

# The Evolution of God

## 1. Foundational Principles & Presuppositions

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**4** Winds Fellowships and the Bereans Bible Institute hold to doctrines developed by consistently employing a series of ten principles. These guide our handling of Scripture and provide a cross-check against our theological conclusions.

- I. The original prophetic Scriptures are "God-breathed," completely accurate, & harmonious, never contradictory.*
- II. The Scriptures, illuminated by the "Breath of Truth," are entirely sufficient to fully equip the man of God. There is no other reliable source of truth.*
- III. The grammar of the original languages must not be violated, but its nuances allowed to guide interpretation.*
- IV. Interpretation must be from within the historical setting and context, and must not be used beyond the intended purpose in that context.*
- V. While metaphors, parables, and allegories are often used, literal interpretation should be by default whenever it makes sense.*
- VI. The Apostles' spiritual discernment must always be followed to unlock and explain the "mysteries" concealed in the Old Testament Scriptures.*
- VII. Interpret progressively, with newer revelation always complimenting and explaining (but never contradicting) older revelation.*
- VIII. Reject all illogical reasoning including all doctrines that require holding mutually exclusive ideas or illogical conclusions.*
- IX. Make sure that all doctrinal conclusions are consistent with God's revealed character and with all other acknowledged doctrines.*
- X. Whenever possible, trace modern doctrines back to the source to see when, where, why, and how they originated.*

These principles are intended to remove personal bias and faulty presuppositions as much as possible. The first nine principles guide our handling of Scripture. They would be entirely sufficient if we did not have nearly two centuries of theological baggage polluting our modern understandings of the Scriptures. Most of us are not new to Christianity or to the Scriptures. We have been indoctrinated for many years by various denominations and the pastors and teachers in our churches. Some of us have also been indoctrinated by Christian college and/or seminary professors, reading required theological source material, and the various theological systems of the schools we

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attended. This exposure colors our thinking and imposes biases and presuppositions, many of which do not reflect the pristine teachings of Jesus Christ and His Apostles.<sup>1</sup> Most Christians are oblivious to the fact that their minds have been conditioned to assume certain things as being true and other things as being anathema and heretical without solid proof. Most have not even attempted to apply Paul's admonishment objectively or thoroughly – *"Test all things; hold fast what is good."*<sup>2</sup>

It is because of this theological baggage that the tenth principle is absolutely critical if we expect to arrive at the whole truth. This principle provides a check against the possibility that we might have overlooked something important, or are still being influenced by personal biases of which we are not aware. If our conclusions cannot be found in the writings of the earliest Christians, we need to know why. The last thing we want to do is come up with something unique that was not taught by Jesus and His Apostles and thus faithfully passed on to the earliest Christian assemblies. Worse yet, we do not want to teach something that was considered heresy by the earliest Christians who were instructed by the Apostles. Jesus warned that many Christian pastors and teachers will be cut in pieces and cast in with the unbelievers or be beaten with lashes when He returns.<sup>3</sup> Referring to this, James warned that Christian teachers will receive a much harsher judgment than the average Christian.<sup>4</sup> At 4Winds we take these threats and admonitions very, very seriously.

**"The Evolution of God"** series of articles puts the tenth principle into practice regarding the doctrine of God, His Son, and His holy Breath, by considering the writings of the earliest Christians who were closest to the Apostles in time and proximity, and who spoke fluently the original language of the New Testament. This step should not be neglected nor its importance underestimated. Comparing our conclusions with the historical record of early Christianity helps ensure that we are not departing from what the Apostles passed on to their faithful students and was preserved by the ordained pastors and teachers of the local assemblies founded by the Apostles. Examining the post-apostolic development of doctrine and tracing the evolution of doctrine back to its source reveals a great deal about the root – whether something is based on genuine apostolic

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<sup>1</sup> The truth of this statement is illustrated by the fact that there are a multitude of Christian churches, groups, and denominations which do not agree with each other on even the fundamentals of the Gospel message or the Christian Faith. Yet, the average Christian just assumes that the church he happens to attend is preaching and teaching the whole truth and nothing but the truth. But why should that particular church or denomination be error-free while all the other hundreds of churches or denominations are teaching error? This simple fact ought to drive Christians to investigate further. Unfortunately, most are too lazy or simply do not know how.

<sup>2</sup> 1 Thess. 5:21

<sup>3</sup> Luke 12:41-48

<sup>4</sup> James 3:1

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tradition, wishful thinking driven by presuppositions, or subtle deception from the Enemy. Jesus warned that a tree is known by its fruit. A bad tree cannot produce good fruit neither can a good tree produce bad fruit. The fruit will reveal the root. Likewise, the root reveals the fruit. Therefore, investigating doctrinal evolution, the circumstances and men involved, and the philosophical, social, and political pressures that drove the evolution of doctrine all serve to give us a picture of the tree and root from which the fruit was produced. By embarking on this journey, we are attempting to faithfully follow Jesus' instructions regarding fruit and root inspection,<sup>5</sup> and Paul's admonition to "*test all things.*" This process requires examining the earliest Christian writings in an unbiased way just as we try to do with the Scriptures themselves. We cannot use as our sources the works of later theologians and historians since their interpretations of history are all colored by their own theology and presuppositions, some of which would absolutely horrify Bible-believing Christians.

This step is avoided by both Trinitarians and Unitarians simply because the earliest recorded views outside of the New Testament do not agree with either viewpoint. The tendency of both groups is to simply dismiss the opinions of the early Christian pastors, apologists, and martyrs out of hand. Yet, such an approach is not objective, but subjective. Our approach is to see whether the opinions of the earliest writers can indeed be sustained from the Scriptures while being faithful to the text.

Part 2, Corruption in Apostolic Times

[www.4windsfellowships.net/articles/God/Evolution\\_002.pdf](http://www.4windsfellowships.net/articles/God/Evolution_002.pdf)

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<sup>5</sup> Matt. 7:15-20