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Bible Doctrine I

Radical, Biblical, Apostolic, Christianity



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BIBLE DOCTRINE I

Elohim and the Plural Passages

The first time the word “God” is mentioned in Scripture (Genesis 1:1), it is translated from the Hebrew ELOHIM. This word, which appears 2,250 times in the Old Testament, is translated “God,” when used in reference to the one true God, but it is also translated “god,” when used in reference to a false god or “gods,” when referring to a multiplicity of false deities, “god” or “gods” in reference to human beings, “angels,” judges,” “mighty,” in reference to a human prince and to thunder, and “great:” in reference to Rachel’s competition with her sister.

To understand how ELOHIM is used of the true God, it is essential to understand how it can be used in such a variety of ways. ELOHIM is a masculine plural noun. ELOHIM, the singular form of the word, appears 54 times and is also used in reference to both, the true God and to false gods. ELOAH is from the Hebrew EL, which appears 226 times. EL signifies strength and power.

The “im” ending on a Hebrew word (as in ELOHIM) makes the word plural, like putting an “s” on the end of many English words. But, unlike the English language, the plural form of a Hebrew word may not signify more than one. Though the Hebrew plural can certainly refer to more than one (and the Hebrew language also has a dual ending, signifying two), the Hebrew also uses plural forms when only one subject is in view, to indicate intensity (something like the “est” ending on some English words), fullness, something that flows, or multiplicity of attributes.

C.L. Seow, points out that when ELOHIM is used “as a proper name, or when referring to Israel’s God, it is treated as singular. Elsewhere it should be translated as “gods.” When ELOHIM is used of Israel’s God, “the form of the noun is plural, but the referent is singular. This is sometimes called “plural of majesty.” Though ELOHIM is

plural, it must be accompanied by plural modifiers and plural verb forms, to function as a plural noun. If accompanied by singular modifiers and singular verb forms, it functions as a singular noun.

ELOHIM can be accurately translated two ways: the singular “God” (or “god”) or the plural “gods.” If it is translated “gods,” and in this case, the plural form of the word must not be taken to indicate a plurality of gods, but a plurality of the majestic attributes of the one true God and that He is the supremely powerful one. The plural ending, either makes a word plural, meaning more than one, or it makes a singular referent, more intense. The latter, is the case where ELOHIM refers to the one God. Grammatically, then, ELOHIM does not suggest that Israel’s God is plural or more than one. If the reason for the plural ending is to indicate more than one, the word must be translated “gods.” This is not acceptable to the monotheism of the Old Testament. (See, for example, Deuteronomy 6:4).

Whenever ELOHIM refers to the one true God, it is always accompanied by singular verbs, although ELOHIM is plural. Whenever ELOHIM refers to more than one false god, it is accompanied by plural verbs. This is significant. Grammatically, when ELOHIM refers to the one true God only, although the word is plural. If the reason ELOHIM is used of the true God is to indicate He is more than one, plural verbs would have to be used.

For example, in the first verse of the Bible, the third person masculine singular verb “created:” is used with ELOHIM. Since the verb is singular, it is required that He who did the creating, is singular. In this case, the only option left to explain the plural form of ELOHIM, is that ELOHIM refers to the fullness and intensity of the many majestic attributes of the one true God.

In Exodus 32:4, where ELOHIM is used of a plurality of false gods, the verb, “brought...up out:” is third person common plural. The plural verb demands that ELOHIM be referring to more than

one false god. Although in this case, only one golden calf was made, it apparently represented to the Israelites the worship of cows, considered sacred by the Egyptians. Thus, the one calf represented to them, more than just itself; it represented the gods of the Egyptians. In Deuteronomy 4:28, a series of third person masculine plural verbs, “see,” “hear,” “eat,” and “smell,” are used to describe the inabilities of false gods (ELOHIM). This demonstrates, that if the intention of ELOHIM is to indicate more than one, plural verbs will be used. If the intention of ELOHIM, is to indicate only one, singular verbs are used.

It is helpful to note, that when the inspired Greek of the New Testament quotes from an Old Testament reference where ELOHIM is used of the one true God, the Greek THEOS (God) is singular. (See Psalm 45:6-7; Hebrews 1:8-9). When the New Testament quotes and Old Testament reference, where ELOHIM refers to people or false gods, the plural form of THEOS is used. (See Psalm 82:6; John 10:34-35 and Exodus 32:1; Acts 7:40). The Greek languages does not use plurals in the same way as the Hebrew, that is, to indicate intensity, fullness, and plurality of attributes. Since both, the Hebrew and the Greek are inspired, if the point of ELOHIM, when used of the true God, was to indicate God is more than one, the Greek would use the plural form of the noun. The fact that the Greek uses the singular THEOS where the Hebrew scriptures use the plural ELOHIM of the true God, settles any question as to the singularity of the true God. Indeed, in the example of Psalm 45:6, ELOHIM is used of the Messiah alone. There is only one Messiah, but the plural noun is used, to indicate His immeasurable majesty.

All of this helps us to understand the plural “us” in Genesis 1:26; 3:22; 11:7, and Isaiah 6:8. Some might suppose that these plural pronouns, indicate more than one god or that God is somehow, more than one. But the grammar of the passages, indicates otherwise.

In Genesis 1:26, ELOHIM (plural) said (third masculine singular), “Let us make (first person common plural) man (noun masculine singular) in our image (“image” is a

masculine singular noun, with a first person common plural suffix), after our likeness (“likeness” is a feminine singular noun, with a first person common plural suffix).

Grammatically, the words, “make,” “us,” and “our” in this verse, cannot refer to ELOHIM alone, for the verb directly connected with ELOHIM (“said”) is singular. The doctrine of verbal plenary inspiration, means the Bible is inspired, even to its very words, and inspiration extends to every Word in the Bible. This means, even verb tense and number is inspired. If ELOHIM had intended here, to include only Himself in His address, He would have used a singular verb and pronouns. If ELOHIM were more than one, it would be appropriate to use the plural form of “make” and the plural pronouns, “us” and “our,” but in that case, the verb, “said” would be plural, as well.

Thus, the grammar makes clear, that when the singular ELOHIM spoke, He included someone else in His statement. The Jewish people, who are, of course, strictly monotheistic, have long held, that Genesis 1:26, ELOHIM addressed the angels in a courteous consideration for the attendants at His heavenly court when He said, “Let us make man in our image, after our likeness.” This is not unreasonable, for Job 38:7, indicates the angels were present at creation, rejoicing in the works of God. Others suppose we should take the plural pronouns, like the plural ELOHIM, as “plural of majesty.” Ezra 4:18, is appealed to, for support. Here, in response to a letter, King Artaxerxes says, “The letter which ye sent unto us hath been plainly read before me.” The letter was to Artaxerxes alone, and in the same breath, he uses both, a plural and a singular pronoun of himself. Historically, kings of the earth have used plural pronouns of themselves. Perhaps, that is the use the Great King makes of a plural verb and plural pronouns, in the few verses of Scripture, where they appear. But if so, one is left to wonder why, in thousands of cases, ELOHIM uses singular verbs and pronouns of Himself, and why He would use plural verbs and nouns, in only four verses in the entire Bible. Why would He not use, either singular verbs and pronouns exclusively, or plural verbs or pronouns exclusively? The sparse use of plural verbs and pronouns, must indicate some specific, limited purpose. The simplest explanation, and the one which agrees with the inspired grammar, most closely, is that in these few verses, ELOHIM is

graciously including others, angelic beings, in His address. Angels did not actually make man, anymore than believers today, actually work miracles (see John 14:12; Matthew 10:8); God has graciously allowed us, to be laborers together with Him (1 Corinthians 3:9). Perhaps there is some similarity here, to the way God included the angels, in His work.

But regardless of the exact meaning of Genesis 1:26, it cannot mean ELOHIM is more than one. In Exodus 20:2, the one God of Israel declared, “I am the LORD your GOD.” The word, “LORD” is “JEHOVAH,” the third person singular form of the Hebrew verb, “to be” (HYH). “JEHOVAH,” means “He is.” Again, a singular word is connected to ELOHIM, which is plural. Grammatically, the meaning of “I am the LORD your God” cannot be, “I am the “He is gods.” A singular word cannot have a plural object, unless in keeping with common Hebrew usage - the point of the plural, is to indicate intensity, fullness, or multiplicity of attributes, not plurality of persons or things.

Since every verse, leading up to Genesis 1:26, uses singular verbs and pronouns (see the singular pronouns in verses 5 and 10), exclusively of the creative work of God, and a singular verb (“said”) in verse 26, the introduction of a plural verb (“make”) and plural pronouns (“us” and “our”) in verse 26, must signify the fact, that the singular God is including others in His address. Since there were no other intelligent beings created up, until that time, except the angels, His words must have been addressed to them.

Genesis 3:22, has a grammatical construction, similar to 1:26. The LORD (third person, singular form of YHWH) God (ELOHIM) said (third person masculine singular). “Behold, the man is become as one of us (first person common plural), to know good and evil.” Grammatically, the “us” must include someone other than God, for a plural pronoun cannot have a singular antecedent. Again, He must have included the angels in His address; they certainly were aware of matters of good and evil, since Lucifer had rebelled against God, prior to this (See Ezekiel 28:11-16). The fact that, after His statement, “man is become as one of us,” God placed cherubim (angels) at the east of the Garden of Eden with a flaming sword, to prevent men from returning to the Garden,

supports the idea, that God used the plural “us,” to include angels in His conversation.

The grammar of Genesis 11:6-7, is even more telling. Here, ELOHIM does not appear. JEHOVAH (translated “LORD”), whose name is the third person singular form of the verb, “to be,” is recorded as having said (third person masculine singular), “Go to (second person masculine singular), let us go down (first person common plural) and there confound (first person common plural) their language.” It is fascinating to note, that the word, translated “go to” (HAVAH) is an imperative, a command. It is a second person masculine singular imperative, which is understood to mean “YOU (second person singular) go to.” It could also be translated “come,” as in an imperative command, “You come.” The understood “you” is singular, not [plural]. Grammatically, at this point, Jehovah is speaking to another person, giving that person a command. There is nothing here, according to the grammar, to indicate one divine Person is speaking to another. It would seem strange indeed, if one divine Person COMMANDED another divine Person to do something. Instead, Jehovah is speaking to someone else. When Jehovah says, “Let us go down,” the verb form is first person common plural. Thus, when JEHOVAH (the one true God, whose name is a third person singular verbal form) goes down to confound the language of the people, He is accompanied by someone else. In this case, He was apparently accompanied by only one angel.

This should not be thought strange, for in Genesis 18, Abraham was visited by three “men” (verse 2), one of whom turned out to be the LORD (“Jehovah” [a theophany; God in angel form]) (verses 10, 13-15, 17) and the other two, of whom, were angels (verses 16; 19:1). If God wishes to be accompanied by angels in any of His activities, that is His prerogative. If He wishes to speak to them, to include them in His activity, He will doubtless, use plural words to do so.

The only other case in Scripture where a plural pronoun is used, in a way some think, implies plurality in God, is Isaiah 6:8. Here Isaiah says, “Also I heard the voice of the Lord, saying, Whom shall I send (first person common singular), and who will go for us (first person common plural)?” The plural pronoun, “us” cannot have the singular “I,” as

its antecedent. It seems apparent, from the context of Isaiah 6:1-7, that there is a great deal of angelic activity, in this vision. Apparently, the one true God, is again, including the heavenly angelic court, in His address. It is significant, that only He, God, does the sending, but someone is needed to go, on behalf of all heaven's inhabitants. God does not say, "Whom shall we send," but, "Whom shall I send." The angels' concern for God's Holiness in the context, underscores the fact, that Isaiah's mission to backslidden Israel was of interest to them, as well as, to God. Indeed, the conversation Isaiah heard in verse 8, was apparently the Lord, addressing the angels. In Isaiah 6:7, an angel speaks directly to Isaiah. There is no indication in verse 8, that the Lord was speaking directly to him. Instead, the Lord is addressing His heavenly court, and Isaiah volunteers his service. This strengthens the view, that in Genesis 1:26, 3:22, and 11:7, God is addressing angels.

That God does indeed address His heavenly court, is indicated by 1 Kings 22:19-23. Here, Jehovah is sitting on His throne with all the heaven's host (angels) standing on His right and left. Jehovah asks, "Who shall persuade Ahab, that he may go up and fall at Ramoth-gilead?" Various angels answered in different ways, until one came forth and stood before Jehovah and said, "I will persuade him." Jehovah answered, "Wherewith?" The angel responded, "I will go forth, and I will be a lying spirit in the mouth of all his prophets." Jehovah answered, "Thou shall persuade him, and prevail also: go forth, and do so."

The grammar of Scripture is inspired. When ELOHIM refers to the one true God, singular verbs and pronouns are used. When the one true God reaches out to include others in His activities, plural verbs and pronouns are used. These do not indicate any plurality of gods or that the true God is more than one. "When (ELOHIM) refers to the God of Israel, it is always singular in concept, even though it has a masculine plural ending."

Who Were the Sons of God in Genesis 6?

Genesis 6:1 And it came to pass, when men began to multiply on the face of the earth, and daughters were born unto them, 2 That the sons of God saw the daughters of men that they were fair; and they took them wives of all which they chose. 3 And the LORD said, My spirit shall not always strive with man, for that He also is flesh: yet, His days shall be an hundred and twenty years. 4 There were giants in the earth in those days; and also after that, when the sons of God came in unto the daughters of men, and they bare children to them, the same became mighty men, which were of old, men of renown.

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Who were the sons of God in Genesis 6? This has been a highly disputed passage for many years now, although it apparently, was not originally. To the early Jews, this was referring to angels. For a few thousand years, this was the favored interpretation, and it was not until only a few hundred years ago, that rationalism and the modern mind has ruled this out, as being impossible. First, I must say, that I think it may be a little presumptuous to make such a dogmatic claim about something we know so little about, especially when the evidence is so strongly in favor of this view. The only thing I can find that would seem to oppose this, would be Jesus' statement that angels do not marry (Matthew. 22:30). But Jesus does not say that they cannot reproduce. Now to us, reproduction without marriage seems like it must be wrong, and for us it is. Marriage is the institution, that God gave man to reproduce life, here on earth. But, we do not know what type of system God has ordained for the angels in heaven. Animals mate and reproduce without marriage, so it would seem, at least feasible, that angels may do so. We just do not have enough knowledge of the angelic realm, to make hard statements of what they do and do not do, based merely, on our assumptions.

The alternative interpretation of this verse, is that the daughters of men, referred to Cain's descendants and the sons of God, referred to Seth's descendants. It would seem strange that the phrase, "the daughters of men (*Adam*)," would refer to the specific sinful lineage of Cain, when even Jesus Himself, is called the Son of Man.

Consider the words of this commentary:

The literal translation of this verse is, “And the sons of the ELOHIM saw the daughters of the Adam that they were good (beautiful); and they took to them wives whomsoever they chose.” . . . Now, it seems undeniable that the Adam here spoken of, were the Sethites. The phrase occurs in the history of Noah, just after giving his descent from Adam; Cain is absolutely passed over, even in the account of the birth of Seth, who is described as Adam’s firstborn, such as legally he was The Canaanites have already been depicted as violent and lustful, and their history has been brought to an end. Moreover, over, in verse 3, “the Adam with whom God will not always strive” is certainly the family of Seth, who, though the chosen people and possessors of the birthright, are nevertheless described, as falling into evil ways.

Furthermore, it does not seem likely, that the sons of God would refer to men in the Old Testament who had not been redeemed. It is by the baptism of the Holy Spirit (Spirit of adoption, Romans 8:15), that we are adopted as the sons of God. Israel was seen as being a corporate *son* of God (Ex. 4:22,23), but never as *sons* individually. But, we do see clearly that angels are called the Sons of God (Job 1:6; 2:1; 38:7).

This chapter goes on to say, that when God looked upon the earth that, “behold, it was corrupt; for all flesh had corrupted his way upon the earth. And God said unto Noah, The end of all flesh is come before me; for the earth is filled with violence through them; and, behold, I will destroy them with the earth.” (v.12, 13). All flesh was corrupt, but it says that, “Noah was a just man and perfect in his **generations**” (emphasis added). Could this be saying, that Noah and his family had not interbred with these others, and that one of the reasons that God destroyed the earth, was so that He could start mankind over with an uncorrupted race?

2 Peter 2:4 For if God spared not the angels that sinned, but cast them down to hell, and delivered them into chains of darkness, to be reserved unto judgment; 5 And spared not the old world, but saved Noah the eighth person, a preacher of

righteousness, bringing in the flood upon the world of the ungodly; 6 And turning the cities of Sodom and Gomorrah into ashes condemned them with an overthrow, making them an ensample unto those that after should live ungodly;

Now another fall than that of about Satan and his angels must be in view here. They are still awaiting their imprisonment, and are now free to roam the earth (Matt. 25:41; Rev. 20:10). So where does Peter get this idea from? The most probable interpretation, is that this is in line with the following two verses. If that is the case, then it is interesting that he speaks of the flood in the very next verse, which is recorded right after the account of the Sons of God in Genesis. When God decided to take action and He “spared not the angels,” He also took action on the world and “spared not the old world.” He goes on to talk of Sodom and Gomorrah, which story also follow afterwards in chronology. Furthermore, this entire chapter has much to say about lust and fornication, as does Jude.

*Jude 6 You also know that the angels who did not keep within their proper domain, but abandoned their own place of residence, he has kept in eternal chains in utter darkness, locked up for the judgment of the great Day. 7 So, also Sodom and Gomorrah and the neighboring towns, since they indulged in sexual immorality and pursued unnatural desire **in a way similar to these angels**, are now displayed as an example by suffering the punishment of eternal fire. 8 Yet, these men, as a result of their dreams, defile the flesh, reject authority, and insult the glorious ones. -- NET Bible (emphasis added)*

This passage seems to me, to give the most credence to the belief, that the Sons of God, in Genesis, were indeed angels. Jude says, that they kept not their first estate (*arche*, principality), but left their own habitation (*oiketerion*, habitation, dwelling place). Now what other realms do we know of, but the spiritual and the physical? It appears, that these angels left the heavenly region that God had appointed for them and ventured into the realm of man in a way that was forbidden. The next verse says, that

Sodom and Gomorrah did “in like manner with them,” giving themselves over to fornication and going after “strange flesh.” The sin of Sodom and Gomorrah was the same as “them,” the angels. We see the people of Sodom and Gomorrah going after “strange flesh,” when the angels came to destroy the cities (Gen. 19:24).

The next verse also states, that, “Likewise also, these filthy dreamers defile the flesh.” Each time, sexual immorality with the “flesh” is involved with their sin, and as in 2 Peter, the theme, or context of the chapter has more to say about lust. Now, it seems that both, Peter and Jude, get this fuller story from the book of Enoch, which Jude actually quotes from in verses 14 and 15, and Peter may allude to elsewhere. The book of Enoch, tells the story of the angels interbreeding with people in great detail, even giving the name of several of them. The apocryphal book of Tobit, presents this story also. Now, although these books may not be Scripture, that is no reason to dismiss them, as not being accurate accounts of history. Their story, coupled with everything previously mentioned, seems to build a strong case for the idea, that the Sons of God in Genesis 6, actually were angels.

Ye Are Gods

Surely, “Ye are gods” is one of the strangest statements recorded in the Bible. It is one of those verses that we simply pass over, time and time again, because of its peculiarity. We do not understand it, but we are able to live with that lack of understanding. What did Asaph mean, when he penned these words under the inspiration of the Holy Ghost, in the 82nd Psalm? What did Jesus mean, in John 10, when He quoted Asaph to the unbelieving Jews?

First, we must look at Psalm 82, to get the context in which these words are found. In verse one, Asaph declared that God judges among the *gods*. This word “gods” is the same Hebrew word, used in verse six. Verses two through four, inform us as to the identity of these gods, whom God judges. They are none other than judges, or

magistrates of the land. They were rulers who were perverting judgment through their office and authority. Because of this, it is declared, "I have said, Ye are gods; and all of you are children of the most High. But ye shall die like men, and fall like one of the princes" (Psalm 82:6-7). The Lord had given these rulers their authority, but they abused it (Daniel 4:25, 30, 34-37; 5:18-22; Romans 13:1-4). As a result of their evil stewardship over the offices of God, the Lord said, they would fall like one of the princes. In this passage, then, those who are called gods are human judges in the land of Israel.

The Hebrew word translated "gods" is *Elohim*. This is the masculine plural form of the root word *El*, denoting strength and power. Elohim is used 2,250 times in the Old Testament. What is interesting about this word, is that it does not always refer to the one true God, and is not even always translated "god." It is also attributed to angels (Psalm 8:5), and human judges (Exodus 21:6). It is translated as "mighty" in reference to a human prince (Genesis 23:6), thunder (Exodus 9:28), "great in reference to Rachel's competition with Leah for children (Genesis 30:8). The reason God called the judges "gods" was because of their strength and power of position, not because of any deity within them. As I have just demonstrated, the word does not always imply deity, whether it be false or true, but can refer to different offices, peoples, or concepts.

Now, we will examine Jesus' use of this verse in John 10:34. The event that prompted Jesus' quotation of this verse was the Jews' response to His claim of deity. Not only did He claim deity, but He claimed to be Jehovah Himself (Deuteronomy 6:4; John 10:30-33). The Jews did not understand Jesus' statement, "I and my Father are one," to mean that Jesus was in unity with God's purpose. They understood Him to be claiming, that He and God, were one in essence and substance. To the Jews, this was blasphemy. Blasphemy received the death penalty, by stoning, according to the Law of Moses. That is why they took up stones to stone Him.

Jesus knew that it was His claim to be God Himself that infuriated the Jews enough to kill Him. If Jesus only meant that His oneness with the Father was of purpose, and

not of essence, this would have been the perfect time to explain to the Jews, that He was not claiming to be God, but merely a demigod, or second God, sent from the Lord. Instead He quoted Psalm 82:6 saying, “Is it not written in your law, I said, Ye are gods? If he called them gods, unto whom the Word of God came, and the Scripture cannot be broken; Say ye of Him, whom the Father hath sanctified, and sent into the world, Thou blasphemest; because I said, I am the Son of God?”

The point Jesus was making here, was that since “the Scripture uses the word, *god* as applied to magistrates, it settles the question that it is *right* to apply the term to those in office and authority. If applied to *them*, it may be to others in similar offices. It cannot, therefore, be *blasphemy* to use this word, as applicable to a personage so much more exalted than mere magistrates, as the Messiah.” If the magistrates could be called by the same word used for the true God because they were leaders to whom the Word of God came (was entrusted), then Jesus should also be able to claim the title for Jehovah, since He spoke the Words of God. Jesus’ argument to the Jews, was that if mere humans could carry the title of “gods,” in the Holy Scriptures, then they should not object to His claim, either.

With this, I believe we might also view a touch of sarcasm in Jesus’ Words. In a sense, He said, “Why can’t I be God, just because I’m a Man? Even your own Scriptures declare men to be gods?” Jesus was not minimizing His identity to be something less than God, but seems to be mocking the Jews with their own Scriptures. The Jews continually came at Jesus with the Scriptures, trying to destroy His claims, so Jesus used their own methods on them.

If Jesus did not intend to be at least a little sarcastic with the Jews, then His statement would have put Him on the same level as a magistrate or leader, and not as the Son of God, as He claimed to be (John 10:30, 36). If Jesus was equating Himself with a magistrate or leader, He could not have claimed to be in the Father, and have the Father in Him (John 10:38). This was a special identity and relationship, unique to Jesus Himself. No mere man could claim anything similar, without in fact, committing

blasphemy against the God of heaven.

Yahweh or Jehovah (Jesus): What is God's Name?

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In the OT, God declared that His name was YHYH (Exodus 6:3; 20:7; see also 3:14). Scholars believe that “YHYH,” or “Jehovah” is the third person, singular form, of the ancient Hebrew verb, “haya,” meaning, “to be.” The basic thrust of this verb describes the state of existence. As the third person form of *haya*, Jehovah, literally means “He is,” or “He exists.” It is a description of who God is. He is the self-existing one.

To understand the import of this, we must understand the nature of Hebrew names. Hebrew names are not simply nominal devices, used to identify one person from another, as they are in the English language; they are actually sentences in themselves. It is similar to how the Indians named their children, “rising sun” or “running bear.” These were not quite complete sentences, but they were descriptions (partial sentences). God's name, JEHOVAH, is a full sentence. It just so happens to be the shortest sentence in any language -- “I am.”

Has JEHOVAH always been God's name? While it is possible, it is unlikely. God existed, long before the Hebrew language, so it would seem unlikely, that God has always had a Hebrew name. It must be remembered, that God did not reveal a name to the Hebrew people that they were unfamiliar with; God revealed Himself, to the Hebrew people, using existing Hebrew vocabulary (*haya*) to express to His chosen people, who “He is” (the pun is intended). It was a word/sentence, they were familiar with, because it already existed in their language, before God declared it to be His name.

I am persuaded that God said His name was JEHOVAH, only because, He was speaking to Hebrew people. If God would have revealed Himself to English speaking people, He would not have said His name was “JEHOVAH,” but rather, “I am,” because the Hebrew “JEHOVAH” and the English, “I am” are same verb. The difference is not in

the meaning, but in the language through which the meaning (“I am”) is conveyed. The name *JEHOVAH*, does not “tag” God for identity purposes (for God does not need a name), but rather, describes to us, who God is. God was not eternally called, “JEHOVAH.” He was simply Himself, the self-existing one.

I am further persuaded that the name God, revealed to the Hebrews, was for the sake of revealing something about Himself and His nature to man. He is the “I am,” the existing one.” It is for this reason, that it is in vain, when people make a big ordeal over the manner in which we should pronounce God’s name. Some go so far as to say, that if you do not pronounce God’s name correctly, you cannot be saved. While this is not to say that God’s name is unimportant, it is to say, that His name describes who He is, and discovering who God is, takes precedent over the exact pronunciation of the words used to describe Him. When God communicated His name to the Hebrews, it was not so they could know what to call Him, or how to pronounce His name properly, but to reveal something about Himself to them.

The name, “Jesus” found exclusively, in the NT, is a continuation of the revealed name of God, found throughout the OT. “Jesus” is not a new name. The name of Jesus encompasses the fullness of God’s revelation of Himself to man -- as Saviour. The name “Jesus,” is so important to us, because it is an expanded form of the same Divine name, revealed in the OT. It is not a different name. It is only greater, in that, it more fully expresses who God is to us -- Saviour. Truly God’s name is Jesus, because God’s name is JEHOVAH. We confess that God’s name is JEHOVAH, every time we confess Him, as Jesus.

Is Jesus God the Father?

“Hear O Israel, Jehovah is our God. Jehovah is one” (Deut. 6:4).

There is only one God. This is the emphatic teaching of the Old Testament. The

Jews were the people who knew their God, if anyone did (John 4:22), and they had no concept of persons within the Godhead. In the book of Isaiah, God makes some very strong statements, which I believe, do not allow for a Trinitarian understanding. In Isaiah 44:6 & 8, God makes the statement, "*I am first and I am the last, And there is no God besides Me. . . Is there a God beside me? yea, there is no God; I know not any.*" Could Scripture be any plainer than this? In verse 24, He states, "*I, the LORD, am the maker of all things, Stretching out the heavens by Myself And spreading out the earth all alone.*" If language means anything, then "*by Myself*" and "*alone*" mean, that there was no other person present. If God is not claiming that He is absolutely one, here, then what stronger language would one suggest to convey this? Why would God be so emphatic about oneness, if in reality, He were three persons? Would not these statements be misleading? In the next chapter, He states, "*I am the LORD, and there is no other; Besides Me, there is no God . . . That men may know from the rising to the setting of the sun That there is no one besides Me. I am the LORD, and there is no other, The One forming light and creating darkness, Causing well-being and creating calamity; I am the LORD, who does all these*" (Isa. 45:5-7). Once again, if God were really three persons, could He use such emphatic language as this? If we take this to be one of the members of the Trinity, speaking here, would it be honest for Him to say, "*There is no one besides Me?*" Would He not be forced to admit, that there are indeed, two other persons in the Godhead? In 46:9, God says, "*Remember the former things long past, For I am God, and there is no other; I am God, and there is no one like Me.*" In this statement, there is one person speaking (notice the singular pronouns), and that singular person says, that there is no one like Him. I do not see how it is possible to see a Trinity in these passages.

Surely, the coming of Christ, did not in any way, compromise this strict Monotheism, taught in the Old Testament. There is only one God. That God is our Father. If Jesus is that God, then Jesus is our Father. As to His deity, Jesus Christ is God the Father. Isaiah 9:6, clearly calls Him the Father. Some have argued, that this should be translated "Father of Eternity," but not one major translation translates it that way. However, even if we adopt the translation, "Father of Eternity," does that diminish the

force? Jesus is called the Father. I Corinthians 8:6, tells us that, “*to us there is but one God, the Father.*”

There is no God outside of the Father. So, in the sense, that Jesus is that God, then Jesus is the Father. Malachi 2:10, asks the question, “*Have we not all one Father? Hath not one God created us?*” So, we all have one Father, and our Father, is God. The reason we call, God our Father, is because He created us. John 1:3, Colossians 1:16, and Hebrews 1:2, tell us, that all things were created by Jesus, thereby, making *Him* our Father.

The Holy Spirit, many times, is simply referred to, as the Spirit of God. Yet, Scripture also speaks about us receiving the Spirit of Christ (Rom. 8:9; Gal. 4:6;), or simply, identifies Him as the Spirit (2 Cor. 3:17; 1 Peter 1:11), and Ephesians 4:4, tells us, that there is only one Spirit. This must all refer to the same person, the one true God. As to His deity, Jesus is the Holy Spirit. To receive Christ, is to receive the Spirit. Jesus told the disciples, “*Even the Spirit of truth . . . ye know Him; for He dwelleth with you, and shall be in you. I will not leave you comfortless: I will come to you.*” (John 14:17-18).

Now I will readily admit, that on the surface, Jesus does seem to speak of Himself and the Father, as if they were two persons. In fact, I would say, that the first indication of Trinitarian thought, began with Philip, in John 14, when he asked Jesus, “*Lord, show us the Father*” (v. 8). Jesus had been speaking of God, in a distanced way all this time, and poor Philip thought that He was speaking of another person. But, notice Jesus’ response. He almost sounded as if He were puzzled when He said, “*Have I been so long time with you, and yet, hast thou not known Me, Philip?*” (v. 9). Jesus was saying, that He Himself, was the one that Philip was asking for.

One reason that Jesus so often spoke of God in the third person, is that He did not want to appear unto men, as God, but He wanted to appear as a Man, just like one of us, as we read in Philippians 2:5-8, NIV:

5. *Your attitude should be the same as that of Christ Jesus:*
6. *Who, being in very nature God, did not consider equality with God, something to be grasped.*
7. *But made Himself nothing, taking the very nature of a servant, being made in human likeness.*
8. *And being found in appearance as a Man, He humbled Himself and became obedient to death - even death on a cross!*

Jerry Hayes explains it this way:

Many times the question is asked, "If Jesus was Father God, why did He not just say so?" The answer to this question, is so completely summed up, in Philippians 2:5-8. He was humble. He did not think it a good thing, to flaunt His deity, before men. He did not chose to appear better than man, although He was better than all men, for He was the creator of all men. He choose, instead, to have all men appear better than Himself.

When Jesus spoke of the Father, it was always in a way that distanced His own identity from that of Father God. This action was in keeping with His character of not appearing as God, although He was.

Concerning this very subject, Jesus made the following promise: "*These things have I spoken unto you in Proverbs, but the time cometh, when I shall not more speak unto you in Proverbs, but I shall shew, you plainly of the Father:* (John 16:25). Paul referred to this same event of revelation, when he wrote unto Timothy, "*Which in His times He shall shew, who is the blessed and only Potentate, the King of Kings, and the Lord of Lords; Who only hath immortality, dwelling in the light which no man hath, seen, nor can see: to whom be honour and power everlasting. Amen*" (1 Timothy 6:15-16).

At the time of this great revelation, may we all bow, low at His feet and whisper in hushed tones of adoration, the confession of Thomas, “*The Lord of Me and the God of Me!*”

But that still leaves the question: Why does the New Testament make a distinction, at times? The answer to this, goes back to the dual nature of Jesus. In the capacity of being fully Man, He was distinct from God. Not just distinct from the Father, but from being God, at all. This is why we can see references to the *God of Jesus Christ* (Matt. 27:46; John 20:17; Eph. 1:17). This is obviously, not the *God of God*. It is the *God of a Man*. Jesus is called a Man, over and over, (Acts 2:22; 13:38; 1 Tim. 2:5). As a man, there were things He did not know (Mark 13:32), there were things He could not do (Mark 6:5), He could only be in one place, at one time, (John 16:7), He could be tempted (Heb. 4:15), He could thirst (John 19:28), and He could die (John 19:33).

So, from this point of view, He was distinct from God, and could be spoken of, that way. But, from another point of view, He was fully God and could be called such (John 20:28; 1 Tim. 3:16; 1 John 5:20). When we see a separate reference, it is always something like: “God the Father and our Lord Jesus Christ.” What you never see is: “God the Father and God the Son.” It is always, God and Man, Spirit and flesh, God the Father, and the Son of God. As 1 Timothy 2:5, puts it, “*For there is one God, and one mediator between God and Men, the Man, Christ Jesus.*”

In John 10:30, Jesus said, “*I and my Father are one.*” Does that mean that they are one in unity? Well, I ask if that was all He meant, then why did the Jews pick up stones to stone Him? (v. 31). In fact, Jesus asks them why (v. 32), and they answered Him, “*because that thou, being a Man, makest Thyself God*” (v. 33). They understood this as claiming to be God, not claiming to be in accordance with Him. So, if, “*I and the Father are one,*” means, “I am God,” then He must be God the Father. Some Trinitarians have tried to draw attention to the neuter gender of the word, “one” in this passage (Gk - *hen*), claiming that this means, that they are one in unity. However, this is the same

word used in passages, such as, Eph. 4:4, where it says, that there is “one Spirit,” and no one would argue that this means, only one in unity.

In Matthew 28:19, Jesus commanded the disciples to baptize, “*in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost.*” Yet, they routinely baptized only in Jesus’ name. Either they were mistaken, or they understood the name of the Father, Son, and Holy Ghost, to be Jesus. Surely, the apostles didn’t disobey their Lord.

I could give many Scriptures to show that Jesus, is indeed, God, but here are a few more that show, that He is specifically, the Father (who *is* the only God, Mal. 2:10; 1 Cor. 8:6).

1. Jesus said, that He would send the comforter to us (John 16:7), but He also said, the Father would send the comforter (John 14:26).

2. The Father, alone, can draw men to God (John 6:44), yet, Jesus said, He would draw all men (John 12:32).

3. Jesus will raise up all believers, in the last day (John 6:40), yet, God the Father quickens (gives life to) the dead and will raise us up (Romans 4:17; 1 Corinthians 6:14).

4. Christ is our sanctifier (Ephesians 5:26), yet, the Father sanctifies us (Jude 1).

We can easily understand all of this, if we realize, that Jesus has a dual nature. He is both, Spirit and flesh, God and Man, Father and Son.

Finally, I would like to look at a passage in Revelation 21, which clearly indicates, that Jesus, is the Father. Starting at verse 5, it reads: *And He who sits on the throne said, “Behold, I am making all things new [we are made new by being in Christ (2 Cor. 5:17)].” And He said, “Write, for these words are faithful and true [in Rev. 3:14 and*

19:11, Jesus is called “faithful and true”).” 6 *Then He said to me, “It is done.* [compare to John 19:30, “it is finished”] *I am the Alpha and the Omega, the beginning and the end.* [In the very next chapter, Jesus says, this same thing, 22:13-16] *I will give to the one who thirsts from the spring of the water of life without cost* [Jesus gives the water of life, John 4:10-14; Rev. 7:17]. 7 *He who overcomes* [Jesus spoke these Words, seven times, to each of the seven Churches in the beginning of this Epistle, 2:7, 11, 17, 26; 3:5, 12,21] *will inherit these things, and I will be His God **and He will be My Son*** (emphasis added). Everything in this passage, points towards Jesus, as the speaker, yet, at the end of the passage, we realize that, it is God the Father.

As our Lord said elsewhere, “*These things I have spoken to you in figurative language; an hour is coming when I will no longer speak to you in figurative language, but will tell you plainly of the Father*” (John 16:25). Or as Zechariah the prophet said, “*And the LORD shall be king over all the earth: in that day shall there be one LORD, and his name one*” (Zech. 14:9).

The Dual Nature of Christ

The Problem

Believers and unbelievers, alike, have speculated over the identity of Christ for the past two millennia. Jesus asked Peter, who men said, that He was. Peter’s reply evidenced the confusion of Jesus’ identity, among the populace. Finally, Jesus asked Peter, who he thought He was. Peter replied, “You are the Christ, the Son of the living God (Matthew 16:13-16). Jesus’ question still rings in our ears today, as we consider the Man from Galilee, who has changed the course of human history. Who was this Jesus?

Was Jesus divine? Was Jesus human? Was He both? If Jesus is both divine and human, how do we understand these two natures to function together? Is there a metaphysical union (ontological) between Christ’s humanity and deity, or is the union one, of function only (behavioral)? Is a metaphysical union, logically absurd? These

are just a few of the many problems, that have surfaced through the centuries, by those examining the person of Christ. These questions and others will be examined in this course. We are not stopping, at mere faith, in Jesus for salvation, but we are seeking understanding, to the nature of His being.

Alternative Interpretations in the Church

There are three strands of historical understandings of Christ. The first category consists of those who deny Christ's genuine deity. The second, denies Christ's genuine humanity. The third category consists of those who confess Jesus' genuine deity and humanity.

Deny Genuine Deity

Ebionism

The Ebionites were a very early Jewish sect, who maintained, that the Logos was not pre-existent. Jesus was a mere Man, who perfectly kept the Law of Moses. He was the Messiah, but in so sense, was He divine. He was born, to Joseph and Mary, in a normal fashion, but had the Spirit of God descend on Him, in a special way at His baptism, in reward of His perfect obedience to the Mosaic Law. Jesus was not born Divine, but was adopted into divinity, though not the divinity of the Father.

Dynamic Monarchianism

Also known, as Adoptionistic Monarchianism, this view of the Godhead, attempted to preserve monotheism, by denying the absolute deity of Jesus Christ. Jesus was a mere Man, but became endowed with the Holy Spirit, in a special way, at some point in His life (usually attributed to the time of His baptism or birth). Jesus was the *logos* and was *homoousis* (of the same essence) with the Father, but in the same sense, as a man's reason, is *homoousios* to Himself. The *logos* was not God, in the strict sense, however, for the same *logos* was present, in all men in degree. The Man Jesus, merely experienced the operation of this power, to such an extent, that the *logos* penetrated the

humanity of Christ, progressively, resulting in eventual deification.

The founder of this view, was Theodotus of Byzantium. Its most famous proponent, however, was Paul of Samosata. This teaching is akin to Ebionism.

Deny Genuine Humanity

Docetism

This group of Christians took their name from the Greek word, *dokew*, meaning “to seem, appear.” They maintained, that Jesus was Divine, but not human. He only “appeared” to be, a genuine human being. His sufferings and death, were mere illusions. There was no substance to His humanity, nor any real human nature. This teaching was an early form of Gnosticism.

Gnosticism

Gnosticism encompasses many diverse views, but certain teachings common to all veins of Gnosticism, can be gleaned. Working with a Platonic framework, which equated matter with evil and Spirit with good, they taught that the material man, was evil. Some men, however, had the divine spark of “The Ultimate Death” within them, but were unaware of the divine spark. In order to become aware of their divinity, they needed someone to manifest to them, this knowledge (Greek *gnosis*, hence *Gnosticism*). Jesus Christ is identified, as the one who came to bring this awareness to men. Since matter is evil, Jesus Christ could not have had a physical body, but was a spirit body, instead. In this respect, Gnosticism models Docetism.

Arianism

Although this teaching had its origin in Lucian of Antioch, its most famous propagator and developer, was Arius of Alexandria, from whence, it bears its name. Arius taught, that because God is immutable, His essence cannot be communicated to any other. This being so, the Son could not be considered to be God. Jesus was said, to be the first creation of God. In turn, Jesus created everything else. The famous cry of the

Arians, concerning Jesus, was, "There was once, when He was not." He was Divine, but not deity. Only the Father, was eternal and immutable. The Son was not consubstantial, coeternal, or coequal with the Father. Essentially, the Son is a demi-god, being neither God, nor man. He serves as a buffer between the physical realm and the heavenly realm, belonging completely, to neither.

Apollinarianism

Apollinarianism is the father of the theological position, named after him. Apollinaris believed Jesus to be one person, both Divine and human, but believed that the divine Logos replaced the rational spirit (*nous*), as the animating principle, in the human Christ. In his Christology, then, a human body and soul were joined to the divine Logos. The Logos was the interior of Christ, that had been fused to human flesh. As a result of the fusion, Christ had only one nature, not two.

Confessed Full Humanity and Deity

Nestorianism

The main proponents of this view, were Nestorius and Theodore of Mopsuestia. Theodore confessed the full humanity and deity of Christ, but suggested that the union of the divine logos and the humanity, of Jesus, was not as essential unity, but a moral unity. The union was functional, not ontological. The full humanity of Christ obeyed the full deity of the logos, thus resulting in a behavioral unity.

Nestorius, also confessed, the full humanity and deity of Christ. He identified each nature of Christ with the Greek, *prosopon* (person), thus splitting Christ into two persons. He refused to attribute to the divine nature, the human acts and sufferings of the Man, Jesus. He did not see any *communicatio idiomatum*, Latin term, meaning, "communication of attributes" between Christ's two natures. The two natures of Christ were only joined, by will.

Eutychianism

Also known, as Monophysitism (mono = one; physis = nature), this teaching was espoused by Eutyches, a monk, who lived in Constantinople. Eutyches taught, that the Logos had two natures before the incarnation, but after the incarnation, Jesus only had one nature, which was clothed in human flesh. He maintained, the full deity and humanity of Christ, but in explaining the unity of the two natures, he denied that Jesus' humanity, was essentially, the same as all others' humanity, because in the incarnation, the Logos absorbed the human nature. The result was, that neither nature retained its respective properties, i.e., that which makes each nature (divine and human) what it truly is, metaphysically. Rather, a *tertium quid* (third substance) resulted, which was neither purely Logos or human, but something wholly other. In the incarnation then, both the divine nature and human nature, fused into one new nature. This new nature was "not God," because the deity of the Logos subsumed the humanity in the union of the two.

Critique

Dynamic Monarchianism

Dynamic Monarchianism must be ruled out, because it espouses a personal subsistence (state of existing in reality) of the humanity of Christ, apart from deity. The hypostatic union, demands that we understand Christ's humanity and deity as being mutually interdependent, i.e., Christ's person was dependent on His deity, for His personal existence. God fathered a child. He did not merely indwell a human being, but He became a human being. The Word was made flesh (John 1:14). There was a metaphysical union between deity and humanity. According to the Scriptures, Jesus was Divine from His birth (Micah 5:2; Luke 1:32-35). There was never a time, when Jesus, was not God.

Ebionism

Ebionism would follow in this same vein, because its views of Jesus Christ, are nearly identical, to Dynamic Monarchianism. Its view of Jesus Christ, in nothing more than that of a moral example for men to follow, not the sinless God-Man, who

accomplished salvation, on our behalf, as the Scripture teaches.

Docetism

Docetism fails to account for the numerous Scriptural affirmations to the authenticity of Jesus' humanity. Jesus was not a hologram. John claimed, that He could be seen and touched (1 John 1:1-3). Scripture also teaches, that Christ suffered (Romans 8:17; Philippians 3:10; Hebrews 2:9; 5:8-9; 1 Peter 2:19; 3:14), which according to Docetism, Christ could not suffer.

Apollinarianism

Apollinarianism fails to explain the accounts of Jesus' temptation. If Jesus did not have a human mind it would make His temptations meaningless. Jesus also grew in wisdom (Luke 2:52). He learned obedience, through suffering (Hebrews 5:8). He had His own will, not just the will of God (Luke 22:42).

Apollinarianism, also limits humanity, to the physical. In the end, we end up having God peering out into the world through a human set of eyes. It makes God into a driver of a taxi-cab; the flesh of Jesus was just the vehicle, for God to redeem the world. But, human skin is not the essence of humanity. We are much more than skin. If Jesus was a genuine Man, as the Scriptures speak of Him and portray Him as being, then He must have had a human mind, will, spirit/soul, and emotions, in addition to human flesh.

One of the most important deficiencies of this doctrine, is soteriological (having to do with salvation). As the Cappadocian maxim says, "What He did not assume, He cannot heal." What this means, is that Jesus can only redeem the aspects of humanity, which He Himself, took upon Himself, in the incarnation. If Jesus did not have a human mind and Spirit, then He cannot redeem mankind in their totality, because we have a human mind and Spirit. Jesus could only redeem, that which, He became. If He did not have a human Spirit/mind, then He cannot redeem this aspect of man.

From a Biblical perspective, if Jesus was to be the last Adam (1 Corinthians 15:45),

His humanity had to be like Adam's, in every respect (Romans 5:12-21; 1 Corinthians 15:21-22). Paul's argument, in Romans, is that, just as sin entered the world through one man, causing all men to die a spiritual death, because of God's condemnation on sin, righteousness was gained for mankind, through the one righteous act of Jesus Christ. Jesus came to reverse the effects of Adam's sin. Whereas, Adam brought death and condemnation to man, Jesus brought life and righteousness.

In the Corinthians passage, Paul made a similar argument, namely that since death was brought into the world by man, the resurrection from the dead, also, had to have been brought into the world by a man. All of those who are born from Adam, will die both physically and spiritually; however, those who are in Christ, though they will physically die (except those that are still alive at the resurrection of the dead), they will be resurrected from the dead to Spiritual life. The point of both passages, is that since death and condemnation was brought on by man, Spiritual life, righteousness, and the resurrection from the dead to life everlasting, also had to come from a man. Whatever Adam was, the last Adam, Jesus Christ, had to be. Only a man like Adam could reverse what Adam did. If Adam had a human Spirit/mind, then Jesus had to have a Spirit/mind. This is especially telling, since Adam succumbed to temptation, with his mind/will. If Jesus was to objectively overcome temptation, He likewise, had to resist it, with a human mind. God cannot be tempted, but if the Divine Spirit/mind replaced the human Spirit/mind, then Jesus, as God, was tempted.

If Christ did not possess a human mind/will, then certain Biblical statements about Christ would be rendered, meaningless. He could not be tempted, since God cannot be tempted (James 1:13), but we find, that He was in fact, tempted (Hebrews 4:15). Temptation occurs in the mind of man. If Jesus did not have a human Spirit/mind, He could not have been tempted.

It is also said of Jesus, that He "increased in wisdom" (Luke 2:52). If Jesus did not have a human mind, then we would have to confess, that God was increasing in wisdom. This cannot be true, because God is all-knowing and full of wisdom. He gives

wisdom to man; He does not receive wisdom from man (Romans 16:27; 1 Timothy 1:17; James 1:5; Jude 1:25).

It is also said, that Christ “learned obedience through what He suffered” (Hebrews 5:8). A moral improvement is not in view here, but Christ’s increasing capacity, which He gained for the fulfillment of His office. What needs to be emphasized, is that Jesus *learned*. There is nothing for God to learn. He knows all things. Only a human mind can learn.

Hebrews 2:11, 14-18, is very clear as the completeness and genuineness of Christ’s humanity. The author said, “For indeed He who makes Holy and those being made Holy, all have the same origin, and so He is not ashamed to call them brothers and sisters.....Therefore, since the children share in flesh and blood, He likewise, shared in the same, as well, so that through death, He could destroy the one who holds the power of death (that is, the devil), and set free those who were held in slavery all their lives, by their fear of death. For surely, His concern is not for angels, but He is concerned for Abraham’s descendants. Therefore, He had to be made like His brothers and sisters, in every respect, so that He could become a merciful and faithful high priest, in things relating to God, to make atonement for the sins of the people. “For since He suffered and was tempted, He is able to help those who are tempted” (NET Bible). The author argues, that Jesus shared in the same flesh and blood that all other humans possessed. He is of the same origin. He had to be made like all the rest of humanity, *in every respect*, if He was to be able to suffer and overcome temptation, in order to represent humanity as a priest, to help those who are tempted. The phrase, *in every respect*, most assuredly includes, a human Spirit/mind.

Nestorianism

Nestorianism is deficient, because it makes Jesus into two persons. It is similar to Apollinarianism, in that, it paints a picture of Jesus, as having God peering through human eyes. In contradistinction to Apollinarianism, however, Nestorius did maintain Christ’s full humanity. He was correct in confessing

Christ's complete dual nature, but was in error, when trying to explain how His two natures functioned together. Instead of teaching a moral (behavioral) union between Jesus' Divine and human nature, the Scripture teaches, that the Logos *became* flesh (John 1:14). The Greek word, *ginomai* means, "to become." The Logos did not merely assume a human body, but became a human being. The union is metaphysical, not moral. In such a union, whatever can be said of Christ's Divine nature, or of His human nature, can be attributed to Christ's whole person. This is known as the *communicatio idiomatum*. Christ's person is one unified whole, not two fragmented parts.

If Jesus' two natures are only joined by the will-the human nature in Christ always submitting to the Divine nature in Christ-then theoretically, the Man, Jesus Christ, and the Spirit of God, could have existed apart from one another. But, in the incarnation, God became a Man. When God assumed a human existence, the deity and humanity, of Christ, became forever inseparable, joined in a metaphysical union, in every respect. If this were not so, then Jesus did not, truly become a Man, but only indwelt, a particular Man. When one became a man, it would be impossible for Divine nature to be separate from His humanity.

If God, only indwelt a particular man, then at best, Jesus' sacrifice could only have accomplished a particular salvation, i.e., His own. His death could not have saved all of humanity. It is by virtue, that God became a Man, identifying with the human race, as a whole, that Jesus can be a mediator between God and men. What makes Jesus' death of infinite value, is not merely His sinlessness, but the fact, that He was God, manifest in the flesh. If Jesus was not metaphysically, God Himself, then His death could not save us. The infinite God, became a Man, to die for us. This is the reason for the efficacy of Calvary. If the humanity of Christ was separate from His deity, however, this could not be true.

Nestorianism's insistence on the separate natures, in Christ, fails to provide a satisfactory explanation, as to the sense, in which, Jesus can be spoken of in the Scripture, as one person, rather than two. Jesus always speaks of Himself, and is

spoken of by others in the singular, not the plural, as we would expect, if there are two separate persons, in one body. Neither can Nestorianism provide an adequate explanation, as to how it can be said, that the logos *became* flesh, if Christ's Divine nature is separate from His human nature. Finally, Nestorianism's portrait of separate natures, connected only by will, displaces the idea of a true incarnation of God, denigrating it to a mere possession, of Jesus' human body. If there is not essential, metaphysical, unity between Christ's deity and humanity, then Christ cannot be considered God, any more than Spirit-filled believers can be considered God. The difference between the Nestorian Jesus and all other believers, is limited only by the fact, that Jesus is filled with the Spirit in a special way, and was conceived miraculously.

Eutychianism

Eutychianism came close to being the orthodox teaching of the early Church. It was so close to the Biblical teaching, because it affirmed two complete, authentic natures in Christ, and even confessed, that there was a metaphysical union between the two, thus avoiding the soteriological problem, that Nestorianism faced. Where this teaching falls into error, is in claiming that the two natures blended together to form a third substance, which is neither of the original two. Such a mixture, would necessarily produce, a confusion of the natures, and thus, the individuality of each nature, is destroyed. In the end, Jesus is no longer God and Man, but other than God and other than Man. If this were true, Jesus could not identify with the sons of Adam, nor could He identify with Deity. He would be in a class of His own, thus, not fit to be a mediator between God and men (1 Timothy 2:15).

This teaching also ignores the many Biblical statements, that portray Christ, as having ministered as a Man, anointed by the Holy Ghost. The Divine nature of Christ, did not subsume or overwhelm, His human nature. Jesus was metaphysically, and functionally, a man. A Eutychian understanding of Christ, ignores the Biblical portrayal of Christ, as a genuine human being with genuine human emotions and characteristics.

The Incarnation is a Contradiction

Although not proposed as an alternative interpretation in the above section, some have contended that the idea of an incarnation of God, is a contradiction. Soren Kierkegaard has proposed this view, saying that God and man are two infinitely different things. The world of God and the world of man are as different as fire and ice.

What must be remembered, is that a contradiction is between two propositions; the one denying the claim of the other. For example, to say that a man is a Spiritual being, and that he is not a Spiritual being, at the same time, is a contradiction. To say, that a man is a Spiritual being, in one sense, and not a Spiritual man, in another sense, is not a contradiction; nor is it a contradiction, to affirm that a man is a Spiritual and a material being, at the same time.

There are many aspects, concerning the mechanics of the incarnation, that we do not understand, but mystery is not the same thing, as contradiction. God's existence and man's existence, are not wholly other, as Kierkegaard has claimed.

It must be remembered, that man is made in God's image, and therefore, resembles God. If God's image can be found in man, why is it so hard to imagine that God could assume a human existence, while still retaining His Godhood? Although we may not have full understanding of the way in which deity could unite metaphysically with humanity in the one person of Jesus Christ, it is not a contradiction, to believe such a thing. Rather, it is a paradox, or a seeming contradiction, that cannot be adequately explained, but nonetheless, is within reason.

[Systematic Formulation](#)

The Scriptures are very clear in their portrayal of Jesus, as being both Man, and God. He plays the role of the Divine and of the human -- two roles, which had been heretofore, worlds apart, calling for two different actors, and requiring two different stages. In Jesus, however, the infinite Spirit, united with finite humanity, to become the Son of God. These two natures seem mutually exclusive. Deity is infinite in knowledge,

power, and presence. Humanity is limited to knowledge, power, and presence. How can the two distinct worlds of God and man, come together, into one existence? This is the very question Christology attempts to answer.

Although the Bible infers, that there is a relationship between the deity and humanity of Christ, (called the *hypostatic union*), no one passage was specifically penned, to explain its mechanics. The New Testament writers, simply affirmed, that it was true. What we must do, then, is meticulously scrutinize all that Jesus said about Himself, relating to His identity (His self-concept), and statements made by the writers of the New Testament, concerning His dual nature, in order to understand in what ways Christ's two natures can or cannot relate to one another.

Since Jesus was from the lineage of Abraham and David (John 7:42; Acts 13:22-23; Romans 1:3; Hebrews 2:16), by necessity, He was received from the lineage of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, not only was Jesus human, but, He was also Jewish, because His mother and her descendants were Jewish. Jesus was born to a Jewish woman, in the nation of the Jews, with Jewish customs, habits, and culture. Jesus was a Jew! He looked and acted like any other Jewish person would. Surely, Jesus danced in the folk dances, attended social events (John 2), and played with other boys in His village.

Although His conception was miraculous, Jesus was born like any other human being is born. He grew physically, intellectually, socially, and spiritually, like any other man (Luke 2:40, 52). Sometimes, we have the concept, that Jesus came out of Mary's womb, looked at Mary and said, "Hi mom, I'm God!," then cut off His umbilical cord, and taking off running. He preached to the world. Jesus did not know He was God, manifest in the flesh, when He was born. His human mind, had not come to know or understand, that yet. He came to realize this, at some point in the future. When and how this occurred, is not discussed in the Bible, but we do know that Jesus understood His identity, at least by the age of twelve. It was at this time, He told Mary, "Do you not know that I must be about my Father's business?" (Luke 2:42, 49).

Jesus lived a childhood, like every other Jewish boy. He had to learn and memorize the Hebrew Scriptures, be potty-trained, fed, taught how to speak, learn a trade, walk, and all the other things, children must do. Jesus surely drooled on Mary's shoulder, and wet His pants. As a carpenter, surely, He received splinters, and when hitting His hand with the hammer of His day, He must have yelled, because of the pain.

Jesus had a complete human nature, differing only from ours, in that, He was spared the sin nature, by way of the virgin birth and conception by the Holy Ghost. This does not make Him any less human than we, because we know Adam and Eve to be true human beings, and they existed without the sin nature, previous to their transgression. If anything, Jesus was more human than we are, because we are tainted by the sin nature. We live an existence, that limits our relationship with God. Jesus was not limited by this sin principle or bound by its effects: alienation from God, sickness, disease.

Although He was born into this world like any other man, Jesus was conceived in a very unique way. He did not have a human father, but was begotten by the Holy Ghost (Matthew 1:20; Luke 1:34-35). God was His Father. Jesus received His deity from His Father. He did have a human mother, but she conceived in her womb, in a way different from any other (Galatians 4:4). Instead of sexual intercourse and fertilization by the sperm of a male, the power of the Highest, overshadowed her (Luke 1:35). It was, at that point, that God became a human, as a fetus, in Mary's womb. Jesus received His deity and part of His humanity from the Father, and part of His humanity from Mary (Luke 1:34-35; Galatians 4:4). This will never be fully understood or comprehended, but must be accepted, by faith.

Because Jesus was conceived by the Holy Ghost, and not of man, He is called the Son of God. Although we too, are called, sons of God (1 John 3:2), our sonship is different than Jesus'. Whereas we are adopted as God's sons (Romans 8:14-17), Jesus was born as God's Son (Luke 1:35). His very being came into existence, by the

Holy Ghost. Jesus would have never existed without the contributions made, by His Father. Since God physically fathered Jesus, through the miraculous conception, He is God's Son, in a physical sense. We are only God's sons, in a spiritual sense. Our existence, is not dependent on Him. Our being, results from the physical union of two human parents. It is only after this, that we can become sons of God, through the adoption by His Spirit. The difference between Jesus and us, then, is that Jesus' existence has its dependence on the Father, while ours, does not.

The miracle of the virgin conception, means that deity and humanity, were as inseparable, in Jesus, as the genetic influence of a mother and father, is inseparable, in their son or daughter. Just as no human being could exist, if all that was contributed to his existence, by either his father or his mother were removed, so Jesus could not have existed as the Messiah, apart from either His deity (contributed by the Holy Spirit [Luke 1:34-35]) or His humanity (contributed by Mary [Galatians 4:4]).

This union demonstrates the permanence of the incarnation. Once God assumed humanity at His conception in Mary's womb, He acquired an identity He would retain for the rest of eternity...Jesus' humanity is not something that can be discarded or dissolved back into the Godhead, but He will always and forever exist in heaven as a glorified human, albeit God, at the same time. His humanity is permanently incorporated into the Godhead. God did not just live in flesh as a Man, but the "Word became flesh" (John 1:14). God is now a Man. This does not mean He no longer exists as the omnipresent Spirit, but it does mean that His existence, as a Man, is both authentic and permanent.

Jesus did not merely put on a "robe of flesh" when He came to this earth. He was more than "God with skin on." These types of statements imply a Nestorian view of Christ -- a separation of natures within Jesus, as though He is two separate individuals, living in one body. They imply that the flesh was a mere shell that Deity moved within. The humanity of Jesus was not independent of the deity of Jesus. The deity and humanity, comprising Jesus' existence, should not be viewed as some sort of "room-

mate situation,” in which, two entities exist in the same area, but are separated from one another, in reality. In Christ, “the Spirit of God was inextricably and inseparably, joined with the humanity.....”

An example, from chemistry, might demonstrate this well. A mixture or blend can be separated into its original substances after being blended. Whereas mixtures (physical compounds) can be separated again, chemical compounds form a new substance, of which, the original substances can never again be separated from the compound. The two natures, in Christ, should not be viewed as, blended or mixed together. His two natures cannot be separated.

Unfortunately, every analogy breaks down, at some point, this one being, no exception. This analogy can only demonstrate the permanence of the incarnation, not the metaphysical union of the two natures of Christ. The deity and humanity, of Christ, did not form a new substance from the two, known as *tertium quid* (which Eutyches espoused), for each nature retained all of their respective “properties.” The deity was uncompromised by the humanity, and the humanity was uncompromised by the deity; both being perfectly preserved in their wholeness and genuineness, yet united in every way. The deity was not obscured by the complete humanity, and neither was the humanity overwhelmed by the fullness of the deity. The fullness of God’s deity, was manifested in every aspect of His genuine humanity; integrated, and not segregated. The nature of God was not changed in the incarnation, but rather that God personally united to Himself, a human existence - not by merely adding flesh to His existence, but by the two natures being brought together into a vital union, so as to speak of Christ, as being one person, yet, still having two distinct natures.

The *Evangelical Dictionary of Theology*, sums this up saying, “In the incarnation ... a human nature was inseparably united forever with the Divine nature in the one person of Jesus Christ, yet, with the two natures remaining distinct, whole, and unchanged, without mixture or confusion, so that the one person, Jesus Christ, is truly God and truly Man.”

Common Misconceptions of the Union

It is commonly said of Jesus, that He has a “divine side” and a “human side,” or that sometimes, He acted as God, and at other times, as man. It is explained that, as a man, Jesus prayed, ate, and slept. As God, He healed the sick, raised the dead, and calmed the storms. This seems to imply some sort of duality in Jesus, as though He is two persons, in one body. This is the teaching of Nestorianism. These activities give indication of the reality of each nature, but it must be understood, that Jesus’ natures never worked independent of one another. His two natures exist “without confusion,” without change, without division, without separation; the difference of the natures, having been in no wise, taken away by reason of the union, but rather the properties of each, being preserved....” The *communicatio idiomatum* of Christ’s two natures demands that, whatever can be attributed to either the human or Divine nature of Christ, can be attributed to Christ’s one person. Whatever is true of either nature, is true of the whole person. James White commented on this saying that: ...when Jesus spoke, He spoke as one Person, not two. One cannot say that, when claiming deity, Jesus’ “deity” spoke, or when He referred to His humanity, it was His “human nature” that spoke.

It can be seen from this, that natures don’t speak - only Persons do....And, since Jesus is one Person, not two, He speaks as a whole Person. ... He had two natures, but those natures were made personal by only one Person, the Word made flesh. Hence, though Jesus may say things that indicate his two natures, what He says, represents His whole being, not a certain part, thereof.

This is important because the *communicatio idiomatum*, is often misunderstood to mean, that whatever can be said of one nature, can be said of the other. This is not so. The divine attribute of omnipresence alone, demonstrates this fact. Jesus’ humanity could not be omnipresent because of the nature of the human existence. Humanity is limited, by nature. The *communicatio idiomatum* means, that whatever can be said of one nature, can be spoken of as, applying to the whole of Christ’s person. For example, we would not say, that the divine nature, died on the cross. God did not die, but the humanity, which God assumed, died. Likewise, the Scripture says, that God cannot be

tempted (James 1:13), yet, Jesus was tempted. If we apply the *communicatio idiomatum* to mean, that whatever can be said of one nature, can be said of the other, then we have God's essence, being tempted and dying. Such a conclusion is absurd. This is explained by saying, that God as He exists in a genuine human existence, was tempted. How exactly this could be, without splitting up the union of the two natures, I cannot adequately explain. This is where our understanding breaks down. Even Chalcedon could not pinpoint the truth; it could only draw a box around it, by saying what can and cannot be true, and let the truth lie somewhere inside the box. I am also asserting what must be true, and what cannot be true (insofar, as it is knowable), and leaving the rest to the box of mystery.

The typical way of explaining Jesus' natures splits up their unity and integration, insinuating that one could be "operated" apart from the other. It almost reduces Jesus to Superman, who is sometimes, Clark Kent and other times, Superman after a quick change in a telephone booth somewhere. Jesus does not change over, from acting in one nature, to acting in the other. He is not like the Wild E. Coyote, who holds up a sign saying, "Now, I'm acting as a man," and at other times, He holds up another sign saying, "Now, I'm acting as God." Everything Jesus did, He did as God manifest in the flesh (Son of God). There can be no separation of Jesus' natures. "The union of the two natures, meant that they did not function independently. Jesus did not exercise His deity at times, and His humanity, at other times. His actions were always those of Divinity-humanity." Jesus is a unitary being. He is unipersonal, not multipersonal. Whatever can be said of His Divine nature or human nature can be said of His whole person. Gordon Lewis explained it this way:

What unites the natures, is that both, may be predicated of the one actual person. The two natures exist, not merely in a functional harmony, nor are they in a non-metaphysical way, merely communicated to each other. The divine nature, is not simply, the indwelling Holy Spirit, as is the case in all Christians. Nor did the human nature lose anything, by its assumption into the person of God's Son. In the God-Man, we find a complex of two distinct natures, but not a confusion of the two sets of

attributes.

The metaphysical union of Christ's two natures does not mean, that we cannot make a distinction between them, but only that we cannot make a separation between them. Because in the union, each nature was preserved in its fullness and not blended into a third substance; we can recognize a distinction between Christ's deity and His humanity, but we cannot make a separation. We may understand that Jesus did certain things, because He was a genuine human being, or because He was God, but we cannot say, that He only does those things, in the respective nature. To do so, would be to destroy the metaphysical unity of the two natures, and hence, the unity of the person of Christ.

The way in which we can differentiate, but not separate Christ's two natures may be compared to the way, in which, Paul differentiated between our inner and outer man. He said, "Though our outward man perish, yet the inward man is renewed, day by day" (2 Corinthians 4:16). In another place he noted, "For I delight in the law of God, after the inward man: but I see another law in my members, warring against the law of my mind, and bringing me into captivity to the law of sin, which is in my members" (Romans 7:22-23). Both of these references makes a distinction between our spirit-man and our fleshly-man, yet such a distinction was never intended to teach, that we are two people. In a similar way, we can attribute the cause of certain activities or sayings of Christ, to one of His natures, but we cannot say, that these only occur in one nature to the exclusion of the other, because of the fact, that Christ is one whole, unified, person. Whatever He does, He does as God, unified to humanity.

A Nestorian understanding of Christ, which divides Christ into two distinct persons dwelling in one body, is also witnessed in the way one defines the Biblical title, "Son." Many attribute "Son," strictly to Jesus' humanity, avoiding any attribution to His deity. Such a use of "Son" is foreign to the NT text. The Bible uses the term, to refer to Jesus' whole person, both deity and humanity, never to refer to one-half of Jesus' person. "Son," most certainly originated with the incarnation, and thus, does not imply a pre-

existing divine person of a Trinity, but “Son” cannot be said, to refer only to Jesus’ human nature. The term, “Son” incorporates Jesus’ whole person, both deity and humanity, conjoined into one indivisible person. To say, that “Son” only refers to Jesus’ human nature, is Nestorian at heart, separating Jesus into two persons, in one body. The Scripture, however, presents Christ, as one whole person.

It has been common to hear Jesus’ dual nature explained as “roles.” It is said that in the role of a Man, Jesus did such and such, and in His divine role, Jesus did this and that. Sometimes, it is even asserted, that Jesus was acting, in both roles, simultaneously. It must be made clear, that roles do not have person-hood. They cannot act in and of themselves. A person can act in a role, but a role has no personal existence. If it is true, that Jesus could act in one role and not in another, at any one given time, this indicates that, only one nature, in Jesus, was acting. This makes Jesus into two individual persons, one Divine and one human, dwelling in a physical body simultaneously, which are only unified functionally. Everything that Jesus did, He did as God, manifest in the flesh. There is no Biblical support to say, that Jesus ever acted in a human role sometimes, in the Divine roll other times, and both simultaneously, yet still, at other times.

We should not even say of Christ, that as a Man, He was tempted, ate, slept, and felt emotion; and as God, He had power over life and death, performed miracles, and forgave sin. Instead, we should say, that the fact that Jesus was tempted, ate, slept, and felt emotion, *indicates that*, He was a genuine human being. It could also be said, that Jesus was tempted, *because of* His authentic humanity. Likewise, the fact that Jesus forgave sin, *demonstrates* His genuine existence as God, or it could be said, that His power over life and death, was *due to* His complete deity. However, it is explained, it must not be understood, that when Jesus did something that demonstrates His humanity, that it was done strictly, *in* His human nature, but not *in* His Divine nature. Such an explanation is clearly Nestorian, making Christ two persons, in one body. If some things Jesus says and does are only in His human nature, and other things He says and does, are in His Divine nature, then we have two parts of Jesus that are only

unified in geographical area, not essence or even necessarily, function. God was not in Christ peering through human eyes, like a child who peers through the mask of the costume, at Halloween, but God became a Man, in the person of Christ. The Nestorian portrayal of the incarnation, is little more than the Spirit possession of a created human being, whereas the Biblical portrayal of the incarnation, is that of God becoming the Man, Jesus Christ.

The orthodox understanding of Christ's two natures, is that in the incarnation, the deity and humanity were joined, in such a way, that they are united into one, and not divided; inseparable, yet distinguishable; the properties of each being, present in Christ in the fullness, yet united, as one person. The Spirit of God and the human Spirit of Jesus, were not blended to form a third substance, that was not purely God or purely man, nor was either Spirit overshadowed by the other, so that one was dominant over the other. The deity was not compromised or obscured by the humanity, and neither was the humanity compromised or obscured by the deity; both being perfectly preserved in their wholeness and genuineness, yet united, in every way. Neither, were His two natures separated, in any way, but were unified, in every way.

The best analogy to demonstrate this truth, is that of grafting. In grafting, a branch is cut from one tree and attached to another. This is done, by splicing the recipient branch, and then taping the spliced foreign branch to the area of the recipient tree. Various methods are employed, to hold the foreign branch on the recipient tree. Over time, the two branches will grow together into one branch. If we were to graft a plum branch onto a peach tree, when they grew together, we would have one branch, bearing both plums and peaches. It would not produce "peaches" (the Eutychian view of Christ), for each fruit continues to exist on that one branch, unchanged. The one limb would not produce hollow fruit (the Apollinarian view of Christ), and neither could we distinguish the two branches any longer (a Nestorian view of Christ), for the two have come together into one unified branch. Each branch retains its respective properties, continuing to be what it had always been, yet it is essentially united, in every way, to the other branch (the orthodox understanding of Christ), and will continue to bear two

respective fruits, both unchanged, from the time when they existed, on two separate branches.

Conclusion

Jesus, was both, God and Man. That this is so, is known from the revelation of the Scripture. How exactly this is so, is a mystery. Mystery, however, is not the same as contradiction! Although the incarnation is the greatest of mysteries, and we will never fully comprehend how Jesus can be both, God and Man, we can confess, that Jesus is both fully God and fully Man, and yet, be one person. The Scripture speaks of Him in this manner, and so must we. Harold O.J. Brown, has spoken a fitting word, concerning the understanding and explanation of mysteries:

The New Testament message confronts believers with a number of formidable mysteries and at the same time, calls upon them, to use their minds in the effort to proclaim and interpret them. There is a point, in the proclamation of the mystery, where human understanding reaches its limit. To stop too soon in the effort to understand and to interpret, leaves the believer facing a contradiction or an absurdity; to go too far, often leads him into a logical impossibility. One of the greatest challenges to the Christian witness, is to explain as much as can be explained, and thus, not to leave believers in ignorance, where clarification is possible, but to stop when the limits of understanding have been reached, and thus, not trespass the mystery of God.

We must be careful in our attempt to explain how Jesus could be, both God and Man, that we do not under-explain or over-explain it. Both of these tendencies will lead us into error. We can affirm what we know is true, and affirm what we know, cannot be true about Christ's person, but we can never pin our theological tail, right on the donkey. We can box in the truth, to a smaller dimension of understanding, by affirming certain things and negating other things about Christ, but we can never pinpoint the exact nature of the hypostatic union.

The box of limitation, which surrounds the exact truth of the union, cautions us, that we must not deny, either the fullness of His deity or the fullness of His humanity, and that we be careful, to not explain the unity of His two natures, in such a fashion, that it makes Jesus into two separate persons, in one body, one unified person, that compromises either nature, or one person, who is some third substance, that is neither God or Man. Jesus, although both fully God and fully Man, is nevertheless, one unified person. This is a mystery of the incarnation, and oh, what a mystery it is!

Colwell's Rule and John 1:1

A Greek scholar named, E.C. Colwell, discovered a rule, which applied to certain uses of the Greek article (in English, this is the word, "the"). His rule stated, that "definite predicate nouns, which precede the verb, usually lack the article. The word, *theos* (God) in John 1:1, is a predicate noun and it is anarthrous (it lacks the article). The question I would like to address is: "How does this rule apply to John 1:1, and how does this relate to a Oneness perspective of this passage?"

In the past, Trinitarians have argued, that Colwell's rule proves that the anarthrous *theos*, in John 1:1 (the Word was God) must be taken, as definite. They have done so, to combat Arianism and modern day Jehovah's Witnesses. The New World Translation, the official Bible of Jehovah's Witnesses, translates John 1:1, as "the Word was a god." So, we can see why Trinitarian scholars would object to such a translation and instead, argue for a definite *theos*, thus proving the deity of Christ, in this passage. However, as Daniel Wallace has pointed out, simply appealing to Colwell's rule alone, does not prove that *theos* must be taken as definite. His rule would only say, that if *theos* is definite, then it would probably lack the article (and it does), But, the reverse is not necessarily true. Simply, lacking the article in this construction, does not *make* the noun definite.

Wallace goes on to argue, that *theos* should not be taken as definite, but instead, as

qualitative, thus emphasizing “the nature of the Word, rather than His identity.” The glosses, which he suggests, bring out this idea are, “What God was, the Word was” (NEB), or “the Word was Divine” (a modified Moffatt translation). He also states, that a definite *theos*, in this passage, would imply Sabellianism or Modalism (making Jesus to be God the Father, i.e., a Oneness perspective). In a footnote, he quotes several other Greek scholars, which concur, some even more emphatically (Westcott, A.T. Robertson, Lange, Chemnitz, Alford, and even, Martin Luther).

My question to all of these grammarians is this: Why does a definite *theos* have to refer to God the Father, since all three persons are co-equal in Trinitarian theology?” The Holy Spirit is identified as “God” with the article present in Acts 5:3-4. Jesus is identified as “God” with the article present in John 20:28, Titus 2:13, and 2 Peter 1:1. Wallace acknowledges these passages, but states that (in John 20:28), “There is nothing in that context that would identify [Jesus] with the Father.” But if God is a Trinity, I see nothing in John 1:1 (“the Word was with God”) that would require that this occurrence of *theos* be identified, as God the Father, either. It simply says that, “the Word was with God (article present).” Why could this not be referring to God the Holy Spirit? Surely, if God is an eternal Trinity, then Jesus would have been with Him (God the Holy Spirit), in the beginning, as well.

The point we should note here, is that when a Trinitarian reads the word, “God,” he (rightly) assumes that it refers to God the Father, unless there is reason to believe otherwise. Somehow, the Father is more ‘God,’ than the other two people. So, if a definite *theos*, in this passage, would make Jesus, God the Father (as Wallace and the other grammarians above have stated), then I see no reason why a definite *theos* applied to Jesus *anywhere else in the New Testament would not also make Jesus, God the Father!* (such as in the passages noted above.).

So what other options were open to John? He could have easily left *theos* anarthrous and still put it after the verb, thus retaining the qualitative sense, that Wallace argues for. So, it was not *necessary* to place it before the verb, merely for that

reason. The fact that he chose to put it before the verb and to the beginning of the phrase, would seem to indicate *emphasis* (The Word was **God!**). As mentioned before, Colwell's rule states that, "definite predicate nouns, which precede the verb, usually lack the article." So, if John *intended* a definite *theos* and wanted to emphasize the word, "God," then he would have said it, *exactly how he did!* Now, I am in agreement with Wallace, that Colwell's rule does not *prove* a definite *theos*, but it most definitely supports it. Even he admits, that a definite *theos* is "certainly possible grammatically."

Furthermore, you could only derive a Trinitarian interpretation from John 1:1, if you come to this passage with an already developed Trinitarian theology. If you approached it with a strict Monotheism (which is what I believe John held to), then this passage, would definitely support such a view. If John had wanted to emphasize the word, *theos* then he would have moved it to the beginning of the phrase before the verb and thus, (according to Colwell's rule), it would be anarthrous (as it is).

The Significance of a Name

The use of names in Bible times, especially in Old Testament times, carried much more significance than it does, in our day. People often used names, to reveal something about the characteristics, history, or nature of individuals, and God did too. Thus, God changed the name of Abram (meaning high father), to Abraham (father of a multitude), and the name of Jacob (heel catcher, supplanter), to Israel (he will rule as God). Even in the New Testament, Jesus changed the name of Simon (hearing) to Peter (a rock). The AMPLIFIED BIBLE, quotes in a footnote, on 1 Kings 8:42, from DAVIS DICTIONARY OF THE BIBLE, ELLICOTT'S COMMENTARY ON THE WHOLE BIBLE, and THE NEW BIBLE DICTIONARY, to point out the significance of the name of God. *"To know the NAME of God, is to witness the manifestation of those attributes and apprehend that character, which the name denotes...God's NAME, that is, His self-revelation...The name signifies the active presence of the person in the fullness of the reveal character."* Baylor University professors, Flanders and Cresson state: *"To the ancients, the name is a part of the person, an extension of the personality of the*

individual.”

God used names, as a means of progressive self-revelation, for example, in Exodus 6:3, God said, “*And I appeared unto Abraham, unto Isaac, and unto Jacob, by the name of God Almighty, but by my name JEHOVAH, was I not known unto them?*” Verses 4 through 8, make clear, that the significance to Israel, of the name, Jehovah, was its association with redemption and salvation. We know that Abraham did use the name, Jehovah (Genesis 22:14); however, God did not make known to him, the full significance of this name, in its redemptive aspect. So, in Exodus 6:3, God promised to reveal Himself to His people, in a new way. That is, He began to associate His name, with a new understanding of His character and presence.

In addition to using names to manifest His character, God used His name to manifest His presence. At the dedication of the Temple, Solomon acknowledged, that God was omnipresent and that no temple could contain Him (1 Kings 8:27). Since God fills the universe, Solomon asked how the Temple, a man-made structure, could contain God. Then he answered his own question, by reminding God of His promise: “*My name shall be there*” (1 Kings 8:29). Although God’s omnipresence could not be confined to the Temple, yet, the fullness of His character, as represented by His name, could dwell there.

Solomon went on to pray, “*that all people of the earth, may know thy name*” (1 Kings 8:43). Once again, this links the name of God, with a revelation of His character. God Himself, used the concept of His name, to represent the revelation of His nature and power. He told Pharaoh, “*And in very deed for this cause, have I raised thee up, for to shew in thee, my power; and that my name may be declared throughout all the earth*” (Exodus 9:16).

The name of God, represents His authority, as well as His power. For example, He invested His name in the angel that led the Israelites (Exodus 23:21). This was probably a theophany of God, since the passage expresses the idea, that the angel

acted with all the authority of God Himself.

God’s name represents the following:

- 1. God’s presence
- 2. The revelation of His character.
- 3. His power.
- 4. His authority.

Here are some other points that show the importance God places upon His name:

- * God demands fear (reverence, respect) for His name (Deuteronomy 28:58-59). He commands man not to take His name in vain, Exodus 20:7)

- * God warns His people not to forget His name (Psalm 44:20-21; Jeremiah 23:25-27).

- * God promises a blessing for those who know His name (Psalm 91:14-16). There is a blessing for those who think upon His name (Malachi 3:16).

With the significance of the name in mind, let us examine some names used for God in the Old Testament.

Names or Titles of God in the Old Testament

Below is a list of the primary words used to designate God in the Old Testament.

Old Testament Names For God

<u>English</u>	<u>Hebrew</u>	<u>Example of Scripture</u>
God	Elohim	

Genesis 1:1	God	El	
Genesis 14:18	God	Eloah	
Nehemiah 9:17	God	Elah (Aramaic form)	
Daniel 2:18	GOD	YHWH (Jehovah)	
Genesis 15:2	LORD	YHWH or YH	
Genesis 2:4	JEHOVAH	YHWH	
Exodus 6:3	JAH	YH (Yah)	Psalm
68:4	Lord	Adon	Joshua
3:11	Lord	Adonai	
Genesis 15:2	I AM THAT I AM	Eheyeh asher Eheyeh	
Exodus 3:14	I AM	Eheyeh	
Exodus 3:14	Most High God	El-Elyon	Genesis
14:18	The God of sight	El-Roiy	
Genesis 16:13	Almighty God	El-Shaddia	Genesis 17:1
	Everlasting God	El-Olam	Genesis
21:33			

El means strength, might, almighty, or by extension, deity. Eloah is probably derived from el, and always refers to deity. Elah is the Aramaic (Chaldean) form of Eloah. Elohim is the plural form of Eloah, and the Old Testament uses this word, more than any other, to mean God.

In this case, the Hebrew plural is an intensive form, denoting the greatness, majesty, and multiple attributes of God. The Bible also uses the word, ELOHIM, to refer to false gods (Judges 8:33), Spirit beings (1 Samuel 28:13), and human rulers or judges (Psalm 82). In these cases, it is translated god or gods. Adon means ruler, master, or lord, whether human, angelic, or divine. Adonai is the emphatic form of Adon, and specifically refers to the Lord (God.).

Jehovah (Jehovah) is the redemptive name of God in the Old Testament (Exodus 6:3), and the unique name, by which, the one true God distinguished Himself in the Old Testament, from all other gods (Isaiah 42:8). It means, the “Self-Existing One or the Eternal One.” This concept, also appears, in the phrases, “I AM THAT I AM” and “I AM,” used by God Himself. Flanders and Cresson explain that Jehovah is the third person form of the verb, “to be,” in Hebrew. Jehovah means, “He is.” When used by God, the verb form is in the first person, or “I Am.” In other words, Jehovah and “I Am” are different forms of the same verb. Furthermore, both connote an active (possibly, causative or creative) existence, rather than just a passive existence.

In the English, Jah appears, once in the KJV, as an abbreviation of Jehovah (Psalm 68:4). Jehovah appears, by itself, only four times in the KJV (Exodus 6:3; Psalm 83:18; Isaiah 12:2; Isaiah 26:4), and only three times as part of a compound name (Genesis 22:14; Exodus 17:15; Judges 6:24). In every other place, the King James translators, used GOD or LORD (large and small capitals) to represent YHWH or its abbreviation YH. In most cases, they used LORD (example: Genesis 2:4), using GOD only when Adonai (Lord), also appeared in the same phrase (example: Genesis 15:2).

In using LORD, as a substitute for YHWH, they were simply following an ancient

Jewish tradition of substituting Adonai for YHWH, when copying or reading Scriptures. This custom arose, because the Jews wanted to safeguard against taking God's name in vain, which would violate the Third Commandment (Exodus 20:7). They felt that by constantly repeating the sacred name of God, they might begin to treat it too casually and lightly. The name of God, was so Holy and Sacred, that they did not feel worthy, to use it.

Jesus and the apostles, also followed, this custom. The New Testament uses the Greek word, KURIOS, meaning, Lord, when quoting Old Testament Scripture containing YHWH (Matthew 3:3; 4:7, etc).

Since ancient Hebrew did not use written vowels and since the Jews stopped speaking the sacred name, no one knows what the original pronunciation of YHWH was. All we have, are the four Hebrew letters (called the tetragrammaton), which are usually transliterated as YHWH or JHVH, and are pronounced Jehovah (Hebrew) or Jehovah (English).

The Progressive Revelation of the Name

We find that in the Old Testament, God progressively revealed more about Himself, as various needs arose in the lives of man, and He used names to express this self-revelation. When Abraham needed a lamb to sacrifice, God revealed Himself as Jehovah-jireh, The LORD that provides. When Israel needed deliverance, God revealed that His name was Jehovah, had a previously unknown significance, with respect to deliverance, and salvation (Exodus 6:3-8). When Israel needed protection from disease and sickness, God revealed Himself as Jehovah-rapha, the LORD that heals. When Israel needed victory over enemies, God revealed Himself, as Jehovah-nissi, the LORD, our banner, i.e. victory. Thus, the names and titles, described above, all reveal important aspects about the nature of God.

However, none of them is a complete revelation of God's nature. Many people in the Old Testament realized this; they desired to know more of God and expressed their desire, by asking to know His name. When Jacob wrestled with the man at Penile (a manifestation of God), he asked, *"Tell me, I pray thee, thy name."* *God did not reveal His name, but did bless him (Genesis 32:29).* Manorah, the father of Samson, asked the angel of the LORD, what His name was and received this reply: *"Why asketh thou thus after my name, seeing it is secret:" (Judges 13:18).* Zechariah prophesied that, a time would come when the LORD would be king over all the earth, and "in that day, shall there be one LORD, and his name one" (Zechariah 14:9).

The Name of Jesus

When the fullness of time came, God did satisfy the longings of His people and revealed Himself in all His power and glory, through the name, Jesus. Jesus is the Greek equivalent of the Hebrew name, variously rendered as Jehoshua (Numbers 13:16), Jeshua (Ezra 2:2), or Joshua (Exodus 17:9). Both Acts 7:45 and Hebrews 4:8, show that Jesus is the same name, as Joshua (See NIV).

Jesus means Jehovah-Saviour, Jehovah our Salvation, or Jehovah is Salvation. This is why the angel said, "And she shall bring forth a son, and thou shalt call His name JESUS: for He shall save His people from their sins" (Matthew 1:21). The identification of the name, Jesus with salvation, is particularly evident, because the Hebrew for Jeshua is practically identical, to the Hebrew for salvation, especially since ancient Hebrew did not use written vowels. In fact, STRONG'S EXHAUSTIVE CONCORDANCE transliterates Jeshua, as Yeshuwa and the Hebrew word for salvation, as Yeshuwah. Although others have borne the name Jehoshua, Joshua, or Jesus, the Lord Jesus Christ, is the only One, who actually lived up, to that name. He is the only One, who is actually, what that name describes.

Jesus is the culmination of all the Old Testament names of God. It is the highest,

most exalted name ever revealed to mankind. (**Jesus** fulfills all the eleven compound names of Jehovah). The **Name of Jesus**, is the name of God, that He promised to reveal when He said, "Therefore my people shall know my name" (Isaiah 52:6). It is the one name of Zechariah 14:9, that encompasses and includes all the other names of God, within its meaning.

The New Testament Church, is identified, by the name of Jesus. In fact, Jesus said, we would be hated among all men for His name's sake (Matthew 10:22). The early Church was persecuted for the name of Jesus (Acts 5:28; 9:21; 15:26), and they considered it a privilege, to be counted worthy to suffer for His name (Acts 5:41). Peter stated, that the lame man at the Gate Beautiful, was healed, "by the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth" (Acts 4:10). He then explained, the supremacy and necessity of this name in receiving salvation: "*Neither is there salvation in any other: for there is none other name under heaven given among men, whereby we must be saved*" (Acts 4:12). The Apostle Paul wrote, "*Wherefore, God also hath highly exalted Him, and given Him a name which is above every name: That at the name of Jesus, every knee should bow, of things in heaven, and things in earth, and things under the earth.*" (Philippians 2:9-10).

Because of the exalted position of this name, we are exhorted to rely upon the name of Jesus, in all we do or say: "*Whatsoever ye do in word or deed, do all in the name of the Lord Jesus: (Colossians 3:17).*"

- * We teach and preach in the name of Jesus (Acts 4:17-18, 5:28).
- * We cast out devils, speak in tongues.
- * We receive supernatural power and protection, and
- * We pray for the sick -- all in the name of Jesus (John 14:13-14; 16:23).
- * We gather together in the name of Jesus (Matthew 18:20). We baptize in the name of Jesus (Acts 2:38).

Does this mean the name of Jesus is a kind of magical formula? NO. For the name

of Jesus to be effective, we must have faith in His name (Acts 3:16). We must know and have faith in the ONE represented by that name (Acts 19:13-17). The name of Jesus, is unique, because unlike any other name, it represents the presence of its owner. It represents God's presence, power, and work. When we speak the name of Jesus in faith, Jesus Himself, is actually present and begins to work. The power does not come from the way the name sounds, but it comes, because the utterance of the name, in faith, demonstrates obedience to the Word of God and faith in the work of Jesus. When we call His name, in faith, Jesus manifests His presence, performs the work, and meets the need.

Through the name Jesus, therefore, God reveals Himself, fully. To the extent that we see, know, honor, believe, and receive Jesus, to that extent, we see, know, honor, believe, and receive God, the Father (John 5:23; 8:19; 12:44-45; 13:20; 14:7-9). If we deny Jesus, we deny the Father (1 John 2:33), but if we use the name of Jesus, we glorify the Father (Colossians 3:17).

The Bible foretold, that the Messiah would declare the name of the LORD (Psalm 22:22; see Hebrews 2:12). Jesus asserted that He had manifested and declared the name of the Father (John 17:6, 26). [What name did Jesus declare and reveal?] In fact, He inherited His name from the Father (Hebrews 1:4). How did Jesus manifest and declare the Father's name? He did so, by unveiling the meaning of the name through the works that He did, which were the works of Jehovah (John 14:10-11). Just as God, in the Old Testament, progressively revealed more about His nature and His name, by responding to the needs of His people, so Jesus in the New Testament, fully revealed the nature and name of God, through miracles, healings, casting out of devils, and forgiveness of sins. Jesus declared the Father's name by His works; for by them, He proved, that He was indeed, the Jehovah of the Old Testament (See Isaiah 35:4-6, with Luke 7:19-22).

Why is the name of Jesus the full revelation of God?

Simply because, Jesus is Jehovah, and *in Jesus dwell all the fullness of the Godhead bodily (Colossians 2:9).*

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