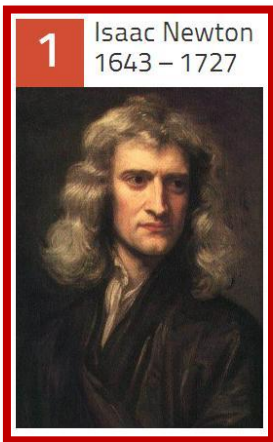


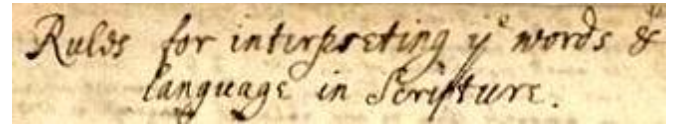
# ISAAC NEWTON & THE TRINITY

Paul G. Humber, March 2017



According to “Top 10 Most Influential Scientists”<sup>1</sup>, Newton is listed #1. Wikipedia, however,

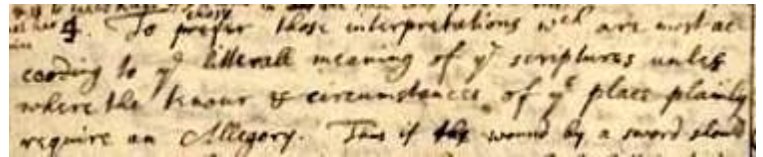
says, “According to most scholars, Newton was Arian, not holding to Trinitarianism,”<sup>2</sup> but the “most scholars” were/are wrong! Let us see what Newton himself actually wrote. You can see his handwriting above. It says “Rules for interpreting the words & language in Scripture.”<sup>3</sup> Notice how he capitalized “Scripture,” as he had a high regard for it (“I have a fundamental belief in the Bible as the Word of God, written by men who were inspired. I study the Bible daily”).



Before dealing with his concept of God and the

Trinity, let us view one of his rules for interpreting the Bible. He said for rule #4, “To choose<sup>4</sup> those

interpretations which are most according to the literal meaning of the scriptures unless where the tenor & circumstances of the place plainly require an Allegory.” His words, “most according to the literal meaning” support an understanding of Genesis 1-3 that is NOT allegorical—but literal. Regarding creation itself, Newton is famous for his words in his *Principia*, “The most beautiful system of the sun, planets and comets could only proceed from the counsel and dominion of an intelligent and powerful being.”



On July 25, 2016, I wrote to Dr. James Clements, Librarian, King's College, Cambridge, “As things presently stand, we cannot do business. Instead of happily allowing images of Newton's words to get out, you apparently want to clamp down on dissemination. I was willing to pay for the image of page 12, but now you want to control my use of that image. When a person buys a painting, should artists have the right to tell the new owner not to take any pictures of the artwork? Are you (or your boss) Unitarian? If so, then that might help me better understand what is going on? Unitarians deny the Trinity (do not affirm the Deity of Jesus), but those pages from Newton's notebook show many verses which affirm Christ's Deity. Unitarians probably do not want people to know that Newton was not a Unitarian in the usual sense. He did have reservations about the word, Trinity, as it is not used in the Bible, but that does not mean he did not believe in God the Father, God the Son, and God the Holy Spirit. He gave 'Deus Filius' (God the Son) as title to that page, and his very first verse, coming from Rom 9:5, applies the words, 'God blessed for ever more. Amen,' to Jesus Christ. The next passage is from Phil 2, where it says, '...every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ is Lord.' That word 'Lord' has YHWH as its Old Testament backdrop. There are many other wonderful passages in that section that pose a challenge to Unitarianism.”



<sup>1</sup> See <http://listverse.com/2009/02/24/top-10-most-influential-scientists/>.

<sup>2</sup> See [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Religious\\_views\\_of\\_Isaac\\_Newton](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Religious_views_of_Isaac_Newton).

<sup>3</sup> The deciphering of Newton's “Rules” may be found here, <http://www.wright.edu/~christopher.oldstone-moore/NewtonRules.htm>.

<sup>4</sup> Newton wrote either “choose” (or “chosed”) above his initial choice (“prefer”).

I had received an email earlier the same day with an attachment that required that I affirm these words, “I declare that ... I shall not use the copy except for research or private study ... I shall not make, nor permit to be made, any further copy from the copy that you supply me with in response to this request....” I concluded my response to Dr. Clements with, “Today, I became increasingly aware of King’s College’s censoriousness and/or money-is-all philosophy.” Note, however, that though I did not get the page I wanted, I did get this indirect confirmation of the phrase, “Deus Filius” [God the Son] from King’s College →→→→→→→→→→

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While still on the matter of Newton’s “Rules,” let us consider what he wrote about the Holy Spirit. Rule 14 contains the thought that the Holy Spirit sees (He “observes this rule accurately in his prophetic dictates”). Here is a fuller context: “... if Historians divide their histories into Sections Chapters & Books at such periods of time where the less, greater & greatest revolutions begin or end; & to do otherwise would be improper: much more ought we to suppose that the holy Ghost observes this rule accurately in his prophetic dictates, since they are no other then histories of things to come....” Note that whereas the word “holy” is not capitalized, “Ghost” is. Holy is an adjective, but “Ghost” is a Person.

Even though I do not have any handwritten copies of the next item, there is an extremely helpful link<sup>5</sup>, which reveals the sense, digitization, and publishing (2003) of Newton’s own *Theological Notebook*. In it, he gave three major headings: “Deus Pater” (God the Father), “Deus Filius” (God the Son), and “Spiritus Sanctus Deus” (God the Holy Spirit). Thus, all three Persons of the Godhead are considered in his own handwriting! He called it “Attributa dei” (Attributes of God), and the first part relates to “Deus Pater” (God the Father). A key factor, however, is the second heading “Deus Filius” (God the Son). Did Newton believe Jesus was indeed God the Son? He most assuredly did, for the section is full of quoting Scripture affirming Christ’s deity.

For example, Newton quotes Rom 9:5, “Of whom (the Jews) as concerning the Flesh Christ came, who is over all, God blessed for ever more. Amen Rom 9.5” The way Newton renders that verse says “Christ...is... God.” Newton was not stupid, and Unitarians do not believe Christ is God! The excuse that some use for saying that Newton did not believe Christ was/is God (an Arian tenet) surrounded the word, “consubstantiality”. He did not think the word made a lot of sense, plus the Greek word, ὁμοούσιος (homoousios), is not found in the Bible. The Latin word *consubstantialis*, was coined by Tertullian, and the present author joins with Newton in having reservations about Tertullian.<sup>6</sup>

Newton quoted many classical passages that are used to affirm the deity of Christ, including John 1:1,18, 17:5,24, Phil 2, “Colos 1.15”, Heb 1, Heb 13, and 1 John 1:1. He also quote many Old Testament passages, applying them to Christ—such as “Gen 18 & 19”, “Isa. 9.6 ”, “Mica 5.2”, and “Zach. 13.7”

Newton quoted John 8:58, “Jesus said unto them, Verily verily I say unto you before Abraham was I am. John 8.58.” [There the Lord Jesus was claiming to be the I AM of Exodus 3, and Newton lists it under “God the Son.”]

<sup>5</sup> See <http://www.newtonproject.sussex.ac.uk/view/texts/normalized/THEM00180>.

<sup>6</sup> See the author’s book, *Leaven in the Lump*.

Newton hand-wrote, “We are in him that is true, ... in his son Jesus Christ. This is the true God &c 1 John 5 20.” Condensing this, we have, “Christ...is...the true God.” Newton was quoting this verse to affirm the deity of Christ. He was NOT an Arian (Unitarian).

Newton wrote, “Christ is called light also. Iohn 1.4, 5, 7, 8, 9. & 3.19 & 8.12 & 12.35, 36, 46.” Notice how saturated Newton was with Scripture. Again, he wrote, “Jesus answered, my Father worketh hitherto, & I work. Therefore the Jews sought the more to kill him becaus [apparently Newton left off the “e”] – he said that God was his Father, making himself equall with God.” Notice Newton’s “equall.” Again, he was affirming Christ’s deity—not denying it like the Arians/Unitarians do.

Newton wrote, “Christus Jehova dicitur [Christ is Yahweh/Jehovah] Jer 23. 6. Jehova our righteousness.” This is hardly affirming Arianism. He was neither an Arian (as Wikipedia intimated above) nor Unitarian. The Jeremiah passage is about the Messiah, and Newton was affirming that Jesus is the Promised Messiah.

Many passages in the Old Testament involve the “Angel of the LORD” (a pre-incarnate manifestation of Jesus). Well, Newton was right on board here, too. He wrote, “The Angell of the Lord called unto Abraham out of heaven & said – Now I know that thou fearest God seeing thou hast not withheld thy son thine onely son from me, Gen 22.11.” He added, “The angel of the Lord appeared unto Moses in a flame of fire out of the midst of a bush – & God called unto him out of the midst of the bush & said, I am the God of thy Father &c – And Moses hid his face for he was affraid to look upon God. — And God said unto Moses, I am that I am — Go & gather the elders of Israel & say unto them the Lord God of your Fathers, the God of Abraham Isaac & Jacob hath appeared unto me. Exod 3.2. See also Acts 7.30. & Num 20.16.”



Notice, the “angel of the Lord” (Christ) from the “midst of a bush” and “God” called unto Moses “out of the midst of the bush.” In short, there’s a connection between the “angel” and “God.”<sup>7</sup>

Newton wrote, “And I saw in the night visions & behold one like the son of man came with the clouds of heaven & came to the ancient of days &c Dan 7.13. Quære [Inquire] how the name ancient of days is used to distinguish the father from the son?” [These notes of Newton were not meant to be published, but see how Newton speaks here of both “father” and “son.” This is Trinitarian thinking, even if he did not use the term.

Notice next Newton’s use of the phrase, “Christ as God.” He wrote, “Both he that sanctifieth (Christus ut Deus [Christ as God]) & they that are sanctified are all of [or from] one [the ffather] ffor which cause he is not ashamed to call them brethren. Heb. 2.11.” [Please forgive Newton’s odd spellings.]

Newton had a section, “Christi Incarnatio” [Christ’s Incarnation]. This is in harmony with the deity of Christ concept. God the Son, in other words, took on human flesh. He wrote, “The word was made flesh, & dwelt among us/– Iohn 1.14. See also 1. Iohn 1.1, 2, 3.” He wrote, “In him dwelleth all the fulness of the godhead bodily Coloss 2.9. God was manifest in the flesh. 1. Tim. 3. 16.”

Imagine a supposed Unitarian saying that “all the fulness of the godhead bodily” was in Christ! Newton also wrote, “Christ the only begotten Son of God in respect of his miraculous birth of the Virgin by divine power

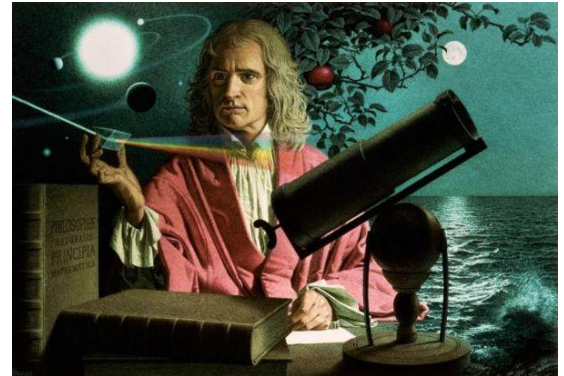
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<sup>7</sup> The author can readily related to Newton here, for his first book, *Jehovah Jesus*, displays many of the same passages from the Old Testament about the Angel of the Lord and seeing them as revelations of Jesus prior to His incarnation.

without a father Acts 13.32, 33, 34. Psal 2.7. Heb 1.4, 5. Luc 1. 32, 35. Mark 13.33. John 1.34, 49. & 6.69 & 9.16, 33, 35. & 10.35, 36 & 11.27 & 13.3. Heb. 3.6. The Jews did not expect their Messiah to be more than a man, yet freely called him the Son of God. Christ did not magnify his divinity before his passion yet freely called himself the Son of God. See Matt. 24.33. & 26.63 & 27.54.”

In the above paragraph Newton wrote of Christ’s “divinity” and of the fact that many “Jews did not expect their Messiah to be more than a man.” Newton, however, was affirming that Jesus was God the Son (“Deus Filius”) and that He was/is divine.

He had another section dealing with “Spiritus Sanctus Deus” (God the Holy Spirit) and there gave many passages about the Holy Spirit, not included here—except one. Newton wrote, “Go - teach all nations, baptising them in the name of the Father & of the Son & of the holy ghost. Matt 28.19.” This is a classic passage often used to affirm the Trinitarian doctrine. The fact that he used lower case here for “ghost” should be seen as his writing personal notes to himself. There are a variety of unusual spellings in his personal Notebook.]



Did Newton keep *consubstantiation* at a distance? Yes, because it was not a Biblical word. Did Newton believe in God the Father, God the Son, and God the Holy Spirit? He most certainly did. Was he a true Christian? I wish more Christians were devoted to the study of God’s Word and devotion to God the Father, God the Son, and God the Holy Spirit as Newton was. This author expects to meet Newton in heaven some day.