To the Glory of His Grace:
The Doctrine of Divine Simplicity and its Interrelatedness to the Economy of God in Salvation

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Abstract

It is a contemporary trend by many theologians and philosophers to view the Doctrine of Divine Simplicity (from hereon, DDS) as an unnecessary, illogical, and problematic addendum of scholasticism to theology proper.[1] However, upon further investigation, this doctrine is found to be prevalent and implied in biblically orthodox ontology. Furthermore, it may be shown that the DDS bears potentially broad ramifications to how we understand the Trinity (given that it proceeds *from* simplicity in logical priority) and, subsequently, how we understand the initial, sustained, and perfected work of God in salvation through grace. Therefore, contrary to current theological trends, it may be stated that the DDS is, in fact, a centrifugal, practical, and even *indispensable* part of the Christian understanding of how we know God.

Introduction

"A public relations problem"; thus Dr. Ronald Nash describes the doctrine of divine simplicity (herafter, DDS) in his book, *The Concept of God.*[2] Nash is, perhaps, merely taking a page from Alvin Plantinga, who, in his 1980 Aquinas Lecture, "Does God Have a Nature?" once raised the charge that the DDS made God "a mere abstract object and not a person at all."[3] Nash and Plantinga certainly aren't alone; over the past century several reasoned arguments have been raised against the doctrine, critiquing it on the level of its own internal logic with such penetrating force that even certain evangelical theologians have raised the white flag in this figurative 'battle of metaphysics' to the cry of, "There is no need to hold

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[1]This paper is a March 10th, 2018 revision by the author himself of a paper originally submitted in spring of 2014 for the Systematic Theology class taught by Joshua Malone at Moody Bible Institute—Spokane.

[2]Ronald H. Nash, *The Concept of God: An Exploration of Contemporary Difficulties with the Attributes of God* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1983), 83. Quoted by Stephen R. Holmes, "'Something Much Too Plain to Say': Towards a Defence of the Doctrine of Divine Simplicity,'" *Neue Zeitschrift fur Systematische Theologie und Religionsphilosophie* 43 (2001), 137; James E. Dolezal, *God Without Parts: Divine Simplicity and the Metaphysics of God's Absoluteness* (Eugene, OR: Pickwick Publications, 2011), 24. Hereafter, *GWP.*

[3]Alvin Plantinga, *Does God Have a Nature?* (Milwaukee, WI: Marquette University Press, 1980), 53. Quoted in *GWP*, 23.

simplicity."[4] The general premise is this: the DDS is an ancient philosophical, platonic, or medieval scholastic construct that is either impractical or obsolete (or both), one which should be cast aside in light of the much purer and wiser cogitations of the modern mind.[5]

Is this really so? Is this a fair characterization of a doctrine that, as Berkhof notes, is *implied* throughout the breadth of biblical theology?[6] Addressing this characterization is the subject of this paper, which will serve as an attempt to put such blanket assertions to the test. If any interrelation can be found between the DDS and God's work in salvation, then such claims must certainly be dismissed and, conversely, the DDS must be embraced as a central and important aspect of Christian theology. The discussion shall begin with I. a survey of the DDS, move on to II. a survey of the DDS in the doctrine of the Trinity, and III. end by tying the first two together under the heading of salvation, paying careful attention to biblical evidence throughout.

Simple God

Prolegomena

In his *Systematic Theology*, Louis Berkhof is careful to point out that, "When we speak of the simplicity of God, we use the term to describe the state or quality of being simple, the condition of being free from division into parts, and therefore free from compositeness."[7] This is all good and well when providing a basic definition of the doctrine for the layman. However, the DDS is posited and contemplated as something central and integral to God's nature; it deals with concepts related to an absolute Being who, *ipso facto*, is noetically "too lofty to attain to."[8] Therefore, the question must be posed: how does one describe the DDS adequately without slipping into the miry bogs heresy? Indeed, the doctrine is commonly referred to as a 'mystery' in and of itself, as it pertains to concepts knowable as creatures only secondarily, analogously, and ectypally, incomprehensible inasmuch as they relate to the very

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[4]John S. Feinberg, *No One Like Him: The Doctrine of God* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway Books, 2001), 337.

[5]It is Plantinga who seems the most adamant about the platonic nature of the DDS, referring to the concept of concerning such a thing as putting God on the plane of the "platonic menagerie." Plantinga, 35. Plantinga's thought has become endemic even in evangelical circles; for a survey thereof, see Dolezal, 24-29.

[6]Louis Berkhof, *Systematic Theology* (Grand Rapids, MI: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1953), 62.

[7]Berkhof, 62.

[8]Psa. 139:6.

nature of God. Thus Stephen Charnock once warned, "Though we cannot comprehend Him as He is, we must be careful not to fancy Him to be what He is not."[9]

At the same time, care must be taken to avoid tragic shipwreck upon the lonely island of theonomy. Just because a doctrine is deemed a *mystery* does not mean that it is, at the same time, *prior to* or *beyond* logic, as though it were a paradox.[10] Feinberg once asserted that the DDS should be discarded "unless one holds a theonomous metaphysic"; needless to say, Feinberg is *not* a theonomist and, as such, he is effectively stating that the DDS is illogical.[11] The dissonance is on the ontological level and comes with a confounding of terms: God as ontologically *mysterious* in His simplicity versus God as ontologically *nonsensical.* As Holmes discerns, "Certain things will remain mysterious to us, but unless one or the other can be shown to be illogical, mystery is not a sufficient reason to reject a position."[12] In fact, it could rightly be argued that the retention of the mystery of certain doctrines has been a key point in church dogmatics from its very inception, beginning with the Trinity at Nicaea and extending to the hypostatic union at Chalcedon.[13]

Hence why it most natural to slip into "traditional apophaticism" when dealing with such a doctrine.[14] That is to say, it is much easier to describe something pertaining to the incomprehensibility of God in terms of negatives than it is in (arguably *inadequate*) terms of positives, inasmuch as negatives serve to strain out and separate what the Creator is from what creation is. Dolezal notes that the DDS in particular "is formally articulated apophatically as God's *lack* of parts" and that it lies "at the heart of the Creator-creature distinction."[15] This is exactly why Aquinas' classic formulation of the DDS is cast in terms of "six varieties of composition that must be *denied* of God if His absolute simplicity is to be

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[9]Stephen Charnock, "On God's Being as Spirit," *Discourses upon the Existence and Attributes of God* (New York: Robert Carter & Brothers, 1874), 197 [III.2].

[10]The distinction is important in relation to the dialectic conception of reality posited by neoorthodoxy: a mystery is something unknown to us due to a higher logic in the mind or reality of God, whereas a paradox is something irrational and self-contradictory. See G.K. Berkouwer, *Studies in Dogmatics: The Person of Christ* (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1954), 96, 327-364.

[11]Feinberg, 337.

[12]Holmes, 141.

[13] *GWP*, 3, 4. Dolezal makes the same point in a more recent publication: James E. Dolezal, *All That Is In God* (Grand Rapids: Reformed Heritage Books, 2017), 38. For an extended analysis of this strategy in Chalcedonian theology, see Berkouwer, "Chalcedon a Terminal Point?" 83-97.

[14]Holmes, 141.

[15]*GWP*, 31.

maintained."[16] In other words, "God is not *ontologically* identified *by relation* to anything outside of Himself"—the key word being *ontologically*.[17]

In fact, this leads the discussion to an axiomatic point concerning what must be properly analyzed before even attempting to delineate, espouse, or critique the DDS: ontology. Many of the critiques and dismissals of the DDS are related to the use of a presupposed ontology that is not analogous to that of the same doctrine stemming from a more classical Christian ontology. Holmes is even more emphatic in stating this observation:

> "The problems – all of the problems, I think – raised by the doctrine of divine simplicity are results of an improper assumption that we can understand God's essence. If we import an ontology, an account of God's essence, from (say) neoplatonic philosophy to inform our understanding of what it means to say that God is simple, but then make biblical and creedal confessions that are not based on that account, we will very probably be faced with incoherence."[18]

This is the preeminent matter in discussing the DDS. The perceived inconsistencies proposed by, for example, Alvin Plantinga—who regards such considerations tantamount to invoking the so-called "platonic menagerie"—are resultant from his subjection of God to the same ontological parameters one would subject creation to, thus striking closer to Plotinus' concept of simplicity than to that of any classic Christian theologian.[19]

Contrarily, the entire point of the DDS is that it "effectually places God beyond the creaturely mode and order of being," for, "As the one who ultimately accounts for being in general, as its first and final cause, God does not stand within that general ontological order."[20] God is not even the highest being, the platonic 'monad'; rather, He is wholly other, "not to be counted as existing in an ontological series with any creature."[21] Therefore, when we contemplate what is said of Him, we do so in a completely different way than we would a created being—and derive from it completely different implications.

Exposition

Everything up to this point has been mere prolegomena to the subject at hand; a more precise (albeit limited) explanation of the DDS may now be discussed before moving on. In

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[16] ^32. For a helpful Protestant analysis of these varieties of composition, see Francis Turrretin, *Institutes of Elenctic Theology* (Phillipsburg, NJ: P&R Publishing, 1992), edited by James T. Dennison, translated by George Musgrave Giger, three volumes, 3.7.5. Hereafter, *IET*.

[17] *GWP*, 116 (emphasis added).

[18] Holmes, 141.

[19] Plantinga, 35; Holmes, 141.

[20] *GWP*, 93, 29.

[21] ^113.

the above-given definition Berkhof notes that by the term *simplicity* is meant that God is without components or parts.[22] This is standard nomenclature; for example, Genevan theologian and pastor Francis Turretin says of the DDS that the nature of God is "free from all composition and division," with the common denominator being Thomas Aquinas, who had reasoned that a *composite* presupposes a *Composer*, or a uniting and prior principle of composition.[23] Though the DDS had been utilized explicitly by earlier writers—the most prominent example being, of course, Augustine—it is to be observed that Aquinas was the first to formally and definitively delineate it.[24]

Aquinas (and other Christian authors) assumed an ontology of God as *actus purus* (pure act) and *ipsum esse subsistens* (subsistent being [verb] itself).[25] Aquinas' argumentation is intricately logical, and his vocabulary quite particularized; to summarize for the purposes of this paper, the main point is that God's essence is actually identified *with* His being (verb): "*being* must be the essence or nature of God."[26] This can only be said of God, for in every created being the *esse* (being) and *essentia* (essence) are distinct, the former preceding and causing the latter; however, in God the two are unified in simple nature, for God is prior to all caused things. In other words, God is what *esse* is: "A divine intelligence gives being, and that being is the first of all effects, and that nothing was created before it."[27] A treatment of this point would veritably stand incomplete without noting Ex. 3:14, a theologically rich text which, classically, has been seen to at least *imply* this very concept.[28] Dolezal writes, "God's very name, 'I AM,' conveys His existential absoluteness over against the creature's contingency. Both God and creatures are named from their essences, but only God's name includes His very act of existence."[29]

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[22]See n7.

[23]*IET* 3.7.3. Thomas Aquinas, *Summa Theologiae: Prima Pars, 1-49* (Lander, WY: The Aquinas Institute for the Study of Sacred Doctrine, 2012), translated by Fr. Laurence Shapcote, edited by John Mortensen and Enrique Alarcon, 1a.3.7. Hereafter, *ST*.

[24]Augustine, *Concerning the City of God against the Pagans* (London: Penguin Books, 2003 reprint), translated by Henry Bettenson, 441, 456-458 [11.10, 24]; Augustine, *The Trinity* (Hyde Park, NY: New City Press, 1991), translated by John E. Rotelle, 227-228 [7.10].

[25]*GWP*, 93.

[26]Thomas Aquinas, *On the Power of God* (Dominican House of Studies Priory), web, accessed February 24, 2014 ‹http://dhspriory.org/thomas/QDdePotentia.htm› 7.2.

[27]De Pot. 7.2.

[28]Formally-speaking, the text speaks directly to the aseity of God, which assumes simplicity.

[29]*GWP*, 99. On an exegetical level, the assertion that this text speaks to God's ontology has been questioned based on more recent cognate and linguistic studies. However, Gleason Archer is helpful in assembling several strands of evidence in defense of the more traditional interpretation of the Hebrew phrase אֶהְיֶה אֲשֶׁר אֶהְיֶה, e.g. the LXX rendering thereof as ἐγώ εἰμι ὁ ὤν (concurrent with the assumed rendering), and the fact that it is unlikely to be rendered as a *hiphil* (causative, i.e. 'I cause to be...') because the *hiphil* form of היה (the

How does this correlate to the concept of God without parts or composition? Turretin provides an answer: "God is a most pure act having no passive admixture and therefore rejecting all composition," he states, explaining that this is "because in God there is nothing which needs to be made perfect or can receive perfection from any other, but He is whatever can be and cannot be other than what He is."[30] That is to say, given that every composite contains an act-potency dynamic, as well as passive potency, God cannot be composite, for He is perfect act and cannot even potentially change or become more so than He is.[31] To state the contrary, if God were not pure act, He would in some way be internally divided and the DDS would not stand. This separates Him from creation; thus the Creator-creature distinction is retained.

There are certainly many more ways of approaching the simple uniqueness of God over and against creation, which proceed far beyond the parameters of the present study.[32] However, even in this brief exposition one can see that the positive implications of the DDS are striking: given that God's nature is pure, absolute, and undivided act, this means that "wherever the divine essence is present it must be *wholly* present"—or rather, "*all that is in God is God.*"[33] Thus in Scripture we see God identified with His attributes or *perfections*: He is the very light by which He illumines (I Jn. 1:5), the very love by which He loves (I Jn. 4:8, 12), 'the very life by which He lives (Jn. 1:4; 5:26), and the very wisdom by which He is wise (Pr. 8:22-31)'—to name but a few examples.[34] Furthermore, these attributes are not in conflict with one another; rather, they operate and subsist in complete harmony, for "in God each perfection is really identical with all the others inasmuch as each is identical with the Godhead and God cannot really be distinct from Himself."[35] Applied to the doctrine of the Trinity, it is easy to see the implications of, for example, how the members thereof are

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assumed verbal root of YHWH) never occurs in the OT. Gleason Archer, *A Survey of Old Testament Introduction* (Chicago: Moody Press, 1964), 114 n6.

[30]*IET* 3.7.4.

[31]*GWP*, 35ff.

[32]*GWP*, passim; for a more concise look, see *All That Is In God*, 37-78.

[33]*GWP*, 125.

[34]A free paraphrase of Anselm, "Proslogion," *The Major Works* (Oxford, UK: Oxford University Press, 1998), edited by Brian Davies and G.R. Evans, 94 [s. 12]. As a brief aside, Isa 11:2 also stands as biblical proof for the DDS, where God, in His absolute nature as Spirit, has several predicated attributes; the use of רוּחַ in construct proceeds from יְהוָה in absolute in the head phrase, making each instance in parallel thereafter equally definite and examples of the genitive of inalienable possession (when predicated on יְהוָה as a unique referent). Bruce K. Waltke and M. O'Connor, *An Introduction to Biblical Hebrew Syntax* (Winona Lake, IN: Eisenbrauns, 1990), 9.5.1h.

[35]*GWP*, 125.

predicated on *one name*, as in Mt. 28:19.[36] In fact, the DDS provides a prime foundation for understanding the Triune economy—as shall be seen.

Simple Trinity

The doctrine of the Trinity is usually viewed as the central and definitive facet of orthodox faith, lying at the heart of every creedal confession from the time of Nicaea onward. The Niceno-Constantinopolitan Creed, for instance, outlines its very articles of faith in Trinitarian form. However, it may be shown that, lying prior to any formulation of the Trinity is the DDS. Dolezal quotes Lewis Ayres in saying that, "[T]he deepest concern of pro-Nicene Trinitarian theology is shaping our attention to the union of the irreducible persons in the simple and unitary Godhead," whereafter Dolezal notes, "It is the DDS that ensures this is not a union of three gods."[37] "Indeed," Holmes posits, "for much of this tradition a standard form of dogmatics could deal with the doctrine of Scripture in the first locus, God as He is simple in the second, and the doctrine of the Trinity in the third."[38] Case-in-point, the DDS can be seen logically preceding Trinitarianism as early as the church father Tertullian, who was careful to distinguish between *division* and *dispensation* of the unity of the Godhead, favoring language of the latter.[39]

Concordantly (and for the purposes of this paper) the present author sees fit to utilize Francis Turretin's explicitly DDS-based definition of orthodox Trinitarian doctrine:

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[36]Christ's wording of the phrase τὸ ὄνομα τοῦ πατρὸς καὶ τοῦ υἱοῦ καὶ τοῦ ἁγίου πνεύματος is markedly particular. Warfield explains: "The precise form of the formula must be carefully observed. It does not read: 'In the names' (plural) - as if there were three beings enumerated, each with its distinguishing name. Nor yet: 'In the name of the Father, Son and Holy Ghost,' as if there were one person, going by a threefold name. It reads: 'In the name [singular] of the Father, and of the [article repeated] Son, and of the [article repeated] Holy Ghost,' carefully distinguishing three persons, though uniting them all under one name. The name of God was to the Jews Jehovah, and to name the name of Jehovah upon them was to make them His." This assumes simple unity and absoluteness as its necessary predicate. Benjamin Breckenridge Warfield, *The Person and Work of Christ* (Phillipsburg, NJ: The Presbyterian and Reformed Publishing Company, 1950), edited by Samuel G. Craig, 66. See Turretin's analysis of this passage in *IET* 3.25.8. Furthermore, it should be noted that the idea of the τὸ ὄνομα is underladen with the Hebrew concept of a name (שֵׁם) as associated directly with essence, e.g. Isa 42:8; see Nahum M. Sarna, *On the Book of Psalms: Exploring the Prayers of Ancient Israel* (New York: Schocken Books, 1993), 54; *IET* 3.4.1, 5.

[37]*GWP*, 4.

[38]Holmes, 140.

[39]Tertullian was dealing with dynamic and modalistic Monarchianism; his entire argument thus hinges on the concept of οἰκονομία predicated on a single, indivisible essence: "…[T]he mystery of the dispensation [οἰκονομία] … distributes the Unity into a Trinity … of one substance, and of one condition, and of one power, inasmuch as He is one God…" Tertullian, "Against Praxeas," *The Ante-Nicene Fathers, Volume III: Latin Christianity* (New York: Cosimo Classics, 2007), edited by Rev. Alexander Roberts, Sir James Donaldson, and Arthur Cleveland Coxe, 598. For Tertullian and Monarchianism, see Gregg R. Allison, *Historical Theology* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2011), 236, 237.

"The orthodox faith is this: in the one only and most simple essence of God there are three distinct persons so distinguished from each other by incommunicable properties or modes of subsisting that one cannot be the other – although by an inexpressible circum-insession (*emperichoresin*) they always remain and exist in each other mutually. Thus the singular numerical essence is communicated to the three persons ... as a singular act of nature to its own act of being (*suppositis*) in which it takes on various modes of subsisting."[40]

This will be explained in the following discourse. As is apparent in Turretin's definition, a significant part of understanding the doctrine of the Trinity has to do with the terms involved. This is due to the need to retain and represent God as essentially simple and without composition. Traditionally (and particularly in the Eastern tradition) the term *hypostasis* (ὑπόστασις) has been used to express the unique properties and distinctions between Father, Son, and Spirit; the Greeks tend to view it as synonymous with *subsistence*—"a mode of existing proper to substances," according to Turretin.[41] Turretin, however, flirts with the term "intellectual *suppositum*," with *suppositum*—though a confusing term in and of itself—being definable as "an individual thing that can have properties predicated of it, and yet cannot be predicated of anything else," i.e. a mutually exclusive individual within a substance.[42] Turretin's suggestion seems plausible, as the word *hypostasis* "[means] existence in general, but [is] capable also of application to individual substances."[43] The use of the word *hypostasis* is thus significant to the overarching discussion in that it builds the priority of the DDS into Trinitarian nomenclature. For example, Olson notes that the use of the term, 'three hypostases,' implies that "they are relations within the one Godhead that is an infinite, transcendent and *perfectly simple (unified) being*."[44] "It is important to realize," observes Donald Green, summarizing Olson, "that *hypostasis* includes not only a sense of individuality but at the same time a sense of community as well. Thus, there is a sharing of essence even within the idea of *hypostasis*."[45] At the same time, the reader is to be reminded that, given that we are dealing with a wholly-other ontology, the three *hypostases* are not simply predicated *upon* the

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[40]*IET* 3.25.1.

[41]*IET* 3.23.5. Cf. Vladimir Lossky, *The Mystical Theology of the Eastern Church* (Crestwood, NY: St. Vladimir's Seminary Press, 1976), 50. Lossky's book provides a thoroughly insightful analysis of the development of Trinitarian theology from an Eastern Orthodox perspective.

[42]*IET* 3.23.5-7; *GWP*, 52, quoting J.L.A. West.

[43]Lossky, 51.

[44]Roger E. Olson, *The Story of Christian Theology* (Downers Grove, IL: IVP Academic, 1999), 186.

[45]Donald E. Green, *The Trinity and the Arian Controversy* (Donald E. Green, 2001), unpublished paper, accessed March 3, 2014, web, 30. ‹http://gracelifepulpit.media.s3.amazonaws.com/pdf/arian_controversy.pdf›

divine *ousia*, which would indicate "not a Trinity but a certain quaternity"; rather, given that they are found in the transcendent and simple Being of God, they are to be seen as identical therewith.[46]

Before moving on, it should also be noted that the term *hypostasis* has another element in its favor: it is a biblical term used of Christ in relation to the Father in Hebrews 1:3, where it states that "He is the radiance of His glory and the exact representation of His nature (*hypostasis*)."[47] The passage contains within it both the element of absolute, simple essential unity of the persons, as well as their distinction.[48] Calvin discerns the dual implications of this passage: "Surely we infer from the apostle's words that the very hypostasis that shines forth in the Son is in the Father. From this we also easily ascertain the Son's hypostasis, which distinguishes Him from the Father."[49] Of course, at this point a caveat should be made: certainly the author of Hebrews was not using *hypostasis* with the same theological sense that later generations would lend it; rather, the point made here is that it is, indeed, a biblical word that can be seen to have a prototypical allusion to its later implementation that makes it ripe for such a use.[50]

Another term classically introduced to help resolve perceived issues of disunity in the Godhead is *perichoresis*, a Greek word which could be rendered *permeation* and which finds its parallel with the Latin *circumincessio*. The word is used to describe "the coinherence of mutual indwelling of the members of the Trinity" without loss of distinction of persons, and is gathered from passages such as John 14:23 ("We will come to him and make Our abode in Him"); 10:38; 17:21; omans 8:9-11 ("...The Spirit of God ... the Spirit of Christ ... If Christ is in you ... the Spirit of Him who raised Jesus from the dead ... His Spirit dwells in you"); etc.

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[46]*IET* 3.7.5.

[47]Gk. ὃς ὢν ἀπαύγασμα τῆς δόξης καὶ χαρακτὴρ τῆς ὑποστάσεως αὐτοῦ.

[48]The passage in question (Heb 1:3) contains two parallel concepts, both of which revolve around the differentiation between Jesus Christ denoted by the relative personal pronoun ὃς and the implementation of the third person personal pronoun αὐτοῦ. In the lattermost phrase, the distinction between the Father's ὑποστάσεως and the relation of the Son thereto revolves around the *hapax legomena* χαρακτὴρ, a rare word even in extrabiblical literature found in Wis 7:26 in tandem with εἰκών, a representation or pattern, which, in turn, is used later in Heb 10:1 in a similar vein. The word is thus implemented to supplement the first phrase "in describing the essential unity and exact resemblance between God and His Son." Paul Ellingworth, *The Epistle to the Hebrews: A Commentary on the Greek Text* (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1993), 99; cf. Johannes P. Louw and Eugene Albert Nida, "**58.62 χαρακτήρ, ῆρος**," *Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament: Based on Semantic Domains* (New York: United Bible Societies, 1996).

[49]John Calvin, *Institutes of the Christian Religion* (Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox Press, 2006), two volumes, edited by John T. McNeill, translated by Ford Lewis Battles, 1.13.2.

[50]The word began to be used with some specificity by Origen and, in particular, the Cappadocian Fathers during the Nestorian controversy. Allison, 237; Nick R. Needham, *2000 Years of Christ's Power, Part One: The Age of the Early Church Fathers* (London: Grace Publications Trust, 2011 revision), 1:275f.

where the concept is depicted.[51] John of Damascus was the first to introduce the term, and he did so with a view to establishing the simple unity of the Godhead in His Triune interactions with creation, "For the deity is undivided amongst things divided."[52] This provides an important component in understanding how three *hypostases* can remain but one God, for "although always remaining distinct, yet they are never separated from each other, but always coexist; wherever one is, there the other also really is."[53] Such a thing can only be said of the absolute and simple YHWH; because of the utterly unique and transcendent ontology applied thereto, "the entire Holy Trinity co-exists in corporate, exhaustive harmony."[54] Thus, as Augustine summarizes, "the whole unity Trinity is revealed to us in its work."[55]

Simple Salvation

Having discussed the DDS in relation to the Trinity, the discussion now turns to its focal point: the DDS's interrelatedness to the work of God in salvation. At first it seems like the connection should be elementary, given that God's triunity is the paradigmatic doctrine in understanding how God manifests Himself to save mankind. However, the ramifications of understanding the simple nature of the Trinity with regards to how God works in and finalizes salvation are too broad to be discussed in fullness here. Therefore, this section will only serve as an abbreviated survey of possible implications of the DDS thereto in order to establish the initial purposes of this paper as opposed to being a definitive treatment of the subject. As was said in the introduction, all that needs to be demonstrated is that the DDS does, indeed, have some bearing on how we understand the work of God in salvation.

In Ephesians 1:6 is found the peculiar phrase, "to the praise of the glory of His grace," used in relation to the Father's willful bestowment thereof in His Son.[56] Indeed, Ephesians 1 is a distinctly Trinitarian chapter; verses 3-14 in particular are one sentence in the Greek, depicting in bold relief the work of the Father in *sending*, the work of the Son in *saving*, and the work of the Spirit in *sealing*, all with a view to an end in God's glory (verses 6, 12, 14). Yet the key aspect here seems to be God's *grace*, seeing as the chapter as a whole pertains to God's

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[51]J. Scott Horrell, "Toward a Biblical Model of the Social Trinity: Avoiding Equivocation of Nature and Order," *Journal of the Evangelical Theological Society* 47/3 (September 2004), 407.

[52]John of Damascus, *An Exposition of the Orthodox Faith* (New Advent: Kevin Knight, 2009), web, accessed March 23, 2014, 1.8. ‹http://www.newadvent.org/fathers/3304.htm›

[53]*IET* 3.23.13.

[54] Horrell, 407.

[55]Augustine, *Concerning the City of God Against the Pagans*, 11.24.

[56]Gk. εἰς ἔπαινον δόξης τῆς χάριτος αὐτοῦ, with εἰς indicating telic purpose.

work in salvation. Ergo, an abbreviated look will need to be taken at the nature of God's grace before moving onto His glory.

In a particularly axiomatic passage later in the Epistle to the Ephesians, Paul declares that we were saved "by grace" as a "gift of God," which he clarifies is to the mutual exclusion of "works."[57] Earlier in his life Paul had told the Romans that, if any work was added to grace, then it becomes grace no longer, where this 'working' has been defined by Paul himself as any act produced by man, even down to the most remote act of the will.[58] In these passages (among others) Paul engages in a classic argument by definition; his is point—particularly in the book of Romans—is that grace itself is a salvific aspect of "God's free, sovereign, undeserved favour [sic] or love to man."[59] In essence, Paul is teaching that grace is God's manifested love, but without component parts. That is to say, there is no act-potency admixture in grace, for it is not contingent upon the merits and endeavors of mankind; rather, God is able to provide it to His creatures abundantly and infinitely. Paul sees this state of 'standing in grace' as synonymous with "the love of God [which] has been poured out within our hearts through the Holy Spirit who was given to us," language meant to emphasize exponential abundance.[60]

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[57]Eph 2:8, 9. Gk. τῇ γὰρ χάριτί ἐστε σεσῳσμένοι διὰ πίστεως· καὶ τοῦτο οὐκ ἐξ ὑμῶν, θεοῦ τὸ δῶρον· οὐκ ἐξ ἔργων, ἵνα μή τις καυχήσηται. The initial dative τῇ … χάριτί is not necessarily instrumental and should be taken as a dative of cause, e.g. "because of grace"; Paul is seeking to establish instrumentality with the preposition διὰ+genitive instead, a word particularly suited for this purpose. Likewise, whereas the particle μὴ presents the more theoretical negation of the idea of something, οὐκ is a forceful negation of something as a reality—in this case, anything stemming ἐξ (a substantially-related derivation, *contra* ἀπο) ἔργων, which, in prior Hebrew thought, was a word that bore "the general thought that all man's action is wicked and corrupt" and that "acquires in Paul a completely negative sense whenever it is a matter of human achievement. For the work of man cannot stand before the exclusive operation of grace" (cf. Gen. 3:17 LXX in relation to mankind's function after the fall and subsequent curse). Daniel B. Wallace, *Greek Grammar: Beyond the Basics* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2006), 167, 168; "διὰ," "ἐξ," "μὴ," & "οὐκ," *A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament and Other Early Christian Literature* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1979), edited by Walter F. Bauer, Wilbur Gingrich, and Frederick W. Danker, second edition (herafter, *BGD*); quotation from Georg Bertram, "Ἔργον, Ἐργάζομαι, Ἐργάτης, Ἐργασία, Ἐνεργής, Ἐνέργεια, Ἐνεργέω, Ἐνέργημα, Εὐεργεσία, Εὐεργετέω, Εὐεργέτης" *Theological Dictionary of the New Testament* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1964-), edited by Gerhard Kittel, Geoffrey W. Bromiley, and Gerhard Friedrich (hereafter, *TDNT*).

[58]Rom 11:6. Gk. εἰ δὲ χάριτι, οὐκέτι ἐξ ἔργων, ἐπεὶ ἡ χάρις οὐκέτι γίνεται χάρις. Note the doubly-emphatic repetition of the already emphatic adverbial negative οὐκέτι, a compound that serves as an absolute negation from a prior state, but which is also a common parlance of Paul's in order to add a logical thrust to the negation. *BGD*, "οὐκέτι."

Rom 9:16. Gk. ἄρα οὖν οὐ τοῦ θέλοντος οὐδὲ τοῦ τρέχοντος ἀλλὰ τοῦ ἐλεῶντος θεοῦ. The οὐ/ ἀλλὰ formula is common in Paul as a device meant to contrast two antithetical and even mutually-exclusive realities—in this case, the individual-willing-man and the individual-running-man (τοῦ θέλοντος and τοῦ τρέχοντος, singular active substantival participles that emphasize the function of every individual human being). Cf. Tit 3:6. *BGD*, "ἀλλὰ."

[59]Berkhof, 427.

[60]Rom 5:2. Gk. ὅτι ἡ ἀγάπη τοῦ θεοῦ ἐκκέχυται ἐν ταῖς καρδίαις ἡμῶν διὰ πνεύματος ἁγίου τοῦ δοθέντος ἡμῖν. Note the perfect passive verb, ἐκκέχυται, denoting a completed action with continual implications for believers as the receiving subject of the action, the root, ἐκχέω, meaning "to cause someone to experience

It is logical, then, to make the following connection with the Trinity: God, as pure act, wished to demonstrate His love *unmitigated*, and thus, through the gracious gift of Christ, united us to Himself through His Spirit. This is no less than what the Trinitarian Benediction of 2 Cor 13:14 implies: the unity of the three permeating the breadth of salvation, consistent with the Ephesians 1 passage currently in view, as well as passages such as Titus 3:4-7, which delineates difference aspects of the divine economy while emphasizing their unity.[61] This gracious salvation, procured for us by the simple will of God in Christ before creation, is thus absolute and of God in every respect, not divided betwixt Creator and creature; in the words of Philippians 2:13, "For it is God who is at work in you, both to will and to work for His good pleasure."

Thus we come to the ultimate *object* of God's good pleasure: His glory.[62] The preceding argument makes all the more sense when one realizes that the entire work God in grace is for no frivolous end; it is with an end to the undivided and simple perfection of God's glory. This is seen from passages such as the doxological Rom. 11:36, which declares all things to be 'from, through, and to God for His glory forever.' "Glory" is thus to be considered as all that God is internally and archetypally, and all that He has revealed Himself to be externally and ectypally.[63] Again, given that God is *pure act* it follows that this inimitable and unchangeable perfection of glory, present with God in timeless eternity, can be the only single end equivalent enough to suffice for God's simple and undivided purpose and will.[64]

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something in an abundant or full manner." Louw-Nida, "ἐκχέω". Likewise, the aorist passive δοθέντος is significant to the point at hand; as Dunn notes, "in Paul the aorist passive clearly speaks of something done by God." James D.G. Dunn, *Word Biblical Commentary, Romans 1-8* (Colombia: Thomas Nelson, 1988), 311. This is owing to the fact that the aorist tense can specify a passive versus a middle voice, unlike other perfective tenses in Greek, allowing for more definite grammatical precision. Wallace, 410. Cf. John's words in Jn 1:16: "For His fullness we have all received, grace upon grace," where elsewhere the Holy Spirit is referred to as the "Spirit of grace," Zec 12:10; Heb 10:29.

[61]2 Cor 13:14, Gk.: Ἡ χάρις τοῦ κυρίου Ἰησοῦ Χριστοῦ καὶ ἡ ἀγάπη τοῦ θεοῦ καὶ ἡ κοινωνία τοῦ ἁγίου πνεύματος μετὰ πάντων ὑμῶν. Note the carefully-staggered use of polysyndeton, meant to emphasize fulness in its distinction, whereas the concluding phrase μετὰ πάντων ὑμῶν equates the three with singularity in their mutual referent.

[62]The NT usage of δόξα connotes more than and is discontinuous with its implementation in secular Greek literature in tandem with honor and repute; rather, it is underlaid with LXX rendering of the Heb כָּבוֹד, used in a secular sense of richness or weight, but more commonly recognized theologically in collocation as כְּבוֹד יְהֹוָה (another example of a genitive of inalienable possession). *TDNT*, "Δοκέω, Δόξα, Δοξάζω, Συνδοξάζω, Ἔνδοξος, Ἐνδοξάζω, Παράδοξος." The כָּבוֹד or 'weightiness' of something is thus its dynamic, active, and immersive presence in relation to God as the only source thereof, Exod 7:14; 8:15, 28; 9:7, 34; 10:1; etc. Oswalt, John N, "943 כָּבֵד," *Theological Wordbook of the Old Testament* (Chicago: Moody Press, 1999), edited by R. Laird Harris, Gleason L. Archer Jr., and Bruce K. Waltke.

[63]Jonathan Edwards, "The End For Which God Created the World," *The Works of Jonathan Edwards* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1989), 73 volumes, 8:513 [2.6]. Edwards will famously utilize the dual concept of *emination* and *remination* in discuss the nature of God's glory to return to itself without mixture or parts.

[64]God's glory is tied uniquely to His name in Isa 42:8; 48:11.

This may be applied to what has been said of grace and works. It has already been established that grace, by virtue of being an unconditional aspect of God's indivisible, purely-active love, cannot contain any component parts from or be added to by creation; likewise, since grace is contemplated as an aspect of God's revealed glory, it follows that the completed state of redeemed humanity therein can contribute nothing thereto. Believers are seen merely as "vessels" prepared to display God's glory, not actually intermingling glory with God.[65] Thus if God is to be "all in all" (1 Cor 15:28) His simple glory cannot be in composition with that of His creatures. Edwards notes, "'Tis God's declared design that others should not 'glory in His presence,' which implies that 'tis His design to advance His own comparative glory. So much the more man 'glories in God's presence,' so much the less glory is ascribed to God,"[66] an end result which is necessarily impossible due to His unchanging and irreducible nature as *pure act* and *subsistent being itself*, "Because it is evident, both to Scripture and reason, that God is infinitely, eternally, unchangeably, and independently glorious and happy: that He stands in no need of, cannot be profited by, or receive anything from the creature."[67]

Thus it must be understood that the completed subjective work of salvation in the eternal state is experienced by its recipients in terms of *participation*.[68] This is what is intimated by passages like John 10:38 or, in particular, 2 Peter 1:4, where is stated that we become "partakers of the divine nature."[69] It is important to realize that this is not meant to be taken in terms of actual subsistence of being or essence, which would, of course, diffuse

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[65]Paul is very careful in his language in Rom 9:23; the phrase ἵνα γνωρίσῃ τὸν πλοῦτον τῆς δόξης αὐτοῦ ἐπὶ σκεύη ἐλέους specifies that it is God's glory (αὐτοῦ, possessive genitive), made known (γνωρίσῃ, in experience) upon (ἐπὶ, metaphorical and conceptual spatial relativity in the accusative) the vessels of mercy, i.e. it is not imputed to them essentially and intrinsically, but only analogically and by way of participation. Wallace, 81-83; *BGD*, "ἐπὶ."

[66]Jonathan Edwards, *The Sermons of Jonathan Edwards: A Reader* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1999), edited by Wilson H. Kimnach, Kenneth P. Minkema, and Douglas A. Sweeney, 78.

[67]Edwards, "The End For Which God Created the World," *The Works of Jonathan Edwards*, 8:420 [1.1].

[68]The concept of participation features heavily in, for example, Edwards' consideration of grace in relation to the Holy Spirit; see Jonathan Edwards, "Treatise on Grace," *The Works of Jonathan Edwards*, 21:150-198. For an overview of the concept of participation in the theology of Jonathan Edwards, see James Salladin, "Nature and Grace: Two Participations in the Thought of Jonathan Edwards," *International Journal of Systematic Theology*, 18 (2016): 290–303.

[69]2 Pet 1:4, Gk.: ἵνα διὰ τούτων γένησθε θείας κοινωνοὶ φύσεως. The word κοινωνός is not ontological language, but—quite literally—*economic*, i.e. by way of function, not essence, often denoting partnership and thus implying interpersonal distinction between individuals. Louw-Nida, "**34.6 κοινωνός, οῦ; συγκοινωνός, οῦ**." As such, Turretin—referencing Col 3:15 as a parallel passage—writes, "Believers are said to be partakers of the divine nature not univocally (by a formal participation in the divine essence), but only analogically (by the benefit of regeneration." *IET* 3.6.5; cf. 5.10.4. The passage may be compared also to 2 Cor 3:18, which likewise contains a prepositional distinction (ἀπὸ, 2x) of degrees of glory relative to God but manifest by participation in the Spirit. *BDG*, "ἀπὸ."

the Creator-creature distinction and negate the DDS; rather, the participation should be seen as *causative*, *imitative*, and *analogical*.[70] So God's glory is communicated externally without a collapse of being, and, importantly, is returned in fullness to the simple God who emitted it: "In the creature's knowing, esteeming, loving, rejoicing in, and praising God, the glory of God is both exhibited and acknowledged; His fullness is received and returned." Thus it may be said with Edwards that "the whole is *of* God, and *in* God, and *to* God; and God is the beginning, middle, and end in this affair"[71]—that is, God Himself, absolutely and entirely with no division or composition from beginning to end, for "from Him and through Him and to Him are all things. To Him be the glory forever. Amen."[72]

Conclusion

The discussion may now close by revisiting and restating the question first posed: is it fair to characterize the DDS as an antiquated artifact of Christian philosophizing, mere 'ivory tower' scholasticism that has little or no bearing on understanding faith? The answer must certainly be in the negative. It has been at the very least demonstrated that the DDS is *related* to the place of the redeemed God's salvific scheme and the eternal state and at most has shown a certain interrelatedness betwixt them, thus undermining the stand-or-fall propositions of many critics.

Perhaps even more important, however, are the possibilities left open by what has *not* been said. An attempt to list the possible correlates between our understanding of God's simple ontology and the place of mankind therein would undoubtedly be an exercise in futility. Thus the door is left open to future studies and, subsequently, the prospect of coming to a greater understanding of the infinitely simple YHWH, so that the elect may further grasp their place in the absolute will of God "to the praise of the glory of His grace"[73]

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[70]See the quote from Turretin in the prior note. Turretin is undoubtedly working from Aquinas' model; see *ST* 1a.44.1. Cf. *GWP* 113-116.

[71]Edwards, "The End For Which God Created the World," *The Works of Jonathan Edwards*, 8:531 [2.7].

[72]Rom 11:36.

[73]Eph 1:6.

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