

Reformation  
& Revival



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**T**he uniqueness of Jesus Christ, I venture to say, is the most distinguished feature of the New Testament's presentation of Him. Claims such as those of Acts 4:12 and Colossians 1:18 bear witness not simply to a theological dictum, but to an intuitive awareness of the singularity of His person and work. Early in this century, B. B. Warfield proposed that there is a trinitarian consciousness which pervades the New Testament and undergirds its occasional and often unsystematic formulations of the doctrine of the triune God. Underlying Warfield's study was the proposition that the Trinity is revealed, strictly speaking, not in the writings of the Old and New Testaments, but in the history which fulfilled the expectations of the Old and formed the basis of the New.<sup>1</sup> The Trinity, in other words, was brought to light *in the person of the incarnate Logos Himself*.

The same can be said of the uniqueness of Christ. The first Christians came to believe and confess that He is the Son of God through an encounter with His living presence among them. Yet such a conviction raises a historical problem, because much of what He said and did was not unique in itself. Resemblances with Him can be found in ancient reports of teachers, parable tellers, wise men, prophets, miracle workers, exorcists, and redeemer-figures. Even His temptations are paralleled in the reports of ancient religious leaders.

The obvious question, then, is this: How do we account for the depth of devotion bestowed on Jesus of Nazareth by His first disciples? Perhaps more importantly: How is it that ever since that time people of widely divergent cultures, ancient and modern, have come to confess Him and Him alone as "the savior of the world" (John 4:42)? There is only one way. His people have accepted what the New Testament claims for Him: He is none other than God incarnate (John 1:1, 14), the Lord to whom every knee shall bow (Isa. 45:23; Phil. 2:10).

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I want to propose that our Lord's testing in the wilderness of Judea is one of the most significant signposts to His uniqueness (and divinity). While various individuals in the Old Testament and post-biblical Judaism were considered to be examples of faith and perseverance, He is portrayed in the Gospels as the one who gives meaning to all who went before Him. In brief, it is His obedience, among the obedience of many, which alone counts. The destiny of the universe depends on *His* fidelity to God and none other's.

#### **The Connection of Jesus' Temptations with His Baptism**

Matthew, Mark, and Luke all place Christ's testing in the wilderness back-to-back with His baptism. There are two main points of contact.

*Christ's Reception of the Spirit.* Of many things which could be said, when our Lord was baptized in the Holy Spirit after His water baptism by John the Baptist (Luke 3:21-22), He became the first man of the Spirit, the one who sets the standard for all who are to be baptized in the same Spirit.<sup>2</sup> It is thus His unique anointing with the Spirit which sets the stage for His unique obedience in the wilderness. It is by the leading of the Spirit through the wilderness (Luke 4:1) that He is able defeat Satan and finally return into Galilee "in the power of the Spirit" (Luke 4:18). In all this, the Gospel writers recognize that even though the Spirit came upon various persons in the Old Testament, only Jesus' possession of the Spirit counts at this crucial point in the history of salvation.

*The Voice from Heaven.* 1) Christ the Son of God. The temptation narratives cannot be understood apart from the voice of the Father speaking from heaven: "This is My beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased" (Matt. 3:17; Luke 3:22). When Satan challenges, "If You are the Son of God," he takes for granted that such is the case. He has heard the voice very well indeed! Without any exaggeration, it may be

said that the whole account is about the testing of the Son of God.

2) Christ the Obedient One. In the book of Deuteronomy, special emphasis is laid on God's voice as speaking to His people Israel. Very important is Deuteronomy 4:36: "*Out of heaven He made you hear His voice.*" Much of Deuteronomy, in fact, is concerned with urging Israel to obey the voice of the Lord. Therefore, just as Israel was summoned by the voice of God to be His people, so now Jesus is called by the voice from heaven to undertake His mission as the true Israel. In this light, Jesus is set forth as the one who listens to the voice of God and compensates for the ancient people's failure to hear and obey. If the voice announces that Jesus is the beloved Son, well pleasing to the Father, it is the trial in the desert which proves that such is the case. Consequently, when Matthew and Luke record the voice from heaven, they had in mind the difference between the reaction of the Israelites to the voice of God and that of Jesus, who was called, proved, and found obedient in the wilderness.

#### **The Place: The Wilderness**

*The Wilderness and the Red Sea.* Jesus' baptism in the Jordan forms the latter-day counterpart of Israel's crossing of the Red Sea at the onset of the exodus. Accordingly, Jesus transverse the Jordan, and then, like Israel, spends a period of time in the wilderness. God is now ready to fulfill His word of promise concerning the new exodus on which His people would embark; and it is Jesus, another Moses, who leads the way. On Him the Spirit has been placed, as on the first Moses at the time of the original exodus (Isa. 63:10-14).

*The Wilderness As the Place of God's Coming Deliverance.* A key text is Hosea 2:14-23. The wilderness, according to the prophet, was the place of Israel's original sonship, where

know what was in your heart, whether you would keep His commandments, or not" (cf. Deut. 13:3; Judg. 2:22; 3:1, 4; 2 Chron. 32:31; Job 8:12-27). (2) Moses on Mt. Sinai (Ex. 24:18; 34:28; Deut. 9:9-18). (3) Elijah's 40-day trip through the wilderness to Mt. Horeb (1 Kings 19:8, 15). Christ is thus linked with Israel as a whole as well as with certain distinguished persons in Israelite history. Not surprisingly, then, His association particularly with Moses and Elijah crops up again in the transfiguration accounts of the Synoptic Gospels.

#### **Conflict Between Jesus and Satan**

*The Fundamental Perspective: Jesus Is Tested As the Son of God.* The Gospels all portray Jesus' experience in the wilderness as a "testing" or "temptation." He is not tested in the abstract, however, because Deuteronomy 8:2 still stands in the foreground. The temptation narratives can thus be reduced to Jesus' identification with Israel, whose role of sonship in salvation history is now concentrated in Him who is *the Son* and *the Beloved*. Hence, the heart of the temptations is to be found in Satan's attempt to induce Jesus to be unfaithful to the pattern of sonship as established in the relation of the ideal Israel and the divine Father.

Yet even the covenant with Israel is not fully comprehensible apart from the prior testing of Adam in paradise. Although Deuteronomy 6-8 forms the basis of the dialogues between Jesus and Satan, the testing motif begins in Eden and is repeated several times before Israel's formation as a nation, most conspicuously in the case of Abraham. In the beginning, it was Adam who was charged with the mandate of subduing the earth and was promised a reward at the end of his task (the "Sabbath rest" of Gen. 2:1-3; Heb. 4:9). Adam, however, repudiated his formation as God's image and chose the way of self-determination and idolatry. Rather than inherit "all the kingdoms of the earth" by obedience to

God, he sought to become as God by compliance with "the Tempter." It is precisely Adam's error which the devil wishes Jesus to repeat. The temptations are Satan's endeavor to induce Jesus to renounce His vocation as the *obedient Son*.

However, an all-important qualification is in order. Matthew in particular represents Jesus as more than Israel and Adam, God's Son, image, and covenant partner. He is, in point of fact, a divine person who is to be worshiped in His own right and approached with reverence. One indication is that in relating the demand of Satan that Jesus "fall down" and "worship" him (4:9), Matthew draws on the same combination of terms which he has already used of the infant Jesus, the very one who received the adoration of the Magi (2:11). For another, in keeping with his characteristic usage, Matthew draws on the verb "approach," which conveys an attitude of homage.<sup>4</sup> The tempter thus "approaches" Jesus in this pregnant sense for the purpose of enticing Him. The irony of the situation is self-evident.

*First Temptation: Stones into Bread.* Both Matthew (4:2) and Luke (4:2) relate that Jesus went without food for 40 days and nights. The number 40, again, is reminiscent of Israel's 40 years in the wilderness, but also of Moses' 40 days of fasting before his reception of the law (Ex. 34:28; Deut. 9:9-18). Yet apart from these historical and theological associations, it is at the end of the 40 days, when Jesus' hunger was at its most intense and when He was most vulnerable, that "the tempter came" (Matthew) and said, "If You are the Son of God. . . ."

The clause, "If You are the Son of God," assumes that such is the case. This has been established at the baptismal scene, where He is declared to be the Son by the heavenly voice. Satan, accordingly, does not tempt Jesus to doubt His divine sonship, but to presume on it in self-serving ways that would lead him disobediently from the path of the

cross. D. A. Carson points out that the same taunt, “If You are the Son of God,” is hurled at Jesus on the cross, when for Him to have left the cross would have annulled the purpose of His coming.<sup>5</sup> While the last temptation is the most blatant instance, all of Satan’s efforts are designed to seduce Jesus to use His sonship in a way inconsistent with His God-ordained mission—indeed, with the very nature of sonship itself, i.e., a relationship of trust and obedience.

Jesus’ sonship again displays a twofold association. One is Adam, the first “son of God” (Luke 3:38) to be tested by Yahweh, with Satan as the instigator of his temptation. The other is Israel, who is admonished in Deuteronomy 8:5: “Know then in your heart that, as a man disciplines his son, so the Lord your God disciplines you.” Jesus, in other words, takes on the role of the covenant people (cf. Isa. 42:6; 50:1-11). And, as we shall see momentarily, it was precisely Israel’s grumbling about food which occasioned its infidelity.

Satan’s appeal to food resembles his tactic in the Garden, but it is intensified by the fact that Jesus is solicited when He was most vulnerable and might most plausibly use His powers in an act of self-assertion. Adam, though not really hungry, made the fruit of the tree a vehicle for declaring his independence of his Maker—and it is precisely in this vein that the devil wishes Jesus to express His sonship. In other words, He should behave like the first Adam in an assertion of autonomy, using food as the warrant of His rebellion; He should take the initiative in providing for His needs rather than wait on the Father to do so.

Later, Israel’s rebellion in the wilderness is voiced by nothing other than its demand for food (Ps. 78:17-20). Numbers 11 is adamant that Israel’s dissatisfaction with the manna was tantamount to its rejection of the Lord Himself, who was in its midst (v. 20). The Lord’s hand, the people thought, was shortened, so that His word of promise could

not come to pass (v. 23). Psalm 78 confirms that the children of Israel “had no faith in God, and did not trust His saving power” (v. 22): “in spite of His wonders, they did not believe” (v. 32). Psalm 106:13-14 is to the same effect.

The impact of the temptation is that Jesus, like Adam first and Israel later, has a justifiable grievance against God and ought to verbalize His complaint by “murmuring” (Ex. 16; Num. 11) and then, in an act of rank insubordination, Himself provide the basic necessity of life-bread. Satan, in other words, seeks to make Jesus groundlessly anxious about His physical needs and thus provoke Him to demand the food which He craves (Ps. 78:18). In a nutshell, the Devil’s aim is a repetition of the apostasy of Adam and Israel. He wants to break Jesus’ perfect trust in His Father’s good care and thereby short-circuit the plan of salvation.

Jesus rejoins with the words of Deuteronomy 8:3b: “Man shall not live by bread alone but by every word which proceeds out of the mouth of God.” As always, the context, in this case, Deuteronomy 8:1-10, must be taken into account, particularly v. 2: “And you shall remember all the way which the Lord your God has led you these 40 years in the wilderness, that He might humble you, testing you to know what was in your heart, whether you would keep His commandments, or not.” Here are the three elements underlying the temptation narratives as a whole: the number 40, the wilderness, and testing. In addition, v. 3a mentions hunger, and v. 5 speaks of Israel’s sonship. In his own person, then, Jesus embodies Israel. It is He who *remembers* all the way which Yahweh has led (v. 2) and that He has provided all His people’s needs, indisputable proof of His care (v. 4). Christ is thus content to live by “every word which proceeds from the mouth of God,” i.e., God’s interpretation of reality, as opposed to that of Satan. Only when this lesson is learned is one entitled to be called “the Son of God.”

*Second Temptation: God's Protection of His Son.* In the movement from the first temptation to the second, Jesus is taken out of the wilderness to the Holy City. The significance of this temptation centers around two factors. First, Luke makes the proposed leap from the temple the climactic episode of his narrative: Jesus is made to face death in Jerusalem. At the same time, He is informed that there is an alternative, i.e., the ministry of angels to save Him. Consequently, Satan would have Jesus resort to divine intervention to deliver Him from death altogether.<sup>6</sup> However, Luke is clear that Jerusalem is the place of His death (9:51; 13:32-33): Jesus must eventually undergo death in the capital city as one of the prophets (13:33), in fulfillment of God's plan (24:26, 46; cf. Matt. 26:54). Satan wants Jesus to deny the very relationship which constituted Him the Son of God, viz., the relationship of faith, the faith which trusted that God would deliver Him from the pangs of death (Ps. 16:8-11; Acts 2:24-36).

Second, the site of the temptation is the temple, the symbol of God's presence with Israel and the most conspicuous emblem that this nation is His people. Moreover, the geographical location of Jerusalem and the temple has a significance of its own. The Holy City was located in the highlands of Israel, with Mt. Zion as its loftiest point and the temple as the most imposing building in the land. To this we may add that, according to Ezekiel 5:5; 38:12, Jerusalem was conceived of as the "center of the nations, with countries round about her," whose inhabitants "dwell at the center of the earth." Thus, when Jesus stands on the pinnacle of the temple, He is, theologically speaking anyway, at the precise center of the world. It is from this point that the Messiah, as commonly believed, would claim the nations as His own and rule them with "a rod of iron," beginning, so many Jews thought, with the overthrow of the Romans. In this light, Satan's intention is that Jesus should make an impressive

entrance onto the stage of Israelite history, enabling Him to rally around Himself those "zealous for the law" (1 Maccabees 2:27), who would mount an insurrection against Roman rule.<sup>7</sup>

The Devil quotes Psalm 91:11-12, the whole of which celebrates God's fatherly care of those who trust in Him in *all* their ways. Nevertheless, the Psalmist takes it for granted that "all these ways" are in accord with the divine will and purpose. When this is understood, Satan's proposal that Jesus throw Himself from the temple bears no resemblance to the intention of the Psalm. It is, in fact, a misapplication and, therefore, a distortion of the Scriptures. Ultimately, Psalm 91 is messianic, and Satan cannot be unaware of it. So, his intention is that Jesus the Davidic Son should force His Father to vindicate Him in a way other than that of His own appointment—His resurrection following the cross. There is in all this an irony in Satan's use of the Psalm, because immediately following the portion quoted by him there is the assurance: "You will tread on the lion and the *adder*, the young lion and the *serpent* you will trample under foot" (v. 13). It is precisely at the cross that Christ bruises the head of the serpent (Gen. 3:15; cf. Rom. 16:20)!

Christ's reply, "You shall not tempt the Lord your God" (Deut. 6:16), is not intended to call into question Psalm 91, but rather the Devil's application of it. One should trust in God, but there are occasions on which the appeal to such a text is nothing less than putting God Himself to the test. Such "manipulative bribery" (Carson) turns justifiable reliance on the Lord's protection into blindness and presumption. The quote comes from Moses' warning for Israel not to repeat their sin at Massah, when they demanded water from the rock (Ex. 17:1-7; cf. Num. 20:2-9). If it was wrong for Israel the son of God to demand miraculous confirmation of the Father's care, so it would be for Jesus the Son to demand the same. Jesus, therefore, will not repeat the example of the

fathers by testing God (Num. 14:22; Pss. 78:17-20, 40-42, 56-57; 95:8-11; 106:6-7; Heb. 3:7-11). As ever, it is *the* cross to which Jesus must finally submit. As intimated above, the death scene at the temple corresponds to that in Jerusalem at the climax of the passion week. Not only is Jesus determined not to tempt God, He is ready to lose His life in obedience to the Father.

*Third Temptation: the Kingdoms of the World.* There is in Matthew a discernible mountain motif.<sup>8</sup> In keeping with this motif, Matthew mentions that Satan took Jesus to “a very high mountain.” In so doing, he identifies Jesus with Adam, Moses, and David.

With regard to Adam, we encounter early in Genesis (2:10-14) and later in Ezekiel (28:13-16) the idea that the Garden of Eden was located on a mountain.<sup>9</sup> Thus, from the mountain of paradise, Adam was able to gaze upon the kingdoms of the world and see the domain destined to be his under God. For Jesus, however, the mountain is that of the wilderness, the mountain of testing and temptation. From this mountain, Satan seeks to have Jesus renounce God’s prior lordship over the creation in favor of himself, the “god of this world” (John 12:31; 14:30; 16:11; 2 Cor. 4:4; Eph. 2:2),<sup>10</sup> who has been granted the prerogative to bestow “all this authority,” i.e., world leadership and the accompanying wealth of the nations, on whomever he desires (Luke 4:6; cf. 1 John 5:19).

As to Moses, Deuteronomy 3:27; 34:1-4 describe the panoramic view of the promised land shown him on Mt. Nebo, from which he could see the earth in every direction. As God showed all the land of Canaan (and the earth) to Moses, the Devil shows and promises the entire world to Jesus, if He will worship him.

Arguably, the most prominent association with the mountain is that of the Davidic “Son of God.” Several scholars have proposed that the mountain is specifically Mt. Zion, in

keeping with Psalm 2:6-8. It is pointed out that the ultimate source of Satan’s acknowledgment, “If You are the Son of God,” is Psalm 2:7, as echoed by the heavenly voice at the baptism. Also, Psalm 2:7’s declaration, “Thou art My Son,” is followed immediately by the promise of world sovereignty to David’s heir. Quite strikingly, Satan’s promise, “All this I will give You,” corresponds directly to the king’s pledge of the same: “Ask of Me and I will give You the nations as Your inheritance.” If these scholars are correct, the site of the temptation is none other than the place of the enthronement of the Son, where His world-throne would be established.

Jesus’ presence on the mountain of temptation, where He refuses to acknowledge the devil’s “authority,” is deliberately contrasted to the mountain of “the great commission,” on which He will finally claim that all “authority” in heaven and on earth has been granted to Him (Matt. 28:16). Therefore, He repudiates Satan’s “authority” in view of the lasting dominion to be His as a result of willing obedience to God.

Jesus’ rebuff of Satan is embodied in the words of Deuteronomy 6:13: the demand placed on Israel that Yahweh only is to be worshiped. Since Yahweh only is one, He is to be loved with all one’s heart, soul, and might (v. 4). Jesus thus re-lives the same attraction to idolatry to which the nation characteristically succumbed, while remaining the faithful Son. Rather than a place of apostasy, as was so of Israel, the desert for Him is the place of fidelity to God. He is to have glory (e.g., Matt. 16:27; 17:1-8; 19:28; 24:30; 25:31; Mark 14:62), but—especially in Johannine perspective (John 12:28; 13:31-32; 17:1-26)—the glory is to be through and as a result of the cross. This is where the Synoptic Gethsemane narratives (as paralleled by John 12:27-33; 14:30-31; Heb. 5:7) demonstrate that the glory of Jesus cannot be divorced from the way of the cross.

As noted above, in relating Satan's demand that Jesus "fall down" and "worship" him, Matthew alludes to Jesus as the recipient of the adoration of the Magi. The irony of the third temptation, therefore, is that the one who Himself ought to be worshipped is told to worship the being who wrongfully received the service of Adam in Eden.

*The Aftermath.* In Matthew, the temptations end abruptly with Jesus' rebuke, "Away from Me, Satan!" The precise choice of words links up with Matthew 16:21-23. In both places, Jesus must choose the path of duty. "The end ordained by the Father is to be achieved by the manner ordained by the Father, namely, the cross. And any opposition to this is satanic. To reject the way of the cross is to be on the side of the devil."<sup>11</sup> It is Jesus' resistance of the devil's way to universal rule that imparts to "Away from Me, Satan" a climactic effect. Thus vanquished, the devil departs until a more "opportune time" (Luke 4:13), i.e., Gethsemane, when, in spite of all, he will try again.

The account concludes with the ministry of the angels to Jesus. There is again an Old Testament backdrop. In part, it is formed by the angel who guided and helped Israel through the wilderness (e.g., Ex. 14:19; 23:20, 23; 32:34; 33:2). The other part is supplied by 1 Kings 19:5-7, where an angel supplies Elijah with food—again in the wilderness. Presumably, the angels also provide Jesus with food, possibly manna, the food of the wilderness (cf. Ps. 78:24-25). He thus receives sustenance not by placing demands on God, but by first submitting to His will. Again, it is He, unlike Adam and Israel, who through perseverance in well-doing seeks glory, honor, and eternal life (Rom. 2:7). For good reason, then, Luke informs us that immediately after the temptations Jesus returned to Galilee "in the power of the Holy Spirit" (4:14). He is the latter-day Adam begotten, as the first Adam, of the Holy Spirit (Luke 1:35; Matt. 1:20) and filled with the Spirit (Luke 4:1).

### Conclusion

We have proposed that the temptations of our Lord are among the most significant indicators of the uniqueness of His person and work. Within the pages of the Old Testament and in the history of the Jewish race, there are many notable instances of people who were exposed to trial, testing, and temptation, as often accompanied by great suffering. For this reason, the Synoptic temptation narratives are rich in such associations. Yet none of them are ultimately of any avail, because all without exception are merely the forerunners (or competitors) of the Coming One, who alone is the zenith of salvation history and the consummation of God's plan for the ages. In a nutshell, the question comes down to this: Who is *the* Son of God? And the answer of these authors is unambiguous: only Jesus Christ.

This bottom line is especially relevant in view of one of the trends of recent biblical scholarship, i.e., to dispute or at least downplay the uniqueness of Christ. One prong of this attack is the claim that the Christology of the New Testament, as distinct from that of later conciliar formulations, can be contained within Jewish limits.<sup>12</sup> Another is the argument, valid in itself, that Christianity is as particularistic as the Judaism preceding it, because it asserts that salvation is available only in Christ. For many, however, this fact only serves to denigrate Christianity's claim to be the definitive religion, especially as forwarded by those who believe that they detect an anti-Semitic bias in the New Testament.

It is impossible to offer anything like a full reply here. Suffice it to say, regarding the first point, that the temptation stories portray Jesus as the one who bursts the mold of Jewish precedents, because in Him something genuinely new has been revealed: a greater than Solomon and the temple is here (Matt. 12:6; Luke 11:31); the old wine skins simply cannot contain the majesty of His person. He is, as

we have seen, cast in the role of Adam, Moses, Elijah, and Israel. But he cannot be limited by such personages, because they are only the “shadows,” while He is the “substance” to whom they point (Col. 2:17). Consequently, it is only *His* success in testing which effects the redemption of the people of God. Though, from one point of view, He is another Adam and the image of God, from another, *He is the Lord God Himself* tempted by Satan.<sup>13</sup>

As to the second, we say: precisely! Christianity is a new particularism: not the particularism of race, culture, politics, or language, but of a person, the unique person of the Lord of heaven who became man in order to be tempted, die and then rise again for the salvation of all who place their trust in Him. And it is only in the proclamation of a sole and *exclusive Savior* who is able to save to the uttermost *all those who come to God through Him* that Christianity finds its authentic self-definition.

## End Notes

- 1 B.B. Warfield, “The Biblical Doctrine of the Trinity,” in *Biblical Doctrines.*, pp.133-72. New York: Oxford University Press, 1929.
- 2 J.D.G. Dunn, *Baptism in the Holy Spirit*, pp. 23-27. London: SCM Press, 1970.
- 3 C.K. Barrett, *The Holy Spirit and the Gospel Tradition*, pp. 25-45. London: SPCK, 1947. See also Dunn, *Baptism*, pp. 23-27.
- 4 See especially Matthew 17:7; 28:18, where the transfigured and resurrected Jesus is approached.
- 5 D.A. Carson, “Matthew,” in *The Expositor's Bible Commentary* (ed. Frank E. Gaebelin), vol. 8, p. 13. Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1984.
- 6 In Matthew, the same point is made in 26:53. Moreover, at the crucifixion, the Jewish leaders mockingly call for Jesus to come down from the cross and save Himself, since He said, “I am the Son of God” (Matt. 27:39-43).
- 7 See Andrew J. Kirk, “The Messianic Role of Jesus and the Temptation Narrative: A Contemporary Perspective,” pp. 11-29, 91-102. *Evangelical Quarterly* 44, 1972.
- 8 Terence L. Donaldson, *Jesus on the Mountain*. Sheffield: JSOT Press, 1985.
- 9 W.D. Davies and Dale C. Allison, *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the Gospel According to Saint Matthew*, vol. 1, pp. 422-23. Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1988. Also, Gerhard Von Rad, *Genesis: A Commentary*, p. 79. Philadelphia: Westminster, 1972.
- 10 In the background is Deuteronomy 12:1-14, which warns Israel against the idolatrous sacrifices of the Canaanites, conducted on the “high mountains.” In Deuteronomy 32:17; Psalm 106:37-39, idolatry and demon worship are joined.
- 11 Davies/Allison, *Matthew*, vol. 1, p. 372.
- 12 A notable example is J. D. G. Dunn, *The Partings of the*

*Ways*, especially pp. 163-229, 244-47, London/Philadelphia: SCM/Trinity Press International, 1991. In arguing that the New Testament's Christology, as distinct from the Nicean variety, can be confined to Jewish monotheism, Dunn consistently robs texts like John 1:1,14; Philippians 2:6-11 of their intended impact. Repeatedly Christ is denied the status of full Godhood by a reductionism which makes Him merely the modality of the divine presence (e.g., p. 215). This simply does not do justice—exegetical or theological—to the assertion that “the word *was* God.” Equally disturbing are two other suggestions: (1) that in Jewish/Christian dialogue, Christ may be regarded as an essential complement of the Torah (p. 247), rather than its displacement (e.g., John 1:17; 5:39; Rom. 10:4); (2) and that classic trinitarianism is actually a form of polytheism (p. 246)! With regard to the latter, Dunn has not allowed for the possibility that Jewish monotheism has now been superseded by *Christian* monotheism, whereby the one God of Israel is now to be regarded as Father, Son, and Holy Spirit (one of the mainstays of Warfield's study, cf. n. 1 above).

- 13 It is significant that Hebrews, which draws so heavily on the imagery of the wilderness, also presents the same interchange of ideas: Jesus is God's image, but He is also the very outshining of God's own glory (1:3).

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