

Bible Student's Notebook"

The Herald of His Grace

Presenting every man perfect in Christ Jesus. Colossians 1:28

Volume 29 Issue 707

Was Jesus Christ Alive Before His Life on Earth Began?

Part 1 of 12

by — Aaron Welch

Introduction

For most Christians, the belief that Christ existed before his own conception (as well as before the creation of the heavens and the earth) is simply a given. It's viewed as being a non-negotiable point of doctrine that is just as essential to "orthodox" Christian belief as the doctrine of the "triune God" itself (and, as such, is viewed as a belief that ought not be questioned). However, despite its "sacred cow" status and the great importance that it has to the majority of Christians, my own studies have led me to reject the doctrine of the "preexistence of Christ."

In contrast with what the majority of Christians believe (and have believed throughout "church history"), I believe the most reasonable and scripturally-informed position concerning the origin of the Son of God is that Christ has, from the very beginning of his life, been a human being, and that his human existence began at the moment of his supernatural conception in the womb of his mother, Miriam.

CHRIST A "PRE-EXISTENT MAN?"

Surprisingly, there are some who, despite affirming the doctrine of the preexistence of Christ, would agree with me that Christ has always been 100% human. This view would, of course, make Christ *the first man created by God*.

In contrast with this position, I think that a straightforward, face-value reading of Scripture will naturally lead one to the conclusion that Adam – and not any being who pre-existed Adam – was the *first* human created by God, and the *first* of only two human beings (the other being Christ) who came into existence without the involvement of a human father.

The Genesis narrative seems clear that mankind/humanity – *i.e.*, the "kind" of created being which was miraculously generated by God in Miriam's womb – did not actually begin to exist until the sixth day of creation (Genesis 1:26-27; 2:5-7; 5:1-2). Whatever existed prior to the creation of Adam – whether celestial or terrestrial – cannot be categorized as the same "kind" of creature that God made when He created Adam.

Paul seemed to confirm this natural, straightforward reading of Genesis when, in I Corinthians 15:45-47, he *twice* referred to Adam as the "*first man*":

If there is a soulish body, there is a spiritual also.
Thus it is written also, **"The first man, Adam,** ▶

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became a living soul": the last Adam a vivifying *Spirit. But not first the spiritual, but the soulish,* thereupon the spiritual. The first man was out of the earth, soilish; the second Man is the Lord out of heaven.

One proponent of the view that Christ pre-existed as a man (who is a friend of mine and a believer) asked the following question in an e-mail correspondence: "Concerning Adam, might we consider him to be the first human of the Earth variety?" We could, of course, theoretically consider any number of things, and the less that is revealed in Scripture concerning a particular subject, the more one can speculate about it (which means that those who believe in the preexistence of Christ have more than enough "room" for speculation and conjecture).

I think a better question than that asked by my friend would be, "Was there any other 'variety' of human in existence before Adam?" When we ask this question, Scripture does not give us so much as a whisper in response. Rather, all we get from Scripture in response to this question is sustained silence.

Considering Adam to have been the "first human of the Earth variety" would be like considering him to have been the "first human of the living variety," or the "first human of the conscious variety!"

Again, Paul simply referred to Adam as "the first man," without any implication whatsoever that there was, at the time of his creation, some other man already in existence (e.g. some celestial "man" who was not "soulish" or "soilish"/"out of the earth"). Had Paul wanted to convey the idea that there was no other man in existence before Adam, I can't think

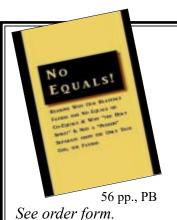
of a clearer and more succinct way of conveying this truth than with the words, "the first man, Adam."

Moreover, Paul explicitly wrote in this same passage that the "spiritual" is NOT first, but rather the soulish. Since, in the context, Paul links "spiritual" with "celestial" and "soulish" with "soilish" - they are, for Paul, intimately connected rather than separable – we could make a similar statement concerning man using this second pair of contrastive words - i.e., "But not first the *celestial*, but the *soilish*, thereupon the celestial."

This simple fact completely undermines the idea that Christ pre-existed as a glorified, spiritual and celestial "man" (a "man" biologically unrelated to "the first man, Adam," until his "generation" in Miriam's womb) Who, nearly 4,000 years after the creation of Adam, came to bear the soilish image of the "first man" before returning to the spiritual and celestial state He supposedly enjoyed long before the "first man" was ever created.

It has been suggested by some who believe that Christ pre-existed as a human that Christ was the "original" man of whom Adam was merely a "copy." However, in light of what Scripture reveals, I think it's safer to speak of Christ as being the "second man" rather than the "original man."

Adam, the "first man," was the first and earliest "model" (definitely in need of a major "upgrade," but still perfect for the "job" for which he was created). Christ, on the other hand, is the second/last/ final version of man. Christ is not the "original man" but rather the perfected man. He is what man was always ultimately intended by God to be – and the One



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through Whom this intention will be realized for all humanity.

Understood in this way, while it would certainly be true to say that Adam was created by God with Christ – the "second man" and "last Adam" – in mind (i.e., as the One Who will completely undo what Adam did and bring the human race – and the entire universe – to perfection), it would not be true to say that "Adam was a copy of Christ." A copy, of course, is "a thing made to be similar or identical to another," and to copy means "to make a similar or identical version of; reproduce." Instead of reading about Adam being "a copy of Christ," we read of Adam being a type of Christ (Romans 5:14).

We also read of Christ partaking of the same "flesh and blood" in which all humanity is presently participating (Hebrews 2:14) and of His being "made like the brethren" "in all things." Such wording seems to imply the exact opposite of the view that Adam and his flesh-and-blood descendants were "modeled after" a celestial, spiritual Man, or made into a similar version of such a being; rather, these words imply that Christ was a "copy" (i.e., He was made into a similar version) of Adam and his flesh-and-blood descendants.

After "copying" the original man and his descendants, Christ then became (after being vivified by God) the final, perfected version of Man. It was after Christ was vivified and glorified that He then became the "original" from which future "copies" will be made:

Now we are aware that God is working all together for the good of those who are loving God,

who are called according to the purpose that, whom He foreknew, He designates beforehand, also, to be conformed to the image of His Son, for Him to be Firstborn among many brethren. Now whom He designates beforehand, these He calls also, and whom He calls, these He justifies also; now whom He justifies, these He glorifies also (Romans 8:28-30).

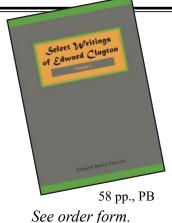
THE TRUTH CONCERNING JESUS' IDENTITY

The view that Jesus Christ has only ever been a human seems to be a minority position among those who hold to the doctrine of Christ's preexistence. Those who *do* hold to this particular belief would, most likely, sooner part with *it* than give up their position that Christ pre-existed the creation of the Heavens and the Earth.

However, as noted earlier, I believe that Christ has always been a human, and that His human existence began when He was conceived. I want to begin my defense of this position by considering the prophetically-based identity of Jesus Christ that I believe constitutes the "evangel of the circumcision."

In John's "Gospel Account" we find that salvation for an Israelite involved believing "in the name [i.e., in the identity] of the only-begotten Son of God":

For thus God loves the world, so that He gives His only-begotten Son, that everyone who is **believing in Him** should not be perishing, but may be having life eonian. For God does not dispatch His Son into the world that He should be judging the world,



Select Writings of Edward Clayton

Volume 1

Edward Henry Clayton (1887-1972) of Sheffield England was a great scholar of the Greek and Hebrew languages. His close association with A. E. Knoch dated from the very earliest days of the *Concordant Publishing Concern*. He did substantial work in the long and involved process of compiling the *Concordant Greek Scriptures*. He then spent half his life working full-time on the *Concordant Hebrew Scriptures*. He authored many articles that appeared in *Unsearchable Riches* and *Grace and Truth* magazines.

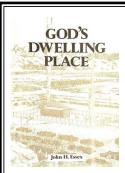
but that the world may be saved through Him. He who is believing in Him is not being judged; yet he who is not believing has been judged already, for he has not believed in the name of the onlybegotten Son of God (John 3:16-18).

To an Israelite, Jesus being the "Son of God" implied that He was (and is) the prophesied Christ or "Messiah" (i.e., the "Anointed One") destined to sit on "the throne of His father David" and rule over the house of Jacob - and indeed the entire Earth - during the eons to come (II Samuel 7:1-16; Psalm 2:1-12; Isaiah 9:6-7; Luke 1:31-33; Acts 2:30-31; cf. Hebrew 1:5, 8-9). Jesus' Lordship is also inseparably linked to His identity as the Christ, the Son of God (Matthew 22:41-46; Luke 2:11; Acts 2:34-36).

That believing "in the name of the only-begotten Son of God" meant believing that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, is further confirmed by what John wrote towards the end of his account:

Indeed then, many other signs also Jesus does, in the sight of His disciples, which are not written in this scroll. Yet these are written that you should be believing that Jesus is the Christ, the **Son of God,** and that, believing, you may have life eonian in His name (John 20:30-31; cf. I John 5:1, 5).

This truth concerning Jesus' identity – that He is the Christ, the Son of God – is, I believe, the "evangel of the Circumcision" with which Peter, John and the rest of the Twelve Apostles were entrusted. The first time we read of the content of this evangel being made known to Peter is in Matthew 16.



184 pp, PB See order form.

God's Dwelling Place

by — John H. Essex (1907-1991)

"Amongst the countless thousands of books on Biblical subjects there are very few indeed (if any) which deal with the subject of "God's Dwelling Place."

WHEN DID CHRIST'S LIFE BEGIN?

In Matthew 16:13-17, we read,

Now Jesus, coming into parts of Caesarea Philippi, asked His disciples, saying, "Who are men saying the Son of Mankind is?" Now they say, "These, indeed, John the Baptist; yet others Elijah; yet others Jeremiah or one of the prophets." He is saying to them, "Now you, who are you saying that I am?" Now answering, Simon Peter said, "Thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God." Now, answering, Jesus said to him, "Happy are you, Simon Bar-Jonah, for flesh and blood does not reveal it to you, but My Father Who is in the heavens."

This is a key passage to our understanding of the identity of both Jesus Christ and God. What did Peter mean when he declared Jesus to be the "Son of the living God?" To begin to answer this question we must first identify the "living God" of whom Peter spoke.

In Jeremiah 10:10 we read,

But Yahweh is the true God; He is the living God and the eonian King.

Here the "living God" is identified by the prophet Jeremiah as Yahweh, the one God of Israel. He is also referred to as the "true God" by Christ (John 17:3) and as the "eonian King" by Paul (I Timothy 1:17). Thus, when Peter identified Jesus as the "Son of the living God" he was affirming that Jesus is the Son of Yahweh, the one, true God of Israel.

What does it mean to say that Jesus is the Son of Yahweh? Clearly it does not mean that Jesus is Yahweh, the one God of Israel. If Yahweh is Jesus' Father, then He is necessarily distinct from Jesus. When Peter called Christ the "Son of God," he was expressing his understanding that Christ had been directly fathered by Yahweh and thus enjoyed a unique relationship with Him.

The Messiah had consistently been prophesied in the Hebrew Scriptures as being a human man - a created person belonging to Adam's race - and thus



distinct from the one God of Israel (Genesis 3:15; 12:3; 22:18; 28:14; 49:10; Numbers 24:17-19; Deuteronomy 18:15; II Samuel 7:12-13; I Chronicles 17:13; Psalm 45:2-7, 17; 72:1; 89:3-4; 110:1; 132:11; Isaiah 7:14; 11:1-5; 52-53; Jeremiah 23:5; 30:21; Daniel 7:13; Zechariah 6:12-13; Micah 5:2).

The first prophetic reference to Jesus, the Son of God, is to the "Seed of the woman" Who would bruise the head of the serpent (Genesis 3:15). We thus find that, from the very beginning, Christ's identity has been tied to His humanity (being the human "Seed" of someone who existed before Him). Every other prophetic reference to Christ is consistent with this fact, and is in no way suggestive of the idea that the Messiah was already in existence as some "pre-human" celestial being.

Psalm 110:1 and Daniel 7:13 are also highly relevant with regards to Jesus' identity. In Psalm 110:1, we read,

Yahweh said to my Lord, "Sit at My right hand, until I make Your enemies Your footstool."

Here we find God inviting a person distinct from Himself to sit at His "right hand." While it is clear that this Person would be superior in authority to David (hence David calls Him Adoni, or "Lord"), it is equally clear that He is distinguished from – and in some sense inferior to – Yahweh Himself. We also know that this verse did not begin to be fulfilled until after Christ's resurrection and ascension (Acts 2:32-35; Hebrews 10:12-13). There was, in other words, no pre-human, celestial "Jesus" to whom this verse had any application prior to the beginning of Jesus' life on Earth.

In Daniel 7:13, the Messiah is described in a prophetic vision as being "One like a son of mankind" and is distinguished from "the Ancient of Days" (or "Transferrer of Days," as the Concordant Version OT (CVOT) has it) before Whom He is presented and from Whom He receives His Kingdom and authority.

This "Transferrer of Days" is portrayed as a single, personal being (:9), and is clearly a title for Yahweh, the God of Daniel and his people (Daniel 9:4, 9, 13). It is Yahweh Who is also (and more frequently) re-

ferred to in Daniel as the "Most High" or "the Supreme" (Daniel 3:26; 4:2, 17, 24-25, 32, 34; 5:18, 21; 7:18, 22, 25, 27).

So in Psalm 110:1 and Daniel 7:13 we find that the Messiah would be a man who, although highly exalted far above all other human beings and given authority that is second only to Yahweh's, is not to be identified with Yahweh Himself.

In addition to this fact, we know that it had been prophesied long before Peter's day that the Christ would be fathered by Yahweh Himself. Quoting Psalm 2:7 and II Samuel 7:1, the author of Hebrews wrote in Hebrews 1:5,

For to which of the angels did God ever say, "You are My Son, today I have begotten You?" Or again, "I will be to Him a father, and He shall be to Me a son?"

If these verses are to be understood as conveying anything meaningful, there must have been a time *before* the Messiah was begotten by God and became God's Son. When did God become the Father of Jesus?

(to be continued)

About the Author:

Aaron was born and raised in Florence, SC and brought up in the Presbyterian church. His passion for the study of Scriptures began during his late elementary/early middle school years. By his last year of middle school he fully embraced his "Reformed heritage" and became a full-fledged, five-point Calvinist, remaining so throughout high school and into college.

He spent two years at Anderson College (now Anderson University), and was an active member of the Reformed University Fellowship group. However, it was during this time that he became increasingly troubled by the very theological beliefs that he had become so eager to share and defend. Through a difficult journey he eventually came to see and embrace an understanding of the salvation of all.

He currently works as a Physical Therapist Assistant at a Florence hospital, while living his life and conducting his ministry outside of organized religion. He married his wife Chrissy in 2007 and they have a daughter, Miriam.

TOPICS:

Major: Jesus Christ (Pre-Existence of); Trinity

Issue 707





The Genesis of Jesus Christ

The book of the **generation** of Jesus Christ, the son of David, the son of Abraham (Matthew 1:1).

In the early 1990s I began to question the orthodox teaching of the Trinity. It was so intertwined with my overall understanding of the Scriptures that it was quite a while before I was even prepared to do a thorough study of it. Even then it would be a long and detailed investigation of what the Scriptures actually had to say on this foundational subject.

The conclusion of my research was that Paul was exact in his statement that "there is one God, the Father ... and one Lord, Jesus Christ" (I Corinthians 8:6, Concordant). The only absolute God is the Father, and He has no equals. The Lord Jesus Christ is a part of His creation; the Spirit is an expression meaning God's spirit.1

Additionally, at that time, my personal studies also

led me to reject the traditional orthodox doctrine known as the "Pre-Existence of Christ." This is a teaching that Christ had existed prior to His "incarnation." This "Pre-Existence" doctrine is vitally connected with that of the Trinity.

However, subsequent to my own studies, I began to read the works of A.E. Knoch,² a teacher from the past that shared many of my own Scripture understandings. He, though rejecting the doctrine of the Trinity itself, did however embrace the "Pre-Existence" doctrine. This caused me pause, allowing enough time to pass to fully test my understanding.

The succeeding years have only proved to strengthen my belief that, in the very first verse of the Greek Scriptures, Matthew was exact in his declaration that his "Gospel" was about "the generation of Jesus Christ" (Matthew 1:1).

The Greek word translated "generation" in the King James Version is γένεσις, "genesis." This word is recognizable as the assigned name of the first book of the Hebrew Scriptures: Genesis. It is defined as:

- BECOMING (*Knoch*)
- source, origin (*Thayer*)
- production, generation, coming into being (Lid*dell-Scott-Iones*)

Our English word "generation" is defined as: "production; formation" (Noah Webster, 1828 Dictionary).

^{2. [}Editor:] See his booklet The Pre-Existence of Christ at Study Shelf.



StudyShelf hosts a collection of online Bible study articles from the past pages of the weekly publication, the Bible Student's Notebook. In addition to personal use, they can be printed out and read together as a family at your dinner table, or at other family times. Appropriate ones can be read with guests in your homes. They can be used to give to others with whom you are fellowshipping.

www.StudyShelf.com/Articles.htm

^{1. [}Editor:] For a clear, concise study of these truths, see the book No Equals! Reasons Why Our Heavenly Father has No Equals or Co-Equals & Why "the Holy Spirit" Is Not a "Person" Separate from the Only True God, the Father (Bible Student's Press™), available through Study Shelf, or see the order form under "Other Authors."

Turning the page from Malachi to Matthew the first phrase we read is,

The book of the **generation** of Jesus Christ.

This is the divine book of introduction to Jesus Christ. By simply using the various definitions we can read these words as,

The book of the **genesis** of Jesus Christ.

The book of the **becoming** of Jesus Christ.

The book of the **source** of Jesus Christ.

The book of the **origin** of Jesus Christ.

The book of the production of Jesus Christ.

The book of the **coming into being** of Jesus Christ.

Simply put: to have the "generation" of Jesus Christ take place prior to the account of Matthew's Gospel, is to have His "genesis" premature. It is my firm belief that the orthodox doctrine of the "Pre-Existence of Christ" ultimately does a great dishonor to our Lord - to His birth, His life, His faith, His obedience, to

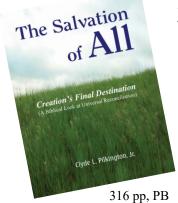
His suffering, His death, His resurrection, and His exaltation.

Beginning with this issue we will be providing our readers with an exceptional 12-part series entitled, Was Jesus Christ Alive Before His Life on Earth Began? It is written by our dear brother Aaron Welch. We certainly appreciate the tremendous dedication to study and countless hours it has taken him to produce this invaluable work. We highly recommend this God-lauding and Christ-honoring study. It may require unfamiliar depths of contemplation, but we believe it will be well worth your time, effort and potential discomfort.

For the truth of God alone,



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The Salvation of ALL: Creation's Final Destination

(A Biblical Look at Universal Reconciliation)

by — Clyde L. Pilkington, Jr.

The Gospel of our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ is truly better "Good News" than we could ever have imagined. It is far more glorious than religion would ever have us believe. The Salvation of All is a book about a "Good News" that will reach its final goal in the salvation of all mankind.

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"The Salvation of All" - An excellent to be discussed among believers. - IL book. – *MI*

The Salvation of All is the most clearly written testimony to God's ultimate grace and mercy towards man that I've seen in print. – VA

I'm sure I'll be referring back to The Salvation of All for years to come. The issues you addressed in the book need

The Salvation of All is worthy reading for people on both sides of the doctrinal fence. Regardless of whether or not those who read it will agree with you, I believe they will respect you for not serving up the regurgitated fodder that fills the shelves of religious bookstores. Very thought provoking! I'll be recommending it to many people! – FL

The Salvation of All, what an amazing book. I feel the veil has been lifted and finally I see clearly the glory of our Lord and Savior. What a joy to know the truth and understand just how amazing our God truly is to all. You are a sincere man of God whom I trust and respect. -VA



God Is Cove

by — Bob Evely

"God is love" (I John 4:16).

od has revealed to us that the most important principle is LOVE. All commandments are summed up in love. God is love.

Because we have been led astray by "the Church" and by incorrect Bible translations, we know that God is love but are forced to reconcile this with the "fact" that many will be condemned to hell forever. We teach that, while God is love, it is necessary that some are condemned to hell forever, because God is holy and cannot bear the presence of sin.

So God must be portrayed in these two ways ... as a God of love, and as a God of justice and holiness. God loves like a father, but He is OK with placing many of His creation into hell forever if they choose to reject Him in this short lifetime.

My point in this entire book has been to show you that this is not the case. God is love, God is holy and God is righteous and interested in justice. But as I have attempted to show in this work, all of these characteristics work together to accomplish God's ultimate purpose: the salvation of all mankind.

To proclaim that God is quite willing to cast many into an eternal torment is teaching something that is totally inconsistent with God's character.

— At the End of the Ages

[Editor:] Our dear friend and brother Bob Evely, of Wilmore, KY, is author of the very helpful book, At the End of the Ages: The Abolition of Hell (see order form under Other Authors, or at Studyshelf.com). Previous articles by Bob Evely in the Bible Student's Notebook include:

- Something's Wrong with This Gospel, #145;
- The Orthodoxy of Hell, #166;
- The Salvation of All: What Led Me to This Belief? #175;
- How Can You Be Right, and the Whole Church Wrong?#227;
- All? or Just Some? #314;
- Adam and Christ, #391;
- Notes Taken from: "E.W. Bullinger: A Biography," #392;
- The Consummation, #603;
- Book Review & Notes on "The Original Bible Restored" by Ernest L. Martin: Part 1 #648; Part 2 #649; Part 3 #650.

Bible Student's Notebook™

Paul Our Guide – Christ Our Goal

ISSN: 1936-9360 Volume 29, No. 707 – April 23, 2018 Scripture education in a semi-weekly format!

This *free* electronic publication is dedicated to:

- the proclamation of the riches of God's abundant, exceeding grace (Romans 5:20; 11:6; Ephesians 1:7);
- the affirmation that God will save all mankind through the death, burial and resurrection of Christ (I Timothy 2:3, 4; 4:10; Titus 2:11);
- the "preaching of Jesus Christ, according to the revelation of the mystery, which was kept secret in ages past" (Romans 16:25);
- true freedom and liberty apart from law (Galatians 5:1);
- the organic nature of the Body of Christ (I Corinthians 12);
- the distinct message and ministry of Paul, the apostle to the nations (Ephesians 1:1-3);
- the importance of receiving all whom Christ has received (Romans 14-15);
- the recovery of rich Biblical truth that has too long remained hidden under the veils of traditionalism, prejudice, misunderstanding and fear (Mark 7:7, 13);
- the completeness of the believer in Christ (Colossians 2:10), with:
 - total freedom from sins (Colossians 1:14);

- union in His death, burial and resurrection (Romans 6);
- adult sonship position (Galatians 4).

We do not claim infallibility for the contents of this publication. Our readers are asked to be as the Bereans and search the Scriptures (Acts 17:10-11; I Thessalonians 5:21).

This publication is not connected with any "church," "denomination," "movement," "organization," "mission," "creed," "meeting," "school," "conference" or "fellowship."

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For definitions of abbreviations/acronyms, see index after the order form.

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ABBREVIATION KEY

Scripture Version

CV: Concordant Literal Version

DAR: Darby Translation DT: Dabhar Translation FF: Ferrar Fenton Bible KJV: King James Version **NET:** New English Translation RE: Rotherham's Emphasized Bible

WT: Weymouth Translation *YLT*: Young's Literal Translation

Reference Sources

AA: Analytical Analysis (Welch)

BDB: Brown-Driver-Briggs Hebrew Lexicon CB: Companion Bible Notes & Appendixes (Bullinger)

CC: Concordant Commentary (Knoch)

CKC: Concordant Keyword Concordance (Knoch)

CL: A Critical Lexicon and Concordance

(Bullinger)

CWS: Complete Word Study Dictionary (Zodhiates)

FoS: Figures of Speech (Bullinger) SEC: Strong's Exhaustive Concordance TGL: Thayer's Greek-English Lexicon

UR: Unsearchable Riches

VED: Vine's Expository Dictionary YAC: Young's Analytical Concordance

Reference Notations

cf. – compare *e.g.* – for example et al. - and others

etc. – et cetera (and so on) ff. – and the following

i.e., – that is