

TRANSCRIPTION AND COMMENTARY  
ISAAC NEWTON'S TWELVE ARTICLES  
ON GOD AND CHRIST

c. 1710s-1720s

KEYNES MS 8, KING'S COLLEGE, CAMBRIDGE

Artic. 1.<sup>1</sup> There is one God the Father<sup>2</sup> ~~eternal~~ (everliving,) omnipresent, omniscient, almighty,<sup>3</sup> the maker of heaven & earth,<sup>4</sup> & one Mediator between God & Man the Man Christ Jesus.<sup>5</sup>

Artic 2. The father is the invisible<sup>6</sup> God whom no eye hath seen or can see,<sup>7</sup> all other beings are sometimes visible.<sup>8</sup>

Artic. 3. The Father hath life in himself & hath given the son to have life in himself.<sup>9</sup>

Artic 4 The father is omniscient & hath all knowledge ~~of future things~~ originally in his own breast,<sup>10</sup> & communicates knowledge ~~to the son~~ of future things to ~~the son~~ (Jesus Christ)<sup>11</sup> & none in heaven or earth or under the earth is worthy to receive knowledge of future things immediately from the father except the Lamb.<sup>12</sup> (And therefore the testimony of Jesus is the Spirit of Prophecy<sup>13</sup> & Jesus is the Word or Prophet of God.)<sup>14</sup>

Artic 5. The father is immoveable ~~th~~ no place being cap<sup>t</sup>(a)ble of becoming emptier or fuller of him then it is by the eternal necessity of nature:<sup>15</sup> all other being<sup>16</sup> are moveable from place to place.

Artic 6. All the worship (whether of prayer praise or thi<sup>(a)</sup>nks giving w<sup>ch</sup> was due to the father before the coming of Christ is still due to him. Christ came not to diminish the worship of his father.<sup>17</sup>

Artic. 7. ~~A~~ Prayers are most prevalent<sup>18</sup> when directed to the father in the name of y<sup>e</sup> son<sup>19</sup>

Artic. 8. We are to return thanks to y<sup>e</sup> father alone<sup>20</sup> for creating us & giving us food & raiment<sup>21</sup> & other blessings of this life & whatsoever we are to thank him for or desire that he would do for us we ask of him immediately in the name of Christ<sup>22</sup>

Artic. 9. We need not pray to Christ to intercede for us. If we pray the father aright he will intercede.<sup>23</sup>

Artic. 10. It is not necessary to salvation to direct o<sup>ur</sup> prayers to any other then y<sup>e</sup> father in y<sup>e</sup> name of the Son.<sup>24</sup>

Artic. 11. To give the name of God to Angels or Kings is not against y<sup>e</sup> first commandment. To give the worship of the God of the Jews to Angels or Kings is against it.<sup>25</sup> The meaning of the commandment is To(h)u shalt worship no other Gods but me.<sup>26</sup>

Artic 12. ~~To give glory Christ & the Holy Ghost~~ To us there is but one God y<sup>e</sup> father of whom are all things (& we of him), & one Lord Jesus Christ by whom are all things & we by him.<sup>27</sup> ~~And each have their proper worship~~ We are<sup>28</sup> that is, we are to worship the father alone as God Almighty & ~~the Lor~~ Jesus alone as the Lord the Messiah the ~~king of t~~ great King the ?? Lamb of God<sup>29</sup> who was slain & hath redeemed us w<sup>th</sup> his blood & ~~was~~ made us kings & Priests.<sup>30</sup>

**Diplomatic transcription**

Key: Newton's deletions are represented as strike-outs and his insertions are placed within angle brackets; y<sup>e</sup> = the, w<sup>ch</sup> = which, o<sup>ur</sup> = our, w<sup>th</sup> = with, ?? = illegible letters.

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# COMMENTARY

1. Newton composed the first article from an amalgam of the scriptural text 1 Timothy 2:5 (“For there is one God, and one mediator between God and men, the man Christ Jesus”), the opening words of the Apostles’ Creed (“I believe in God the Father Almighty, maker of heaven and earth, and in Jesus Christ his only begotten Son our Lord”), along with the addition of three terms describing uniquely divine attributes (“everliving,” “omnipresent” and “omniscient”). The arrangement of the first six words may also be influenced by the wording of 1 Corinthians 8:6 (“But to us there is but one God, the Father ...”), another favourite verse of Newton’s that is cited *in extenso* in Article 12 below.

Although Newton employs the third person of 1 Timothy 2:5 (“There is one God”), rather than the first person of the Apostles’ Creed (“I believe in God”), the embedded text from the Creed (“God the Father . . . Almighty, maker of heaven and earth”) suggests that the twelve articles of this manuscript operate in some way as a statement of faith. Newton’s awareness that the language he cites in his “Twelve articles” derives from the Apostles’ Creed is made evident in his “Irenicum,” where he refers directly to the Creed when he defines the true God as: “The God of whom it was said <to the Catechumeni> in all the Creeds of the primitive Greek Church, I beleive in one God, the father,<,> <the> almighty ~~governour~~ <in dominion>, the maker of heaven and earth &<&> <of> all things therein [& in one Lord Jesus Christ.]” (Keynes MS 3, p. 29). It is unsurprising that Newton should be familiar with such a central Christian text as the Apostles’ Creed. It is instructive, however, that Newton should want to use a pre-Trinitarian (i.e., ante-Nicene) Christian document as part of an elaborated statement of his own belief—a belief that departed so consciously and decisively from the Athanasian doctrine that was so firmly entrenched in the Anglican tradition. One can also see in Newton’s weaving of Scripture into the tapestry of language that makes up the “Twelve articles” not only his adherence to *sola scriptura*, but also his powerful conviction that his faith was the none other than the original faith of the Bible.

Further evidence that Newton held the teaching contained in the first article to be an essential tenet also comes from the “Irenicum,” where he couches a similar statement in the language of belief:

And we are to beleive in one God, the father, almighty in dominion, the maker of heaven & earth & of all things therein; & in one Lord Jesus Christ the son of God, who was born of a Virgin, & sacrificed for us on the cross, & the third day rose again from the dead, & ascended into heaven, & sitteth on the right hand of God in a mystical sense, being next unto him in honour & power (Keynes MS 3, p. 1).

Similarly, later in the same manuscript Newton declares: “We are to beleive that there is one everliving omnipresent omnipotent (invisible) ? God ~~whom??~~ the creator of heaven & earth & <of> all things therein” (Keynes MS 3, p. 35). Another parallel comes from another manuscript of the same period as both Keynes MSS 3 and 8: “We are therefore to ~~ha?~~ acknowledge ~~the supreme God~~ one God infinite eternal ompnipresent, omniscient & omnipotent <most wise most just, most holy, the creator of all things most wise, most just, most good most holy;>, & to have no other Gods but him” (Keynes MS 7, p. 2).

Another analogy comes from the drafts for Newton’s history of the Church, where he writes out the following as the first of a series of numbered beliefs: “1 That <God> the ffather is <an> infinite, eternal, omniscient, immortal, <&> invisible spirit whom no eye hath seen not can see <&> all other spirits <are> sometimes **appearing** visible” (Yahuda MS 15.4, f. 67r). See also Yahuda 15.3, ff. 44-46, where Newton expands on the Apostles’ Creed with interpretative interpolations (this material is printed in Richard S. Westfall, *Never at rest: a biography of Isaac Newton* (Cambridge, 1980), pp. 823-24). A Socinian expansion of the text of the Apostles’ Creed can be seen in Jonasz Szlichtyng’s 1642 *Confession of Faith*, an English translation of which is published in George H. Williams, ed., *The Polish Brethren* (Missoula, 1980), pp. 389-418.

Newton’s Twelve articles on God and Christ can be compared to a similar set of statements (also twelve in number) that Newton composed during the 1670s:

1. God on y<sup>e</sup> scriptures is never used to s The {word} God is no where in y<sup>e</sup> scriptures used to signify more then one of the thre persons at once.

2. The word God ⟨put absolutly⟩ without particular restriction to y<sup>e</sup> Son or Holy ghost doth always signify the Father from one end of the scriptures to y<sup>e</sup> other.

3. When ever it is said in the scriptures that there is but one God, it is meant of ~~God~~ y<sup>e</sup> Father.

4. When, after some heretiques ~~were~~[?] had taken Christ for a meare man & others for the supreme God, S<sup>t</sup> John in his Gospel ⟨indeavoured⟩ to state his nature so y<sup>t</sup> men might have from thence a right apprehension of him ⟨& avoyd those hæresies⟩ & to that end calls him y<sup>e</sup> word or λογος: ~~????~~ we must suppose that he intended that terme in y<sup>e</sup> same sence that it was ~~under-~~  
~~stood~~ ~~??~~ taken in ye world before ⟨he used it⟩ when ~~applied~~ in like manner applied to an intelli-  
gent being. ~~ffor otherwis how could he expect that men w~~ if the Apostles had not used words as they found them how could they expect to ⟨have⟩ been rightly understood. Now the ~~word~~ term λογος before S<sup>t</sup> John wrote, was ~~never~~ ⟨generally⟩ used ~~but~~ in y<sup>e</sup> sence of the Platonists, &[?] when applied to an intelligent being, & ~~the Arrians underst~~ in that sence y<sup>e</sup> Arrians understand it in y<sup>e</sup> same sence, & therefore theirs is the true sence of S<sup>t</sup> John.

5. The son in several places confesseth his dependance on the will of the father.

6 The son ~~calls him~~ confesseth ~~himself less~~ y<sup>n</sup> y<sup>e</sup> father greather then him ⟨calls him his God, &c⟩

7 The Son acknowledgeth the ⟨original⟩ præscience of ~~??~~ ⟨all⟩ future things to be in the ~~breast of the~~ father onely.

8 There is no where made mention of a humane soul in our saviour besides the word, by the mediation of w<sup>ch</sup> y<sup>e</sup> word should be incarnate. But y<sup>e</sup> word it self was made flesh & took upon him y<sup>e</sup> form of a servant.

9 ~~???~~ It was y<sup>e</sup> son of God w<sup>ch</sup> he sent into y<sup>e</sup> world & not a ~~??~~ humane soul y<sup>t</sup> suffered for ~~??~~ ⟨us⟩. If there had been such a human soul in our Saviour it would have been a thing of too great consequence to have been wholly omitted by the Apostles.

10. It is a proper epithete of y<sup>e</sup> father to be called almighty. For by God almighty we ⟨al-  
ways⟩ understand y<sup>e</sup> Father. ~~Not that we hereby~~ ⟨Yet this is not to⟩ limit the power of y<sup>e</sup> Son, For he doth whatsoever he seeth y<sup>e</sup> Father do; but to ~~????~~ ⟨acknowledg⟩ y<sup>t</sup> all power is originally in y<sup>e</sup> Father & & that y<sup>e</sup> son hath no power in him but w<sup>t</sup> he derives from y<sup>e</sup> father for ⟨he professes that⟩ of himself he can do nothing.

11 The son in all things submits his will to y<sup>e</sup> will of the father. w<sup>ch</sup> would be unreasonable if he were equall to y<sup>e</sup> father.

12 The union between him & the father he interprets to be like y<sup>t</sup> of y<sup>e</sup> saints one w<sup>th</sup> another. That is in agreement of will & counsel. (Yahuda MS 14, f. 25r).

A less striking parallel that nonetheless provides several illustrative analogies with Keynes MS 8 can be found in Yahuda MS 7:

That he that sits upon the throne is the God of the Jews. For the Jews worshipped him sitting upon the throne in the Temple.

That he is the God who created heaven & earth

That we are to give him glory & honour for creating all things.

That he has all knowledge of future things originally in his own breast.

That he gave this prophesy to Jesus Christ

That none ~~was~~? in heaven or earth or under the earth was worthy to receive this prophesy ⟨immediately from God⟩ except Jesus Christ.

That Jesus Christ obtained this worthiness by his death

That we are to give glory & honour to Jesus Christ because he was slain & hath redeemed us with his blood &

That Jesus Christ sent his messenger with this Prophesy to John.

That the testimony of Jesus is the spirit of prophesy. Or that [the spirit speaks not of himself but receives from Jesus Christ, ~~the faithful & true witness the word of God & ther?~~ & that] there is no prophesy but by the

testimony of Jesus the faithful & true witness the word of God. The spirit speaks not of himself but receives of Christ & shews it unto the Prophets.

That Christ offers up the prayers of the saints to God. This is his office & therefore we are to direct all our prayers to God in the name of Christ. In that day ye shall ask me ~~noth???~~ nothing, whatsoever ye shall ask my father in my name I will do it.

That Jesus Christ hath washed away our sins & redeemed us with his blood

That we? are to give him glory & honour because he was slain for us & hath redeemed us wth his blood.

That we? to? by? ye resurrection from ye dead is called living ~~again livin?~~ or again & therefore between death & the resurrection men do not live.

That men are ~~not~~ rewarded ~~before the day of judgment~~ at Christs coming not before.

That

(Yahuda MS 7.2e, f. 4v)

Newton's disciple and fellow antitrinitarian William Whiston produced an abbreviated statement of his own Christology, which was nearly the same as Newton's, in 1711. This statement reveals a number of parallels:

- (1.) That the One and Only Supreme God of the Christians is no other than God the Father.
- (2.) That the Original Supreme Worship is due only to him.
- (3.) That the Son is Inferiour, as well as Subordinate to the Father.
- (4.) That he is not equally Omniscient with him.
- (5.) That the Holy Ghost is Inferiour as well as Subordinate to both the Father and the Son.
- (6.) That he was never expressly called God or Lord by the first Christians; nor was ever Invocated by them.
- (7.) That the Son was begotten or created by the Father only *before the World*; whatever secret Eternity he had before his Generation or Creation.

(Whiston, *Historical preface* (London, 1711), p. 65).

2. **“There is one God the Father”**: the fundamental biblically-derived tenet of unitarian theology. Like the Arians of the fourth century A.D. and the Socinians, Transylvanian Unitarians and English Unitarians of the sixteenth through eighteenth centuries, Newton believed that God is one not only in essence (as in Trinitarian theology) but also in person. For Newton and most other biblicist antitrinitarians, the One God was the Father alone. In other words, when not otherwise qualified, the terms “God” and “Father” are synonyms. The distinction is not merely between the Father and the Son, as in orthodox Trinitarianism but between the unipersonal God and Christ. The Arian view is outlined in Maurice Wiles, *Archetypal heresy: Arianism through the centuries* (Oxford, 1996). For a Socinian work advocating at length the exclusive underived Deity of the Father, see Johann Crell's *The two books of John Crellius Francus, touching One God the Father* ([London], 1665).

Newton explicitly equates the one true God with the Father at several points in his manuscripts. In one of these passages, Newton sets out some of the distinctions between the Father, Christ and the Holy Spirit:

To beleive in one God & ⟨in⟩ one Lord ⟨& in the Holy Ghost⟩ is to beleive in them aright in order to practise ⟨our duty towards them⟩. In one God the God of the Patriarchs, ⟨the⟩ Jewss & the Christians, the father who hath life in himself & hath given the Son to have life in himself, the author of life to all intelligent beings, the Almighty ⟨or universal ~~dominion~~ monarch⟩ παντοκράτωρ, ⟨that is⟩ the supreme & universal governour of the Universe, the maker of heaven & earth & ⟨of⟩ all things therein visible & invisible. ? In one Lord, the Son who hath received life from the father, & was slain for us, & rose again ~~the th~~ from the dead, & ascended into heaven, & ~~sitteth at the right hand of God~~ ⟨who⟩ to express his being next to the father in dignity & dominion is said to sit at the right hand of God ⟨the father⟩, & who shall retu come again to judge the & reign over the quick who remain alive in ⟨y<sup>e</sup>⟩ flesh, & the dead whom he shall raise again to life & reward according to their works at his coming & his kingdom. ⟨for his must reign till he hath put all things under his feet, the last of w<sup>ch</sup> is death, that is till all the dead are raised & judged.⟩ And in the Holy Ghost whom Christ promised to send to ~~comfort~~ the elect ⟨to assist & comfort them⟩ & to shew them things to come (Keynes MS 3, p. 43).

Earlier in the same manuscript, Newton asserts that denying the “true God” is equivalent to denying the Father (Keynes MS 3, p. 29). In a separate manuscript dating from the 1670s (already cited in note 1 above), Newton wrote simply: “When ever it is said in the scriptures that there is but one God, it is meant of y<sup>e</sup> Father” (Yahuda MS 14, f. 25r).

3. **“Eternal <everliving> omnipresent, omniscient, almighty”**: cf. the “Irenicum”: “We are to beleave that there is one everliving omnipresent omnipotent <invisible> ? God ~~whom??~~ the creator of heaven & earth & <of> all things therein” (Keynes MS 3, p. 35); “the Almighty <or universal ~~dominion~~ monarch> παντοκράτωρ, <that is> the supreme & ~~universal~~ governour of the Universe, the maker of heaven & earth & <of> all things therein visible & invisible” (Keynes MS 3, p. 43; see also p. 48); “Of the Church”: “He is ὁ πατήρ ὁ παντοκράτωρ the father almighty in dominion, the first author of all things” (Bodmer MS, 1, ff. 11r-12r), “We are therefore to understand that there [sic] one God always every where invisibly, without shape, whom no eye hath seen nor can see, in whom we live & move & have our being, who alone ~~knows all things past present & to come~~, lives hath life essentially in himself, lives for ever & ever & cannot dye <nor change>, who along knows all things past present & to come, who alone is omnipotent, the first author of all things the maker of heaven & earth & all things therein” (Bodmer MS, Additional Chapters, The everlasting Gospel preached in all nations, f. 1v); and Newton’s General Scholium to the *Principia*: “He [God] is eternal and infinite, omnipotent and omniscient, that is, he endures from eternity to eternity, and he is present from infinity to infinity; he rules all things, and he knows all things that happen or can happen” (Newton, *The Principia: Mathematical Principles of Natural Philosophy, a New Translation by I. Bernard Cohen and Anne Whitman, Assisted by Julia Budenz* (Berkeley, 1999), p. 941).

4. **“the maker of heaven & earth”**: A description of God taken immediately from the Apostles’ Creed, but with deep scriptural resonances (cf. Genesis 1:1; Exodus 20:11; Exodus 31:17; 2 Chronicles 2:12; Nehemiah 9:6; Psalms 115:15, 121:2, 124:8, 134:3, 146:6; Isaiah 51:13; Jeremiah 51:15; Acts 4:24, 14:15, and especially Revelation 14:7: “Fear God, and give glory to him; for the hour of his judgment is come: and worship him that made heaven, and earth, and the sea, and the fountains of waters”). For other references to God as maker in Newton’s writings, see note 3 above.

5. **“& one Mediator between God & Man the Man Christ Jesus”**: a quotation from 1 Timothy 2:5: “For there is one God, and one mediator between God and men, the man Christ Jesus.” In his first article, Newton has thus expanded this verse with several qualifications to the term “God”, along with an alteration of the first occurrence of “man” to the plural. It is not without significance that 1 Timothy 2:5, like 1 Corinthians 8:6, was a chief proof-text of antitrinitarian apologists. Newton uses this verse in the same way as contemporary Socinians (Polish Brethren) and English Unitarians, namely, to stress that the One God is the Father alone. Thus Christ is excluded from the One God. For Newton, the unity Christ shared with the Father was moral rather than essential. Nevertheless, although his Christ was not “very God” in the Nicene sense, it must be stressed that Newton, like the Arians, believed that Christ was divine in origin (literally the Son of God) and that he pre-existed his birth by Mary. Socinians and some English Unitarians held the former, but not the latter, positions.

6. **“The father is the invisible God”**: cf. “[The Son] is the image of the invisible God, the firstborn of every creature” (Colossians 1:15) and the doxology “Now unto the King eternal, immortal, invisible, the only wise God, *be* honour and glory for ever and ever. Amen” (1 Timothy 1:17). For Newton, the Father alone is the “invisible God” of the Bible. In one manuscript, Newton wrote that

since [God] is the first cause & by consequence <of necessity> everlasting & every where <immoveably> we are to conceive him <always invisibly> present to <us at all times & in all places> ~~all our actions~~ & that he knows ~~we~~ all things we say or do or think, ~~<He is ever the only being>~~ ~~without appearing to us or moving from place to place to us~~ <without ever being seen by us & to distinguish him from all visible beings ~~without~~ by invoking him without his appearing, & speaking

to them only when they appear (Sotheby's Lot 255.1, private collection).

An understanding of God's invisible nature also entailed certain philosophical corollaries about God's intangibility and incorporeality, as evinced from Newton's "Irenicum": "We are to ~~beleive~~ <conceive> him void of ~~shape~~ external shape <or bounds, a being> intangible ~~incorporea~~ & <&> invisible & ~~therefore incorporeal~~ for? whom no eye hath seen or can see, ~~a being~~ & therefore also incorporeal" (Keynes MS 3, p. 35).

Newton's stress on the Deity's invisibility also links with his deliberate nescience on the ontology of God. In attacking the corrupt hermeneutics of the philosophers, Cabbalists and Schoolmen, Newton, citing John 10:30, wrote in his Church history: "If it be said, He that hath seen me hath seen the father, meaning in their works, they understand it of seing [sic] their substances tho the father be the invisible God (Bodmer MS, 5A, f. 8r; cf. Yahuda MS 15, f. 15.5, f. 97r). Because God is by nature invisible, Trinitarian theologians were wrong to discuss God's substance.

7. "**whom no eye hath seen or can see**": an adapted allusion to the Pauline doxology in 1 Timothy 6:16: "Who [God] only hath immortality, dwelling in the light which no man can approach unto; whom no man hath seen, nor can see: to whom be honour and power everlasting. Amen."

8. "**all other beings are sometimes visible**": for Newton this includes humans, angels and Christ—the latter example demonstrating another contrast between God and His Son. Newton draws a sharp distinction between the Father, who is always invisible, and Christ and the glorified saints, who are and will be sometimes visible and sometimes invisible. In his manuscript "Of the ... Day of Judgment and World to come," Newton writes that the immortal saints of the millennial age will be like the post-resurrectional Christ and reign invisibly, but appearing visible on "extraordinary occasions" (Yahuda MS 6, f. 19r; cf. Keynes MS 5, f. 28r). Angels appear to be included in the following statement from Yahuda 15.4, f. 67r: "<God> the ffather is <an> infinite, eternal, omniscient, immortal, <&> invisible spirit whom no eye hath seen not can see <&> all other spirits <are> sometimes ~~appearing~~ visible." Newton's distinction between the invisible uncreated God and visible creatures is set out in greater detail in his manuscript "Of the Church":

But the father <with his λόγος ενδιάρθετος> is a pure spirit invisible intangible & immortveable being alike in all places & incapable of incorporation. For he is the invisible God (Deut 4.15,16. John 5.37. Col. 1.15. 1 Tim. 1.17. Heb. 11.27) the God whom no eye hath seen nor can see, John 1.18. 1 Tim. 6.16. He is ὁ πατήρ ὁ παντοκράτωρ the father almighty in dominion, the first author of all things who bears a fatherly affection towards all his offspring, [sic] & reigns over them with an universal invincible irresistible dominion, & the Son is heir of all things & owes his father the duty of a son. The father is the ancient of days & hath life in himself originally essentially & independently from all eternity, & hath given the son to have life in himself John 5.26. The father hath knowledge & prescience in himself & communicates knowledge & prescience to the son, Apoc. 1.1. & 5.3,5,7,9 & Mark 13.32. The son can do nothing of himself but what he seeth the father do John 5.19. The father judgeth no man [visibly] but hath committed all judgment unto the son, that all men should honour the [visible] Son ? even as they honour the [invisible] father, John 5.22,23. (Bodmer MS, 1, f. 11r-12r)

9. "**The Father hath life in himself & hath given the son to have life in himself**": an almost verbatim quotation of John 5:26: "For as the Father hath life in himself; so hath he given to the Son to have life in himself." In anti- and non-Trinitarian exegesis, this verse is believed to confirm the subordination of Christ to God. Compare Newton's "Of the Church", where this verse is also cited (see note 8) and Keynes MS 3, p. 43, where Newton writes of "one God the God of the Patriarchs, <the> Jewss & the Christians, the father who hath life in himself & hath given the Son to have life in himself, the author of life to all intelligent beings, the Almighty."

10. "**The father is omniscient & hath all knowledge of future things originally in his own breast**": here Newton contrasts the omniscience of the Father with the limitations of Christ's knowledge (in this case, of

future things). Cf. Article 7 from Yahuda MS 14, f. 25r: “The Son acknowledgeth the ⟨original⟩ præscience of ?? ⟨all⟩ future things to be in the ~~breast of the~~ father onely”, and the statement “That he [God the Father] has all knowledge of future things originally in his own breast” (Yahuda MS 7.2e, f. 4v). Newton almost certainly had in mind Matthew 24:36 (“But of that day and hour knoweth no man, no, not the angels of heaven, but my Father only”) or its parallel in Mark 13:32 (“But of that day and that hour knoweth no man, no, not the angels which are in heaven, neither the Son, but the Father”), with the former implying and the latter explicitly denying the omniscience of the Son.

11. “& communicates knowledge ~~to the son of future things to the son~~ ⟨Jesus Christ⟩”: cf. Bodmer MS, 1, ff. 11r-12r, cited in note 8. In addition to Matthew 24:36 and Mark 13:32, cited in the previous note, Newton may have based this statement on John 5:19-20 and Revelation 1:1, the latter verse of which has God giving the prophecy of the Apocalypse to Christ.

12. “& none in heaven or earth or under the earth is worthy to receive knowledge of future things immediately from the father except the Lamb”: an allusion to and conflation of details in Revelation 5 and 6, where it is said that no-one was able to open the book of the seven seals (5:3) except the Lamb (5:6-6:1), that is, Christ. Newton has generalized the applicability of Revelation 5:3 (“And no man in heaven, nor in earth, neither under the earth, was able to open the book, neither to look thereon”) by omitting reference to the prophetic book of seven seals.

13. “And therefore the testimony of Jesus is the Spirit of Prophecy”: a quotation of the conclusion of Revelation 19:10: “And I fell at his feet to worship him. And he said unto me, See thou do it not: I am thy fellowservant, and of thy brethren that have the testimony of Jesus: worship God: for the testimony of Jesus is the spirit of prophecy.”

14. “& Jesus is the Word or Prophet of God”: an allusion to Revelation 19:13 (“And he [Christ] was clothed with a vesture dipped in blood: and his name is called The Word of God”), with the insertion of the Messianic title “Prophet” (cf. Deuteronomy 18:15; Matthew 21:11; John 7:40; Acts 3:22-23).

15. “The father is immoveable th no place being cap⟨a⟩ble of becoming emptier or fuller of him then it is by the eternal necessity of nature”: a close parallel to this statement, the most philosophically-tinged in this document, can be found in the “Irenicum”, in which Newton writes that God is “A being immoveable [~~because necessarily in all places so yt no place can be without him~~] ⟨& indivisible⟩ & the first cause of motion in all other things ffor he is necessarily in all places alike so that no place can ~~be~~ ⟨subsist⟩ without him or be emptier or fuller of him then it is by the necessity of nature” (Keynes MS 3, p. 35). See also Yahuda MS 9.2, f. 139r: “’Tis not ye place but y<sup>e</sup> state w<sup>ch</sup> makes heaven & happiness. ffor God is alike in all places. He is substantially omnipresent, & as much present in y<sup>e</sup> lowest Hell as in y<sup>e</sup> highest heaven,” and Sotheby’s Lot 255.1, cited in note 6. In these texts, immovability is a primary attribute of God from which Christ and all other beings are excluded.

Newton’s conception of God’s immovability underpins his philosophical conception of absolute space, as demonstrated in the General Scholium to the *Principia*:

[God] endures always and is present everywhere, and by existing always and everywhere he constitutes duration and space. Since each and every particle of space is *always*, and each and every indivisible moment of duration is *everywhere*, certainly the maker and lord of all things will not be *never* or *nowhere* . . . In him all things are contained and move, but he does not act on them not they on him. God experiences nothing from the motions of bodies; the bodies feel no resistance from God’s omnipresence (Newton, *Principia*, trans. Cohen and Whitman, pp. 941-2).

The doctrine of absolute space is treated in more detail in Newton’s Scholium to the Definitions of the *Principia*: Absolute space, of its own nature without reference to anything external, always remains homo-

geneous and immovable. Relative space is any movable measure or dimension of this absolute space; such a measure or dimension is determined by our senses from the situation of the space with respect to bodies and is popularly used for immovable space, as in the case of space under the earth or in the air or in the heavens, where the dimension is determined from the situation of the space with respect to the earth (*Principia*, trans. Cohen and Whitman, pp. 408-9).

The immovable Almighty God is coextensive with immovable absolute space. Just as relative space is measured against the benchmark of absolute space, so all changing creation (of which Christ is a part) is distinguished from the immutable God. Christ belongs to the category of things relative just as surely as God is identified categorically with the absolute, thus providing a sharp ontological contrast between Father and Son.

Newton's antitrinitarian argument that immovability is an exclusive characteristic of the Father can be compared to Argument 8 of John Biddle's *Twelve arguments drawn out of the Scripture, wherein the commonly received opinion touching the deity of the Holy Spirit, is clearly and fully refuted* (London, 1647), where the unitarian reasons that the Holy Spirit cannot be very God:

He that changeth place, is not God; The Holy Spirit changeth place; *Ergo*. The *major* is plaine, for if God should change place, he would cease to be where he was before, and begin to be where he was not before, which everteth his Omnipresence, and consequently, by the confession of the adversaries themselves, his Deity (Biddle, *Twelve arguments*, p. 10).

Newton had access to Biddle's *Twelve arguments* in his copy of the Unitarian publication *The faith of one God who is only the Father* (London, 1690); see John Harrison, ed., *The library of Isaac Newton* (Cambridge, 1978), item 604.

A parallel to Newton's doctrine of God's immovable nature in the works of the first century Jewish philosopher Philo Judeus is demonstrated in Rudolf De Smet and Karin Verelst, "Newton's Scholium Generale: The Platonic and Stoic legacy — Philo, Justus Lipsius and the Cambridge Platonists," *History of Science* 39 (2001): 8, 26. Philo describes the Almighty as "a supreme Ruler of all things, God, ever One, abiding, without motion [*akinētos*], Himself (alone) like unto Himself, different from all others" (cited in De Smet and Verelst, p. 26 n. 60). The Philonic emphasis on God's fundamental "difference from all others" also finds parallels in both Newton's General Scholium and his "Twelve articles."

16. **"being"**: an error for "beings"; cf. the conclusion of Article 2, which reveals a structural parallel to Article 5—the latter continuing the emphasis on contrastive differences between God and Christ.

17. Newton's Christology was adorant, but in a qualified way typical of early modern antitrinitarian theology. The worship of Christ must not detract from the worship of the Almighty. Nor must Christ be worshipped as God, as Newton's glosses in the following passage from the "Irenicum" reveal:

And tho we are to worship him {i.e., Christ}, yet <we are to do it without ~~we are not to break~~(ing) the first commandment) ~~to us~~ there is not to be (in our worship) no other God but one. For tho there be that are called Gods, whether in heaven or in earth (as there be Gods many & Lords many) yet to us {[in our worship] there is but one God the father of whom are all things & we in him, & one Lord Jesus Christ, by whom are all things & we by him. 1 Cor. viii. 5. F We are not to give the worship of the father to the son nor the worship of the son to the to the father but to worship each with that worship wch is ~~peculi~~ proper & peculiar to him (Keynes MS 3, pp. 47-48).

This is consistent with what Newton writes in another manuscript:

<All> The worship here given to Christ respects his humane nature. ffor it is given to him in the form of a Lamb who was slain for us, & who received this prophesy from God & by his death became worthy to receive it. He is here worshipped not as a God but as a King, the man Christ Jesus our Lord, not as God Almighty but as King of Kings (& Lord of Lords) who has redeemed his elect wth his blood & made them kings & priests under him. And therefore this worship is given him without any breach of the first commandment (Sotheby's 255.7, private collection).

Thus God is to be worshipped as God and Christ as Lord, as is made plain in Article 12.

18. **prevalent**”: this term is likely used here to express efficiency, although it is possible that Newton intended the term to mean “of more worth” or “of more value”. A possible modern paraphrase using a cognate of prevalent would be “most likely to prevail.” Examples of “prevalent” used with relation to matters of prayer are attested in the OED.

19. **“A Prayers are most prevalent when directed to the father in the name of y<sup>e</sup> son”**: Newton held to a non-invocant Christology, and the language of this Article echoes that of several New Testament texts:

And whatsoever ye shall ask in my name, that will I do, that the Father may be glorified in the Son (John 14:13).

Ye have not chosen me, but I have chosen you, and ordained you, that ye should go and bring forth fruit, and that your fruit should remain: that whatsoever ye shall ask of the Father in my name, he may give it you (John 15:16).

And in that day ye shall ask me nothing. Verily, verily, I say unto you, Whatsoever ye shall ask the Father in my name, he will give it you (John 16:23).

At that day ye shall ask in my name: and I say not unto you, that I will pray the Father for you (John 16:26).

Giving thanks always for all things unto God and the Father in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ (Ephesians 5:20).

And whatsoever ye do in word or deed, do all in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God and the Father by him (Colossians 3:17).

A similar statement to Article 7 is found in the “Irenicum”, where Newton’s Christological non-invocancy again expresses the subordination of the Son to the Father:

We are not to invoke the son in the name of the father but on the contrary to invoke the ~~name of~~ the father in the name of the Son (Keynes MS 3, p. 48).

Newton also insists that prayer must be directed to the Father in the name of the Son in Articles 8 and 10. In writing these articles, Newton is also likely conscious of the many examples where the Father is addressed directly in scriptural prayer language, as is done most famously in the Lord’s Prayer (Matthew 6:9-13).

It is significant that although Newton’s “Twelve articles” do not touch upon the matter of Christ’s premundane existence, and hence may have had the irenic intent to avoid a point of difference between Arians and Socinians, by denying the scriptural validity of the invocation of Christ, Newton departs further from orthodoxy than Socinianism, which allowed for this. In fact, Newton’s position on prayer to Christ—whether consciously or not—conforms to that of the Transylvanian Unitarians (on whom, see G.H. Williams, *Radical Reformation* [Kirkville, 1992], pp. 1099-1133).

20. **“We are to return thanks to y<sup>e</sup> father alone”**: it was not lost on Newton that formal expressions of thanksgiving in the New Testament are directed exclusively to “God” or “the Father” (e.g. 1 Corinthians 15:47; 2 Corinthians 2:14; Ephesians 5:20; Colossians 1:3, 1:12, 3:17; Revelation 11:17), and never to Christ. The object of thanksgiving in Scripture therefore serves to provide another point of contrast between God and Christ.

Speaking of God in another manuscript, Newton writes:

We must love him feare him honour him ⟨trust in him⟩ pray to him give him thanks ???-pr praise him & ⟨obey his commandments⟩ hallow his name ~~as we are~~ ⟨obey his commandments⟩ & set times apart for his service as we are directed in the third & fourth commandments (Keynes MS 7, p. 2).

21. **“food & raiment”**: an allusion to 1 Timothy 6:8: “And having food and raiment let us therewith be content.”

22. **“whatsoever we are to thank him for or desire that he would for us we ask of him immediately in the name of Christ”**: Newton may have be thinking of Ephesians 5:20 and Colossians 3:17, both of which

speak of thanksgiving directed to the Father *through* the Son. For Newton's belief that prayer must only be directed to the Father through the Son, see also the notes on Article 7.

23. **“We need not pray to Christ to intercede for us. If we pray the father aright he will intercede”**: Newton here confronts directly a potential objection to his non-invocantism, namely, that Christ, the intercessor (Romans 8:34; Hebrews 7:25), is not to be appealed to directly. In Newton's view, suitably presented prayers to the Father are sufficiently efficacious to secure the intercession of the Son. See also notes on Articles 7 and 8.

24. **“It is not necessary to salvation to direct o<sup>r</sup> prayers to any other then y<sup>e</sup> father in y<sup>e</sup> name of the Son”**: a continuation of the theme of Articles 7-9, with the added detail that prayer to any being other than God (and Newton may have had in mind not only Christ, but also the Catholic practice of seeking mediation through saints) is not a requirement of salvation. Put the reverse way, Newton is arguing that lack of prayer to any source of help other than the Father, as in his system, will not be salvifically perilous. See also the notes on Articles 7-9. The wording at the end of the passage is probably influenced by Ephesians 5:20: “Giving thanks always for all things unto God and the Father in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ.”

25. Newton here distinguishes between the granting of the term “God” to angels and (Israelite) kings as an honorific title, which is endorsed in the Bible, and the granting of worship due to God alone to the same, which is a direct violation of the first commandment of the Decalogue. The foundation of the principle that beings other than the Almighty can bear the name “God” is in the Scriptures; one of Newton's manners of explaining how this can be so rests on a linguistic argument that the term God is relative in nature and, crucially, that it obtains its meaning not from essence (as in the Trinitarian conception), but from dominion. He expresses this argument in his General Scholium:

[God] rules all things, not as the world soul but as the lord of all. And because of his dominion he is called Lord God *Pantokrator* [i.e. Almighty]. For “god” is a relative word and has reference to servants, and godhood is the lordship of God, not over his own body as is supposed by those for whom God is the world soul, but over servants (*Principia*, trans. Cohen and Whitman, p. 940).

Newton's treatment of the relative nature of the term “God” is expanded with biblical support in the footnote he added to the General Scholium in 1726 (third) edition of the *Principia*:

Our fellow countryman Pocock derives the word ‘deus’ from the Arabic word ‘du’ (and in the oblique case ‘di’), which means lord. And in this sense princes are called gods, Psalms 82.6 and John 10.35. And Moses is called a god of his brother Aaron and a god of king Pharaoh (Exod. 4.16 and 7.1). And in the same sense the souls of dead princes were formerly called gods by the heathen, but wrongly because of their lack of dominion (*Principia*, trans. Cohen and Whitman, p. 941).

Thus when the ancient Israelite judges were called “gods” (Psalms 82.6), the designation was meant to be taken in an official sense.

These themes are explored by Newton in other manuscripts dating from the same period as Keynes MS 8 and the General Scholium. In his “Of the Church”, he writes:

God is a relative word & signifies much the same thing with Lord, but in a higher sense. For (a) God & his servants are related to one another much after the same manner ???-?? as a Lord & his servants. In this sense Angels who have dominion over man are called Gods in scripture as you have heard . . . By misunderstanding the scriptures we have changed the signification of the word ~~God~~ Θεός God, & take it now in such a sense as can agree to nothing but the supreme God, whereby Angels & ~~kings~~ have lost their title of being called Gods (unless abusively) & God has lost his title of being the Gods of God. But if we would understand the scriptures we much take words in their primitive significations (Bodmer MS, “The everlasting Gospel ~~to be~~ preached in all nations”, f. 2r).

Similarly, in his “Of the Church”, he affirms that

Angels & Princes who have power & dominion over us we may call Gods but we are to have no other Gods in our worship but him who in the fourth commandment is ~~called~~ said to have made the heaven & earth; which is the character of God the father (Keynes MS 3, p. 47).

The same line of argument is followed in another manuscript:

For Elohim, Θεός, Deus, God are words of ⟨dominion & have⟩ the same signification w<sup>th</sup> ⟨the word⟩ Lord but in a higher degree. [~~& have been anciently attributed to Angels ⟨Ghosts⟩ Kings & Magistrates in respect as well as to Christ, & that not abusively but in the proper sense of the word, as the word Lord is still used in the proper sens~~] (Sotheby’s Lot 255.9, f. 2v).

In all of these texts, including Article 11 of Keynes MS 8, Newton stresses the biblical principle that a representative of God can take on His Names in an honorary way. For Newton, however, this principle also pointed to the antitrinitarian corollary that when Christ is occasionally given the title God in the Scripture, this also must not be read in an ontological sense to mean that Christ is “very God.”

26. **“Tō(h)ou shalt worship no other Gods but me”**: this is Newton’s interpretative gloss on Exodus 20:3 (the first commandment), which reads: “Thou shalt *have* no other gods *before* me.” This reading of the first commandment allows Newton to reconcile the scriptural passages that attribute the term “God” to beings other than the Almighty.

27. **To us there is but one God y<sup>e</sup> father of whom are all things ⟨and we of him⟩, and one Lord Jesus Christ by whom are all things & we by him**: here Newton writes out the text of 1 Corinthians 8:6, which outlines a separation not merely between Father and Son but between God and Christ. This verse was the *locus classicus* of early modern unitarian theology. Newton departs from the King James Version’s rendition of the text in punctuation and one preposition. The KJV text reads: “to us there is but one God, the father, of whom are all things, and we *in* him, and one Lord Jesus Christ, by whom are all things, and we by him.”

28. **“~~And each have their proper worship We are~~”**: these deleted words help illuminate Articles 6 and 11, namely, that Newton believed different levels of worship are due to God and Christ.

29. **“that is, we are to worship the father alone as God Almighty & the Lor Jesus alone as the Lord the Messiah the king of t great King the ?? Lamb of God”**: the structure of 1 Corinthians 8:6 is echoed in these words as Newton sets out the difference between the worship of the Father as God and Jesus Christ as Lord. Newton may also have had in mind Ephesians 4:5-6, which distinguishes between Christ as “Lord” and the Father as “God”. Newton uses four biblical titles of Christ here: “Lord”, “Messiah”, “the Great King” (Matthew 5:35) and “Lamb of God” (John 1:29,36).

30. **“the Lamb ... who was slain & hath redeemed us wth his blood & was made us kings & Priests”**: Newton has contracted and adapted these words from Revelation 5:9-10: “thou [the Lamb; see verses 8 and 12] wast slain, and hast redeemed us to God by thy blood ... and hast made us kings and priests.” Newton has rendered his quotation in the third person, which follows the form of the similar passage in Revelation 1:5-6 (*cf.* Revelation 13:8). Already heavily dependent on the prophetic Book of Revelation for the composition of his “Twelve Articles”, it is appropriate that Newton should conclude with a further powerful allusion. It is instructive that the text from Revelation 5:9-10 also brings the “Twelve articles” to a Christocentric conclusion, emphasising the redemption available through the atoning blood of the “Lamb of God” and confirming that the role of the Messiah is pivotal in Newton’s scheme.

**Commentary by Stephen D. Snobelen**