name one many describe His generation, which is in fact altogether indescribable. Neither...angels, nor archangels, nor principalities, nor powers [possess this knowledge], but the Father only who begat, and the Son who was begotten...the Only-Begotten Word of God.”<sup>214</sup>

And in another place he says,

“The Gospel according to John relates the princely, and efficacious, and glorious generation of Christ from the Father...but Matthew relates that generation which belongs to Him as man...”<sup>215</sup>

Now, as was mentioned, we do not have his writings extant in Greek, and so we do not know what Greek word of Irenaeus translated as Only-Begotten. However, we do have other evidence which will confirm to us that he understood *monogenes* as only-begotten.

Roberts and Donaldson tell us that this work of Irenaeus, *Against Heresies*, was translated into Latin sometime after 200 A.D., that is, in the beginning of the third century. They state:

“Dodwell supposes this Latin version to have been made about the end of the fourth century; but as Tertullian seems to have used it, we must rather place it in the beginning of the third.”<sup>216</sup>

And so, what we find is that when Irenaeus' writings were translated into Latin at that time, the Greek word “monogenes” from Jn. 1:18 was translated by the Latin word “*unigenitus*” in his writings, which in Latin can only mean “only-begotten!”

This is how the verse in Latin reads in his writings *Against Heresies*, Book III, chapter XI, verse 6.

“Deum enim, inquit, nemo vidit unquam, nisi unigenitus Filius Dei, qui est in sinu Patris, ipse enarravit.”<sup>217</sup>

So here is more evidence disproving the assertions of Dale Moody and the

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<sup>214</sup> Alexander Roberts, James Donaldson, ed., *The Ante-Nicene Fathers, Vol. I* (Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co, Grand Rapids, MI 1985) pg. 401

<sup>215</sup> Richard Treffry, *An Inquiry into the Doctrine of The Eternal Sonship of our Lord Jesus Christ* (Wesleyan Conference Office, London, 1865) pg. 408-409

<sup>216</sup> Alexander Roberts, James Donaldson, ed., *The Ante-Nicene Fathers, Vol. I* (Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co, Grand Rapids, MI 1985) pg. 312

<sup>217</sup> Available from: [www.documentacatholicaomnia.eu/20vs/103\\_migne\\_gm/0130-0202\\_Iraeneus\\_Contra\\_Haereses\\_Libri\\_Quinque\\_\(MPG\\_007a\\_0433\\_1118\)\\_GM.pdf](http://www.documentacatholicaomnia.eu/20vs/103_migne_gm/0130-0202_Iraeneus_Contra_Haereses_Libri_Quinque_(MPG_007a_0433_1118)_GM.pdf) (Bk. III, ch.XI. 6)

indirect assertions of B. F. Westcott that *monogenes* was never understood to mean only-begotten until the close of the fourth century. The word was so understood sometime shortly after 200 A.D., or for those who might dispute that date, certainly sometime during the third century.

And so, we must conclude in the above quote, when Irenaeus uses “unigenitum” in the phrase “Only-begotten Word,” that, more than likely, it also was a translation of the Greek word “monogenes,” the phrase being translated as “unigenitum Dei Verbum.”<sup>218</sup>

If the translators of Irenaeus understood the Greek word “monogenes” to mean “only,” or “only member of a kin,” or “one of a kind,” then they would not have used the word “*unigenitus*” by which to translate the word for unigenitus cannot mean “only,” “only member of a kin,” or “one of a kind.” It can only mean “only-begotten.”

As an aside, this understanding of “monogenes,” to mean “only-begotten,” is also confirmed for us by the fact that in the majority of extant Old Latin translations of the Greek Scripture, “unigenitus” is used to translate the word “monogenes” – by a margin of 4 to 1 in those particular passages where it is used of our Lord.

The Old Latin texts confirm that the most common understanding of “monogenes” was “only-begotten,” in the days of the early Church, and not “only” or “only member of a kin” (We will look into this in more detail in the following chapter entitled, *The Testimony of Old Latin Versions, Jerome and the Latin Vulgate*)

## Tertullian

Tertullian (c. 200 A.D.) states,

“Thus does He make Him equal to Him: for by proceeding from Himself He became His first-begotten Son, because begotten before all things; and His only-begotten also, because alone begotten of God, in a way peculiar to Himself,<sup>219</sup> from the womb of His own heart—even as the Father Himself testifies: “My heart,” says He, “hath emitted my most excellent Word.” *The Father* took pleasure evermore in Him, who equally rejoiced with a reciprocal gladness in the Father’s presence: “Thou art my Son, to-day have I begotten Thee;” even before the morning star did I beget Thee.”<sup>220</sup>

This is the testimony of Tertullian written in Latin and not in Greek, but we do

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<sup>218</sup> Available from: [www.documentacatholicaomnia.eu/20vs/103\\_migne\\_gm/0130-0202\\_Iraeneus\\_Contra\\_Haereses\\_Libri\\_Quinque\\_\(MPG\\_007a\\_0433\\_1118\)\\_GM.pdf](http://www.documentacatholicaomnia.eu/20vs/103_migne_gm/0130-0202_Iraeneus_Contra_Haereses_Libri_Quinque_(MPG_007a_0433_1118)_GM.pdf) (Bk. II, ch. XXVIII. 6)

<sup>219</sup> What could be more succinct than this to show that “monogenes” was understood as not only as “only-begotten,” but also as “uniquely begotten?”

<sup>220</sup> Alexander Roberts, James Donaldson, ed., *The Ante-Nicene Fathers, Vol. III* (Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co, Grand Rapids, MI 1985) pg. 601

see that Tertullian's understanding of the doctrine of Christ, as recorded in Scriptures, spoke of him as being the "only-begotten" of the Father because he was the only "one" begotten of the Father.

The pertinent part of this quote is as follows in Latin.

"...exinde eum patrem sibi faciens de quo procedendo filius factus est primogenitus, ut ante omnia genitus, et unigenitus, ut solus ex deo genitus, proprie de vulva cordis ipsius secundum quod et pater ipse testatur, Eructavit cor meum sermonem optimum..."<sup>221</sup>

And in English,

"Thus does He make Him equal to Him: for by proceeding from Himself He became His first-begotten Son, because begotten before all things; and His only-begotten also, because alone begotten of God, in a way peculiar to Himself, from the womb of His own heart—even as the Father Himself testifies: "My heart," says He, "hath emitted my most excellent Word."<sup>222</sup>

Tertullian says that he was "*unigenitus*," only-begotten, because he was the only one, "*solus*," begotten of God the Father. Not only that, in that begetting Tertullian calls him "*primogenitus*," which also carries the idea of begotteness.

Unlike Irenaeus, this is not a translation, so we have the direct witness of Tertullian showing that he considered Christ to be "only-begotten," because he was "alone begotten." In other words, Tertullian understood both the concept of begotteness in *unigenitus* and the concept of "aloneness" in *unigenitus*. But the question must be asked, "Did he consider *unigenitus* to be an equivalent word to the Greek word *monogenes*? And the answer to that question is yes.

In chapter 15 of the same book, *Against Praxeas* he writes,

"Let us, in short, examine who it is whom the apostles saw. 'That,' says John, 'which we have seen with our eyes, which we have looked upon, and our hands have handled, of the Word of life.' Now the Word of life became flesh, and was heard, and was seen, and was handled, because He was flesh who, before He came in the flesh, was the 'Word in the beginning with God; the Father, and the Word was God, yet was He with God, because He is God of God; and being joined to the Father, is with the Father. 'And we have seen His glory, the glory as of the only-begotten of the Father;' that is, of course, (the glory) of the Son, even Him who was visible, and was glorified by the invisible Father."<sup>223</sup>

In Latin it reads.

"...denique inspiciamus quem apostoli viderint. Quod vidimus, inquit Ioannes, quod

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<sup>221</sup> Sourced from *Against Praxeas*, chapter VII at:

[www.documentacatholicaomnia.eu/04z/z\\_0160-0220\\_\\_Tertullianus\\_\\_Adversus\\_Praxean\\_Liber\\_LT.doc.html](http://www.documentacatholicaomnia.eu/04z/z_0160-0220__Tertullianus__Adversus_Praxean_Liber_LT.doc.html)

<sup>222</sup> Alexander Roberts, James Donaldson, ed., *The Ante-Nicene Fathers, Vol. III* (Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co, Grand Rapids, MI 1985) pg. 601

<sup>223</sup> *Ibid.*, pg. 610-611



audivimus, oculis nostris vidimus, et manus nostrae contrecta- verunt de sermone vitae. sermo enim vitae caro factus, et auditus et visus et contrectatus quia caro, qui ante carnem sermo tantum 15 in primordio apud deum patrem, non pater apud semetipsum. nam etsi deus sermo, sed apud deum, quia ex deo deus, quia cumpatre apud patrem. Et vidimus gloriam eius tanquam unigeniti a patre, utique filii scilicet visibilis, glorificati a patre invisibili...”,<sup>224</sup>

Tertullian quotes John 1:14 which we know contains the Greek word *monogenes*, and the Latin word he uses to translate *monogenes* is *unigenitus*, which we have already seen can only mean “only-begotten.”

This is significant evidence that should not be ignored in determining the true meaning of *monogenes*, for unlike Irenaeus, this date cannot be disputed. This work was written around 210 A.D, and no later than 225 A.D. for most affirm that he died in 225 A.D. And so this is strong evidence, long before the close of the fourth century, that Christians understood *monogenes* to mean “only-begotten” contrary to the claims of Westcott, Moody and Warden.

The reason this provides such evidence is because this shows us he believed the Latin word *unigenitus* was equivalent to the Greek word *monogenes* in John 1:14, as was seen in the quote above. So if we know how he defines *unigenitus*, we know how he defined the Greek word *monogenes*.

And this is also important because it shows us how the Greek word *monogenes* was understood a little more than a hundred years after John wrote his gospel. We have already seen it was understood as *only-begotten* by a near contemporary, i.e. Clement. And we have also seen it was still understood as *only-begotten* a few decades later by Justin Martyr. And now we have evidence that shows us the word continued to be understood as *only-begotten* a few decades after that.

And so let’s recap. We asked ourselves, “Did Tertullian provides us with any information as to how he understood *unigenitus*?” And the answer was yes. We saw in the quote from the beginning of this section that he understood *unigenitus* as “only-begotten.” because the Son was “alone begotten.” Then we found that he used *unigenitus* to translate *monogenes* in John 1:14, thereby showing us that Tertullian understood *monogenes* to mean “only-begotten” and not to mean simply “only.”

So here again, we have evidence that contradicts the assertion of Dale Moody and Francis Warden that *monogenes* was not understood as only-begotten till the close of the fourth century. In fact, we have a direct timeline for the word directly back to John from the years just after the close of the second century!

The word meant *only-begotten* in c. 210 A.D. in Tertullian’s writing. It meant

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<sup>224</sup> Sourced from Against Praxeas, chapter XV at:  
[www.documentacatholicaomnia.eu/04z/z\\_0160-0220\\_\\_Tertullianus\\_\\_Adversus\\_Praxean\\_Liber\\_\\_LT.doc.html](http://www.documentacatholicaomnia.eu/04z/z_0160-0220__Tertullianus__Adversus_Praxean_Liber__LT.doc.html)

only-begotten in c. 160 A.D. in Justin Martyr's writings. It meant only-begotten in c. 96 A. D. in First Clement, and that brings us to within five to ten years of its use in the Gospel of John! The word clearly meant *only-begotten* in John and continued to mean *only-begotten* well into the third century.

However, before moving on to the next reference from the Patristics it is only fair to mention that I also found an example where Tertullian used *unicus* for *monogenes* when quoting John 1:14 and 3:16 in chapter XXI in his book *Against Praxeas*. As to why he did so, I have to admit I do not know. (The use of *unicus* for the Son will be discussed in the chapter entitled The Apostle's Creed). However, if we desire objectivity we cannot hide this example from the reader.

Perhaps this is also good time to mention that sometimes one will find *unicus* used to translate *monogenes* in other places. It would be foolish to deny it. The same translation occurs in some of the Old Latin texts of the New Testament as we will discuss in a later chapter.

However, as it would be foolish to deny that *unicus* was sometimes used to translate *monogenes*, it would also be foolish to pretend that this minority translation of *monogenes* by the word *unicus* was the majority translation of the Greek word. It was not. It is a minority translation. So even if we cannot explain the reason for its use, it does not change the fact that it is a minority usage, and, as such, should not be put forth as a "majority usage." The vast majority of the times one will find *monogenes* translated by *unigenitus* and not *unicus*. That in itself is significant and should not be denied. (This will be fully discussed under the chapter, *The Testimony of Old Latin Versions, Jerome and the Latin Vulgate*). So with that said, let's continue.

The next reference from Tertullian, among many others, is from his work *Against the Valentinians*. In writing against the Gnostic heretics he says the following.

"Accordingly he is even called the Father himself, and the Beginning of all things, and, with great propriety, Monogenes (Only-begotten). And yet not with absolute propriety, since he is not born alone. For along with him a female also proceeded, whose name was Veritas (Truth). But how much more suitably might Monogenes be called Protogenes (First begotten), since he was begotten first!"<sup>225</sup>

And the pertinent part of the reference, i.e. the first two sentences, reads as follows in Latin:

"Ita et ipse Pater dicitur et initium omnium et proprie **Monogenes**; atquin non proprie

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<sup>225</sup> Alexander Roberts, James Donaldson, ed., *The Ante-Nicene Fathers, Vol. III* (Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co, Grand Rapids, MI 1985) pg. 507

siquidem non solus agnoscitur.”<sup>226</sup>

Tertullian is referring to the imaginary emanations of the Gnostic system, one of whom was named Monogenes. In Latin, he actually transliterates the actual Greek word Μονογενῆς. Therefore, we do not need to speculate as to what underlying Greek word he had in mind. It was not a translation. We know it was the Greek word *monogenes* since it was simply transliterated.

Why is this reference important? It is important because he tells us that it is completely incongruous with the word to name one of these emanations Monogenes. He says it is not “with absolute propriety, since he is not born alone!”

This is an important text for it shows us again, that Tertullian understood the word *monogenes* to mean “born alone,” “only-begotten,” “only born.” If the primary meaning of *monogenes* was truly *unicus* (unique, only), then he would not have needed to make such an observation, for certainly within the Valentinian system each emanation was unique! And, as such, there would be no incongruity if that emanation was named *Monogenes* (Unique). But because the word meant *only-begotten*, he had to explain to the reader that the word did not really fit the context, since the emanation named *Monogenes* was not the only one begotten or emanated; he was not born alone. Veritas was also born. That is why he tells the reader the use of the word *Monogenes* was not with “absolute propriety.”

This is another example in the long line of evidence that “one of a kind,” “only,” or “unique” was not the primary meaning of *monogenes*. The primary meaning of *monogenes* was “only born,” or “only-begotten.”

## Hippolytus

Hippolytus wrote near the beginning of the third century. In his work entitled the *Refutation of all Heresies*, Book VIII, chapter II, he writes:

“When, therefore, those three Æons were adorned with all virtue and with all sanctity, so these teachers suppose, as well as that only-begotten child—for he alone was begotten by those infinite Æons from three immediately concerned in his birth...”

In this text we find the same understanding of *monogenes* as we found in Tertullian’s writings. Unlike, Tertullian’s writings, however, this text was written in Greek. The pertinent Greek text reads:

“...καὶ τοῦ παιδὸς ἐκείνου τοῦ μονγενοῦς – γέγονε γὰρ μόνος...”<sup>227</sup>

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<sup>226</sup> Sourced from Against the Valentinians, chapter VII at:  
[www.documentacatholicaomnia.eu/04z/z\\_0160-0220\\_\\_Tertullianus\\_\\_Adversus\\_Valentinianos\\_\\_LT\\_EN.doc.html](http://www.documentacatholicaomnia.eu/04z/z_0160-0220__Tertullianus__Adversus_Valentinianos__LT_EN.doc.html)

“...and of that only-begotten child – for he alone was begotten...”

Now, whether one translates the text as above or one translates it as the translation of J. H. Macmahon in the Ante-Nicene Fathers, one sees that Hippolytus understood *monogenes* to mean one who is the only “one” begotten. This again is clear evidence that Christians understood the word by its traditional connotation of “only-begotten” long before the close of the fourth century. This work was written just a hundred and so years from the time of the apostle John. Is this not important evidence in determining the meaning of the word? Clearly, *monogenes* meant only-begotten in this text. Remember it was Francis Warden, who admonished his readers,

“An examination of the word as it has been used in all its discoverable sources will do more, perhaps, to bring to light its precise meaning than will lexical and grammatical considerations alone. For the final conclusion must be made in the light of the ways in which the word has been used, never in terms of what any one should like to have it mean.”<sup>228</sup>

And yet, what do we find him doing with this discoverable source? He withholds it from his readers. This is an important piece of evidence, written by a Christian a mere hundred years or so from the time of the apostle John.

And, again, as we have said before, what is more amazing is the reason he gives for dismissing such evidence. He said,

“The patristic usage of *μονογενής* has been omitted from the survey, because of the fact that the Fathers’ employment of the term is with reference to its meaning in the Johannine literature. Therefore, the Fathers are not especially good witnesses for the meaning of the word in any other connection.”<sup>229</sup>

They are not good witnesses for the meaning of the word? Godly Christians who were willing to give their lives for the cause of Christ, Christians who willingly fought against all kinds of heresies raised up against their Saviour, Christians who faithfully contended for the Faith that was once and for all delivered to the saints were not good witnesses? Absolutely amazing! Warden considered Parmenides to be a good witness as to the meaning of the word. He considered Plato to be a good witness as to the meaning of the word. He considered various pagan writers to be good witnesses as to the meaning of the word. But Ignatius is not a good witness for the meaning of the word? Justin Martyr is not a good witness as to the meaning of the word? Irenaeus is not good witness? Absolutely incredible!

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<sup>227</sup> Hippolytus, D. Dr. Paul Wendland, G. Nathanael Bonwetsch, ed., *Die Griechischen Christlichen Schriftsteller Der Ersten Drei Jahrhunderte, Hippolytus Werke, Dritter Band, Refutatio Omnium Haeresium, Vol. 3* (J. C. Hinrichs’sche Buchhandlung, Leipzig, 1916) pg. 228

<sup>228</sup> Francis Marion Warden, *MONOGENES IN THE JOHANNINE LITERATURE* (Southern Baptist Theological Seminary, Louisville, KY, 1938) pg. 25

<sup>229</sup> *Ibid.*, pg. 35

However, even if he dismisses the witness of those Christians because their witness was only in connection with the Gospel of John, what about the last two witnesses of Tertullian and Hippolytus? Tertullian was not writing in connection with the Gospel of John's usage. He was writing in connection with usage of Valentinus. Hippolytus was not writing in connection with the usage in John, he was writing in connection with the usage of some Gnostic heretic! Why did not Warden utilize these references? Why?

Dear brethren, the primary meaning of the Greek word *monogenes* was only-begotten, and it was understood as such, not only by Ignatius and Justin Martyr, but also by Irenaeus, Tertullian and Hippolytus, and many others, including the one we will finish with, that great defender of the Faith, Athanasius.

## Athanasius

Athanasius (A.D. 298-373) whose mother tongue was Greek, the great defender of the Faith up to, during, and after the Council of Nicaea says this:

“If then He is Only-begotten, as indeed He is, ‘First-born’ needs some explanation; but if He be really First-born, then He is not Only-begotten for the same cannot be both Only-begotten and First-born, except in different relations;—that is, Only-begotten, because of His generation from the Father, as has been said; and First-born, because of His condescension to the creation and His making the many His brethren.”<sup>230</sup>

The first line above begins, “If then He is Only-begotten, as indeed He is, ‘First-born’ needs some explanation; but if He be really first-born, then He is not Only-begotten for the same cannot be both Only-Begotten and first-born...”

In the Greek it reads:

“Εἰ μὲν οὖν μονογενὴς ἐστίν, ὥσπερ οὖν καὶ ἔστιν, ἐρμηνεύεσθω τὸ πρωτότοκος. εἰ δὲ πρωτότοκος ἐστὶ, μὴ ἔστω μονογενὴς πγ.”<sup>231</sup>

Now let me quote something he had said a few lines before this quote (with the appropriate Greek text), that will clearly show forth his understanding of *monogenes*.

“Ὁ γάρ τοι μονογενὴς, οὐκ ὄντων ἄλλων ἀδελφῶν, μονογενὴς ἐστίν. ὁ δὲ πρωτότοκος διὰ τοὺς ἄλλοις ἀδελφοὺς πρωτότοκος λέγεται.”<sup>232</sup>

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<sup>230</sup> Philip Schaff, Henry Wace, ed., *Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers, Second Series, Vol. IV* (T&T Clark, Edinburgh; Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., Grand Rapids, MI 1991) pg. 382 (Against the Arians, II, 58)

<sup>231</sup> Athanasius, William Bright, *St. Athanasius Orations Against the Arians* (At the Clarendon Press, Oxford, 1884) pg. 132

<sup>232</sup> Ibid., pg. 132

“For the term ‘Only-Begotten’ is used where there are not brethren, but ‘First-born’ because of brethren.”<sup>233</sup>

And then let me quote one other statement he makes later,

“...who also is therefore the Only-begotten, since no other was begotten from Him.”<sup>234</sup>

“...ὁ διὰ τοῦτο καὶ μονογενὴς ὢν, ἐπειδὴ οὐκ ἄλλος τις ἐξ αὐτοῦ ἐγεννήθη.”<sup>235</sup>

What could be more succinct? Clearly, Athanasius understood *monogenes* to mean only-begotten. It could not mean “one of a kind,” or “unique,” “only,” “only member of a kin,” or “one and only.”

Athanasius says that, “If then He is Only-begotten, as indeed He is, ‘First-born’ needs some explanation; but if He be really first-born, then He is not Only-begotten for the same cannot be both Only-Begotten and First-Born...” But that would not be a true statement if *monogenes* meant *only* or *unique*. In that case, one could be “*unique* (*monogenes*) and still be a *first-born*. So if the Greek word *monogenes* meant “one of a kind,” “only,” or “unique” (as claimed by Moody and Warden) there would not be a need for Athanasius to make an explanation concerning the use of those two terms, for the two terms would not necessarily contradict each other. If *monogenes* does not mean *only-begotten*, there is no contradiction between the two terms!

But if *monogenes* does mean *only-begotten*, if the stem *-genes* does carries a derivative sense, then, indeed, there would be great incongruity between the two terms and the double use of those words would have to be explained.

Clearly, Athanasius says the Son was only-begotten because there were no other begotten of Him. Clearly, he says the word *monogenes* is used where there are no other brethren, and First-born is used where there are other brethren. Clearly, he understood a connotation of begottenness in the word; it is so self-evident. Why were not these references provided by Warden and Moody?

Dale Moody and Francis Warden both wrote papers to show that the Church, for most of her history, was wrong to believe *monogenes* meant “*only-begotten*.” Their papers were written to correct what they considered to be an error, as Dale Moody says, an error that existed for 1500 years. What arrogance! Two men from the twentieth century, whose mother tongue is English and not Greek, accuse Christians from those early centuries, whose mother tongue is Greek, that they do not even understand the language of their

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<sup>233</sup> Schaff, op. cit., pg. 382

<sup>234</sup> Philip Schaff, Henry Wace, ed., *Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers, Second Series, Vol. IV* (T&T Clark, Edinburgh; Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., Grand Rapids, MI 1991) pg.434 (Against the Arians, IV, 4)

<sup>235</sup> Athanasius, William Bright, *St. Athanasius Orations Against the Arians* (At the Clarendon Press, Oxford, 1884) pg. 225

birth! They conclude that Christians for nearly two thousand years were deceived as to the true meaning of *monogenes*, assigning a meaning and title to our precious Lord Jesus Christ that was false and misleading, and, now, that ones like they are on the scene the Holy Spirit has finally found men he can use to recover the true nature of our Lord. What audacity! For two thousand years the true Faith has been hidden in regard to this truth and now that they are on the scene the Holy Spirit can finally unveil the truth!

Could this not be the real reason why Francis Warden dismissed the Patristics as not being good witnesses and why Dale Moody dismissed the witness of the Patristics as being “fruitless?” They did not want to introduce any evidence from the Patristics, because the Patristics would confirm that the word, indeed, meant “only-begotten” and not “only” or “one of a kind!” And if that was true, it would contradict their preconceived ideas of the Blessed Trinity that, in reality, were a departure from the Historic Christian Faith.

If Francis Warden, Dale Moody, or any modern other Evangelical today denies that our Lord was the only-begotten Son of God, eternally begotten of the Father before all time, such a one has departed from the Historic Christian Faith.

The onus is on the Neo-Trinitarian. The traditional understanding of only-begotten has two thousand years of Church witness. The meaning of “one of a kind” is a recent idea that began in the 19<sup>th</sup> century based upon faulty scholarship that will not even consider all the evidence. I understand that some may read this and accuse me of making conclusions based upon how I would like the word to mean, as Francis Warden said. I understand that. And we should be humble enough to admit that none of us are beyond subjective reasoning. But again, the onus is not on me, but it is on them. They are the ones introducing a new doctrine. They must present enough evidence, beyond a reasonable doubt, to prove that their new meaning for *monogenes* is right and the traditional meaning of *monogenes* is wrong. And in this exercise they have failed. The verdict is against them. The Church has been vindicated in her witness as to true meaning of *monogenes* as used of our precious Lord Jesus Christ – the Only-Begotten Son of God, begotten of the Father before all time. They have been proven wrong.

In closing, I hope that even if I have been too subjective at times, I have at least shown enough objectivity to demonstrate the utter failure of their attempt to prove a meaning for *monogenes* in the New Testament other than the traditional meaning of “only-begotten.”

This concludes the examination of the references given by Francis Warden. Dale Moody inferred that Warden’s study proved beyond a reasonable doubt that *monogenes* does not mean “only-begotten.” I hope the reader will now see that is not the case, and that in fact, the references given by Warden, for the most part actually affirm the meaning of “only-begotten” (i.e. once one sees the references in their fuller context).

Unfortunately, there were two references that he gave that could not be located. Therefore, they could not be verified either way. But it would not surprise me that if they are seen in their full context the same conclusion would be found – that the word means “only-begotten” or “only born,” or at least some meaning in line with its basal force of “brought forth.”

Therefore, in conclusion, this is once again how the evidence stacks up, if we were to use his chart.

How Used	Sources				
	Ex-Biblical	Old Test.	Apoc.	New Test.	Total
As Only-begotten, Only Born	25	9	6	4	44
Of a single fact	1(inconclusive)				1
Of solitariness, desolateness					
Of Miscellaneous, singularity	2(unable to verify)				2
<b>Total</b>	28	9	6	4	47

Out of a total of forty-seven cases, *monogenes* meant *only-begotten* or *only born* forty-four times and had an alternate meaning only one time (minus the two cases that could not be verified). And if one believes that Parmenides was actually using paradoxical language, and so should not be considered inconclusive, one then discovers that *monogenes* was understood as *only-begotten* or *only born* one hundred percent of the time!

Now, I am sure that there will be those who still disagree. I understand that; but I also think that any of them who disagree, would now have to admit that the evidence does not preclude the meaning of *only-begotten*, and that certainly, the case against it is not proven beyond a reasonable doubt!



## The Canonical Portions of the Greek Septuagint

We have already examined the use of *monogenes* in the Septuagint from the perspective of the Apocrypha. That leaves us with those uses of the word in the canonical portion of the Septuagint. It seems two basic points are commonly made from its usage in that portion of Septuagint.

- 1) That *monogenes* means *only* or *alone* because it translates the Hebrew word “yachid.”
- 2) That *monogenes* and *agapetos* are equivalent terms and as such this explains why *monogenes* is not used in the Synoptics Gospels, but is used in the Gospel of John.

Let’s now look at both points separately.

### Yachid

First, much has been made of the fact that *monogenes* cannot mean only-begotten because it is a translation of the Hebrew yachid which does not mean *only-begotten*, but *only*. On the surface, this sounds reasonable, but it has a fallacy. Why do we presume that *monogenes* must mean *only* because *yachid* means *only*, rather than *yachid* must mean only-begotten because *monogenes* means only-begotten. In other words, why do we define the Greek word by the Hebrew word and not the Hebrew word by the Greek word? Some may say, “But *yachid* does not have any root meaning of “generation” or begottenness, therefore, we must give preeminence to the Hebrew word’s meaning of *only*.”

This, of course, is an error of judgment because one should never judge the meaning of a word only by its etymology. It is true etymology can give corroborating evidence, but it never can be the conclusive evidence because the meanings of words must be gleaned by its current usage and context. A word may mean one thing at one time, but then centuries later may mean something completely different. So, the fact that the Hebrew translators chose *monogenes* to translate *yachid* may prove that *yachid*, indeed, also carries a nuance of only-begotten!

Another point needs to be made. One must be careful in back translating a meaning from one language into another. We do not know why translators may have chosen the word they chose. They may have been giving a loose translation or paraphrase of a text. For instance, the LXX translators did not always use a literal word for word translation. As far as my understanding goes, from those who have devoted their lives to the study of the LXX, the Septuagint is a mixture of both dynamic and formal equivalence.

This may explain why some translations of Gen. 22:2 have *monogenes* for “yachid,” but *agapetos* in verses 12 and 16 of the same chapter. The translators were making a loose or dynamic translation of the passage and believed the force of the chapter required the idea of “only-begotten” in one portion of the text, while in other places it required the idea of “beloved.” We simply do not know the reason why they chose *monogenes*, and we will never know for sure unless one discovers a document containing the translators notes regarding the choice of certain words for certain words.

Nevertheless, we can piece together some information, which, while it may not be help us precisely, it can give some indication as to how those who spoke the Hebrew language understood the Hebrew word “yachid.”

God told Abraham to take his son, his only son (yachid) in Gen. 22:2 and go to the land of Moriah.

“**Genesis 22:2** And He said, "Take now your son, your only son, whom you love, Isaac, and go to the land of Moriah; and offer him there as a burnt offering on one of the mountains of which I will tell you."

Of course, this verse is speaking of Isaac, the child of promise. This word is translated by some versions by the Greek word *monogenes*. Some believe this demonstrates that *monogenes* means *only* or *unique* since *yachid* means *only* or *unique*.

Dale Moody had this to say regarding this thought.

“No passage illustrates the meaning of monogenēs more clearly than Heb. 11:17 when read in the light of the OT. It is said that Abraham was “ready to offer up his only (monogenē) son,” and it is impossible to say Isaac was the only son begotten by Abraham. What about Ishmael (Gen 16:3-5; 17:25), thirteen years before Isaac (17:19, 21; `8:10)? Isaac was the only son of promise, the only one of his kind, but not the only son Abraham begat. The uniqueness of Isaac is seen the fact that God said: ‘Through Isaac shall your descendants be named’ (Gen. 21:12; Heb. 11:18). However, the most important thing in the Isaac reference is the context from which the event mentioned in Heb. 11:17 is taken. Three times in the famous story of Abraham’s faith Isaac is called his ‘only (yachid) son’ (Gen. 22: 2, 12, 16). Yachid is the common Hebrew word for ‘only.’ Aquila’s Greek translation uses monogenēs to translate it in Gen. 22:2, and Symmachus does the same in Gen. 22:12. So Heb. 11:17 declares Isaac to be Abraham’s ‘unique’ son, but it clearly does not mean ‘only-begotten.’”<sup>236</sup>

Therefore, Neo-Trinitarians state that *monogenes* means “one of a kind” or “unique.” They say that the writer of Hebrews understood *yachid* to mean *only* or *unique* and therefore used the word *monogenes* when referring to Isaac. Therefore, in their mind *monogenes* must equal *yachid* and *yachid* must equal *unique*.

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<sup>236</sup> Dale Moody, “God’s Only Son: The Translation of John 3:16 in the Revised Standard Version” *Journal of Biblical Literature*, Vol. 72, No. 4; (Dec., 1953) pg. 217

Now, assuming that is true, one needs to ask, “Did the readers of the Old Testament understand why Isaac would be unique? The answer, of course, would be yes, they understood why he was unique. Also the question needs to be asked, “Did Abraham understand that Isaac was unique?” And the answer is most assuredly, yes, he knew why Isaac was unique, because Isaac was born of a miracle, being that child of promise, so much so that, if necessary, he knew that God would raise him from the dead (Heb. 11:19).

Therefore, if *yachid* meant *unique*, and Isaac was called *yachid*, then most certainly Abraham knew Isaac was *unique*! And as such, when God asked him to offer up his *yachid* (unique) son, then most assuredly Abraham would have known it meant Isaac and not Ishmael, and **any Hebrew reader** of the Old Testament would have known it meant Isaac and not Ishmael, for only Isaac was considered the *unique one*, being the child of promise; Ishmael was not.

So if that is true, and *yachid* meant *unique*, one must then ask why the Rabbis (Hebrew readers) interpreted this passage with this following exclamation. When Abraham was asked to offer up his son in sacrifice, they have him replying, unlike the Scripture,

“But I have two sons.” ‘Thine only one,’ was the reply.’ “But each is the only one of his mother!” ‘Whom thou lovest,’ he was told. “But I love both!” and the answer came ‘Even Isaac.’”<sup>237</sup>

If *yachid* meant “unique,” and *monogenes* meant “unique,” thereby explaining its choice as a word to translate *yachid*, why then did the Rabbis say in their “midrash” on the passage that Abraham was confused as to what God was asking? Certainly Abraham knew which one of his sons was *one of a kind*, or *yachid* (*unique*) – his son Isaac. Why did they have Abraham ask God which son he meant? Perhaps, because *yachid* does not necessarily mean *unique* as so many presume? Perhaps, instead, the word also carried the nuance of *only-begotten* when used in such contexts! Perhaps, in those contexts it did not carry a meaning of *one of a kind* or *unique*, and that is why the Rabbis believed Abraham needed more information, because they did not believe God was asking Abraham to offer up his *unique* (*yachid*) son, but, rather God was asking Abraham to offer up his *only-begotten* (*yachid*) son.

In other words, the Rabbis understood that God was telling Abraham to offer up his only-begotten (*yachid*) son. Of course Abraham would be confused for both his sons, Isaac and Ishmael, were both only-begotten of their mother. Isaac was the only-begotten of Sarah and Ishmael was the only-begotten of Hagar (at least as of that time). Which one did God mean?

This helps explain why the Rabbis put this response into the mouth of Abraham, “But each is the only one of his mother!” In other words, the

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<sup>237</sup> Dr. A. Cohen, *The Soncino Chumash* (The Soncino Press, London, Jerusalem, New York, 1983) pg. 108

phrase “only one of his mother” bespeaks begottenness and derivation and means “only-begotten of his mother.” If we were to rewrite that line in Greek, I believe it would read:

Ἐγὼ δὲ τοὺς δύο υἱοὺς ἔχω, καὶ εἶπεν, τὸν μονογενῆ σου, ἀλλ’ ἕκαστος τὸν μονογενῆ τῆς μητρὸς αὐτοῦ ἔστιν

“But I have two sons.” And he answered, “Your only-begotten,” “But each one is the only-begotten of his mother.”

So, apparently, in the Rabbis’ minds, the Hebrew word *yachid* did not communicate enough information to Abraham in order to know which son was meant; but if *yachid* simply meant *unique*, it certainly would have communicated the information needed. But because it, apparently, carried the additional meaning of only-begotten, the Rabbi’s had Abraham reply to God, “But they are both the “yachid” (only-begotten) of their mothers.” Only then did God tell him directly that he meant Isaac, which would have been completely unnecessary if *yachid* simply meant *one of a kind* or *unique*, as Neo-Trinitarians would have us believe.

Now it makes no difference that Ishmael had already been sent away, so that this conversation could not have occurred in the story, for we are simply trying to ascertain what the word *yachid* meant according to the Hebrew mentality during the time of the LXX to the time of the first century A.D. Apparently it did not simply mean *unique* as we have been told. Apparently, it also carried the heightened sense of only-begotten in “certain contexts.”

Our problem in all of this is that we do not have a wide corpus of Hebrew literature like we have of Greek literature; therefore, our sources for determining the meaning of a Hebrew word are not as great as they are in Greek. The Hebrew word is only used twelve times in the Old Testament, so our analysis is limited, and so we must look in other sources like the Midrash Rabbah to help us understand the meanings of some words.

Now some may object and say, “Well, we know we said *monogenes* meant *unique* in the story of Isaac in Heb. 11:17, but we never said that *yachid* and *monogenes* are completely equivalent; they are just similar. *Monogenes*, indeed, means “*unique*” in Heb. 11:17, when speaking of Isaac, but *yachid* means “only,” not *unique* in Gen. 22:2 when speaking of Isaac. You are being too rigid to say that if one means “this” the other must mean “that,” to say, if *monogenes* means *one of a kind* or *unique*, then *yachid* must mean *one of a kind* or *unique*.”

Very well, I can understand your reasoning. Let’s continue on with that reasoning. You want to use more of a dynamic equivalence in translating the Hebrew, rather than a strict formal equivalence. That is fine, but then, please be consistent. If you tell me not to be so rigid, then you cannot be so rigid.

You cannot say that since *yachid* means “only,” then *monogenes* must mean “only,” or “unique” as Dale Moody says above. You would then be doing the same thing you accuse me of doing. So you must allow that the two words only need to be similar. Therefore, just because *yachid* means “only” does not mean *monogenes* must mean “only.” It needs only to be a similar word.

Well, guess what? *Monogenes*, meaning “only-begotten,” would be a similar word that could be used in a dynamic equivalent translation. The translator of Gen. 22:2 could have used *monogenes* to translate *yachid* because he knew Isaac was, indeed, the only-begotten son of Abraham and Sarah together and as such he was greatly beloved and unique. So, because *monogenes* gave that heightened connotation, they may have used that Greek word to translate *yachid*.

Nevertheless, getting back to our original premise, it doesn’t even need to be a dynamic equivalent word; it could be a formally equivalent word. In other words, the fact that Greek word *monogenes* is used by some to translate the Hebrew word *yachid*, could prove that *yachid* carried the additional meaning of only-begotten when used in the context of offspring. So what happens is that Aquila’s and Symmachus’ translation of *yachid* by *monogenes* becomes a proof text that *yachid* also meant *only-begotten* in the Hebrew language at that point of time. It certainly, seems the Rabbis understood the word in that way.

Therefore, anyway you look at it; it seems there can only be three possible reasons for the use of *monogenes* for *yachid*. 1) The use of *monogenes* for *yachid* proves that *yachid* carried the sense of *only-begotten* in certain contexts. 2) The Jewish translators sometimes followed dynamic equivalence in their translation. Therefore, they looked for a dynamic equivalent word for *yachid*, and the word they settled upon was *monogenes*, meaning only-begotten. In this scenario, *monogenes* was never thought to be a completely equivalent word, it was only meant to be a similar word. 3) The Neo-Trinitarians are right and *monogenes* is a formally equivalent word, strictly meaning “only.”

Consequently, because our limited corpus of Hebrew literature, we cannot make any definite conclusions regarding the use of *monogenes* for *yachid*. Any of the three reasons above could be possible.

And certainly, the use of *monogenes* for *yachid* does not rule out a meaning of *only-begotten* for *monogenes*, and this passage might actually confirm that meaning when it is coupled together with the Rabbinic understanding of the story as was found in their midrash of the text.

## Agapetos

And this brings us to the second point commonly made, that *monogenes* and *agapetos* must mean the same thing because sometimes *yachid* is translated by

*monogenes* and other times by *agapetos*, and that is why the Synoptic Gospels do not use *monogenes* but do use *agapetos* of our Lord (Matthew 3:17; 12:18; 17:5; Mark 1:11; 9:7; 12:6; Luke 3:22; 9:35; 20:13). This too is faulty reasoning for a number of reasons.

First, we do not know if all the underlying Hebrew texts, at the time, had *yachid* in all the same verses. One knows that in many places the LXX had a different underlying Hebrew text than the Masoretic, and in some cases, the LXX follows more closely to the Dead Sea Scrolls than the Masoretic text. For example, perhaps in those places, like Gen. 22:12 and 16, the Hebrew text before the translators, had *yadid* rather than *yachid*, and that explains why, for instance, Aquila would use μονογενῆ in one verse and ἀγαπετὸν in the rest. *Yadid* (יָדִיד) means *beloved* and is used in many other places in the Old Testament (e.g. Ps.45:1; 127:2). As you can see, *yachid* (יָחִיד) and *yadid* (יָדִיד) are very similar and it is entirely possible that in some Hebrew texts a scribe may have made a copying error, confusing the two words. This alone may explain the use of *monogenes* in verse 2 and *agapetos* in verse 12 and 16 in Aquila. The LXX translators may have had a Hebrew text that had “*yadid*” in those verses, while Aquila had a variant text and that had “*yachid*” in Gen. 22:2.

Now, of course, this is an argument from silence and does not really prove anything, but the opposite assumption that there were no variants in this chapter is also an assumption. We cannot make any definite conclusion regarding the meaning of *monogenes* from this chapter alone, but it is useful in considering all the information.

Also, if we automatically assume that *monogenes* means “beloved” simply because *monogenes* and *agapetos* were used to translate the same Hebrew word *yachid*, what do we do with the word μονότροπος? The word *monotropos* was also used to translate *yachid* in Ps. 67:7 (68:6). Does that now mean that *monotropos* cannot mean “solitary” but must mean “beloved” because both *monotropos* and *agapetos* were used to translate the same Hebrew word *yachid*?

In other words, do the two words automatically become synonyms because they simply translate the same word? Neo-Trinitarians are wont to say,

“Since *monogenes* was used to translate *yachid*, and *agapetos* was used to translate *yachid*, and *agapetos* means “beloved,” therefore *monogenes* must carry a meaning of “beloved” and be a synonym of *agapetos*.”

If that reasoning is true, could we not take that same statement above, substitute the word *monotropos* for *monogenes*, and make the same conclusion? Therefore, it would read: “Since *monotropos* was used to translate *yachid*, and *agapetos* was used to translate *yachid*, and *agapetos*

means “beloved,” therefore *monotropos* must carry a meaning of “beloved” and be a synonym of *agapetos*.

No, of course not. It does not matter that one word is translated by two different words. That does not make those two words equivalent or synonyms. It simply means the translated word has various nuances or meanings according to its context. In this case, the word *yachid* has various nuances.

Therefore, it makes no sense to negate the meaning of “only-begotten” and replace it with “beloved” simply because both words were used to translate the one Hebrew word. Like was mentioned before, it is perilous to base the meaning of one word in one language “solely” based upon how it was used to translate the words of another language (it is helpful, but additional evidence must always be sought).

All this shows is that some translators understood “*yachid*” as *beloved* and some understood it as *only-begotten*, and in some contexts, it was understood to mean *solitary*. It does not mean *only-begotten* must mean *beloved*, or that *solitary* means *beloved*. It means translators had a difference of opinion regarding the meaning of *yachid* in the text!

For example, suppose I was to write a paper in Greek (in the midst of today’s wide disagreement regarding the meaning of μονογενής). And suppose I used the word μονογενής (*monogenes*) in that paper, and then asked certain translators to translate my paper into English. After completing the task suppose they give me their translations and I found that one translated μονογενής by “one of a kind,” but another translated it by “only-begotten.”

Now pretend that in two thousand years someone found those two translations of μονογενής. Now, because that Greek word was translated differently in English (as we’re saying the Hebrew was in Greek) would that mean that those two different English words or phrases were synonymous? No, of course not! Why? Because one translator’s opinion was that *monogenes* meant “one of a kind” and another translator understood it as “only-begotten.”

Now, if they were considered synonymous, don’t you think that those who truly believe that *monogenes* means “one of a kind,” and not “only-begotten,” that they would be completely disheartened by such a conclusion?

I would be disheartened too, for I do not believe “only-begotten” means “one of a kind!” They certainly are not synonymous terms!

Another way we could look at it is this way. Let’s suppose A – *agapetos* is used to translate B – *yadid* (which it does in Ps. 127:2), and also translate C – *yachid* (which it does in Gen. 22:16), does that now mean B – *yadid* must mean the same thing as C – *yachid*, and that we must now translate *yadid* as “only?” No, of course not, *yadid* still means “beloved” and not “only.”

Well, in the same way if C – *yachid* is translated by A – *agapetos* (which it does in Gen. 22:16), and it is also translated by D – *monogenes* (which it does in Aquila’s version in Gen. 22:2), does that mean A – *agapetos*, means the same thing as D – *monogenes*, and we must now believe *agapetos* means “only-begotten?” No, of course not, *agapetos* still means “beloved” and not “only-begotten.”

All this shows is that it is better to first determine a meaning of a word in its own language by its own usage and not by back translating it from another language. There can be many reasons why one word is chosen above another in translating one language into another. Adolf Deissmann addresses this fact in his book on Philology.

“People think that the problem is solved by ascertaining what Hebrew word or words are represented by the Septuagint word. They then look up the meaning of the Hebrew and thus obtain what they consider the ‘meaning’ of the Septuagint word. Equivalence of the words—an obvious fact, easily ascertainable—is taken without further ado to denote equivalence in the ideas conveyed. People forget that the Septuagint has often substituted words of its own rather than translated. All translation, in fact, implies some, if only a slight, alteration of the sense of the original. The meaning of a Septuagint word cannot be deduced from the original which it translates or replaces but only from other remains of the Greek language.”<sup>238</sup>

And, finally, let me offer one other reason why *yachid* may have been translated by *monogenes* (only-begotten), and other times by *agapetos* (beloved), and other times by *monotropos* (solitary). It does not mean *monogenes*, *agapetos* and *monotropos* all mean the same thing. It simply means *yachid* in the minds of the LXX translators had more than one meaning according to each context. Sometimes *yachid* meant *only-begotten* in a certain context and sometimes it meant *beloved* and sometimes it meant *solitary*. This is not unusual. The same thing occurs in our own English language. We call them homonyms. Here are a few examples where the exact word can have different meanings based upon its context.

### Common English Homonyms

Bank – meaning a bank of a river	Bank – meaning a place to keep money
Bat – meaning a baseball bat.	Bat – meaning a bat that eats insects
Sole – meaning the sole of the foot	Sole – meaning the only one
Trunk – meaning a trunk of an elephant	Trunk – meaning a tree trunk

In other words, *yachid* may have been what we could call a Hebrew homonym. Depending on the context, it might mean only-begotten, beloved or solitary. If I wrote, “The elephant swung its trunk,” and then concluded that since trunk, in English, means a tree trunk, well then, the elephant must have had a tree trunk that it played with from time to time, swinging it around, I

<sup>238</sup> Adolf Deissmann, L. Strachan, tr., *The Philology of the Greek Bible, Its Present and Future* (London: Hodder and Stoughton, 1908) pg. 88-89



would be most likely wrong – although it might be possible, an elephant could swing around a tree trunk! But more than likely the sentence above means the elephant swung his “proboscis” from side to side!

Now, let’s assume someone was translating that sentence a thousand years from now and one translated it with a word in their language that meant a “tree trunk” and someone else reading that same sentence translated it with a different word in their language that meant the “proboscis” of an animal. Does that mean that those two different words in that other language, one meaning “tree trunk,” and the other meaning “proboscis,” must now be synonymous and must mean the same thing? No, of course not! It simply means each translator had a difference of opinion as to which meaning of “trunk” was being used within the context. In the same way, it is wrong to conclude that *agapetos* and *monogenes* must mean the same thing because they were used to translate the same Hebrew word and that is the reason why the Synoptic Gospels use *agapetos* and John uses *monogenes*!

Therefore, the fact that *monogenes* was used to translate *yachid* cannot really be used to determine the meaning of *monogenes*. It is a purely subjective exercise and should never be used as **definite** proof for the meaning of the word. *Monogenes* may have been used in certain contexts because that is what the translators believed *yachid* meant in those contexts, or it may have been because there was a Hebrew variant in the text, or it may have been two translators had a difference of opinion as to what *yachid* meant at the time of Moses. In either case, *monogenes*, with the meaning of *only-begotten*, still fits nicely with the context of every occurrence of the word in the Septuagint. And with that thought in mind, let us now look at those other occurrences.

*Monogenes* is used five times in the canonical Old Testament. We have already discussed its usage in the Apocrypha and its usage in Genesis 22 and in Judges 11:34, so that leaves us with its uses in the Psalms. We would now like to look at those passages.

### Psalm 22:20 (21:21) & Psalm 35:17 (34:17)

**Psalm 22:20** Deliver my soul from the sword; my only-begotten one from the power of the dog. (Brenton’s LXX Version)

**Psalm 21:21** ῥῦσαι ἀπὸ ῥομφαίας τὴν ψυχὴν μου καὶ ἐκ χειρὸς κυνὸς τὴν μονογενὴ μου<sup>239</sup>

**Psalm 35:17** O Lord, when wilt thou look upon me? Deliver my soul from their mischief, mine only-begotten one from the lions. (Brenton’s LXX Version)

**Psalm 34:17** κύριε πότε ἐπόνη ἀποκατάστησον τὴν ψυχὴν μου ἀπὸ τῆς κακουργίας αὐτῶν ἀπὸ λεόντων τὴν μονογενὴ μου<sup>240</sup>

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<sup>239</sup> Brenton, op.cit., pg. 710

<sup>240</sup> Brenton, op.cit., pg. 717

Here we see that *monogenes* was again used to translate *yachid*, however, most English translations do not follow Brenton's translation above. Most follow a meaning like the King James Version or like the New American Standard. Some believed the Hebrew word *yachid* meant "beloved," thus the concept of "darling" in the KJV, while other translators thought that the Hebrew *yachid* carried more the meaning of "solitary," thus the meaning "only" in the NASB. But some, like the translators of the LXX and that of Brenton, understood *yachid* to mean "only-begotten" within the context, and so translated it accordingly. So with that in mind, let's examine how one might understand *monogenes* in this verse to mean only-begotten.

The first reason is really quite simple, if one sees it as an adjective amplifying soul. When one understands the processional nature of man, this statement makes perfect sense. Man is created spirit, soul and body. His soul proceeds out of his spirit as does his physical life. Each human being has only *one* soul which proceeds from the very source of life within him – his human spirit.

Franz Delitzsch, when commenting on the trichotomous nature of man said it this way.

"Man is "...spirit, soul, and body; but spirit and soul belong to each other as principium ad principia... the former has its life immediately from God, the latter mediately from the spirit."<sup>241</sup>

As such, *monogenes* would retain a basal sense of "bringing forth" in its meaning. It was not until God breathed in the nostrils of man that man became a "living soul." This is simply a confirmation of the processional nature of man. Only "one" soul is "brought forth" from our spirit. It is the procession of life. As such, in one sense, our soul can be spoken as having been begotten from the spirit, and since each human being has only one soul, the soul is only-begotten from the spirit at the moment of conception when spirit, soul and body come into existence. Thus, the soul is figuratively spoken as being only-begotten, being our most prized possession, i.e. our very life!

However, some saw another reason why *monogenes* was used in these Psalms. Some early Christians took the Psalm as a prophetic picture of Christ.<sup>242</sup> For example, Justin Martyr says this:

"And what follows of the Psalm,--'But Thou, Lord, do not remove Thine assistance from me; give heed to help me. **Deliver my soul from the sword, and my only-begotten from the hand of the dog;** save me from the lion's mouth, and my humility from the horns of the unicorns,'-- was also information and prediction of the events which should befall Him. For I

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<sup>241</sup> Franz Delitzsch, *New Commentary of Genesis* (Klock and Klock Christian Publishers, Minneapolis, MN) 1978, vol. 1, pg. 120

<sup>242</sup> Presumably, those native speaking Greek Christians understood the feminine τὴν μονογενῆ as an agreement with the grammatical gender of τὴν ψυχὴν (soul) and not as any indication of natural or biological gender (cf. the feminine ψυχαὶ (souls) in Exodus 1:5 being used of male descendants).

have already proved that He was the only-begotten of the Father of all things, being begotten in a peculiar manner Word and Power by Him, and having afterwards become man through the Virgin, as we have learned from the memoirs. Moreover, it is similarly foretold that He would die by crucifixion. For the passage, '**Deliver my soul from the sword, and my only-begotten from the hand of the dog; save me from the lion's mouth, and my humility from the horns of the unicorns,**' is indicative of the suffering by which He should die, i.e. crucifixion.<sup>243</sup>

Now one may ask, "How can this be a prophetic picture of the Messiah? Jesus was not the only-begotten of Mary, for Mary had other children." Well, a couple points need to be made. There is a uniqueness regarding our Lord's birth from Mary that has never been true, and will never be true of any other human being. Jesus was born of a virgin! He was eternally begotten of God as to his Divinity and temporally begotten of Mary as to his humanity. As such, he is known as the Only-begotten Son of God as to his Divinity, and he is "prophetically" known as the only-begotten son born of a "virgin" as to his humanity.

He was and ever will be the only-begotten son of a "virgin." After the birth of Jesus, Mary had other children with Joseph, but she only had one child in her virginity. This is what would make some regard Jesus, prophetically, as an only-begotten son of a "virgin," in regards to his humanity. And because Mary was of the lineage of David and because Mary had the seed or DNA of David running through her veins, Christ was said to be of the "seed of David."

**II Timothy 2:8** Remember that Jesus Christ of the seed of David was raised from the dead according to my gospel: KJV

**Rom. 1:3** Concerning His Son Jesus Christ our Lord, who was born of the seed of David according to the flesh. NKJV

Therefore, since, Jesus was of the seed of David, he was known as a son of David (Matt. 1:1), and, as such, David could prophetically call him "my only-begotten" in Psalm 22:20 and Psalm 35:18 – the only-begotten son of a virgin. Remember, according to the Hebrew idiom, a father could call his grandson, great-great grandson or any direct descendent of his, his own son. It was for this reason that Jesus could be called the "son of Abraham, the son of David" (Matt. 1:1). And, as such, this only-begotten son of a virgin was the promised Messiah of the seed of David, the Deliverer of Israel.

**Acts 13:23** Of this man's seed hath God according to *his* promise raised unto Israel a Saviour, Jesus: KJV

No other man was born as he was "born of a virgin" of the seed of David. In this sense, David could prophetically refer to him as "my only-begotten." What a beautiful prophetic picture of the virgin birth of our Lord.

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<sup>243</sup> Alexander Roberts, James Donaldson, ed., *The Ante-Nicene Fathers, Vol. I* (Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co, Grand Rapids, MI 1985) pg. 251-252

One last point should be made regarding this. Jesus is not called the Only-begotten Son of “God the Father” in regard to his humanity. He is the Only-begotten Son of “God the Father” in regards to his Deity. In other words, he is **not** the Only-begotten Son of God the Father and Mary together. Never is that language used of our Lord! That would be heretical. From the standpoint of his Divine Nature, He is called the “Only-begotten” Son of “God the Father,” eternally begotten or brought forth from the Father alone, in and of Himself, without any other, and that before all time. And from the perspective of his human nature, He is prophetically called the Son of Man, the only-begotten or brought forth one from a virgin, in and of herself, without any human father. However, we can say this miracle of birth was a result of the power of the Most High and the overshadowing of the Holy Spirit. We must be careful to only say what Scripture says and not exceed what is written.

The reason he cannot be called the Only-begotten of God the Father and Mary together is because there was not a fusion of natures in the incarnation of our Lord, as there is a fusion of male and female DNA in human birth.

Our Lord “took upon him the form of a servant, and was made in the likeness of men” (Phi 2:7 KJV). He was made in “likeness of sinful flesh” (Rom. 8:3). He was truly human, but without sin, or a sin nature (II Cor. 5:21; I Peter 2:22). The Word “became flesh” and dwelt among us (John 1: 14), but he was not a “mixture” of the human and the divine natures. The Divine Nature and Human Nature were unionized in One Person, without confusion, without change, without division, without separation. The Divine Nature was not unionized with the Human Nature becoming a composite of the two. They two natures remain distinct, but not separate; they remain unionized in the one Person, but not with change; the Divine Nature remained the Divine Nature and the Human Nature remained the Human Nature; they were only unionized in the one Person.

We must be careful on this point, rejoicing in the prophetic word of David bespeaking of him whom he could call my only-begotten because he would be begotten by a miracle out of the virgin Mary, and rejoicing in the fact that God the Father so loved the world that he sent His Only-begotten Son to become flesh and dwell among us.

As John of Damascus said, he was made flesh, “not by procreation, but by creation of the Holy Spirit” (An Exact Exposition of the Orthodox Faith, Book III, Chapter 2). Scripture tells us that in the womb of Mary a body was prepared or created (Heb. 10:5). It was made or created of her human nature which, in turn, was of David, of Abraham, and ultimately of Eve, which made Christ the Promised Seed (Gen. 3:15).

And so Scripture says he was begotten of Mary, thereby, making him the only one ever begotten or born of a virgin, and it was because of that, that David could prophetically call him, “my only-begotten.”

Now it makes no difference whether Justin Martyr was right in his interpretation, or whether what I have just shared is the right interpretation. It makes no difference because in this study we are just trying to show that Early Christians had no problem understanding *monogenes* in this verse as meaning only-begotten.

So whether it refers to the fact that the soul proceeds from the spirit as an only-begotten proceeds from another, or it refers prophetically to the virgin birth, it makes no difference. There is no conclusive proof that *monogenes* in this verse must only mean “alone” or “solitary.” It can linguistically be understood as “only-begotten” and was so understood by those living closest to the times of the apostles.

### Psalm 24:16

The last Psalm and occurrence of *monogenes* in the canon portion of the LXX is Psalm 24:16

**Psalm 24:16 (25:16)** Look upon me, and have mercy upon me; for I am an **only child** and poor. (Brenton’s LXX Version)

**Psalm 24:16** ἐπίβλεψον ἐπ’ ἐμὲ καὶ ἐλέησόν με ὅτι μονογενὴς καὶ πτωχός εἰμι ἐγώ<sup>244</sup>

This verse could also be translated as follows.

**Psalm 25:16** Look upon me, and have mercy upon me; for I am **only-begotten** and poor.

One must understand that David is speaking figuratively. David must have felt so alone at the time of the writing of this Psalm that he describes himself as *yachid* (μονογενὴς—in the LXX). Perhaps, David knew someone in his past who as an only-begotten child, and, through friendship with that person, might know the loneliness that sometimes might be experienced by an only child. In any case, it seems David is speaking in generalities and is using hyperbole, using *yachid*, with its meaning of μονογενὴς (understood as such by the LXX translators) as an expression of his “isolation” and “loneliness.”

One must remember that this Psalm was written when he had to flee Jerusalem because of the rebellion of his son Absalom (2 Sam. 15-18). Perhaps, at this time, even his own siblings, that is those still alive, stood aloof from him. Perhaps this thought in itself could explain the choice of *monogenes* by the LXX translators. But in any case, it should not be taken “literally.” for even if take the meaning in the verse as “alone,” as is done in some translations, that meaning could not fit literally either and would have to be taken as a hyperbole, for David was not “alone!” A whole retinue of people followed him out of Jerusalem. Those from Gath (2 Sam. 15:18) numbered 600, and later we are told that thousands were with him (2 Sam. 18:1)!

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<sup>244</sup> Brenton, op.cit., pg. 711

But some may still argue, “But he cannot use that term of himself because he had other brothers and sisters. It does not fit. He cannot apply a word to himself that, obviously, was never true.” Well I would agree if it could be demonstrated he was speaking literally, but he was not, for, as we have shown, even if we accept the alternate translation of “alone,” one still cannot take that literally. And so, David must have been speaking figuratively, which was a common means of expression in the Hebrew language.

For example, in Psalms 22:6 David says, “I am a worm, and not a man.” Does anyone conclude that the word σκώληξ (worm) in this verse cannot possibly mean “worm” but must mean something else because obviously David was not a worm! No, of course not. We understand he is speaking figuratively. Well, if that is true, why then would anyone say, regarding Psalms 25:16, “μονογενής (only-begotten) cannot possibly mean only-begotten, but must mean something else in this verse because obviously David was not only-begotten.” There is no justification for that conclusion.

This is all the more evident when we consider the very next adjective David uses, the word translated πτωχός (poor). David says he was poor. Yet we know David was not poor. David was rich! He was the king of Israel and possessed great wealth. Obviously, again, David is speaking figuratively and not literally (cf. I Chron. 28:3-4, 28).

There is no reason to presume from this verse that *monogenes* cannot mean *only-begotten*. It fits perfectly within the context of the Psalm. Now, as to whether it should be taken that way or not is a matter of interpretation. Some may disagree that it means *only-begotten*. That is fine. But the important fact to remember is that linguistically there is nothing that prohibits *monogenes* from meaning anything other than *only-begotten*. Obviously, Brenton believed the concept of one who was *only-begotten* still fit the context. This verse from the LXX does not negate the meaning of *only-begotten* nor should it be taken as absolute proof that *monogenes* must mean “only,” “solitary,” or “alone.”

So this concludes our section on the Greek Septuagint. What we are finding, as we have found in other usages, is that there has never been any conclusive proof that *monogenes* means anything other than *only-begotten*. There certainly is not evidence beyond a reasonable doubt to prove such a claim! Indeed, we have found there is overwhelming evidence that *monogenes* means *only-begotten* and has always meant *only-begotten*, even if one prefers to see that *-genes* comes from *genos*. But let presuppose for the sake of argument that such ones are right and that it cannot mean *only-begotten* because *-genes* in *monogenes* does not come from *gennao*, but from *genos* which means “kind.” Would that conclusion be true? Let’s now consider that thought.

# “Only-begotten” vs. “One of a Kind”

## An Assumption

**This is an assumption, so let me again state that I believe there is absolute evidence that the translation of “monogenes” as “Only-begotten is the correct translation, even if –genes comes from *genos*. But let presuppose for the sake of argument that those who deny it are right. What does it then teach us according to Scripture?**

A common statement heard today among those who deny the eternal generation of the Son from the Father is that the word *monogenes* is mistranslated as “Only-Begotten” in such versions as the KJV, NKJV, ASV, and NASB. Consequently, the translation of this word has been changed to “One and Only” in such Bibles as the NIV or to “One of a Kind” in such paraphrases as the Message.

Such Christians contend that godly men for over two millennia have misunderstood the meaning of the word and that modern scholars have now discovered its true meaning. They state that the problem was that for most of church history men erroneously thought the stem *-genes* was related to the word *gennao* which means *to beget*, rather than being related to *genos* which means “kind” or “class.” Now, forgetting the fact, that such is not the case – (many scholars, who preferred to see *genes* as related to *genos*, still believed it should be translated as “only-begotten,”)<sup>245</sup> – let us look at what Scripture reveals if we “assume” that such an assertion is true.

This is an important exercise because this new view is being supported and taught by more and more Christians, and is usually combined with the denial of the eternal generation of the Son from the Father. Indeed, I am afraid the real reason for their new understanding of *monogenes* has less to do with any new linguistic data, but has more to do, in some cases, with their need to marginalize the doctrine of eternal generation.

And what is sad is this wholesale conversion of the modern Christian to this new way of thinking is being aided by the acceptance of such newer versions as the NIV, RSV, ESV, NET and a multitude of other paraphrases as the Message, Contemporary English Version, etc. which Christians do not know are misleading. And the greater tragedy of this all is that many Christians do not know that such a view destroys the unity of the Godhead and actually contradicts the Historic Christian Faith.

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<sup>245</sup> See Kittel, Gerhard, ed., Bromiley, Geoffrey W., trans. & ed., *Theological Dictionary of the New Testament*, Vol. IV (Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., Grand Rapids, MI, 1967) pg. 738-741

Now to be fair, such teachers think they are protecting the deity of the Lord by their denial of the eternal generation of the Son, but, beloved, this betrays a lack of true Trinitarian understanding, and actually destroys the truth of the eternal relations.

The doctrine of the eternal generation does not lessen the deity of our Lord or reduce the nature of his Person. Instead, the doctrine actually strengthens the Lord's deity and shows him to be equal to the Father. It shows that true equality is understood by order and submission, not by a mutual autocracy. Consequently, in contradiction to this new mindset, the terms Father and Son are revelatory and do show forth the primacy of the Father within the Godhead.

The doctrine of eternal generation has always been confessed by godly men throughout the history of the church, and this new view, which is being silently foisted upon the unsuspecting Christian by Neo-Trinitarians, has actually always been considered a grievous error.

Consider the testimony of John Gill in his treatise, *A Dissertation Concerning The Eternal Sonship of Christ, Showing By Whom It Has Been Denied and Opposed, and By Whom Asserted and Defended in All Ages of Christianity*:

"Upon the whole, setting aside the said persons, the testimonies for and against the eternal generation and Sonship of Christ stand thus:

**For Eternal Generation, etc.**

"Ignatius, Polycarp, Justin Martyr, Irenaeus, Athenagoras, Theophilus of Antioch, Clemens of Alexandria, Tertullian, Origen, Cyprian, Gregory of Neocaesaria, Dionysius of Alexandria, the three hundred and eighteen Nicene Fathers; Athanasius, Alexander bishop of Alexandria, Epiphanius, Hilary, Faustinus, Gregory of Nazianzum, Basil, Gregory of Nyssa, Ambrose, Jerome, Ruffinus, Cyril of Jerusalem, besides the many hundreds of bishops and presbyters assembled at different times and in different places, as at Syrmium, Antioch, Arminum, Seleucia, and Constantinople, and elsewhere;

Augustine, Chrysostom, Leo Magnus, Theodoret, Cyril of Alexandria, Paulinus, Flavianus, Victor, Maximus Tauriensis, six hundred and thirty fathers in the council at Chalcedon; Fulgentius, Gregory Furnensis, Fortunatus, Cassiodorus, Gregorius Magnus, the many bishops in the several councils at Toletum, the Roman synod of a hundred and twenty-five under Agatho, Damascene, Beda, Albinus, and the fathers in the council of Frankfort, with many others in later times, and all the sound Divines and evangelic churches since the reformation."

**Against It,**

"Simon Magus, Cerinthus, and Ebion, and their respective followers; Carpocrates and the Gnostick, Valentinus, Theodotus the currier, Artemon, and others their associates; Beryllus of Bostra, Praxeas, Hermogenes, Noetus and Sabellius, the Samosatenians, Arians, Aetians, Eunomians and Photinians, the Priscillianists and Bonotians; Mohammed and his followers; the Socinians and Remonstrants; and all Anti-trinitarians.

"Now since it appears that all the sound and orthodox writers have unanimously declared for the eternal generation and Sonship of Christ in all ages, and that those only of an unsound



mind and judgment...have declared against it, such must be guilty of great temerity and rashness to join in an opposition with the one against the other; and to oppose a doctrine the Church of God has always held, and especially being what the scriptures abundantly bear testimony unto, and is a matter of such moment and importance, being a fundamental doctrine of the Christian religion, and indeed what distinguishes it from all other religions, from those of Pagans, Jews and Mohammedans, who all believe in God, and generally in one God, but none of them believe in the Son of God: that is peculiar to the Christian religion.”<sup>246</sup>

And bringing it up to modern times we ourselves could add to John Gill’s list the following Christians who are for eternal generation and those who are against eternal generation. The spiritual warfare continues.

### **For Eternal Generation:**

Martin Luther, John Calvin, John Gill, J. C. Philpot, J. G. Bellett, Dean Burgon, Franz Delitzsch, Henry Alford, C.H.Spurgeon, Andrew Murry, Robert Jamieson, R.C.H. Lenski, A. T. Robertson, Louis Berkhoff, W. H. Griffith Thomas, Henry C. Thiessen, D.Martyn Lloyd-Jones, H.A. Ironside, C.S. Lewis, A. W. Tozer, Kenneth Wuest, John Walvoord, Henry Morris, and William MacDonald.

### **Against Eternal Generation:**

J. Oliver Buswell, Lorraine Boetner, Mark Driscoll, Millard Erickson, Wayne Grudem, Bruce Ware, Walter Martin, Robert Reymond.

Needless to say eternal generation has always been part of the Historic Christian Faith; the Lord Jesus Christ was considered to be the Eternal Son of God, begotten before all time, being known as the “Only-Begotten” Son of God. To be against this doctrine is a departure of the Historic Christian Faith.

Nevertheless, let’s assume that the modern scholars are right and that –genes of *monogenes* is related to *genos* and not *gennao*. Does it change anything regarding the doctrine of the Son’s eternal generation from the Father? No! Absolutely not, although, Neo-Trinitarians would like one to think it does negate the doctrine. Nor does it change the fact that *monogenes* can still be understood as *only-begotten* or *only born*.

You see, the real problem is not the grammar or the linguistic etymology of the word. The problem is that many modern Christian teachers today have departed from this aspect of the Historic Christian Faith, and are not willing to admit such departure because it might call into question their orthodoxy before men. Instead, they are re-interpreting the Faith to support their viewpoint, and are changing the meaning of this word in order to facilitate this transformation of the Faith. The net result is that a cloud of darkness is

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<sup>246</sup> John Gill, *Sermons and Tracts*, Vol. III (Printed by H. Lyons for W. Hardcastle, London, 1815) pg. 554-555

descending upon the minds of unsuspecting Christians, obscuring a precious truth of our Saviour, the Lord Jesus Christ.

Listen to what the Historic Christian Faith has always said about this truth of our Saviour. The **Nicene Creed** says this –

“We believe in one God, the Father Almighty, Maker of all things, visible and invisible, and in one Lord Jesus Christ, the Only-Begotten Son of God, Begotten of His Father before all time, Light of Light, very God of very God, begotten, not made, being of one substance with the Father, through whom all things were made; who for us men and for our salvation came down from the heavens, and was made flesh of the Holy Spirit and the virgin Mary, and became Man, and was crucified for us under Pontius Pilate and suffered and was buried, and rose again on the third day according to the Scriptures, and ascended unto the heavens and sitteth on the right hand of the Father, and cometh again with glory to judge the living and the dead, of whose kingdom there shall be no end:

And in the Holy Spirit, the Lord and the Life-giver, that proceeded from the Father, who with Father and Son is worshipped together.”<sup>247</sup>

In modern times, one has the example of the **Westminster Confession of Faith**, which affirmed the same truth and declared it this way:

“In the unity of the Godhead there be Three Persons, of one substance, power, and eternity: God the Father, God the Son, and God the Holy Spirit. The Father is of none, neither begotten nor proceeding, the Son is eternally begotten of the Father; the Holy Spirit eternally proceeding from the Father and the Son.”<sup>248</sup>

Or the well-known **Baptist Confession of Faith**, which stated:

“In this Divine and infinite Being there are three subsistences (I John v.7; Matt. xxviii, 19; II Cor. XI 11. 14) the Father, the Word (or Son), and the Holy Spirit, of one substance, power, and eternity, each have the whole Divine essence, yet the (Exod. iii. 14; John xiv. 11; I Cor. vii. 6) essence undivided: the Father is of none, neither begotten nor proceeding; the Son is (John I. 14,18) eternally begotten of the Father; the Holy Spirit (John xv. 26; Gal. Iv. 6) proceeding from the Father and the Son; all infinite, without beginning, therefore, but one God.”<sup>249</sup>

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<sup>247</sup> See *Documents of the Christian Church*, Henry Bettenson, ed. (Oxford University Press, London 1975)

<sup>248</sup> See *The Creeds of Christendom, Vol. III*, Philip Schaff, ed. (Baker Books, Grand Rapids, MI, 1983)

<sup>249</sup> See, *The Philadelphia Confession of Faith* (Associated Publishers and Authors, Inc. Grand Rapids, MI)

We could go on, but let it suffice to state that all major Protestant Confessions and Statement of Faiths have always affirmed the same truth. (e. g. Thirty-nine Articles of the Church of England, Augsburg Confession, Belgic Confession, etc.)

In other words, the Historic Christian Faith has always held that the Lord Jesus Christ was begotten of the Father before all time and as such was known as the Only-begotten (monogenes) Son of God.

Now let me repeat the original premise of this paper. “I believe there is absolute evidence that the translation of monogenes as Only-begotten is the correct translation, even if –genes comes from *genos*. But let presuppose for the sake of argument that those who deny it are right. What does it then teach us according to Scripture?” Does it nullify the doctrine of eternal generation?

To answer that question let’s take the paragraph that I wrote two paragraphs above and substitute the new understanding of monogenes in the summarizing sentence concerning the Historic Christian Faith.

I wrote: “In other words, the Historic Christian Faith has always held that the Lord Jesus Christ was begotten of the Father before all time and as such was known as the Only-begotten (monogenes) Son of God.”

Now let’s substitute the new meaning.

“In other words, the Lord Jesus Christ was begotten of the Father before all time and as such was known as the One and Only (monogenes) Son or God.”

Or,

“In other words, the Lord Jesus Christ was begotten of the Father before all time and as such was known as the One of a Kind (monogenes) Son of God.”

Does it change the fact that the Son was begotten by the Father before all time? No! It simply changes his title from “Only-begotten Son” to “One and Only Son.”

However, many Christians do not realize this and they are not being told that this new semantic twist on the Greek word *monogenes* doesn’t really change the doctrine of the eternal generation of the Son from the Father at all! Instead, they are being assured that the new understanding does change the doctrine. But the Neo-Trinitarian teachers are forgetting some important facts.

First, they are forgetting the revelatory word “Son. The word “Son of God” is used approximately 46 times in the New Testament. You see, the idea of

generation is still included in the title “one and only Son,” because of the revelatory word “Son.”

However, Neo-Trinitarians will usually tell you the word “Son” is used as a Semitic idiom that has more to do with “purpose,” “nature,” “character,” or member of a trade or class,” rather than bespeaking “generation.” They imply that the word “Son” is used in the sense of His office within the Divine economy, rather than the subsistence of nature.

For instance, this Semitic idiom is used in such phrases as “son of perfumers” in Neh. 3:8 NKJV, or “sons of the prophets” in I Kings 20:35. Now, I agree this speaks of character. For instance, the phrase “son of the prophets” would refer to one who had the character of the prophets, or was a member of the prophetic class, or took on the prophetic office, and not necessarily meaning he was a literal son of a prophet. However, one needs to notice one thing in this idiom, when it is used with this connotation, it almost always used in the plural. It is plural, “sons of the prophets,” not singular, “son of a prophet.” If it was singular and read “son of a prophet,” one would understand it was referring to a literal son of prophet.

When it is plural it can be used in an idiomatic manner, when it is singular it is normally used in its derivative manner. And so, when it comes to the usage associated with our Lord, guess what, it is always used in the singular. Scripture says “Son of God,” not that He was of the “sons of the God.” It is not being used in the above mentioned idiomatic manner when referring to our Lord.

The term “Son of God” is not telling the reader that the Son is Divine, with no derivative relationship to God, like the idiom “son of the prophets” tells the reader that one has the characteristics of the prophets, without implying such a one was literally born of a prophet. No, it is being used to tell the reader the Son is Divine because he is “of” God. He is Divine because he has a special derivative relationship to God who is Divine. He is Divine because he is eternally begotten from God the Father who is properly Divine. He is literally the Son “of” God.

Next the word “son” in the Bible is sometimes used in the sense of possessing a certain characteristic as “son of valor” (I Sam 14:52 Young’s Literal Translation). This means the person was courageous. It is true this idiom carries no idea of generation.

However, this idiom is never used of our Lord in the New Testament. It is used only few times in the New Testament in such places as – Luke 10:6, which calls a certain one a “son of peace,” John 17:12 which calls Judas the “son of perdition,” Acts 4:36 which calls Barnabas a “son of encouragement,” etc.. It is never used of the Lord.

The term, that is used over and over for our Lord, is the term “Son of God,” and “Son of Man.” These terms are not used with the Semitic meanings above. They are used in the normal sense of derivation. Christ is the Son “of” God, meaning he is “of” God, or from God the Father. It is used in the same sense when Christ is stated to be the son “of” David, or son “of” Abraham.

When Matthew uses that terminology in his genealogy in Matt. 1:1, he is telling us that Christ was a descendent of David and of Abraham. His humanity was “derived” from them. He was humanly “generated” from them through the virgin Mary. Christ is said to be born of the seed of David (Rom. 1:3). He proceeded forth from David. When Christ posed the following question to the Pharisees, “What do you think about the Christ? Whose Son is He?” They replied, “The Son of David.” (Mat 22:42 NKJV). They understood sonship in its normal sense, as did our Lord. It carried no idiomatic meaning. Christ was using the phrase, “whose Son is He,” in a non-idiomatic manner.

And so we see the revelatory word “Son,” chosen by the Holy Spirit, bespeaks derivation, and this explains why Christ is known as the “Son of Man.” Yes, no doubt it was used as a Messianic title reminding us of the *Son of Man* in Dan. 7:13, and yes it also reminds us of Ezekiel’s title *son of man*, but those titles were titles that spoke of derivation and humiliation. Daniel was also called *son of man* (Dan. 8:17), and, of course, Ezekiel was called *son of man*, but these were titles given to men who saw great visions and mighty angels of God. They were given this title to remind them that they were simply “men,” made lower than angels (Ps. 8:4-5). They were being reminded that they were simply from Adam their father. They were not powerful angels, but humble men, who should not be lifted up by their great visions. It reminds us of Paul’s humiliation after he also saw great visions (II Cor. 12:1-7).

And so, when we come to this title of our Lord, we are reminded of His humiliation (Phil. 2:7-8) and His derivation from the first Man. He is the Son of Man because he literally was the “Son of Adam (Man).” (Remember, “Adam” is many times translated simply as “man,” for he was the first Man). Christ not only took on the “seed of Abraham” (Heb. 2:16), he, obviously, also took on the seed of Adam, for Christ was the promised “seed (Genesis 3:15).

Christ not only had to be “of” God, being consubstantial with God, in order to secure our salvation, he also had to be “of” Man, being consubstantial (in a limited way) with Man in order to save our souls. That is why he is the only one who can save mankind. He is the Son of God, as to his Deity, because he proceeded from God (Jn. 8:42), and the Son of Man as to his humanity, because he proceeded from Adam (Luke 3:23-38).

If one disagrees and believes the term “Son of Man” is simply an idiom bespeaking his humanity, such a one cannot ignore that such an idiom is based

upon a biblical reality. He literally took upon himself the likeness of sinful flesh by being “of” Mary, “of” David, “of” Abraham, “of” Eve, and ultimately, as Luke 3:38 says, “of” Adam (Man).

Moreover, when it comes to the word “Son” in the revelatory term “Son of God,” and some say it does carry the normal meaning of generation, in other words, being begotten of God, but is rather used in an idiomatic manner simply indicating one’s nature, they must understand that they are denying a doctrine that has always been considered orthodox and part of the Historic Christian Faith.

They do not realize that if the Son has the nature of God, ungenerate, meaning He was not begotten of God, but still considered Divine for his nature is like God, they are in reality teaching Semi-Arianism. In this case, Christ could only be of “like substance” or nature (*homoiousios*) with the Father, but not the same substance (*homoousios*) of the Father, which is the orthodox viewpoint. If one has the Divine substance eternally without generation, such a one cannot have the “same” substance. They are not truly consubstantial. They only have “like substance.”

Now, truly, it may be still be a Divine substance, but it is a divided substance. In other words, the Father has a substance that is Divine, the Son has a substance that is Divine, and the Holy Spirit has a substance that is Divine – three Divine substances. That is not biblical “consubstantiality.” And if they are not consubstantial, one simply has a triad and not the Trinity. This is the danger of this new way of thinking. The ultimate result is Tritheism, the belief in three Gods.

Moreover, that fact that the above point is fallacious is shown by the fact that Christ is not simply called the “Son of God (meaning “Divine” according to their scenario, apart from all generation, a simple Semitic idiom not meant to convey derivation), he is also specifically called the “Son of the Father” in II John 1:3.

The phrase “Son of the Father” could never be called a Semitic idiom. John in his epistle is specifically affirming that he is “of” the Father, in the sense of derivation. He is Divine because he was begotten or eternally generated of the Father, and as such received in that eternal begetting or generation, the “same substance” of God the Father without diminution or division. He is God because he is “of” the Father. He is God because he is “of” God. This is what the phrase “very God of very God” means in the Churches earliest standardized “Statement of Faith” – the Nicene Creed.

“We believe in one God, the Father Almighty, Maker of all things, visible and invisible, and in one Lord Jesus Christ, the Only-Begotten Son of God, Begotten of His Father before all time, Light of Light, very God of very God,

begotten, not made, being of one substance with the Father, through whom all things were made.”

The apostle John clearly tells us that Christ is the “Son of the Father,” and the normal and plain meaning of the phrase, Son of the Father, means one who is begotten by the other.

Remember, the apostle John had his hands full with heretical teachers and Gnostics who continually distorted the true faith. I do not think that the apostle John would create more problems for himself by introducing “sloppy language” concerning the nature of Christ.

That would be all he would need! Just imagine, he would be saying to himself, “Because I was careless in my language, some people are actually thinking I meant the Son was “begotten” by the Father!” “How could I have been so careless in my language?” “If I had only been clearer in what I wrote.”<sup>250</sup>

That would be absurd to think that John would make such a statement or make such a mistake and create such a mess for himself. No, John meant just what he said, Christ was the “Son of the Father,” and when one accepts that plain language of John, one has no problem with “eternal generation,” for if he was generated by the Father, when did that occur? John would not think it occurred in some distant time, for that would contradict what he said in John 1:1. So in John’s mind when did that generation occur? He would say in eternity because he would know the prophetic Scripture of Micah 5:2, which says his “goings forth” were from everlasting.

In addition, even the demons understood this meaning of derivation. The demons in Mark 5:7 specifically called him the “Son of the Most High God.” Remember, one of the first rules of hermeneutics is to follow the plain and literal sense of the text, unless the context indicates otherwise. They knew who Jesus was. The plain sense means he was the “Son,” in its normal meaning, of the Most High God. He was the eternal Son of God by eternal generation. All normal understanding of language would mean he came from God. He was generated by God. Even the demons knew this. They knew he was God for he was eternally “of” God.

This is the revelatory word that the Holy Spirit applies to the second Person of the blessed Trinity. The Holy Spirit is not trying to fool us. Revelation is for the purpose of understanding. The Second Person of the Trinity is called Son because he was begotten from the first Person of the Trinity – the Father from

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<sup>250</sup> This is besides the fact that John’s epistle was inspired by the Holy Spirit. In reality, according to today’s thinking, it would be saying the Holy Spirit was not careful in His language and did not possess very good communicative skills! How terrible, awful and absurd to even think such a thing! The Holy Spirit meant exactly what he said.

all of eternity. The words “Father” and “Son” are revelatory words given to us by Holy Spirit to teach us ontological relationships within the Trinity.

They have been understood in this way from the earliest times of the Church, and it is only lately that a new connotation has been given to these two revelatory words. The word “Son” carries its normal meaning when used of our Lord, whether it is the phrase “Son of God,” “Son of the Father,” “Son of Man,” “Son of David,” “Son of Abraham,” or “Son of the Most High God.” They all bespeak derivation of a son from a father, and in these cases, the eternal derivation of the Son, from an eternal Father.

Secondly, they are forgetting the main connotation of *genos*. When they state that *genes*, in *monogenes*, should be understood as being related to *genos* and not *gennao*, and that, as such, *genos* means “kin,” “kind,” or “class,” they are not giving the reader all varied meanings of *genos*, let alone the underlying meaning of “kin,” as we will demonstrate later.

You see, dear reader, *genos* means more than “kind,” or “class,” it also means “offspring.” In fact (which you will never hear from those who seek to negate the meaning of only-begotten), “class” or “kind” is a minor meaning! The major meaning carries a sense of “derivation” and “birth (which remains even in the minor meaning). But they will never tell you this. It is wrong to suggest that *monogenes* can only be rendered as “one or only,” or “one of a kind,” it could also be rendered as “only offspring,” which brings us right back to the original meaning of “only-begotten.” If one is an “only offspring,” one must be by definition “only-begotten.”

Let me list below all the verses that contain the word *genos* as recorded in the New Testament and one will be able to see all the varied meanings. All verses are from the King James Version.

**Matt. 13:47** Again, the kingdom of heaven is like unto a net, that was cast into the sea, and gathered of every kind (*genos*)

**Matt. 17:21** Howbeit this kind (*genos*) goeth not out but by prayer and fasting.

**Mk. 7:26** The woman was a Greek, a Syrophenician by nation (*genos*) and she besought him that he would cast forth the devil out of her daughter.

**Mk. 9:29** And he said unto them, This kind (*genos*) can come forth by nothing, but by prayer and fasting.

**Acts 4:6** And Annas the high priest, and Caiaphas, and John, and Alexander, and as many as were of the kindred (*genos*) of the high priest, were gathered together at Jerusalem.



**Acts 4:36** And Joses, who by the apostles was surnamed Barnabas (which is, being interpreted, The son of consolation,) a Levite, *and* of the country (genos) of Cyprus,

**Acts 7:13** And at the second *time* Joseph was made known to his brethren; and Joseph's kindred (genos) was made known unto Pharaoh.

**Acts 7:19** The same dealt subtilly with our kindred (genos) and evil entreated our fathers, so that they cast out their young children, to the end they might not live.

**Acts 13:26** Men *and* brethren, children of the stock (genos) of Abraham, and whosoever among you feareth God, to you is the word of this salvation sent.

**Acts 17:28** For in him we live, and move, and have our being; as certain also of your own poets have said, For we are also his offspring (genos).

**Acts 17:29** Forasmuch then as we are the offspring (genos) of God, we ought not to think that the Godhead is like unto gold, or silver, or stone, graven by art and man's device.

**Acts 18:2** And found a certain Jew named Aquila, born (genos) in Pontus, lately come from Italy, with his wife Priscilla; (because that Claudius had commanded all Jews to depart from Rome:) and came unto them.

**Acts 18:24** And a certain Jew named Apollos, born (genos) at Alexandria, an eloquent man, *and* mighty in the scriptures, came to Ephesus.

**1Cor. 12:10** To another the working of miracles; to another prophecy; to another discerning of spirits; to another *divers* kinds (genos) of tongues; to another the interpretation of tongues:

**1Cor. 12:28** And God hath set some in the church, first apostles, secondarily prophets, thirdly teachers, after that miracles, then gifts of healings, helps, governments, diversities (genos) of tongues.

**1Cor. 14:10** There are, it may be, so many kinds (genos) of voices in the world, and none of them *is* without signification.

**2Cor. 11:26** *In* journeyings often, *in* perils of waters, *in* perils of robbers, *in* perils by *mine own* countrymen (genos), *in* perils by the heathen, *in* perils in the city, *in* perils in the wilderness, *in* perils in the sea, *in* perils among false brethren;

**Gal. 1:14** And profited in the Jews' religion above many my equals in mine own nation (genos), being more exceedingly zealous of the traditions of my fathers.

**Phil. 3:5** Circumcised the eighth day, of the stock (genos) of Israel, *of* the tribe of Benjamin, an Hebrew of the Hebrews; as touching the law, a Pharisee;

**1Pet. 2:9** But ye *are* a chosen generation (genos), a royal priesthood, an holy nation, a peculiar people; that ye should shew forth the praises of him who hath called you out of darkness into his marvellous light:

**Rev. 22:16** I Jesus have sent mine angel to testify unto you these things in the churches. I am the root and the offspring (genos) of David, *and* the bright and morning star.

When we read these verses we notice that it is used twenty-one times in the New Testament and is translated as follows in the KJV – *kind* 3, *offspring* 3, *kindred* 3, *kinds* 2, *nation* 2, *stock* 2, *born* 2, *diversities* 1, *country* 1, *countrymen* 1 and *generation* 1. Notice that *genos* is understood as “offspring” in such verses as Acts 17:28; Acts 17:29; and Rev. 22:16. If –*genes*, in *monogenes*, should be understood by *genos* and not *gennao*, as we are being told, and in the above listed verses it is clear that *genos* means “offspring,” why then does not the Neo-Trinitarian translate *monogenes* as “Only Offspring?” The reason is because the etymology of *monogenes* is not the real issue. The real reason is that they reject the doctrine of eternal generation, and they are attempting to discredit the doctrine by altering the meaning of *monogenes*. As was mentioned at the beginning of this paper, there is ample evidence that *monogenes* should be translated as “only-begotten.” But, even, if we grant them their viewpoint that it should not be translated in that way, they are still not translating the word by its majority meaning.

Let me give you another example. Rev. 22:16 reads, “I Jesus have sent mine angel to testify unto you these things in the churches. I am the root and the offspring (genos) of David, *and* the bright and morning star.” How does our Lord use the word “genos?” Does he use it as “kind” with no sense of derivation? No, He uses it in the sense of derivation, or generation. He calls himself the “*Genos*” (Offspring) of David. Christ, according to Scripture was literally descended from David (Rom. 1:3; II Tim. 2:8).

Therefore, if Christ uses the word *genos* with a connotation of generation, why do they reject that connotation of the word when the Holy Spirit uses that same source word in *monogenes* when speaking of the Son’s begottenness from God the Father (i.e. according to their claim)?

Even if we accept their presupposition regarding the source of –*genes*, in *monogenes*, the Holy Spirit is still telling the world that “the Word became flesh and dwelt among us and we beheld his glory, the glory as of the *Only Offspring* (*monogenes*) of the Father.” *Genos*, in the Lord’s mind and in the Holy Spirit’s mind, carried the sense of derivation and generation. Why does not the Neo-Trinitarian speak of this?

Let's continue. It is understood as "born" in Acts 18:2 and Acts 18:24 (could not one say, then, he should be understood as the "Only Born Son?" For God so loved the world that he gave His "Only Born"(monogenes) Son." And it is understood as "stock" in Acts 13:26 and Phil. 3:5. All these uses give the idea of "begottenness," "generation" or "derivation" and still support the doctrine of eternal generation.

Or let us take such verses as Acts 4:6; Acts 7:13, and Acts 7:19, which translate the word as "kindred." It also carries the idea of "generation," or "derivation." One cannot be "of" the same kindred unless he has proceeded, been generated, or beogtten from a common ancestor. Why is this not brought out by Neo-Trinitarians?

The simple answer to both those questions is because the primary meaning of *genos* in the New Testament is not "kind" or "class," but rather "descendant," "nation," or "offspring."

Now, let us look as those few verses in the New Testament where it is translated "kind (which is the primary definition Neo-Trinitarians adopt for *genos*). It is translated as *kind* in three verses – Matt. 17:21; Mark 9:29; Matt. 13:47. In two of the verses it is used with the sense of "kind" or "class" without any "obvious" sense of derivation – Matt. 17:21 and Mark 9:29.

Nevertheless, even in this, some may dispute that conclusion because of the common Jewish concept concerning the origin of demons.

At the time of Christ the standard Jewish viewpoint concerning the origin of demons was that they were the offspring of fallen angels and women. Therefore, one could translate the verse as "this ~~kind~~ offspring, or this stock, can come out by nothing but prayer and fasting."

Merrill Unger mentions this interpretation in his book on Biblical Demonology.

"This very ancient theory, which goes back at least to the second century before Christ, if not earlier, maintains that the sons of God (bene-ha'elohim) of Genesis 6:2 are angels, who, cohabiting with mortal women, produced a monstrous progeny, the demons, born at once of spirits and of flesh. The locus classicus in the apocryphal Book of Enoch runs thus:

Wicked spirits came out of the body of them (i.e., of the women), for they were generated out of human beings, and from the holy watchers (angels) flows the beginning of their creation and their primal foundation. The spirits of heaven – in the heaven is their dwelling, and the spirits begotten upon earth – in the earth shall be their dwelling. And the spirits of the gaints will devour, oppress, destroy, assault, do battle, and cast upon the earth and cause convulsions."<sup>251</sup>

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<sup>251</sup> Merrill F. Unger, *Biblical Demonology: A Study of the Spiritual Forces Behind the Present World Unrest* (Van Kampen Press, Inc. Wheaton, Illinois, 1952) pg. 46-47

He then continues and speaks of those who support such a view.

“But the “angel theory” is also supported by an equal, if not a more imposing list of expositors, demonstrating that difficulties of no little moment are encountered by both theories, and both have, at least some Scriptural grounds for support to enlist so many able advocates. . . . Very decidedly it is presented in the Book of Enoch, as noted, and in the so-called ‘Minor Genesis,’ also by Philo, Josephus, and most of the rabbinical writers, as well as by the oldest Church Fathers – Justin, Tertullian, Cyprian, Ambrose, and Lactantius. Though Chrysostom, Augustine, and Theodoret contended zealously against it, and in the dark ages it fell into disfavor, it was espoused by Luther, and by a galaxy of modern exegetes – Koppen, Twisten, Dreschler, Hofmann, Baumgarten, Delitzsch, W. Kelly, A. C. Gaebelein, and others.”<sup>252</sup>

And so, if such an interpretation is correct, we see that *genos* in these two verses might still be used in its normal sense of offspring or stock, but, obviously, this sense is not readily seen in most English translations and is based upon one’s interpretation of the text. And since it is not the purpose of this chapter to support or reject such an interpretation, and since we simply wish to give the reader all the varied facts and possibilities, these two examples may indeed be two examples where *genos* is used as a class or kind in the New Testament.

You see, we are not denying that *genos* sometimes carries a sense of *class* or *kind*. There is no doubt that *genos* was so used in such a way in certain contexts. In fact, in the Septuagint version of the Old Testament it is used 106 times, and in at least six of those times, it is used with the sense of *class* or *kind* with no obvious sense of derivation, as can be seen below.

**Genesis 40:17** “In the uppermost basket were all kinds of baked goods for Pharaoh, and the birds ate them out of the basket on my head.” NKJV

**2 Chronicles 4:3** And beneath it the likeness of calves, they compass it round about: ten cubits compass the laver round about, they cast the calves two rows (two kinds) in their casting. (Brenton’s Version of the LXX)

**2 Chronicles 4:13** and four hundred golden bells for the two nets, and two rows (two kinds) of pomegranates in each net, to cover the two embossed rims of the chapters which are upon the pillars. (Brenton’s Version of the LXX)

**2 Chronicles 16:14** And they buried him in the sepulchre which he had dug for himself in the city of David, and they laid him on a bed, and filled it with spices and all kinds of perfumes of the apothecaries; and they made for him a very great funeral. (Brenton’s Version of the LXX)

**Wisdom 19:21** On the other side, the flames wasted not the flesh of the corruptible living things, though they walked therein; neither melted they the icy kind of heavenly meat that was of nature apt to melt. KJV

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<sup>252</sup> Ibid., pg. 46-47

**Daniel 3:5** at what hour ye shall hear the sound of the trumpet, and pipe, and harp, and sackbut, and psaltery, and every kind of music, ye shall fall down and worship the golden image which king Nabuchodonosor has set up. (Brenton's Version of the LXX)

What we are denying, is the assertion by Neo-Trinitarians that this minority meaning is *the primary and sole meaning of the word*! It is not. In fact, as can be seen above, it only seems to be used with the sense of *class* or *kind* when it is used of inanimate objects. (And our Lord is not an inanimate object!) All other times it carries a sense of derivation.

Even in our third example back in the New Testament where it is translated by "kind" – Matt. 13:47 – the sense of derivation can be clearly seen. Amazing! Even in those verses where it is translated by the word they want to adopt for *genes* – the word "kind," it still, carries the obvious sense of "generation" or "derivation" in one of those verses. But you will not hear this important point mentioned by Neo-Trinitarians.

Let us look closely at that one verse. Matt. 13:47 speaks of every "kind" of fish being gathered in a net. Different species of fish are of the same "kind" because they have descended from the first species God created long ago, whom he told them to be fruitful and multiply and fill the waters (Gen. 1:21-22). God created everything after its own "kind." Everything has "proceeded" or been "generated" from those first creatures. "Kind" in this verse refers to species, and if one is not of the same "kind," one cannot procreate. This third use of "kind" obviously is understood through the concept of "generation." A fish cannot be of that kind, unless it was generated!

The only other instance out of these 21 verses where it is translated as "kind," or actually "kinds," and the sense of derivation is not readily seen is in I Cor. 12:10, I Cor. 12:28 and I Cor. 14:10. Yet, even in these three verses some may still argue that the underlying sense of "derivation," is found, since languages are divided according one's birth. One speaks the language of one's kind or kindred so that one still finds some sense of "derivation" within the word. "Kinds" of tongues would mean languages based upon a certain kindred. It would indicate the different languages of one's birth. Tongues are used with this idea in Rev. 7:9.

**Revelation 7:9** After this I beheld, and, lo, a great multitude, which no man could number, of all nations, and kindreds, and people, and **tongues**, stood before the throne, and before the Lamb, clothed with white robes, and palms in their hands; KJV

As there are different nations, kindreds and peoples based upon one's birth, so there are different tongues based upon one's kind or birth. Therefore, a perfectly fine translation of these verses would as follows:

**1 Corinthians 12:10** To another the working of miracles; to another prophecy; to another discerning of spirits; to another kindred tongues; to another the interpretation of tongues:

**1 Corinthians 12:28** And God hath set some in the church, first apostles, secondarily prophets, thirdly teachers, after that miracles, then gifts of healings, helps, governments, kindred tongues.

**1 Corinthians 14:10** There are, it may be, so many kindred voices in the world, and none of them *is* without signification.

If true, this use *genos* with the genitive would, more than likely, fall under the category, of what some may call, the attributed genitive.<sup>253</sup>

This is all the more significant when we realize that all languages are descended from those few languages created by God at the tower of Babel (Gen. 11:1-7). And in one sense, depending on how one defines the word “confound” or “confuse” in Gen. 11:7, they are all descended from the one common language of the earth at the beginning of our history (Gen. 11:1). In fact, the LXX uses the same word in Gen. 11:1 that is used by Paul in I Cor. 14:10, the word φωνή.

Therefore, what may actually be meant by “kindred tongues” is that the Holy Spirit gave the gift of tongues by grouping – perhaps, a tongue with its subgroups or maybe a tongue with its varied dialects.

In other words, let’s use the apostle Thomas as an example. Let’s assume he was sent to India as tradition declares. Since we know each apostle was given the gift of tongues (Acts 2:1-11), perhaps, he was given the gift of kindred tongues for certain parts of that kingdom to speak and understand one of its languages with all its subgroups, or, perhaps, to speak and understand one of its subgroups with all its dialects. If this is true, then each apostle was given the gift of kindred tongues to match that particular part of the world to which they would be sent. This certainly would aid in the propagation of the Gospel.

So, in these last remaining instances where *genos* is translated in English by “kinds” we may still see the connotation of derivation!

All the other references such as “nation” (Gal. 1:14), “generation” (I Pet. 2:9), or “stock” (Phil. 3:5), also carry the sense of “offspring,” “generation,” or “derivation.”

And so out of all the usages of *genos* in the New Testament only 5 are used with no obvious sense of “offspring” or “derivation” (although that basal sense may still be found in 3 of the 5 and, indeed, may be possibly found in all 5). But, let’s grant the Neo-Trinitarian those 5 examples for the sake of argument. Where does that leave us? It means that out of the 21 examples, 16 are used in such a way that the word carries the obvious sense of “derivation” in its usage, meaning over 75% of the usages of the word carry the outward sense of

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<sup>253</sup> E. g., see Wallace, Daniel B., *Greek Grammar Beyond the Basics* (Zondervan, Grand Rapids, MI, 1996) pg. 89

“offspring” or “derivation” in the New Testament. Why then do Neo-Trinitarians say that because the *-genes* in *monogenes* is associated with *genos* and not *gennao*, it negates the sense of generation, derivation, or begottenness? Why do they claim it nullifies the doctrine of eternal generation? They are not being forthright with their listeners and/or readers for they are leaving out the important connotation of the word, and are emphasizing a minor connotation of *genos* (kind or type), over the primary connotation of *genos* (derivation).

Let’s look at one last verse that uses *genos*, because of all the verses of *genos* this verse succinctly explains the truth of John’s use of *monogenes* in John 1:14, 18 (assuming the reading “Son” as in the NKJV, and not “God” in verse 18).

**Acts 13:26** Men *and* brethren, children (sons) of the stock (*genos*) of Abraham, and whosoever among you feareth God, to you is the word of this salvation sent.

In this verse Paul speaks of those “descended” of Abraham. He speaks to those sons who were of the “stock” (*genos*) of Abraham, in other words, his *offspring*, his *seed*. The word speaks of “derivation” from Abraham. So even if we use the understanding of the word *genes* (from *genos*) as “stock” in *monogenes* when speaking of the Son of God, would we not be speaking of the “derivation” of the Son from his Father, as Paul he uses the word to speak of the “derivation” of the sons of Israel from their father, Abraham?

Would it not be saying that the Son was of the “stock,” of the Father? Most certainly! Indeed, He was not only of the “stock” of the Father, he was “of” the “same” “stock” of the Father. This teaches us a very important truth.

In the book of Genesis we are told God created everything “after its kind” (Gen. 1:11, 12, 21, 24 and 25). Every species is of the same kind and thus possesses the same nature. This is a revelatory picture of a precious truth within the Godhead, albeit in a limited way (please see footnote below).<sup>254</sup>

In the Godhead, if you will, there are Three of the same “kind,” or “stock” – the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit. As the sons of Israel are of the same stock (*genos*) as their father Abraham, so too the Son and the Holy Spirit<sup>255</sup> are

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<sup>254</sup> Animals, who are of the same kind, reveal a common bond of nature within each specific group. The same is true of humans. Animals and men cannot be considered to be of the same species unless they have the same derived nature. However, in human and animal fecundity alike, there is a separation of substance. For example, humans have the same substance in “nature,” but not in “possession” for there is a separation of substance in the generation of their offspring. There is no separation of substance in the generation of the Son and the spiration of the Holy Spirit for they eternally coinhere in each other. Therefore, their sameness of substance is not only the same in “nature,” but is also the same in “possession.” They both possess one and the same substance together, without division, and are thus consubstantial with the Father.

<sup>255</sup> The Holy Spirit was not begotten but spirated. The term *monogenes* can only refer to one who is generated or begotten. That is why the term is never used of the Holy Spirit.

of the same stock as the Father. No one else in the entire universe is of the “same stock” as the Father, except the Son and the Holy Spirit. In Nicene Creed this is called “homousios” meaning of the same substance or in today’s terminology consubstantial. And since the Father eternally communicates this substance, without diminution, to the second Person of the Blessed Trinity in his eternal begetting, he is known as the “Only-begotten,” or (because we assuming, for the sake of argument, the association of *-genes* with *genos*) the “Only Offspring Son,” “Only Born Son,” “Only Stock Son” of the Father’s begetting.

Consequently, one can clearly see that the word *monogenes* still is understood by a sense of begottenness, derivation, or stock, whether you translate it as “Only-begotten,” or “Only Stock!”

How precious is this truth! He is the “Only-begotten,” the “Only Offspring” of God, the “Only Born,” the “Only Stock” of God. If Neo-Trinitarians want to assert that *-genes* is related to *genos* and not *gennao*, so be it. But do not let them tell you it changes the meaning of Only-begotten or it negates the doctrine of the eternal generation of the Son of God. It does not change the fact at all. He still is very God “of” very God. He still eternally proceeds from the Father (Jn. 8:42; 16:28-30; 17:8). He is the “Only-begotten” or “Only Born” of God, not in the sense that there was a time when He was not, and then there was a time when He was. He never had a beginning because His was an eternal begetting, an eternal coming forth; He always was.<sup>256</sup>

And so, dear brethren, do not be misled by the new teaching concerning the Son that is being quietly being foisted upon unsuspecting Christians. Do not accept the grievous error of Neo-Trinitarians. The Son is still the “Only-begotten” of the Father, begotten before all ages, as the Historic Christian Faith has always affirmed, whether you believe *-genes* is derived from *gennao* or from *genos*.

This now brings us to our next chapter. This chapter was based upon the assumption that since the stem *-genes* was related to *genos*, and *genos* meant “class” or “kind,” *monogenes* must mean *one of a kind*. I hope most can now see that is not true. But what of the rest of that assumption – that *-genes* is not related to the word *gennao*? Is that also a groundless assumption? We would like to now look at this common assertion made by Neo-Trinitarians, and see what word explains the stem *-genes*.

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Nevertheless, the Holy Spirit is of the same kind as the Father through his “eternal procession” or “spiration” and so is also homousios, or consubstantial.

<sup>256</sup> For more information on this precious doctrine, see *Understanding the Trinity, An Encouragement to Abide in the Doctrine in both Faith and Practice*, by B.P. Harris (Assembly Bookshelf, Sacramento, 2006).



## The –Genes Stem as Found in Scripture

Christians have been really misled by the assertion that because the stem –*genes* in *monogenes* is from *genos* (kind or class), and not from *gennao* (born or begotten), therefore, the meaning of *monogenes* cannot be *only-begotten*. Why? Because, as we just demonstrated in the last chapter, it makes no difference whether the stem –*genes* is from *genos* or *gennao* because *genos* also carries the sense of offspring from being born or begotten. The major connotation of *genos* is derivation, not class or kind.

Neo-Trinitarians have really misled Christians regarding this issue. If I may borrow a phrase, “They are majoring on the minors.” They are pretending that a minority meaning for *genos* is actually the majority meaning.

In fact, when we examine the other instances of the actual stem –*genes* in the Bible we find those words, like *monogenes*, also carry the sense begat or born. They all contain a derivative sense and not the sense of “kind” or “class.”

As we have found with the rest of this study, once one examines the evidence the assertions of Neo-Trinitarians are found wanting. They are perpetuating an error. When we examine the words ending with the stem –*genes* in the Greek New Testament and the LXX what we find is that they all carry the sense of born or begottenness! Let’s now look at each one.

### Hermogenes – Ἑρμο-γένης

The first example is a name – Ἑρμογένης. It simply means born of Hermes as Thayer declares. It is found in II Tim. 1:15.

“Ἑρμογένης (i. e. born of Hermes; Tdf. Ἑρμογένης), ἑρμογενους, ὁ, *Hermogenes*, a certain Christian: 2 Tim. 1:15.”<sup>257</sup>

I do not think there would be much argument with this understanding.

### Allogenes – Ἄλλο-γενής

The next compound word that ends with the same stem as *monogenes* is ἄλλογενής. It is used in such verses as Ex. 12:43.

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<sup>257</sup> Joseph Henry Thayer, *A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament* (Baker Book House, Grand Rapids, MI 1977) pg. 250

**Exodus 12:43** And the LORD said to Moses and Aaron, "This is the ordinance of the Passover: no foreigner (ἄλλογενής) is to eat of it; (Exo 12:43 NAS)

The word means foreigner and literally would mean “born of another,” which in this context would mean “of another race.” Thayer defines it as follows.

“ἄλλογενής, -ες (ἄλλος and γένος), *sprung from another race, a foreigner, alien*: Luke 17:18. (In the Septuagint (Gen. 17:27; Exo. 12:43, etc.), but nowhere in secular writings.)”<sup>258</sup>

One can see that the idea that says, “Since the stem *-genes* is from *genos*, *-genes* must mean *kind*,” simply will not work in this case. The meaning “of another kind” would not work because according to Scripture all humans are of the “same kind.” The stem *-genes* simply cannot mean *kind* in ἄλλογενής.

Now, I am sure the Neo-Trinitarians would then say that it must mean race. Therefore, one would have to say, “It means of another race.” That is fine, but how is one of another race? One is of another race by birth. No matter what way you look at it the stem *-genes* is not being used with the meaning “kind.” The word literally means “born of another,” in other words, it means *born of another race*. There can, indeed, be different races within the human species, but there cannot be different kinds!

### Suggenes – Συγγενής

Next we find the word συγγενής which means “born with.” Friberg defines it as:

**συγγενής**, ἐς (also συγγενεύς) (1) literally *of common origin, related (by blood), akin to*; substantively in the NT *relative* (JN 18.26); plural οἱ συγγενεῖς *relatives, kinsfolk* (LU 1.58); (2) in a broader sense of the same race or people *fellow countryman, fellow citizen* (RO 9.3; probably 16.21); (3) passive, of close relationship in Christ *close companion, intimate friend, (spiritual) kinsman* (perhaps RO 16.21)<sup>259</sup>

And Liddell & Scott define it thus:

**συγγενής**, ἐς, (γενέσθαι) *born with, congenital, natural, in-born, ἦθος* Pind. O. 13.16...  
**II.** *of the same kin, descent or family, akin to*, τινι Hdt. I.109., 3. 2., Att.: -absol. *akin, cognate*, ... τὸ συγγενές, = συγγένεια, Aesch. Pr. 289, Soph. El. 1469...<sup>260</sup>

This, perhaps, would be the main word chosen by Neo-Trinitarians to demonstrate the meaning of “kind” for the stem *-genes*. We would have no

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<sup>258</sup> Ibid., pg. 28

<sup>259</sup> Timothy Friberg, Barbara Friberg, *Analytical Lexicon of the Greek New Testament* (Trafford Publishing, Victoria, BC 2005) pg. 358-59

<sup>260</sup> Henry George Liddell, Robert Scott, *Greek-English Lexicon, Seventh Edition* (Harper & Brothers, New York, 1883) pg. 1443

argument with this. We have already indicated in a previous chapter the following:

“In Liddell and Scott, the stem “—*genes*” occurs 168 times in various Greek words. In all these occurrences, the *overwhelming majority* carry the sense of “derivation.” Of the 168 occurrences, 111 times it is used with the sense of “derivation” or “born,” and only 17 times is it used with the sense of “class” or “kind!” Of the remaining uses, 28 times the definition is unavailable and the other 12 times miscellaneous meanings are assigned to the word.”<sup>261</sup>

And we also stated:

“Between the two usages, it favors the connotation of born or derivation by a ratio of almost 6 to 1. It occurs a little more than 11% of the time with a connotation of class or kind, yet it occurs almost 65% of the time with the connotation of born or derivation!”

And so, since we find six compound words in the Bible (including the LXX), with the stem —*genes*, it should not surprise us that one of the six could fall into this category.

However, we also made this observation regarding such a use of *genos*.

“Now, let us look at those few verses in the New Testament where it is translated “kind (which is the primary definition they adopt for *genos*). It is translated as “kind” in three verses – Matt. 17:21; Mark 9:29; Matt. 13:47. In two of the verses it is used with the sense of “kind” or “class” without any “obvious” sense of derivation – Matt. 17:21 and Mark 9:29. [But in one of those three verses it is used in the sense of species – Matt. 13:47.] Amazing! Even in those verses where it is translated by the word they want to adopt for *genes* – the word “kind,” it still, carries the obvious sense of “generation” or “derivation.”

Such is also the case with the stem —*genes* in this word. The basal meaning remains “born with.” It is made of *sun* (with), and the stem —*genes* (born), meaning “born with.” It is used in the sense that “kin” are born of common ancestor.” But which ancestor would it be? Well, it depends on the context.

In one real sense every human being is related because we all have one common ancestor, that being, of course, Adam. But usually this word is used in a narrower sense. For example, in Rom. 9:3 it is used of those who have a common ancestor in Abraham, i.e. the nation of Israel. But it is still used in even a narrower sense. In Mark 6:4 we find the following distinction.

**Mark 6:4** Ἐλεγεν δὲ αὐτοῖς ὁ Ἰησοῦς ὅτι Οὐκ ἔστιν προφήτης ἄτιμος, εἰ μὴ ἐν τῇ πατρίδι αὐτοῦ, καὶ ἐν τοῖς συγγενέσιν καὶ ἐν τῇ οἰκίᾳ αὐτοῦ.

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<sup>261</sup> A tally gleaned from Perseus Digital Library Project. Ed. Gregory R. Crane. Updated Mar. 31, 2009. Tufts University. Accessed Oct. 1, 2009 [www.perseus.tufts.edu](http://www.perseus.tufts.edu)

**Mark 6:4** But Jesus said to them, “A prophet is not without honor except in his own country, among his own relatives, and in his own house.” NKJV

The word in this verse is used in a narrower sense than the nation of Israel, but in a broader sense than an immediate family. It is used of those who are in between, those who are *born with* an ancestor that is further removed than that of a father or mother, perhaps one like a grandfather or great grandfather. Thus the word could also be used of one’s aunts, uncles, cousins, etc. It is used this way in the LXX in such verses as Lev. 18:14.

Thus the meaning “born with” must be defined by the context. The context will tell us if the other person who was “born with” you, should be seen as one “born with” the same father, or mother, or “born with” the same grandfather, or great, great grandfather, or, indeed, “born with” a common ancestor like the patriarch Abraham, Isaac or Jacob.

Therefore, once again we see the stem –*genes* still carries the idea of born or begotten, even when it is defined as “kind” or “kin.” One could just as well say “begat with” a common ancestor, simply because one cannot be of the same kind or kin unless one is “born with” a common ancestor.

Therefore, the stem –*genes* still retains the connotation of *begot* or *born* even though it is assigned a different nomenclature in the English language.

This use of the stem does not mean *kind* or *kin*, without the underlying meaning of *born* or *begotten*. *Kin* means what it means because of its underlying meaning of *born with* a common ancestor. In fact, observe how English the word “kin” is defined below:

“**Kin** (kĭn), n. [AS. *cynn* kin, kind, race, people; akin to *cennan* **to beget**, G. & D. *kind* a child, L. *genus* kind, race, *gignere* **to beget**, Gr. γίγνεσθαι to be born.] 1. Relationship; connection by birth or marriage. 2. Relatives; persons of the same race. – a. Kindred.”<sup>262</sup>

So even in English we see the word *kin* comes from the Anglo-Saxon word *cynn*, which was akin to *cennan*, which meant **to beget**! Any way one looks at this Greek word, whether as *born with*, or as *kin*, one sees that the stem, –*genes*, still carries the meaning of *born* or *beget*, just as it does in the word *monogenes*.

## Oikogenes – Οἰκο-γενής

The next word is οἰκογενής and simply means “house born.” Liddell and Scott define it thus:

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<sup>262</sup> Noah Webster, *Webster's Academic Dictionary: A Dictionary of the English Language* (American Book Company, New York, 1895) pg. 316

“οικο-γενής, ἑς, (γίγνομαι) born in the house, homebred, of slaves, Lat. Verna as opp. to emptus, Plat. Meno 82 B; Polyb 40. 2.3...”<sup>263</sup>

Again, we see the stem means *born*, but the Neo-Trinitarians would have us dispute this meaning and say, it must mean “household kind,” since the stem – *genes* is from *genos*, not *gennao*. But, as we have already seen this makes no difference, for it still carries a connotation of *beget* and here is another example where the stem – *genes* carries this nuance. The fact that the stem cannot mean “kind” as in “household kind,” but rather must mean *born* as in “household born,” is demonstrated in Gen. 17:6. I will provide the *New English Translation of the Septuagint*, as it brings out this more fully.

**Gen. 17:12** καὶ παιδίον ὀκτὼ ἡμερῶν περιτμηθήσεται ὑμῖν πᾶν ἀρσενικὸν εἰς τὰς γενεὰς ὑμῶν ὁ οἰκογενής τῆς οἰκίας σου καὶ ὁ ἀργυρώνητος ἀπὸ παντὸς υἱοῦ ἀλλοτρίου ὃς οὐκ ἔστιν ἐκ τοῦ σπέρματός σου.<sup>264</sup>

“And a youngster of eight days shall be circumcised among you – every male – throughout your generations, **the homebred** of you household and the one bought with money from any son of a foreigner, who is not of your offspring.” Genesis 17:12<sup>265</sup>

If οἰκογενής simply meant “household kind” there would be no need of the entire last half of the verse. If the word meant “household kind” anyone living or belonging to the household would have to submit to circumcision. It would not matter how they became a part of that household; consequently, there would have been no need to include the last part of this verse.

But because the stem does not mean *kind*, as in “household kind,” but rather means *born*, as in “one born in the household,” it was necessary to stipulate that even those who are of the household, but were not necessarily born in the household, but were rather purchased from somewhere else, would still have to be circumcised.

Therefore, we see that this word, indeed, could only mean “household born” and that the stem – *genes* in *oikogenes* means the same thing as the stem in *monogenes*, that which is *born*, whether understood as *household born* or *only born*.

## Eugenes – Εὐ-γενής

The next word that ends with –genes is εὐγενής. It is used in such verses as I Cor. 1:26.

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<sup>263</sup> Henry George Liddell, Robert Scott, *Greek-English Lexicon, Seventh Edition* (Harper & Brothers, New York, 1883) pg. 1030

<sup>264</sup> Brenton, op.cit., pg. 18

<sup>265</sup> Sourced from: ccat.sas.upenn.edu/nets/edition/ 2012

**1 Corinthians 1:26** For consider your calling, brethren, that *there are* not many wise according to flesh, not many powerful, not many high-born. (Darby's Version)

The word literally means “well born.” NET translates it “born to a privileged position,” with Darby translating it “high born.”

Liddell and Scott define it as follows—

“εὐγενής, ἕξ, in Hom. εὐηγενής (q.v.), and in h. Hom. Ven. 94 (γένος) *well-born, of noble race, of high descent*, Lat. *generosus*, Aesch. Pers. 704. Soph. O.C. 728, etc...”<sup>266</sup>

In other words, the word means “born of nobility.”

Now according to Neo-Trinitarians, since the stem *-genes* means “kind” and has nothing to do with *gennao*, indicating birth, or begotteness, they would insist the word must mean a “good kind.” But, of course, for those who believe in the Bible, this could not be, for Jesus says in Luke 18:19, there is “none good, but one, God!” How could there be a few of a “good kind” in Corinth. As Paul says, “there is none righteous, no not one” (Rom. 3:10). But, obviously, there could be some who were born of nobility.

But someone will then say, “But your mixing metaphors, “You should use the same word and say it would then mean “born of one good,” rather than “born of nobility,” for if you say “born of one good,” you have the same dilemma we have; there are none good but God. Now to be fair, they would be right in this assertion. So one could not, seemingly, prove either way whether the stem *-genes* should be understood by *kind* or by *born* in this verse. But, as we will find out, that is not necessarily so because we have an example of this word used by Josephus in his writings.

In War of the Jews he says the following.

“Now a little afterward there came into Judea a man that was much superior to Archelaus's stratagems, who did not only overturn that reconciliation that had been so wisely made with Alexander, but proved the occasion of his ruin. He was a Lacedemonian, and his name was Eurycles. He was so corrupt a man, that out of the desire of getting money, he chose to live under a king, for Greece could not suffice his luxury. (War of the Jews, Bk. I, ch. XXVI, v.1)  
<sup>267</sup>

“Now as soon as this fellow perceived the rotten parts of the family, and what quarrels the brothers had one with another, and in what disposition the father was towards each of them, he chose to take his lodging at the first in the house of Antipater, but deluded Alexander with a pretence of friendship to him, and falsely claimed to be an old acquaintance of Archelaus; for which reason he was presently admitted into Alexander's familiarity as a faithful friend. He also soon recommended himself to his brother Aristobulus: and when he had thus made trial of these several persons, he imposed upon one of them by one method,

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<sup>266</sup> Henry George Liddell, Robert Scott, *Greek-English Lexicon, Seventh Edition* (Harper & Brothers, New York, 1883) pg. 596

<sup>267</sup> Flavius Josephus, William Whiston, tr., *The Works of Flavius Josephus* (Simms and McIntyre, Belfast, 1841) pg. 590

and upon another by another; but he was principally hired by Antipater, and so betrayed Alexander, and this by reproaching Antipater, because, while he was the eldest son, he overlooked the intrigues of those who stood in the way of his expectations; and by reproaching Alexander, because he who was born of a queen, and was married to a king's daughter, permitted one that was born of a mean woman to lay claim to the succession, and this when he had Archelaus to support him in the most complete manner. (War of the Jews, Bk. I, ch. XXVI, v.2)<sup>268</sup>

In this story of Josephus, we find a con-artist by the name of Eurycles causing problems in the household of Herod. Herod's oldest son was Antipater by his first wife named Doris. She was not of noble birth but was called by Josephus a "mean woman." In other words, she was considered a common woman. The word used by Josephus regarding this lineage is ἰδιώτιδος which is defined as "low family." Herod's other two sons, on the other hand were Alexander and Aristobulus by Herod's second wife Mariamme, who was of noble birth. She was the daughter of Alexander, being of Hasmonean descent. The Hasmoneans were the rulers that came forth from the Maccabean revolt.

In his history on Herod, Peter Richardson says this regarding this account.

"Josephus's information allows the conclusion that the Herodian family was not bound completely by traditional notions of patrilineal descent. Apparently the family also used cognatic descent (i.e., links based on female relationships, often in combination with male relationships). Josephus shows that descent from female members of the family, especially from Mariamme I, was important" "Aristobulus and Alexander would have no more ascribed honor than Antipater due to their mother's family's lineage, since the father of all three was Herod. But Mariamme's sons, thought younger than Antipater, claimed greater honor on account of their Hasmonean descent, and ridiculed Antipater as being born of a non-royal mother, Doris."<sup>269</sup>

Then in War of Jews 1:522 Josephus says the following.

"Wars of the Jews 1:522 πολλά δ' εἶναι τὰ παροξύνοντα καθ' ἡμέραν ὥστε μηδὲ λαλιᾷ τινα τρόπον ἀσυκοφάντητον καταλελειφθαι περὶ μὲν γὰρ εὐγενείας ἐτέρων μνείας γενομένης αὐτὸς ἀλόγως ὑβρίζεσθαι τοῦ πατρὸς λέγοντος ὁ μόνος εὐγενὴς Ἀλέξανδρος καὶ τὸν πατέρα δι' ἀγένειαν ἀδοξῶν κατὰ δὲ τὰς θήρας προσκρούειν μὲν σιωπῶν ἐπαινέσας δὲ προσακούειν εἴρων

"Wars of the Jews 1:522 that many things happen every day to provoke him so to do, insomuch that he can say nothing at all, but it affords occasion for calumny against him; for that, if any mention be made of nobility of birth even in other cases, he is abused unjustly, while his father would say that no one, to be sure, is of noble birth but Alexander, and that his father was inglorious for want of such nobility. If they are at any time hunting, and he says nothing, he gives offence; and if he commends anyone, they take it in way of jest."<sup>270</sup>

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<sup>268</sup> Ibid., pg. 590-591

<sup>269</sup> Peter Richardson, *Herod: King of the Jews and Friend of the Romans* (University of South Carolina Press, Columbia, 1996) pg. 41

<sup>270</sup> Sourced from Bibleworks: The Works of Flavius Josephus - This addition includes the complete works of Josephus, fully parsed and lemmatized, as well as the 1828 Whiston English Translation. The Greek text is based on the 1890 Niese edition which is public domain.

He says that only Alexander is of noble birth. And the word he uses is this word εὐγενής.

So we see that εὐγενής cannot mean one of “noble kind” or one of “noble class,” i.e. the upper class, because all of Herod’s household would be considered to be in the upper class! Yet, even though Antipater was “upper class,” he was not “εὐγενής!” Antipater was viewed as one of “low birth,” born from a common woman who was named Doris, Herod’s first wife. Only Alexander, by Herod’s second wife, Mariamme, who was of Hasmonean descent, was considered to be of noble birth (εὐγενής); only Alexander had the proper pedigree to be εὐγενής; only he was considered to be “noble born.”

So we see the stem –*genes* in the word εὐγενής does not mean “kind” or “class” as the Neo-Trinitarians claim, even though they claim the stem is from *genos*. It still has the meaning of *born* or *begotten*, the same meaning it carries in *monogenes*. The Neo-Trinitarians are simply wrong. It makes no difference if one wants to assert that the stem comes from *genos* or *gennao*. It still carries the connotation of *begotten* or *born*.

### Protogenes – Πρωτο-γενής

The last example is found in the word πρωτογενής. The word is defined by Liddell and Scott as follows.

“πρωτο-γενής, -έξ; *first-born, primeval*, εἶδος, κτήμα Plat. Polit. 288 E.m 289A; of persons, Orph. II 23 (25). 2, etc.”<sup>271</sup>

The word is used in two places in the Bible. Both are found in the LXX.

**Exodus 13:2** ἀγιάσον μοι πᾶν πρωτότοκον πρωτογενὲς διανοίγον πᾶσαν μήτραν ἐν τοῖς υἱοῖς Ἰσραὴλ ἀπὸ ἀνθρώπου ἕως κτήνους ἐμοὶ ἐστίν<sup>272</sup>

**Exodus 13:2** Sanctify to me every first-born, first produced, opening every womb among the children of Israel both of man and beast: it is mine. (Brenton’s LXX translation)

**Prov. 31:2** τί τέκνον τηρήσεις τί ῥήσεις θεοῦ πρωτογενές σοὶ λέγω υἱέ τί τέκνον ἐμῆς κοιλίας τί τέκνον ἐμῶν εὐχῶν

**Proverbs 31:2** What wilt thou keep, my son, what? the words of God. My firstborn son, I speak to thee: what? son of my womb? what? son of my vows? (Brenton’s LXX translation)

What we find in this word is that its stem –*genes* means *begotten*, just as it does in *mono-genes*. As μονογενής means *only-begotten*, so πρωτογενής

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<sup>271</sup> Henry George Liddell, Robert Scott, *Greek-English Lexicon, Seventh Edition* (Harper & Brothers, New York, 1883) pg. 1337

<sup>272</sup> Brenton, op.cit., pg. 86



means *first-begotten*. It is made up of two words *proto* (first) and *genes* (begotten). It is an equivalent to first-born, but first-born is understood from the perspective of the mother and first-begotten is understood from the perspective of the father.

We see this distinction from the writings of Philo. In one of his fragments on Question and Answers from Exodus, he states the following.

Τὸ μὲν “πρωτότοκον” πρὸς τὸ μητρῶον γένος, τίκτει γὰρ γύνη· τὸ δὲ “πρωτογενές” πρὸς τὸ πατρῶον, γεννᾷ γὰρ ἄρρεν· τὸ δὲ “διανοῖγον πᾶσαν μήτραν” ἵνα μὴ γενομένης πρωτοτόκου θυγατρός, εἰθ’ ὕστερον ἐπιγενομένου υἱοῦ, τὸν υἱὸν ἐν πρωτοτόκοις καταριθμήσει τίς, ὥς τῆς ἄρρενος ἄρχοντα γενεᾶς· ὁ γὰρ νόμος φησὶν, οὐ διοίγνυσι τὴν μήτραν ὁ τοιοῦτος τὴν εὐθὺς ἐκ παρθενίας.<sup>273</sup>

I would translate it as follows:

“So, on the one hand the first-born *refers* to the mother’s offspring, for a woman gives birth, and the first-begotten *refers* to the paternal, for a male begets, and *it refers* to the *first* one opening every womb. So that it is not about a first-born daughter being born, if *it is about* the second, of a son being born; *it is* the son, he is counted among the first-born; thus *he is* the first of the male offspring. For the Law says, it is not such that straightaway opens the womb from virginity.”

Now, a few points need to be made before we look at the text. First, this is just a fragment so we do not have the greater context in which fully understand the text. But since this fragment is entitled, *Questions and Answers on Exodus*, more than likely it is an answer given to a question concerning Exodus 13:2, especially since it is the only place in Exodus where πρωτογενές occurs.

Secondly, since it is a fragment, and we do not have the greater context, it is hard to decide if we have an ellipsis in the text; this must be taken into account when deciding upon the appropriate translation.

And, finally, even if the rest of the text might be understood in a different way, one thing that cannot be understood differently is the use of the explanatory conjunction γὰρ in the first part of the fragment. It explains the meaning of πρωτότοκον and πρωτογενές, as we will now presently see.

It seems that Philo, in this fragment, is answering a question about Ex. 13:2, regarding who qualifies as a “first-born,” thus needing to be sanctified to God.

**Exodus 13:2** Sanctify to me every first-born, the first-begotten opening every womb among the children of Israel, from man unto beast: it is mine.”

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<sup>273</sup> Philo, Ralph Marcus, tr., *Questions on Exodus*, Loeb Classical Library 401 (Harvard University Press, Cambridge, MA, 1953) pg. 261

**Exodus 13:2** ἁγιάσον μοι πᾶν πρωτότοκον πρωτογενές διανοῖγον πᾶσαν μήτραν ἐν τοῖς υἱοῖς Ἰσραὴλ ἀπὸ ἀνθρώπου ἕως κτήνους ἐμοὶ ἐστὶν

As one can see, Ex. 13:2 does not specify the gender of the child, but Philo intimates that it is the male that qualifies as a first-born. He states that if a daughter is the first-born, she is not sanctified, because the Law only refers to a first-born son. In other words, he interprets the verse to mean only the first of male offspring are to be sanctified. The reason he says so is because the Law says, “it is not such that straightaway opens the womb from virginity.”

Now, there is no verse that says this in the Law, but, more than likely, he is referring to Exodus 13:12 which specifically indicates it is the first-born male that is sanctified. (This is the difficulty of translating a fragment. We do not fully know the context of his answer or what dialogue has already taken place).

**Exodus 13:12** that thou shalt set apart every *offspring* opening the womb, the males to the Lord, every one that opens the womb out of the herds or among thy cattle, as many as thou shalt have: thou shalt sanctify the males to the Lord. (Brenton’s LXX Version)

If we take it this way, then the text would seem to be saying the following.

“So, on the one hand the first-born *refers* to the mother’s offspring, for a woman gives birth, and the first-begotten *refers* to the paternal, for a male begets, and *it refers* to the *first* one opening every womb. So that it is not about a first-born daughter being born, if *it is about* the second, of a son being born; *it is* the son, he is counted as the first-born, thus, *he is* the first of the male offspring. For the Law says, it is not such that straightaway opens the womb from virginity.”

If this is so, then it seems the latter half would mean this.

“So that it is not about a first-born daughter being born” – In other words, Philo may be answering the question as to what the first part of Ex. 13: 2 is speaking about. He is saying the phrase, “Sanctify to me every first-born,” in Ex. 13:2, does not refer to a first-born daughter.

“If *it is about* the second, of a son being born” – In other words, the πρωτότοκον (first-born) in Ex. 13:2 cannot refer to a first-born daughter, if the “second reference” in Ex. 13: 2, i.e. πρωτογενές (the first-begotten), is a reference to a son being born, as is also confirmed by verse 12.

“*It is* the son, he is counted as the first-born, thus *he is* the first of the male offspring” – In other words, since the second reference, πρωτογενές (the first-begotten), is referring to a male, then only a first-born male can be considered to be the first-born that is sanctified in the phrase, “Sanctify to me every first-born” in Ex. 13:2.

“For the Law says, it is not such that straightaway opens the womb from virginity” – In other words, in other verses it says it is not the first-born child that is sanctified, but only the first-born male child. A first-born daughter, even though it is the first one to open the womb, is not one that is sanctified to the Lord or redeemed.

This seems to be Philo’s argument. However, if we translate it this way, with ὥστερον (later) regarded as an adverb and not an adjective, it seems this must be the sense.

“So, on the one hand the first-born *refers* to the mother’s offspring, for a woman gives birth, and the first-begotten *refers* to the paternal, for a male begets, and *it refers* to the *first* one opening every womb. So that it cannot be about a first-born daughter being born, if *it refers later* to a son being born. *It is* the son, he is counted as the first-born; thus *he is* the first of the male offspring. For the Law says, it is not such that straightaway opens the womb from virginity.”

In this translation the sense of the first part remains the same, but the other part of the text might then mean this:

“So that it is not about a first-born daughter being born, if *it refers later* to a son being born” – In other words, Philo may have already told his enquirer that Exodus 13:12 states that a first-born male needs to be sanctified. Perhaps, the enquirer, then, asks Philo, “But if the previous reference (Ex. 13:2) does not specify only the male gender, why does not a first-born daughter also need to be sanctified?” Philo then answers him that if the text written later (Ex. 13:12) refers only to first-born males who open the womb, then the previous reference (Ex. 13:2) cannot be about a first-born daughter being born.

The problem in properly understanding this fragment is that we do not have the greater context and we do not know what questions had already been asked and what dialogue had already occurred. So it is difficult to properly understand the rest of the fragment but the first part of the fragment is pretty straightforward. We have a statement and we have an explanation. This part remains the same in either translation and it is this part which pertains to the question before us.

So let us look at this portion that addresses the fundamental question, “How should we understand the stem *-genes* in *protogenes*?”

This is what we have.

Πρωτότοκον	Statement	Reason
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<b>Greek Text</b>	τό μὲν <u>πρωτότοκον</u> πρὸς τὸ μητρῶον γένος	τίκτει γὰρ γυνή
<b>English Translation</b>	So, on the one hand the <u>first-born</u> <i>refers</i> to the mother's offspring	for a woman gives birth

<b>Πρωτογενές</b>	<b>Statement</b>	<b>Reason</b>
<b>Greek Text</b>	τὸ δὲ <u>πρωτογενές</u> πρὸς τὸ πατρῶον	γεννᾷ γὰρ ἄρρεν
<b>English Translation</b>	And the <u>first-begotten</u> <i>refers</i> to the paternal	for a male begets

We have two main words brought to the forefront in this fragment – πρωτότοκον and πρωτογενές. Apparently, the question was about the meaning of these two words. What do they mean? How do they influence the meaning of Exodus 13:2?

Let me give the text again with an English translation, and a chart on the words in question.

Τὸ μὲν “πρωτότοκον” πρὸς τὸ μητρῶον γένος, τίκτει γὰρ γυνή· τὸ δὲ “πρωτογενές” πρὸς τὸ πατρῶον, γεννᾷ γὰρ ἄρρεν· τὸ δὲ “διανοίγον πᾶσαν μήτραν” ἵνα μὴ γενομένης πρωτοτόκου θυγατρὸς, εἴθ’ ὕστερον ἐπιγενομένου υἱοῦ, τὸν υἱὸν ἐν πρωτοτόκοις καταριθμήσει τίς, ὥς τῆς ἄρρενος ἄρχοντα γενεᾶς· ὁ γὰρ νόμος φησὶν, οὐ διοίγνυσι τὴν μήτραν ὁ τοιοῦτος τὴν εὐθὺς ἐκ παρθενίας.<sup>274</sup>

“So, on the one hand the first-born *refers* to the mother's offspring, for a woman gives birth, and the first-begotten *refers* to the paternal, for a male begets, and *it refers* to the *first* one opening every womb. So that it is not about a first-born daughter being born, if *it is about* the second, of a son being born; *it is* the son, he is counted among the first-borns, thus *he is* the first of the male offspring. For the Law says, it is not such that straightaway opens the womb from virginity.”

<b>Word</b>	<b>Compound</b>	<b>Stem</b>	<b>Explanatory verb</b>
πρωτότοκος	πρωτό – τοκος	– τοκος	τίκτει (τίκτω)
πρωτογενής	πρωτο – γενής	– γενής	γεννᾷ (γεννάω)

Philo tries to explain the verse by explaining the meaning of each word. The meaning of *prototokos* is identified by the use of τίκτει which is the present active indicative, 3<sup>rd</sup> person singular form of the verb τίκτω. This verb simply means “give birth or bear.” Thus Philo is telling us the stem – τοκος should be

<sup>274</sup> Philo, Ralph Marcus, tr., *Questions on Exodus*, Loeb Classical Library 401 (Harvard University Press, Cambridge, MA, 1953) pg. 261

understood by the verb τίκω. Thus, the compound word *prototokos* should be understood as “*first-born*.”

Next he tells us that the meaning of *protogenes* is understood by the use of γεννᾷ which is the present active indicative, 3<sup>rd</sup> person singular form of the verb γεννάω. This verb simply means “begat or bear.” Philo is telling us the stem –γενής should be understood by the verb γεννάω. Thus, the compound word, *protogenes*, should be understood as “*first-begotten*.” As such, what does this tell us about Philo’s understanding of the stem –genes in *protogenes*?

For this entire paper we have been affirming the meaning of *only-begotten* for the Greek word *monogenes*. Neo-Trinitarians have been telling Christians that *only-begotten* cannot be the true meaning because the stem –genes is from *genos*, which means *kind*, and not *gennao* which means *beget*. In the last chapter we accepted their assumption that it was from *genos* and we traveled down that rabbit trail with them. However, we have found and demonstrated, over and over, that even if such is the case, it does not preclude the meaning of “only-begotten one,” or “only offspring,” because *genos* still carries the meaning of *derivation* and *begottenness*. And now that we have reached this point in our study what do we find out after all? We find that a Greek speaking Jew, from the days of our Lord, disagreeing with Greek scholars of today. Whom should we believe? One who wrote in the language of his birth, or certain ones, who in many cases, have learned Greek as a second language?

Philo explains the meaning of the stem –genes, not by *genos* but by *gennao*! He declares that in the compound word *protogenes*, the stem –genes is understood by *beget*. *Gennao* means *beget*. Therefore, in the compound word *monogenes*, which has the same stem –genes, how do you suppose we should understand the stem –genes?

Dear brethren, we have come full circle. This final example clearly demonstrates how the assertion that the stem –genes cannot mean “begotten” or “born” is simply unfounded and false! It is a hoax perpetrated upon the minds of unsuspecting Christians. It is a myth that has become widespread, gaining a life of its own because of the strength of the internet. This example clearly demonstrates why the assertion made by Dale Moody and others—that Greek speaking Christians of yesterday have been wrong, and that the Church for fifteen hundred years has been in error—is so foolish and without foundation.

The Greek scholars of yesterday have not been wrong; they have been correct! They have correctly understood the stem –genes as *born* or *begotten*. It is the Greek scholars of today, who assert it cannot mean *begotten* that have been wrong.

All those early Christians, whose mother tongue was Greek, were the ones who were right, and all those modern scholars, whose mother tongue is other than Greek, are the ones who are wrong.

Stated plainly, Neo-Trinitarians have misled a whole generation of Christians regarding this matter. They have wrongly asserted that *monogenes* cannot mean *only-begotten*. They have wrongly asserted that *-genes* is clearly related to *genos*, and not to *gennao*, and thus could not be understood as *begotten*. (Of course, they are also ignoring the fact that usage and context should drive the meaning of a word, not just its etymology.) Rather, we have found the opposite is true—that the stem in *μονογενής* can, indeed, be understood as *born* or *begotten*, as it is also understood as *born* or *begotten* in *πρωτογενής*! (And we have found that the etymology of the word does support the meaning of *only-begotten*, although, again, etymology should never determine the meaning of a word, in and of itself.)

At the minimum, you would think the modern Greek Neo-Trinitarian scholar would let the Christian reader know the stem *-genes*, can indeed be used with the sense of “born” or “begotten” (even though they might not agree). They must know this was the common understanding by many Greek scholars and lexicographers of yesterday (like Philo before them).

Those Greek scholars and lexicographers clearly saw that *-genes* was related to the verb *gennao* (γενῶ)<sup>275</sup> and so could be understood as *begotten* in *monogenes*. For example, consider the following.

Henry George Liddell, Robert Scott, and Henry Drisler, in their *Greek-English Lexicon, based on the German work of Francis Passow*, link the word *μονογενής* to both *μονος* and *γενῶ*.<sup>276</sup>

Greville Ewing, in his *Greek Grammar and Greek and English Scripture Lexicon*, links *μονογενής* to *μονος* and *γενῶ*.<sup>277</sup>

J. H. Bass, in his *Greek and English Manual Lexicon to the New Testament*, links *μονογενής* to both *μονος* and *γενῶ*.<sup>278</sup>

L. Edward Peithman at the end of his *Theoretical and Practical Greek Grammar* links *μονογενής* to *μόνος* and the verb *γίνομαι*,<sup>279</sup> a derivative of *γενῶ*.

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<sup>275</sup> Liddell & Scott and Drisler state that *γενῶ* is obsol. “the common root of *γείνομαι* and *γίγνομαι*,” with *γείνομαι* being “pass., from obsol. act. *γείνω*, for which *γεννάω* is in use, *to be engendered, be born*, *γεννόμενος, one that is born*.” See their *Lexicon: Liddell, Henry George, Scott, Robert, Drisler, Henry, A Greek-English Lexicon, Vol. 2* (Harper & Brothers, New York, 1852) pg. 287, 289

<sup>276</sup> Liddell, Henry George, Scott, Robert, Drisler, Henry, *A Greek-English Lexicon, based on the German work of Francis Passow, Vol. 2* (Harper & Brothers, New York, 1852 ) pg. 945

<sup>277</sup> Greville Ewing, *A Greek Grammar and Greek and English Scripture Lexicon* (James Hedderwick & Co., Glasgow, 1812) pg. 264

<sup>278</sup> J. H. Bass, *A Greek and English Manual Lexicon to the New Testament* (Baldwin and Cradock, London, 1829) pg. 144

<sup>279</sup> L. Edward Peithman, *A Theoretical and Practical Greek Grammar* (Longman, Rees, Orme, Brown & Green, London, 1830) pg. 348

John Groves, in his *Greek and English Dictionary*, also links it to that verb, showing μονογενής as being derived from “μόνος and γίνομαι, to be born.”<sup>280</sup>

Karl Gottlieb Bretschneider in his work, *Lexicon manuale Graeco-Latinum in Libros Novi Testamenti* gives the derivation of μονογενής as follows—“ex μόνος et γίνομαι e. μόνος γεννώμενος unice genitus, unicus, sic a,”<sup>281</sup> [also showing its link to the verb].

And, finally, James Donnegan, in his *New Greek and English Lexicon; Principally on the Plan of the Greek and German Lexicon of Schneider* relates it to the verb γενω, but it is interesting to note that he also relates it to γένος, (like some other lexicographers of his day). But it should also be noted that he did not think this precluded the traditional meaning of *only-begotten*. He like, many others, still gave it the nuance of *only-begotten*. He defines it as “born or produced alone,” with the thema as follows,<sup>282</sup> “Th. μόνος, γένος, γενω.”<sup>283</sup>

All these Greek scholars and lexicographers of the 18<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup> century, being very proficient in the Greek language (since they were raised in an educational system that taught Greek and Latin from an early age), believed that *-genes* was related to the verb *gennao* and *ginomai*, and therefore carried the meaning of *begotten* or *born*. But today their witness is dismissed out of hand, not even being recognized as a possibility.

This spiritual battle over *monogenes* is spiraling downward as time goes on. In the 19<sup>th</sup> century those who introduced the meaning of “one of a kind” for *monogenes* could still admit that *only-begotten* was also a legitimate translation. By the 1930’s they still retained some objectivity, still admitting such a meaning was possible (as was done by Francis Warden, although he tried hard to disprove it). But by the 1950’s men begin to lose that objectivity. We see this with the example of Dale Moody; he outright denied the possibility of *only-begotten*, and labeled the Church, “deceived” for fifteen hundred years for ever believing such a thing!

And now that we have reached the 21<sup>st</sup> century, the fruit of such thinking, unfortunately, is beginning to be seen. Not only do men continue to deny the possibility of *only-begotten*, many are now denying the doctrine behind the word *monogenes*, the doctrine of the eternal generation of the Son from the Father. Many continue to pass on false and misleading information regarding the meaning of *monogenes* and the stem *-genes* without the blink of an eye. Almost every modern Bible translation, since the introduction of the RSV in middle of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, now substitutes a different meaning for *monogenes*.

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<sup>280</sup> John Groves, *A Greek and English Dictionary* (Hilliard, Gray & Co., Boston, 1839) pg. 398

<sup>281</sup> Karl Gottlieb Bretschneider, *Lexicon Manuale Graeco-Latinum in Libros Novi Testamenti* (Barth, Lipsiae, 1840) pg. 269

<sup>282</sup> Thema is an old word (from the Greek θεμα) which means—words from which others are derived.

<sup>283</sup> James Donnegan, *A New Greek and English Lexicon, principally on the plan of the Greek and German Lexicon of Schneider* (Hilliard, Gray & Co., Boston, 1839) pg. 856

Dear brethren, the fact of the matter is, those who have left the Historic Christian Faith are deceived—whether they know it or not. They have departed from the Faith—whether they will admit it or not. I do not make that judgment by myself, for who am I? It is the millions of godly Christians down through the ages who have made that judgment. I am just a part of them.

Neo-Trinitarians are the ones who are introducing a new doctrine! I am not. They are the ones departing from the Historic Christian Faith. I will not. Each Christian will have to decide for themselves.

Will you remain in the Faith that was once and for all delivered to the saints, confessing that our precious Lord Jesus Christ was the Only-Begotten Son of God, eternally begotten of the Father before all time—Very God of Very God, equal in all ways with the Father, being co-equal, co-essential, and co-eternal not only with the Father but also with the Holy Spirit—Father, Son and Holy Spirit, the Three Persons of the Blessed Trinity!—or will you follow this new doctrine, that our precious Lord Jesus Christ was **not** the Only-Begotten Son of God, was not eternally begotten of the Father before all time—and so, in reality, could not be Very God “of” Very God (of course, they will deny this, but without eternal generation the Son cannot be “of” God the Father), equal in all ways with the Father, being co-essential, not only with the Father but also with the Holy Spirit—Father, Son and Holy Spirit, the Three Persons of the Blessed Trinity?



## The Testimony of Old Latin Versions, Jerome and the Latin Vulgate<sup>284</sup>

We mentioned before that when the writings of Irenaeus were translated into Latin, they translated the Greek word “monogenes” by the Latin word “unigenitus.” The same thing occurred when the Greek Scriptures were translated into Latin. In the majority of cases where the Greek word “monogenes” was applied to Christ, it was translated by the Latin word “unigenitus,” demonstrating that the early Latin Christians understood “monogenes” as “unigenitus.”

As was mentioned before, the word “unigenitus” is made up from two words, the prefix “*uni*” from “*unus*” which means “only” or “sole” and “*genitum*” which means beget or bear. The word clearly means “only” or “solely” begotten, and it is this word which is used in the majority of cases to translate “monogenes” when speaking of Christ.

However, most Evangelicals today make the opposite assertion, claiming that *unicus* was the common word used to translate *monogenes* in those verses speaking of Christ. And, when one traces their reason for such an assertion, one is invariably led back to the assertions made by Dale Moody in his paper: “*God’s Only Son: The Translation of John 3:16 in the Revised Standard Version.*” But, once again, as we have seen with so many other statements of his, this assertion is based upon half-truths and misconceptions.

This is what he claims in his paper regarding this issue. He states that in the Old Latin Codex Vercellensis, *monogenēs* was translated by the Latin word *unicus* in John 1:14, 18; 3:16, 18. This is a true statement as will be seen in the chart below. However, after making this true statement, he then implies that this was the way it was translated in most Old Latin MSS and that Jerome changed this translation of *unicus* to *unigenitus*. This is patently false as will be seen below! But, by first making this true claim, he is then able to lay the blame upon Jerome for supposedly changing the meaning of *monogenes* from *unicus* to that of *unigenitus* in his Bible. He even implies that Wordsworth and White confirm his accusation in their *Novum Testamentum Latine*, which, as far as I have been able to determine, was never done by them. Perhaps, others may be able to find confirmation for this accusation of Moody, but I have not been able to find it. Maybe he is not saying this and simply worded his sentence poorly, but it seems he is at least implying this to the reader. This is what he said in his paper,

“Jerome’s Vulgate revised the old Latin *unicus* (only) in John 1:14, 18; 3:16, 18 to *unigenitus* (only begotten). A further examination of the Old Latin MSS, as they are conveniently recorded in Wordsworth and White, *Novum Testamentum Latine*, indicates that Jerome made

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<sup>284</sup> Excerpted from *Understanding the Trinity, An Encouragement to Abide in the Doctrine in both Faith and Practice*, by B.P. Harris (Assembly Bookshelf, Sacramento, 2006) pg.374-387

the changes, together with I John 4:9 and Heb. 11:17, out of interest for ecclesiastical dogma. Linguistic study did not force the change, for Jerome left *unicus* (only) as the translation of *monogenēs* in Luke 7:12; 8:42; 9:38 where no theological question is involved.”<sup>285</sup>

Whether he worded his sentence poorly or not, he still completely misleads readers into thinking that the Old Latin MSS consistently translated *monogenes* by *unicus* and that Jerome was the one responsible for substituting *unigenitus* for *unicus* into the Latin Bible because of theological reasons. This simply is not true. Long before Jerome, Christians were translating *monogenes* by *unigenitus*, as we have already demonstrated in the writings of Irenaeus and Tertullian, and those writings were almost two hundred years before Jerome. But that is not all. Most Old Latin MSS, contrary to the implication of Dale Moody, were also translating *monogenes* with *unigenitus* in those verses from the Gospel of John. Out of all the MSS—he chooses the one MS that has *unicus* and ignores all the other MSS that have *unigenitus*. This can be clearly seen in the chart below, showing those verses where Christ is the subject matter. Why does he not let the reader know this?

### Old Latin Texts of John 1:14; 1:18 & 3:16, 18

✓ = *unigenitus* for the Greek word Μονογενής

0 = *unicus* for the Greek word Μονογενής

Old Latin Manuscript	Jn 1:14	Jn 1:18	Jn 3:16	Jn 3:18
Codex Auren 8 <sup>th</sup> Century	✓	✓	✓	✓
Codex Bezae 5 <sup>th</sup> Century c. 400A.D.	missing	missing	0	0
Codex Brixianus 6 <sup>th</sup> Century	✓	✓	✓	✓
Codex Carnotensis 6 <sup>th</sup> Century	✓	✓	✓	✓
Codex Colbertinus 12 <sup>th</sup> Century	✓	✓	✓	✓
Codex Corbeiensis 5 <sup>th</sup> Century	✓	✓	✓	✓
Codex Gatianus 9 <sup>th</sup> Century 800 A.D.	✓	✓	?	✓
Codex Monacensis 6 <sup>th</sup> or 7 <sup>th</sup> Century	0	✓	✓	✓
Codex Palatinus 5 <sup>th</sup> Century	✓	0	0	0
Codex Rehdigeranus 8 <sup>th</sup> Century	missing	✓	✓	✓
Codex Sangallensis 48 5 <sup>th</sup> Century	✓	✓	✓	✓
Codex Sangallensis 60p4 9 <sup>th</sup> Century	✓	✓	?	✓
Codex Sangermanensis Secundus 8 <sup>th</sup> Cent.	✓	✓	0	✓

<sup>285</sup> Dale Moody, “God’s Only Son: The Translation of John 3:16 in the Revised Standard Version” *Journal of Biblical Literature*, Vol. 72, No. 4; (Dec., 1953) pg. 214

Old Latin Manuscript	Jn 1:14	Jn 1:18	Jn 3:16	Jn 3:18
Codex Usserianus Primus 7 <sup>th</sup> Cent. 700 A.D.	missing	✓	0	✓
Codex Vercellensis 4 <sup>th</sup> Century	0	0	0	0
Codex Veronensis 4 <sup>th</sup> or 5 <sup>th</sup> Century	✓	✓	0	✓
Codex Wurzburg/univ Mpthf67 9 <sup>th</sup> Century	✓	✓	✓	✓

So, when Dale Moody speaks of Jerome's "*revision* of the Old Latin MSS from *unicus* (only) to *unigenitus* (only begotten)," <sup>286</sup> he is completely misleading his readers. The Old Latin MSS were not revised by Jerome in the use of that word to *unigenitus*. They already utilized the word *unigenitus* over the word *unicus* by a margin of 4 to 1 in those verses bespeaking Christ. There was no "revision" of the word, as Dale Moody says. That is simply a false statement. The Old Latin texts were already using the word *unigenitus*.

Now, some, when confronted with this fact, dismiss the assertion of this chart because they say that all these Old Latin Texts were already corrupted by Jerome's Vulgate translation. They also claim that Jerome's use of *unigenitus* was influenced by a series of lectures by Gregory of Nazianzus. They assert that before Jerome studied with Gregory, he understood *monogenes* by *unicus*, but because of Gregory's influence, he changed his mind, and thus introduced the concept of *unigenitus*, "only-begotten," into his own Latin translation, which, they then claim, corrupted the Old Latin Texts.

This is what Dale Moody says:

"Gregory's theological orations (Migne, Vol. 36, pp. 11-171) were preached in the Church called Anastasia at Constantinople at the very time (A.D. 379-381) Jerome was in Constantinople...there is little doubt that Jerome was influenced by these orations in his revision of the Old Latin MSS from *unicus* (only) to *unigenitus* (only begotten)." <sup>287</sup>

This story of Jerome and Gregory has been repeated over and over by many different people, but beloved, there is not one shred of evidence to support such a conclusion. In fact, the whole assertion is mistaken. The statement is not true. Jerome believed the Lord Jesus to be the *Only-Begotten Son* before he ever studied with Gregory. Jerome didn't need Gregory to teach him the Faith concerning the nature of Christ, for he was ordained a priest before he ever studied under Gregory and, as such, he would have already agreed with one of the first Statements of Faith of the Church, the Nicene Creed, which declared 54 years before that Christ was "*monogenes*," or "*unigenitus*."

<sup>286</sup> Dale Moody, "God's Only Son: The Translation of John 3:16 in the Revised Standard Version" *Journal of Biblical Literature*, Vol. 72, No. 4; (Dec., 1953) pg. 215

<sup>287</sup> Dale Moody, "God's Only Son: The Translation of John 3:16 in the Revised Standard Version" *Journal of Biblical Literature*, Vol. 72, No. 4; (Dec., 1953) pg. 215

This is all the more confirmed for us because he had already been ordained a priest (c. 378-379 A.D.) before he ever left to study with Gregory. In fact, when he was being ordained a priest, the church in Antioch was already undergoing the Meletian Schism, and it was with the Eustathian group that Jerome finally allied himself, whose bishop, Paulinus, ordained him as priest. The Eustathian group was the group who adhered minutely to the Nicene Creed, and which believed the Lord was *monogenes*, in other words, *unigenitus*.

Well some may say, “But you are back reading the meaning only-begotten into the Creed. But in all candidness, such a claim is totally misguided and is made by one desperate to change the meaning of *monogenes* from *only-begotten* to *only*. There is not one shred of evidence to support such an assertion. Even, Wayne Grudem admits the Christians of that day understood *monogenes* to mean “only-begotten.” He says in his Systematic Theology,

“The controversy over the term “only-begotten” was unnecessary because it was based on a misunderstanding of the meaning of the Greek word *monogenes* (used of Jesus in John 1:14, 18; 3:16,18; and I John 4:9). For many years it was thought to be derived from two Greek terms: *mono*, meaning “only,” and *gennao*, meaning “beget” or “bear.” Even the received version of the Nicene Creed understand it that way, since the explanatory phrases “begotten of the Father before all worlds” and “begotten, not made” both use the verb *gennao* (beget) to explain *monogenes*.”<sup>288</sup>

So we see that Jerome understood *monogenes* to mean *only-begotten*, and that the Son was eternally begotten of the Father before he ever studied with Gregory. Gregory did not introduce some new doctrine to Jerome, nor did Gregory cause or lead him to believe this.

This claim about Jerome is repeated over and over, but it is simply based upon error. But no one ever checks the facts out.

The Schaff-Herzog Encyclopedia gives us the following chronology.

“Returning to Antioch, in 378 or 379, he was ordained by Bishop Paulinus, apparently with some unwillingness and on condition that he still continue his ascetic life. Soon afterward he went to Constantinople to pursue his study of Scripture under the instruction of Gregory Nazianzen. There he seems to have spent two years; the next three (382-385) he was in Rome again, in close intercourse with Pope Damasus and the leading Roman Christians.”<sup>289</sup>

This confirms that Jerome was already a priest before he left for Constantinople. Therefore, one sees that the assertion made by Dale Moody and others, that Jerome came to understand that *monogenes* meant *unigenitus*

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<sup>288</sup> Wayne Grudem, *Systematic Theology: An Introduction to Biblical Doctrine* (Zondervan, Grand Rapids, MI, 2009) pg. 1233

<sup>289</sup> Samuel Macauley Jackson, D.D., LL.D, Editor-in-Chief, *The new Schaff-Herzog encyclopedia of religious knowledge: embracing Biblical, historical, doctrinal, and practical theology and Biblical, theological, and ecclesiastical biography from the earliest times to the present day Volume 6* (Funk and Wagnalls Co. New York and London, 1910) pg. 126

and that the Lord was the Only-begotten of the Father, all because of his studies with Gregory, is unfounded and misleading. His time with Gregory came after he had already asserted his belief in the Only Begotten, the One who was begotten not made before all time.

This is also easily demonstrated by reading Jerome's writings. Before he ever joined Gregory, Jerome wrote his *Dialogue against the Luciferians*. It was written around 379 A.D. The Introduction to this work in the *Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers Edition*, says the following about this treatise.

"This Dialogue was written about 379, seven years after the death of Lucifer, and very soon after Jerome's return from his hermit life in the desert of Chalcis. Though he received ordination from Paulinus, who had been consecrated by Lucifer, he had no sympathy with Lucifer's narrower views, as he shows plainly in this Dialogue."<sup>290</sup>

As we will see it is totally misleading to say Jerome did not adhere to the doctrine of the Only-begotten until after he studied with Gregory, as this treatise will clearly show.

"And all the more because the current profession of faith no longer exhibited on the face of it anything profane. "We believe," said they, "in one true God, the Father Almighty. This we also confess: We believe in the only-begotten Son of God, who, before all worlds, and before all their origins, was born of God. The only- begotten Son, moreover, we believe to be born alone of the Father alone, God of God, like to his Father who begot Him, according to the Scriptures; whose birth no one knows, but the Father alone who begot Him." Do we find any such words inserted here as "There was a time, when he was not?" Or, "The Son of God is a creature though not made of things which exist." No. This is surely the perfection of faith to say we believe Him to be God of God. Moreover, they called Him the only-begotten, "born alone of the Father." What is the meaning of born? Surely, not made. His birth removed all suspicion of His being a creature. They added further, "Who came down from heaven, was conceived of the Holy Ghost, born of the Virgin Mary, crucified by Pontius Pilate, rose again the third day from the dead, ascended into heaven, sitteth at the right hand of the Father, who will come to judge the quick and the dead." There was the ring of piety in the words, and no one thought that poison was mingled with the honey of such a proclamation..."

"...Lastly, at the very time when rumour was rife that there had been some insincerity in the statement of the faith, Valens, bishop of Mursa, who had drawn it up, in the presence of Taurus the praetorian prefect who attended the Synod by imperial command, declared that he was not an Arian, and that he utterly abhorred their blasphemies. However, the thing had been done in secret, and it had not extinguished the general feeling. So on another day, when crowds of bishops and laymen came together in the Church at Ariminum, Muzonius, bishop of the province of Byzacena, to whom by reason of seniority the first rank was assigned by all, spoke as follows: "One of our number has been authorized to read to you, reverend fathers, what reports are being spread and have reached us, so that the evil opinions which ought to grate upon our ears and be banished from our hearts may be condemned with one voice by us all." The whole body of bishops replied, Agreed. "And so when Claudius, bishop of the province of Picenum, at the request of all present, began to read the blasphemies attributed to Valens, Valens denied they were his and cried aloud, "If anyone denies Christ

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<sup>290</sup> Philip Schaff, ed. Henry Wace, ed. *Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers, Second Series Vol. VI* (T&T Clark, Edinburgh; Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., Grand Rapids, MI 1993) pg. 319

our Lord, the Son of God, begotten of the Father before the worlds, let him be anathema.” There was a general chorus of approval, “Let him be anathema...”

“...After these proceedings the Council was dissolved. All returned in gladness to their own provinces. For the Emperor and all good men had one and the same aim, that the East and West should be knit together by the bond of fellowship. But wickedness does not long lie hid, and the sore that is healed superficially before the bad humour has been worked off breaks out again. Valens and Ursacius and others associated with them in their wickedness, eminent Christian bishops of course, began to wave their palms, and to say they had not denied that He was a creature, but that He was like other creatures. At that moment...the Nicene Faith stood condemned by acclamation. The whole world groaned, and was astonished to find itself Arian.”<sup>291</sup>

From his own writings we see that Jerome understood the Lord to be *only-begotten*, or *unigenitus*, before he ever joined Gregory. He said that the common Faith declared that he was “the only-begotten, ‘born alone of the Father.’” What could be more succinct as to the meaning of *monogenes*?

So this assertion that Jerome was swayed by Gregory to understand *monogenes* as *unigenitus*, and not as *unicus*, is completely false and without standing!

Now how about the other assertion that is made that it was because of Jerome’s insertion of *unigenitus* in his Latin translation – the Vulgate – that caused the corruption of the Old Latin texts? This too, is without foundation.

More than likely, the corruption went the other way around! Most Vulgate texts were corrupted by the Old Latin Texts. Why? – Because there was such a resistance to the Vulgate that many Christians preferred to use their Old Latin Texts. In fact, many times the scribes would insert Old Latin phrases into the Vulgate!

Now, no doubt, over time, there would have also been corruption in the Old Latin texts, but until the Vulgate was accepted, most of the contamination went the other way. Sir Frederic Kenyon refers to this phenomenon.

He says,

“Then came the Vulgate, the revised Latin Bible of St. Jerome. Undertaken as it was at the express request of the Pope, it, yet, did not win immediate acceptance. Even so great an authority as St. Augustine objected to the extensive departures from the current version which Jerome had made in his Old Testament. For some centuries the Vulgate and the Old Latin existed side by side. Complete Bibles were then rare. More commonly, a volume would contain only one group of books, such as the Pentateuch or the Prophets, the Gospels or the Pauline Epistles; and it would very easily happen that the library of any one individual would have some of these groups according to the older version, and others according to the Vulgate, Hence we find Christian writers in the fifth and sixth centuries using sometimes one version and sometimes the other; and when complete copies of the Bible came to be written, some books might be copied from manuscripts of the one type, and others from those of the other.

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<sup>291</sup> Ibid., pg. 328-329

Special familiarity with particular books was a strong bar to the acceptance of the new text. Thus the Gospels continued to circulate in the Old Latin much later than the Prophets, and the old version of the Psalms was never superseded by Jerome's translation at all, but continues to this day to hold its place in the received Bible of the Roman Church."<sup>292</sup>

"Scribes engaged in copying the Vulgate would, from sheer familiarity with the older version, write down its words instead of those of St. Jerome; and on the other hand a copyist of the Old Latin would introduce into its text some of the improvements of the Vulgate."<sup>293</sup>

And so we see that there was quite a resistance to Jerome's Vulgate. In fact, it was the Gospels in the Old Latin that continued to circulate longer than other books in the Old Latin and so would have been more resistant to any changes from Jerome's Vulgate. So the chances that scribes would alter "unicus" to "unigenitus" in the Gospel of John are greatly exaggerated.

There is no doubt that some changes had to have occurred over time to the Old Latin text, as changes had to have occurred to the Vulgate, but there is no sound reason to conclude that all Old Latin Texts that have *unigenitus* were corrupted by the Vulgate and that is why they have *unigenitus* rather than *unicus*. There is no evidence to even suggest that assertion, absolutely none!

Now some will say, well some of the earlier Old Latin versions have *unicus* and some of the later Old Latin versions have *unigenitus*, therefore the later ones must have been changed from *unicus* to *unigenitus*.

One needs to realize that there is not a direct lineal descent from the earliest Old Latin Texts to the later Old Latin Texts, as if there was one parent Old Latin Text that originally had *unicus* and, when that pure Old Latin text was recopied by scribes, they changed the word into *unigenitus* because of the influence of the Vulgate. That is simply not true. The Old Latin texts were written from different parts of the Roman Empire and were not all related to a common source. Different Latin scribes in different parts of the empire would translate the Scriptures out of the Greek and into Latin for those Christians in their area. The accuracy of the translation would depend on the ability of the translator, and, just as today, some translators have a better grasp of the language than others. Not every Latin scribe or translator was equal in their ability or in their intellect. As Augustine said in *De Doctrina Christiana*, ii.11 when he was talking about the Old Latin texts—

"For the translations of the Scriptures from Hebrew into Greek can be counted, but Latin translators are out of all numbers. For in the early days of the faith every man who happened to get his hands upon a Greek manuscript, and who thought he had any knowledge, were it ever so little, of the two languages, ventured upon the work of translation."<sup>294</sup>

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<sup>292</sup> Sir Frederic George Kenyon, *Our Bible and the ancient manuscripts: being a history of the text and its translations* (Eyre and Spottiswoode, London, 1898) pg. 175

<sup>293</sup> *Ibid.*, pg. 176

<sup>294</sup> Philip Schaff, ed., *Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers of the Christian Church, Vol. 2* (T&T Clark, Edinburgh, WM. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., Grand Rapids, MI, 1993) pg. 540

In other words, the reason why some Old Latin texts had either *unicus* or *unigenitus* was because that particular translator chose those words to translate *monogenes*. It doesn't mean a corruption was involved. We do not know why he chose one word over the other or why in some cases both words are used in the same Gospel as the chart shows.

For example, Codex Monacensis translates *monogenes* by *unicus* in John 1:14, but then four verses later, in verse 18, it uses *unigenitus* for *monogenes*, which it also does in the remaining verses in John. Or conversely, in Codex Palatinus, *monogenes* is translated by *unigenitus* in Jn. 1:14, but then four verses later and in the remaining verses of John it translates *monogenes* by *unicus*!

Obviously, if words were being altered in these particular verses in later copies of these codices, one would expect to find that if one word was altered in one verse, the same word would be also altered in the remaining verses. But, as that is not the case, it implies there was no corruption or alteration at all.

So the fact remains, when we consider all the Old Latin texts, we find that while some translated *monogenes* by *unicus*, the vast majority of Old Latin translators translated *monogenes* as *unigenitus*. *Unicus* was the minority translation, and not the majority translation as many claim today.

Moreover, remember – the fact that Latin Christians understood *monogenes* to mean *unigenitus* is not only dependent on Old Latin Texts of the Greek Scriptures. As was mentioned before, *monogenes* in the writings of Irenaeus was translated by *unigenitus*, and the Latin Christian, Tertullian, who wrote 150-200 years before Jerome (when many of the Old Latin texts were being written), certainly understood *monogenes* as *unigenitus*.

As we mentioned before he writes in *Against Praxeas*, Chapter VII,

“Thus does He make Him equal to Him: for by proceeding from Himself He became His first-begotten Son, because begotten before all things; and His only-begotten also, because alone begotten of God, in a way peculiar to Himself, from the womb of His own heart—even as the Father Himself testifies: “My heart,” says He, “hath emitted my most excellent Word.”<sup>295</sup>

And in the Latin it reads,

“...exinde eum patrem sibi faciens de quo procedendo filius factus est primogenitus, ut ante omnia genitus, et **unigenitus**, ut solus ex deo genitus, proprie de vulva cordis ipsius

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<sup>295</sup> Alexander Roberts, James Donaldson, ed., *The Ante-Nicene Fathers*, Vol. III (Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co, Grand Rapids, MI 1985) pg. 601



secundum quod et pater ipse testatur, Eructavit cor meum sermonem optimum...<sup>296</sup>

Therefore, it is not accurate to say that if a later Old Latin text has *unigenitus* is must be a corruption by Jerome's Vulgate. Latin speaking Christians understood *monogenes* to mean *unigenitus* (only-begotten) long before Jerome was even born. As such, they commonly used that word in their Old Latin translations.

In addition, one must realize that an earlier text does not necessarily mean a better text. In other words, just because one might have an earlier Old Latin text from the 4<sup>th</sup> century, that must be a better and more accurate than a later Old Latin text from the 5<sup>th</sup> or 6<sup>th</sup> century. This is a misleading assumption. That would be like saying that some of our Greek manuscripts of a later date cannot be as good as an earlier Greek manuscript, or, if it is later, it is less likely to reflect the true reading of the original autographs.

A trusted friend once reminded me that Greek professor, Edward Goodrick, from Multnomah School of the Bible, once said, something to the effect, "Earlier manuscripts are not necessarily the better manuscripts. Sometimes an earlier manuscript may have been an inferior manuscript that was set aside from use and so, because of lack of use, was preserved, whereas the better manuscript was worn out through continual use and so had to be recopied and so was of a later date." In other words, it is untrue that the earlier Old Latin Texts are better and less likely to be corrupted.

It is a false premise to claim that later Old Latin texts are inferior, and earlier Old Latin texts are better. Indeed, the later Old Latin texts may be the better one because it reflects a text that was well respected and continually used and so was a text that had to be continually recopied because its earlier copy wore out through its continual use.

Nevertheless, some people may still say if an Old Latin text has *unigenitus* it must be a corruption by Jerome's Vulgate. If someone still claims such a corruption, one need only ask, "How do you know it was corrupted precisely in John 1:14, 18; 3:16 or 3:18? It may have been corrupted, let's say, in Matt. 5:8, or Rom 1:9, or in any number of other verses."

If you ask that question, they will not be able to answer, because there is no evidence that shows those specific verses were corrupted. It is all conjecture! If someone produces evidence to the contrary, I will bow to the obvious.

No—the reason later Old Latin texts have *unigenitus* in the Gospel of John is because it was a copy of an earlier Old Latin text which, more than likely, also

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<sup>296</sup> Sourced from Against Praxeas, chapter VII at:  
[www.documentacatholicaomnia.eu/04z/z\\_0160-0220\\_\\_Tertullianus\\_\\_Adversus\\_Praxean\\_Liber\\_\\_LT.doc.html](http://www.documentacatholicaomnia.eu/04z/z_0160-0220__Tertullianus__Adversus_Praxean_Liber__LT.doc.html)

had *unigenitus* in the Gospel of John. *Monogenes* was commonly understood by Latin Christians to mean *unigenitus*.

In the same way, one would also have to say, the reason some later Old Latin texts had *unicus* in the Gospel of John is because, more than likely, the earlier Old Latin text had *unicus* in the Gospel of John.

Now, could a scribe, when coming to a place where the original Old Latin text had *unigenitus* decide, because of his supposed skill in language, that *unicus* would be a better translation than *unigenitus*, and so change it in his new copy? Certainly! That could explain why some “later” Old Latin texts, like Codex Palatinus, have *unicus* rather than *unigenitus*. Anything is possible. But more than likely, unless there is evidence to prove otherwise, the reason some later Old Latin texts have *unicus*, is because the earlier Old Latin texts they were copying had *unicus*. And the reason later Old Latin texts have *unigenitus*, is because the earlier Old Latin texts they were copying had *unigenitus*.

It would be convenient to ignore those Old Latin Texts that have *unigenitus*, and simply declare that they must be corruptions, but to do so is to create a “straw man argument.”

There is no doubt that for a period of centuries the two translations were intermixed, as was mentioned above, but one does not know where, when, or if any cross contamination occurred. There is no evidence that the Old Latin verses in the Gospel of John were corrupted by the Vulgate, and so, without such evidence, what we are left with is the undeniable fact that most Old Latin texts use *unigenitus* in regard to Christ, because that was the most common understanding of the word.

But let’s assume, for the sake of argument, some Old Latin texts were corrupted by Jerome’s Vulgate and in those texts the word *unicus* was changed to *unigenitus*. And let’s assume that those Old Latin texts before Jerome were uncorrupt and reflected the original word the translator chose for *monogenes*. Would it change the results? Let’s examine the evidence.

Henry Alford lists the following Codices as being what some like to call “pure (i.e. being before Jerome). He states, “The ancient Latin versions before Jerome are known to us by the following mss.”<sup>297</sup> He then lists the codices considered before Jerome, which are included in the chart below. I have even included Codex Bezae, even though Alford did not include it. He does not list *j*. The mss. *h* and *k* do not include John. The chart only deals with those Old Latin texts which include those verses in John’s gospel, as those verses are the verses in question.

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<sup>297</sup> Henry Alford, *The Greek New Testament Vol. 1* (Moody Press, Chicago, 1958) pg. 140  
This is found in his Prolegomena.

**Old Latin Texts Before Jerome Including  
John 1:14; 1:18 & 3:16,18**

✓ = unigenitus for the Greek word μονογενής  
0 = unicus for the Greek word μονογενής

Old Latin Manuscript	Jn 1:14	Jn 1:18	Jn 3:16	Jn 3:18
Codex Bezae 5 <sup>th</sup> Century c. 400 A.D.	missing	missing	0	0
Codex Brixianus 6 <sup>th</sup> Century	✓	✓	✓	✓
Codex Colbertinus 12 <sup>th</sup> Century	✓	✓	✓	✓
Codex Corbeiensis 5 <sup>th</sup> Century	✓	✓	✓	✓
Codex Monacensis 6 <sup>th</sup> or 7 <sup>th</sup> Century	0	✓	✓	✓
Codex Palatinus 5 <sup>th</sup> Century	✓	0	0	0
Codex Rehdigeranus 8 <sup>th</sup> Century	missing	✓	✓	✓
Codex Sangallensis 48 5 <sup>th</sup> Century	✓	✓	✓	✓
Codex Sangallensis 60p4 9 <sup>th</sup> Century	✓	✓	?	✓
CodexSangermanensis Secundus 8 <sup>th</sup> Cent.	✓	✓	0	✓
Codex Vercellensis 4 <sup>th</sup> Century	0	0	0	0
Codex Veronensis 4 <sup>th</sup> or 5 <sup>th</sup> Century	✓	✓	0	✓

In these Old Latin versions before Jerome, as Alford calls them (which I assume he means genuine Old Latin texts, not influenced by Jerome, because some are from later centuries) there is a total 44 recorded occurrences of the Greek word *monogenes* in the Gospel of John. In 32 cases it is rendered *unigenitus* and in 12 cases it is rendered *unicus*.

So, even if one wants to change the parameters from Old Latin texts, to Old Latin texts before Jerome, (i.e. not be open to corruption), the majority still favour the translation of *monogenes* by *unigenitus* by a margin of almost 3 to 1!

Therefore, one can see by the evidence, that the claim that the Old Latin texts routinely translate *monogenes* by *unicus* and not by *unigenitus* is unfounded and, actually, the opposite is the truth. The Old Latin texts show that that *monogenes* was routinely translated by *unigenitus*, meaning “only-begotten,” and that *unigenitus* was the common understanding of *monogenes* by many early Latin Christians. What Dale Moody asserts is simply not true and what is continually repeated over and over on the web regarding this is a falsehood that is undermining the faith of many Christians. Anything that one reads on the web should be checked for accuracy, for much that is purported to be true is false. And if anyone is reading this book online, I would encourage you to check my facts for accuracy. It will strengthen your faith for we are all commanded by God to “test the spirits.”

## THE APOSTLES' CREED<sup>298</sup>

I believe in God the Father almighty;  
And in Christ Jesus His only (unicus) Son, our Lord,  
Who was born from the Holy Spirit and the Virgin Mary,  
Who under Pontius Pilate was crucified and buried,  
On the third day rose again from the dead,  
Ascended to heaven,  
Sits at the right hand of the Father,  
Whence He will come to judge the living and the dead;  
And in the Holy Spirit,  
The holy Church,  
The remission of sins,  
The resurrection of the flesh

When one reads the various Latin Creeds from the churches in the West, one realizes that many include the word *unicus* (only), rather than *unigenitus* (only-begotten) in the Second Article. Why did the Latin Christians utilize this word in their Creeds, when many in the East utilized *monogenes* in their Greek Creeds? In other words, why did they say “only” Son, rather than “only-begotten” Son?

The answer is simple, but first let me say the use of the one does not nullify the other. Both statements are true! Why do we assume the one negates the other? That would be as if someone concluded that because someone said, “I believe in God the Father and in His Son, Jesus Christ,” rather than saying “I believe in God the Father and in His Only Son, Jesus Christ,” that such a person must not believe that Jesus Christ was God’s only Son, because he did not say “only” Son. Obviously, someone would say, “That’s a silly conclusion.” “Why would you assume that?” Well, is it not just as silly to assume that because someone said “I believe in His only Son,” rather than saying “I believe in His Only-Begotten Son,” that such a person must not believe the Son was also the only-begotten Son of God His Father? Just because someone makes the former statement does not prove that the same person does not believe the latter statement.

The fact of the matter is that Latin Christians who used “only” in their Creeds also believed Christ was also the “only-begotten” Son of God the Father from all eternity. It simply was not stated so succinctly in their Creed, but that does not mean they did not believe it.

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<sup>298</sup> An excerpt from *Understanding the Trinity, An Encouragement to Abide in the Doctrine in both Faith and Practice*, by B.P. Harris (Assembly Bookshelf, Sacramento, 2006) pgs. 388-403

Secondly, many wrongly assume that the Latin form of Apostles' Creed was simply a translation of a standardized Greek original, and, as such, the use of *unicus* became significant because they assumed it was a translation of the Greek word *monogenes* used in an original standardized Greek version. This simply is not true. Now, no doubt, some Latin Creeds may have been translated from a Greek Version, and vice versa, but generally speaking, the various Latin Creeds were not derived from earlier Greek versions.

For example, some believe the Creeds found in the *Psalterium Graecum ET Romanum*, found in Philip Schaff's, *The Creeds of Christendom* (pg. 45), where one column is in Latin and the second column is in Greek, are simply translations of each other. Consequently, they assume *unicus* in the Latin Creed is a translation of the *monogenes* in the Greek Creed. But this is misnomer. They are not translations of each other, but are Creeds derived from different sources and were simply put side by side for comparison. In fact, the Latin found in Schaff does not exactly correspond to the Greek.

For example, in the fifth line the Latin Creed says Christ was conceived "de," "down from," or "by" the Holy Spirit. The Greek says Christ was conceived "ἐκ" "out from," or "of" the Holy Spirit. The Latin preposition "de" does not necessarily correspond to the Greek preposition "ἐκ," although no one would deny the word could be used as a translation of the other. But if that was the case, one would expect in line six, when the Greek says Christ was born "ἐκ" out of the Virgin Mary, the Latin would again use "de" as it did two lines earlier, but that fact is the Latin changes and uses "ex" and says Christ was born "ex Maria virgine." If the one was a translation of the other, why would "ἐκ" be translated "de," and then, within the same context, a few words later be translated "ex?" Of course, such a translation is certainly possible, especially if one wanted to emphasize the difference between the Holy Spirit's part and Mary's part, but such a fine distinction is not found in the Greek text.

So, as we said before, it is simply a misnomer to believe that the Apostles' Creed was basically a standardized Greek text that was "translated" over time into Latin. That is not to deny some translations were made; indeed, we know some translations were made from Greek to Latin and some from Latin to Greek, but that was not how the Latin Creeds were originally formulated. There were multiple variations formulated in the Latin language of the people by various churches in different parts of the Empire at different times, not as translations of a standardized Greek original. They developed out of the baptismal formulas of the churches.

The whole conclusion that the use of *unicus* in the Latin Creeds gives sure proof that *monogenes* was originally understood as *unicus* and not as *unigenitus* is simply a fabrication out of thin air.

Philip Schaff gives a concise statement about the nature and origin of the Creeds in his book *The Creeds of Christendom*.

“Faith, like all strong conviction, has a desire to utter itself before others—' Out of the abundance of the heart the mouth speaketh;' ' I believe, therefore I confess...' There is also an express duty, when we are received into the membership of the Christian Church, and on every proper occasion, to profess the faith within us, to make ourselves known as followers of Christ, and to lead others to him by the influence of our testimony.”

“This is the origin of Christian symbols or creeds. They never precede faith, but presuppose it. They emanate from the inner life of the Church, independently of external occasion. There would have been creeds even if there had been no doctrinal controversies. In a certain sense it may be said that the Christian Church has never been without a creed. The baptismal formula and the words of institution of the Lord's Supper are creeds; these and the confession of Peter antedate even the birth of the Christian Church on the day of Pentecost. The Church is, indeed, not founded on symbols, but on Christ; not on any words of man, but on the word of God; yet it is founded on Christ as confessed by men, and a creed is man's answer to Christ's question, man's acceptance and interpretation of God's word. Hence it is after the memorable confession of Peter that Christ said, ' Thou art Rock, and upon this rock I shall build my Church,' as if to say, ' Thou art the Confessor of Christ, and on this Confession, as an immovable rock, I shall build my Church.' Where there is faith, there is also profession of faith. As ' faith without works is dead,' so it may be said also that faith without confession is dead.”

“But this confession need not always be written, much less reduced to a logical formula. If a man can say from his heart, ' I believe in the Lord Jesus Christ,' it is sufficient for his salvation (Acts xvi. 31). The word of God, apprehended by a living faith, which founded the Christian Church, was at first orally preached and transmitted by the apostles, then laid down in the New Testament Scriptures, as a pure and unerring record for all time to come. So the confession of faith, or the creed, was orally taught and transmitted to the catechumens, and professed by them at baptism, long before it was committed to writing....When controversies arose concerning the true meaning of the Scriptures, it became necessary to give formal expression of their true sense, to regulate the public teaching of the Church, and to guard it against error. In this way the creeds were gradually enlarged and multiplied...”

“The first Christian confession or creed is that of Peter, when Christ asked the apostles, ' Who say ye that I am?' and Peter, in the name of all the rest, exclaimed, as by divine inspiration, ' Thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God' (Matt. xvi. 16).’ This became naturally the substance of the baptismal confession, since Christ is the chief object of the Christian faith. Philip required the eunuch simply to profess the belief that 'Jesus was the Son of God.' In conformity with the baptismal formula, however, it soon took a Trinitarian shape, probably in some such simple form as ' I believe in God the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit.' Gradually it was expanded, by the addition of other articles, into the various rules of faith, of which the Roman form under the title ' the Apostles' Creed' became the prevailing one, after the fourth century, in the West, and the Nicene Creed in the East.”<sup>299</sup>

“We must distinguish two independent or parallel creed formations, an Eastern and a Western; the one resulted in the Nicene Creed as completed by the Synod of Constantinople, the other in the Apostles' Creed in its Roman form. The Eastern creeds were more metaphysical, polemical, flexible, and adapting themselves to the exigencies of the Church in the maintenance of her faith and conflict with heretics; the Western were more simple, practical, and stationary. The former were controlled by synods, and received their final shape

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<sup>299</sup> Philip Schaff, *The Creeds of Christendom*, Vol. 1 (Baker Books, Grand Rapids, MI 1993) pg. 4-6

and sanction from two oecumenical Councils; the latter were left to the custody of the several churches, each feeling at liberty to make additions or alterations within certain limits, until the Roman form superseded all others, and was quietly, and without formal synodical action, adopted by Western Christendom.”<sup>300</sup>

We now can begin to understand why the Apostles’ Creed has “only” (unicus) Son,” and others have “Only-begotten” (unigenitus) Son. As we saw above, the Creed was the outgrowth of baptismal formulas. There was not one early standardized Creed in the West that all others were copied or translated from. Certain individual churches would create a confession as to what they believed the Apostles revealed to them was the truth concerning the Faith, and they would use that in their baptismal formulas.

Remember, the Apostles and their fellow workers were always concerned that the truth of the Faith remained inviolate. For example, Paul admonished Timothy to commit to faithful teachers, within the assembly, the truth of what he taught concerning the Faith (II Tim. 1:13; 2:2). John admonished Christians to hold fast to what they had been taught in the beginning (I John 2:24). And Jude exhorted the saints to contend for the Faith which had once been delivered to the saints (Jude 1:3). And so we see that at the baptism of believers, affirmations of faith were asked of the baptismal candidate in order to ascertain that they truly believed and understood the true Faith.

For example, the Ethiopian eunuch was told by Philip he could be baptized only if he believed with all his heart that “Jesus was the Son of God” (Acts 8: 35-37). This is the first example of such a baptismal question in Scripture. This was the basis of the origin of the Creeds. As such, we notice that the central tenet of the baptismal question was whether the person believed that Jesus was the Son of God.

The significance of this is evidenced when we recall, originally, the Gospel went forth first to Jerusalem, then to Judea and then Samaria (Acts 1:8). This is important to remember when we realize the required confession of faith required of the Ethiopian eunuch did not contain the word “only.” He was simply asked to confess that “Jesus was the Son of God”. Why is that? Well, because the nation of Israel and of the Samaritans did not believe that the God of Israel was like the heathen gods who begat many sons (this eunuch was more than likely a proselyte of Israel). No, they believed according to the Scripture, that God had only one unique Son, the Messiah (Ps. 2:7). Therefore, the baptismal candidate only had to be asked if he or she believed that Jesus was *that* Son of God, not if they believed Jesus was His “only” Son.

However, when the Gospel came to Gentile, there was a different set of religious beliefs. Gentiles were raised to believe that god had many sons. For example, Zeus had multiple sons such as Hermes, Apollo and Ares. He also

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<sup>300</sup> Ibid., pg. 24-25



had mortal sons such as Hercules of a mortal woman named Alcmene. In the Roman religion, the Romans were brought up to believe that the foremost god, Jupiter, also had many sons, such as Vulcan, Mercury and Mars.

Therefore, it was not enough to question a Gentile baptismal candidate whether he believed Jesus was the Son of God. They needed to ask them if they believed Jesus was the “only” (unicus) Son of God. They needed to ascertain whether the new believer really understood the truth of the Gospel. And so, we see a reason why the little word “only” (unicus) may have been added to those baptismal questions among the Gentiles.

The Jew did not need to be asked whether Jesus was the *only* Son of God; they needed to be asked simply if Jesus was the Son of God. But the Gentile needed to be asked if Jesus was the “only” Son of God.

But then someone may ask, “Why did they add “unicus” (only), rather than “unigenitus” (only-begotten) before the word Son?” The reason was the other apostles did not speak of or reveal, as far as we know, the title of *Only-Begotten* for Christ, at least, not in Scripture. Paul never spoke of Christ as the “Only-Begotten.” None of the other Gospels that circulated in the later part of the first century utilized the word “monogenes” (Only-Begotten). It was not even revealed in Scripture as a specific title of Christ until John wrote his Gospel near the end of the first century.

Also we must remember that the Gentile Christians for many years were limited to only a part of the Canon of Scripture. We must not forget that the early Christians did not have the entire Canon of Scripture as we do today. At first, in the mid part of the first century, the only New Testament Scriptures many Gentile churches would have possessed would have been the epistles of Paul (having shared his epistles with each other—cf. Col. 4:16). Remember, in those early days of the Gentile churches the Gospels were not yet written, especially the Gospel of John.

And so, if individual churches began putting together baptismal questions for the baptismal candidate, *for the most part*, they would have been restricted to Paul’s epistles, that is, until the latter part of the first century.<sup>301</sup>

F. F. Bruce tells us that even after the Gospels were penned they were not grouped together as a whole until some years after the last Gospel was written, which traditionally is assigned a date late into the first century.

He states,

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<sup>301</sup> If Peter ever visisted Rome, then, perhaps, in those later decades of the first century some western churches may have also had the Gospel of Mark, the epistles of Peter, and perhaps, Luke’s writings.

“Until about the sixties of the first century A.D. the need for written Gospels does not appear to have arisen. So long as the eye-witnesses of the great salvation-bringing events were alive to tell the tale, it was not so necessary to have a formal written record. But the apostles were not going to live on earth forever, and it was obviously desirable that their message should be preserved after they had gone. So we find Mark, the companion and interpreter of Peter, committing to writing in Rome the Gospel as Peter habitually proclaimed it; shortly afterward we have Matthew’s Gospel appearing in the East...and Luke, the companion of Paul, writes in two books for Gentile readers a narrative of the beginnings of Christianity...Towards the end of the century, John, perhaps the last surviving companion of Jesus in the days of His flesh, records his reminiscences of his Master’s life and teaching...The Gospels are not simple biographies – they are rather written transcripts of the Gospel preached by the apostles.”

“But we have not yet a canon in the sense of a collection of these writings. Towards the end of the first century, however, we find the beginnings of a movement in this direction. Not long after the writing of the fourth Gospel, the four Gospels appear to have been brought together in one collection. Thus, whereas previously Rome had Mark’s Gospel, and Syria had Matthew’s, and a Gentile group had Luke’s, and Ephesus John’s, now each church had all four in a corpus which is called The Gospel (each of the components being distinguished by the additional words, According to Matthew, According to Mark, and so on).”<sup>302</sup>

More than likely this collection of all the Gospels together began sometime at the very beginning of the second century. Until that time, some churches would have copies of some of the Gospels and others would have copies of other Gospels. Those were not the days of instant publishing and mass market distribution. It was a long painstaking process to produce a copy and so it should not surprise us that this process took time.

Consequently, for the decades shortly following the death of Paul, the only New Testament Scriptures the churches in the West may have had were some of Paul’s epistles, and perhaps, Peter’s epistles, along with the Gospel of Mark, and possibly the writings of Luke. It would have been from those writings that their confessions of faith would have arisen. In any case, they would not have possessed the Gospel of John, for it would not be written until the end of the first century.

When we understand this we can understand why the Latin Churches picked the term *unicus* rather than *unigenitus*. For many years the churches may not have even known Christ by the title *monogenes*, or “Only-begotten.” There is no evidence that Paul knew this title was used by our Lord. Peter did not use it in his writings, nor did Luke in reference to Christ. Remember, more than likely, Paul’s knowledge of the earthly ministry of our Lord was limited to what he learned from the Apostles and those with firsthand knowledge. If John or one of the others had not spoken to Paul about our Lord’s conversation with Nicodemus that night so long ago, he might not have known that the Lord’s name included that title, and since John’s Gospel would not be written for perhaps another 40-50 years, the churches in the West may

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<sup>302</sup> F. F. Bruce, *The Books and the Parchments* (Fleming H. Revell Co., Westwood, New Jersey 1963) pg. 106-7

not have been familiar with that title—*although, they certainly would have been familiar with the doctrine behind the title.*

So when they were looking for a phrase to describe Christ's unique relationship with God the Father they, more than likely, would have looked at such verses as Rom. 8:3 and Rom. 8:32.

“For what the law could not do, in that it was weak through the flesh, God sending his **own Son** in the likeness of sinful flesh, and for sin, condemned sin in the flesh.” Rom. 8:3

He that spared not his **own Son**, but delivered him up for us all, how shall he not with him also freely give us all things? Rom. 8:32

Here (vs. 32) we see Paul calling Christ God's own Son, using the word “own” (ἰδίου), which means “something privately belonging to one's own self,” “something not common to all.” This would be an approximation of saying what the Creed declares, that they believed “in Jesus Christ, His *only Son*.”

Therefore the reason why some first century Latin Christians have *unicus* in their Creed, and not *unigenitus*, may be because they were not yet familiar with Christ's title, *monogenes*, when they were composing their baptismal questions in those first few decades after the death of the Apostle Paul.<sup>303</sup> As such, the title “*unicus*” was a perfectly appropriate title based upon the New Testament Scriptures they possessed, and so they used it in their baptismal question. And when these baptismal questions were eventually put to writing in creedal form, it would not be abnormal for them to utilize the very same words they used in their verbal confessions. They based their early Creed on their baptismal questions which in turn were based upon the New Testament Scriptures in their possession.

However, even though they had *unicus* and not *unigenitus* in their Creeds, it would be wrong to assume that they had no understanding of the truth contained in the word “*unigenitus*.” They did not have to contend with such a teaching that says Christ was not begotten of God as we do today. For them, the word “Son” was sufficient to show them that the Christ of the Blessed Trinity was begotten of the Father. To them the word “Son” was a revelatory term. They had no concept that it did not mean derivation. They had no concept of it meaning just a Son in “purpose or character.” To believe such a

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<sup>303</sup> This is not to say that they did not understand the meaning of *monogenes* until John wrote his Gospel. Obviously, the Gentiles understood the meaning of *monogenes*, as was seen in First Clement, because Clement uses the word in his Epistle to the Corinthians in the last decade of the first century. What we are suggesting is that until John wrote his Gospel, they may not have known that *monogenes* was a “title” used by Christ himself.

concept to them would be contrary to Scripture and the teaching of the Apostles. Their use of *unicus* in no way diminished their understanding of the eternal begottenness of the Only-Begotten (*unigenitus*) Son from the Father.

As was said before, to the Latin Christian the word “Son” was a revelatory word sufficient to teach the doctrine of the generation of the Son from the Father. When they used *unicus*, rather than *unigenitus* in the Apostle’s Creed they were emphasizing the “uniqueness” of this begetting, not denying it. To prove this point listen to a *Commentary on the Apostle’s Creed*, written approximately in the year 307 A.D. by Rufinus.

He states the following regarding the use of *unicus* in the Apostle’s Creed:

“Having shown them what Jesus is, Who saves His people, and what Christ is, Who is made a High Priest forever, let us now see in what follows, of Whom these things are said, His only [*unicus*] Son, our Lord. Here we are taught that this Jesus, of whom we have spoken, and this Christ, the meaning of whose name we have expounded, is the only Son of God and our Lord. Lest, perchance, you should think that these human names have an earthly significance, therefore it is added that He is the ‘only’ [*unicus*] Son of God, our Lord. For He is ‘born’ ‘One of One,’ because there is one brightness of light, and there is one word of the understanding. Neither does an incorporeal ‘generation’ degenerate into the plural number, or suffer division, where He Who is ‘born’ is in no wise separated from Him Who ‘begets. He is “only” (unique), as thought is to the mind, as wisdom is to the wise, as a word is to the understanding, as valour is to the brave. For as the Father is said by the Apostle to be “alone wise,” I so likewise the Son alone is called wisdom. He is then the “only Son.” And, although in glory, everlastingness, virtue, dominion, power, He is what the Father is, yet all these He hath not unoriginately as the Father, but from the Father, as the Son, without beginning and equal; and although He is the Head of all things, yet the Father is the Head of Him. For so it is written, ‘The Head of Christ is God.’ ”

“...Rightly, therefore, is the Son called “only,” “unique.” For He who hath been so born is “only” and “unique.” That which is unique can admit of no comparison...’ But Christ alone is the only Son and the only Lord, as the Apostle saith, “One Lord Jesus Christ, by Whom are all things. Therefore...the Creed has in due order set forth the ineffable mystery of the nativity of the Son from the Father...”<sup>304</sup>

“...of Him of Whom, a short while since, we said that He is everlasting with God the Father, and that He was begotten of the Father’s substance, and is one with God the Father, in dominion, majesty, and eternity.”<sup>305</sup>

“Otherwise, if the divine nature alone be taken into account, as in the beginning of the Creed we say ‘I believe in God the Father Almighty,’ and afterwards, ‘In Jesus Christ His only Son our Lord,’ so in like manner we add, ‘And in the Holy Ghost’...By the mention of the Holy Spirit, the mystery of the Trinity is completed. For as one Father is mentioned, and there is no other Father, and one only-begotten Son is mentioned, and there is no other only-begotten Son, so also there is one Holy Ghost, and there cannot be another Holy Ghost. In order, therefore, that the Persons may be distinguished, the terms expressing relationship (the properties) are varied, whereby the first is understood to be the Father, of Whom are all things, Who Himself also hath no Father, the second the Son, as born of the Father, and the

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<sup>304</sup> Philip Schaff, ed., Henry Wace, ed. *Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers, Vol. III* (T&T Clark: Edinburgh, Eerdmans Publishing Co. Grand Rapids, MI 1989) pg. 545-46

<sup>305</sup> Ibid., pg. 549-550

third the Holy Ghost, as proceeding from both,<sup>306</sup> and sanctifying all things. But that in the Trinity one and the same Godhead may be set forth, since, prefixing the preposition “in ” we say that we believe “ in God the Father,” so also we say, “ in Christ His Son,” so also “ in the Holy Ghost.”<sup>306</sup>

This last paragraph confirms it all the more. This portion of the last paragraph that reads—

“By the mention of the Holy Spirit, the mystery of the Trinity is completed. For as one Father is mentioned, and there is no other Father, and one only-begotten Son is mentioned, and there is no other only-begotten Son, so also there is one Holy Ghost, and there cannot be another Holy Ghost.”

reads this way in the Latin text—

“Igitur in Sancti Spiritus commemoratione adimpletur mysterium Trinitatis. Sicut enim unus dicitur Pater, et alius non est Pater: et unus dicitur **unigenitus** Filius, et alius **unigenitus** filius non est: ita et Spiritus Sanctus unus est, et alius non potest esse Spiritus Sanctus.”<sup>307</sup>

As one can see, Rufinus concludes his *Commentary on the Apostles' Creed* with the title Only-Begotten (*unigenitus*). The use of *unicus* in the Creed did nothing to negate his understanding of *unigenitus*, Only-Begotten. He still believed the Son was the Only-Begotten Son of God the Father, begotten from everlasting. This fact, itself, shows that *unicus* was not a translation of *monogenes* from an earlier Greek Creed. Otherwise, why would Rufinus switch to the word *unigenitus* later in his Commentary? If he understood the word *unicus* to be the equivalent of *monogenes*, he simply would have continued with *unicus* in this portion of the text. No, he understood *unicus* as a word utilized in the Creed to explain “the ineffable mystery of the nativity of the Son from the Father.” “Rightly, therefore,” he says, “is the Son called only [*unicus*], unique.” For He who hath been so born is “only” and “unique.” This fact, his unique begetting, is why he concludes that “there is no other only-begotten [*unigenitus*] Son.”

Augustine also confirms this, he states:

“Since this is the case, I repeat, we believe also in Jesus Christ, the Son of God, the Only-begotten [*unigenitum*] of the Father, that is to say, His only [*unicum*] Son, our Lord.”<sup>308</sup>

And so we see why the Creeds differed in some particulars from church to church. Each church adapted the Creed for their own local baptismal questions that were formulated according to the particular circumstances of their church, and, more than likely, also according to those portions of the New Testament Scriptures they possessed.

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<sup>306</sup> Ibid., pg. 557

<sup>307</sup> Pg. 371, ¶35. Sourced from: [www.documentacatholicaomnia.eu/02m/0345-0410,\\_Rufinus\\_Aquileiensis,\\_Commentarius\\_In\\_Symbolum\\_Apostolorum,\\_MLT.pdf](http://www.documentacatholicaomnia.eu/02m/0345-0410,_Rufinus_Aquileiensis,_Commentarius_In_Symbolum_Apostolorum,_MLT.pdf)

<sup>308</sup> Schaff, Philip, Ed. *Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers, First Series Vol. III* (T&T Clark, Edinburgh; Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., Grand Rapids, MI 1993) pg. 323

Another example which demonstrates this local variety is the fact that some Creeds would read that they believe “in Jesus Christ,” yet in other Creeds it would read “in one Jesus Christ” adding the little word “one.” Why would some churches add this word? Because in some churches Gnosticism was a real threat because Gnostics taught that Jesus was separate from Christ. They believed the Christ descended on Jesus at his baptism, who then left him before his death on the cross, so that Jesus and Christ were two separate persons. In order to ascertain that the baptismal candidate did not hold to this understanding they inserted the little word “one,” in order to affirm that Jesus and Christ were one and the same – “one Jesus Christ.”

Sir Peter King in his book on the Apostles’ Creed mentions this fact,

“But, though the Eastern Creeds did read in One Jesus Christ, yet in the west where the Churches were not so much invested and ravaged by the Gnostics, the Creed, as our present one doth, expressed this Article without the addition of the term One, saying, And in Jesus Christ, his only Son our Lord.”<sup>309</sup>

And in another place he states:

“Not long after the apostles days, and even in the apostolic age itself, several heresies sprung up in the church, subversive of the fundamentals of Christianity ; to prevent the malignant effects whereof, and to hinder such heretics from an undiscernible mixing themselves with the orthodox Christians, as also to establish and strengthen the true believers in the necessary truths of the Christian religion, the Christian verities [truths] opposite [opposed] to those heresies, were inserted in the creed.”<sup>310</sup>

And finally,

“I would not be here mistaken, as if I did, mean, that none of those articles which were introduced into the creed, and settled there in opposition to heresies were ever used before, or demanded at baptism by the administerer thereof: but my meaning is, that every church [was]...at liberty to express the fundamental articles of the Christian faith in that way and manner, which she saw fit...”<sup>311</sup>

And so we see why some Latin Creeds would read one way and the others would read a little bit different and why they were not simply translations of a Greek Creed. Each church would adopt the Creed to its own particular needs and dangers present from heresies. But now let us return again to the main question in hand, why do some Creeds read *unicus* and some read *unigenitus*?

First, we have seen that in the first few decades after the death of the apostle Paul there was a gradual development of the Creeds in the West from baptismal questions which were formulated from whatever New Testament

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<sup>309</sup> Sir Peter King, *The History of the Apostles Creed* (Printed and Published by John Woods, Elizabeth-town, New Jersey, 1804) pg. 102

<sup>310</sup> Ibid., pg. 37

<sup>311</sup> Ibid., pg. 38

writings each church possessed, and were formulated in opposition to the prevailing heresies of the day. This would explain the prevailing use of *unicus* in the churches in the West.

Secondly, based upon this liberty of each church to formulate their baptismal questions, we have seen that the written Creeds of the churches differed from place to place in small particulars. As such, it would not be surprising that the Eastern churches, who would have greater access to John's Gospel in the latter decade of the first century, would have been more likely to utilize John's use of *monogenes* (*unigenitus*) in their baptismal questions before the churches in the West.

This would explain why eastern churches would sometimes have *unigenitus* and western churches would still have *unicus*. It was not because Latin Christians were translating the word *monogenes* as *unicus* from a standardized Greek Creed. There was no standardized Creed at that time, and the western churches use of *unicus*, more than likely, preceded the eastern churches use of *unigenitus*. Although, it should also be mentioned, that in many churches in the West, in those early days, many churches may not have even had a Latin Creed. Many of them still utilized a Greek Creed.

However, as time passed we find that (more than likely by the end of the second decade of the second century), most Western churches would also have copies of John's Gospel, as well all the other three Gospels.

Therefore, it should not surprise us that *unigenitus* began to show up in some western Creeds, although most of them continued to use the word they were most familiar with, the word *unicus*. Either word was appropriate, for both words were rooted in the revelation of Scripture, and it must be remembered that to the Latin Christian, the doctrine of the eternal generation of the Son was not based upon, nor negated by, the word *unicus*. It was a doctrine attested to by many portions of God's word and was not limited to the understanding of the word *monogenes* that they gained when they obtained a copy of John's Gospel (assuming there was not an oral tradition of the title *monogenes*).

But if the tradition of the earlier forms of the Apostles' Creed held fast among the Latin Christians, why did some adopt the word *unigenitus* in place of the word *unicus* to which they were so familiar? The answer is to remember that in those early days there never was a standardized Creed from which they copied. Each church adapted their Creeds to their particular needs. When we recognize this we can understand why *unigenitus* began to appear in a few western Creeds.

H. B. Swete says:

“St John's phrase [*monogenes*] finds indeed no place in sub apostolic writers: though Ignatius approaches to it when he calls our Lord the Only Son...It seems to have been first seized upon by the Valentinians, who gave the name Monogenes to the Aeon Nous. The Catholic writers began, although slowly, to reclaim it; Justin uses it sparingly; it occurs once in the Smyranean circular on the martyrdom of Polycarp; in Irenaeus at length it becomes frequent. Thus it is not unlikely that the word took its place in the vocabulary of the Church by way of protest against the Valentinian misuse of St John; and the same cause may have gained for it admission to the Creed. Valentinus taught at Rome during the episcopates of Hyginus, Pius, and Anicetus, i.e. between 140 and 160 A.D.—the very epoch to which the making of the Creed is assumed to belong. The Valentinians, or at least the Anatolic School, distinguished Monogenes from the historical manifestation, remarking that St John guards himself by writing " we " beheld His glory, glory as of the only-begotten," where the qualifying word "as" bars out complete identification. If the Church of Rome admitted the word under these circumstances, it can hardly have done so except by way of protest against the Valentinian interpretation. To confess faith in Jesus Christ as the Only-begotten Son, was to identify the Only-begotten with the historical Person who was born, and died, and rose again.”<sup>312</sup>

During the time John composed his Gospel, Gnostics were beginning to teach that a Pleroma of thirty aeons proceeded from God. They believed the purpose of those aeons, or offspring, was to make known the true God. One of these thirty aeons was known by the name Monogenes. So, in order to combat this heresy, John, under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit, declared in a clear and emphatic manner, Christ was not just God's only (*unicus*) Son, He was also the *monogenes*, the Only-Begotten (*unigenitus*) Son of God, who dwelt in the bosom of the Father from all of eternity, and, as such, was the only one who knew the Father and who could properly reveal or declare the Father (Jn. 1:18).

However, when Valentinus arose years later in Rome, he tried to rob the Lord Jesus Christ of this title and, instead, taught that Monogenes was just one of the many aeons who emanated from God. He did not believe that the Lord Jesus was the Only-Begotten, Monogenes. So, although we could never say for sure, *unigenitus* may have replaced *unicus* in some areas of the West in order to combat this Valentinian heresy.

John's Gospel, which the church in Rome, now had, clearly declares that the “Only-begotten” (*monogenes*) was the Lord Jesus Christ, who resided in the bosom of the Father from all eternity. If that is held as true, then, obviously, the Gnostic system was in error.

So what could Valentinus do, to discredit John's assertion, since he believed in the Gnostic system and, indeed, desired to propagate it? An apostle, who knew the Lord Jesus, declared that Christ was the Only-Begotten from all of eternity. As such, he was affirming that there were no other offspring (as the Gnostics called them) who emanated from God the Father to produce a Pleroma. There were no others who were begotten. There were no other beings in a Pleroma. Yet, Valentinus wished to continue with his system

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<sup>312</sup> H.B. Swete, *The Apostle Creed: Its relation to primitive Christianity* (C. J. Clay and Sons, London, 1894) pg. 25-26



where Monogenes was just one of many. What could he do since John's Gospel contradicted this concept? Well, change the meaning of *monogenes*! Redefine the word! And this is apparently exactly what he did.

He changed the meaning of the title that described the nature of the Son, into a simple proper name that was not to be understood as an adjective. Monogenes was just the name of one of many emanations from God. He was the Monogenes, the Only-begotten, the only one so named, not because He was the only one "begotten" by God, but because that was His given name. In other words, he was not given the title "Only-Begotten" because he was the only one begotten of God. It was simply a name. Valentinus taught that Monogenes should not literally be considered the "only-begotten," meaning "only offspring," for God had many other offspring in his Pleroma.

By changing the meaning of *monogenes* from "only-begotten," or "only born," to a word that was simply used as a proper name, Valentinus was able to claim John did not mean to say, by using the title "*monogenes*," that Christ was the "Only-begotten one of God. It was simply a proper name, and was not meant to be taken literally.

Indeed, Valentinus may have been the first person in the history of the Church to try to change the meaning of *monogenes* as it was understood by the Christians of his day. The enemy of our souls knows the importance of every revelatory word of Scripture, and if he cannot change one's acceptance of Scripture as inspired, and thus authoritarian, then he will just change the meaning of the "words" in Scripture. He has no problem allowing Christians to have their Scriptures, if he can change the meaning of the "words" in the Scriptures to his own liking, thereby, changing the true meaning of the revelation.

And so we can understand why some churches wanted to expand the meaning of *unicus* to *unigenitus*, because the Valentinian heresy may have been rampant in their area. They wanted to retain the word *monogenes* with its proper meaning. They refused to let Valentinus rob the Church of that revelatory word.

Consequently, we can now understand the varied reasons why some Latin Creeds utilized *unicus*, while the Creeds in the East utilized *unigenitus*. It had nothing to do with translations of Greek Creeds into Latin, nor was it the result of a translation of the Greek word *monogenes* into the Latin word *unicus*. Most early Latin Creeds were not translations but were declarations of faith developed from early baptismal confessions that were put together autonomously by different local assemblies in accordance with their own local situations, and in accordance with the New Testament Writings each church possessed.

Nevertheless, if someone still disagrees with this viewpoint, as to why *unicus* was utilized in those early Latin Creeds, one cannot disagree with the fact that those Christians, who confessed Christ to be His only (*unicus*) Son, believed he was the only one who was *begotten* by the Father before all time. Their understanding of this doctrine did not simply depend on the word *unicus* or *unigenitus*, but on the word *Son*. They understood it in the normal and plain sense. The word Son was the basis for their understanding of the doctrine of eternal generation, not the word *unicus*. *Unicus*, simply meant he was the only Son of God who was begotten of the Father before all time, as opposed to all other sons, whether referring to angels who were created (Job 1:6), or to Christians, who were begotten by regeneration in time (Rom. 8:14 ).

## **Books from Assembly Bookshelf**

**Anthony Norris Groves**  
On the Nature of Christian Influence

**B. P. Harris**  
Bearing Witness to the Original Principles of the Early Brethren: As Found in a Letter  
Written by A. N. Groves to J. N. Darby in 1836 (Updated Version)  
Church Principles of the New Testament  
Press on to Spirituality  
Studies in the Usage of the Greek Word Μονογενής  
Understanding the Trinity  
The Gospel According to Matthew: Notes and Comments  
What is Biblical Discipleship?

If one would like to freely download these books in digital format, they are available at  
[www.silicabiblechapel.com](http://www.silicabiblechapel.com)

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