

WHAT THINK YE OF CHRIST?

**God the Son
or
Son of God?**

**A Refutation of the Doctrine
of the Trinity**

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CONTENTS

CHAPTER ONE: WHAT THINK YE OF CHRIST?	4.
CHAPTER TWO: “ONE LORD”	10.
CHAPTER THREE: NO MAN AT ANY TIME HAS SEEN GOD	36.
CHAPTER FOUR: ELOHIM - GOD - ANGELS	52.
CHAPTER FIVE: “MY NAME IS IN HIM”	66.
CHAPTER SIX: ABRAHAM’S THREE VISITORS	76.
CHAPTER SEVEN: THE HOLY SPIRIT	83.
CHAPTER EIGHT: “I SAID YOU ARE GODS”	99.
CHAPTER NINE: THE EVERLASTING FATHER	116.
CHAPTER TEN: THE HISTORY OF THE TRINITY	138.
CHAPTER ELEVEN: THE PRE-EXISTENCE OF CHRIST	169.
CHAPTER TWELVE: SENT FROM GOD	181.

CHAPTER THIRTEEN: “WHOSE GOINGS FORTH HAVE BEEN FROM OLD”	208.
CHAPTER FOURTEEN: “IN THE BEGINNING WAS THE WORD”	220.
CHAPTER FIFTEEN: PREDESTINATION	245.
CHAPTER SIXTEEN: THE FIRSTBORN OF EVERY CREATURE	254.
CHAPTER SEVENTEEN: “THOUGHT IT NOT ROBBERY TO BE EQUAL”	259.
CHAPTER EIGHTEEN: ONE FATHER CREATED US	287.

A COMPREHENSIVE CONTENTS IS LISTED
ON PAGES 309-317.

CHAPTER ONE WHAT THINK YE OF CHRIST?

"**W**hat think ye of Christ? whose son is he?" This was the question put by Jesus to his Jewish contemporaries nearly 2000 years ago (Matt. 22:42). What he was really asking was: "Who do you think Christ is - what is his origin - where does he come from?"

The Jews believed he was the son of Joseph and Mary, and therefore a mere man - an ordinary human being with ordinary human parents. They rejected all connection with God. They did not believe that Jesus had a Divine origin.

Christendom, however, for many centuries, has given Jesus the closest possible connection with God, claiming that he is, in fact, "Very God of Very God" Himself.

These two views are poles apart from each other, and controversy has raged over this issue for centuries between the two parties. Each party has stood sternly aloof from the other and there have been times when war to the death has taken place in order to uphold conviction.

There are many who believe that both views have gone to unnecessary extremes, and that the truth of the matter lies in between. The Jewish view has swung too far one way and is therefore justifiably rejected by Christendom. But Christendom's view has swung too far the other way and is therefore justifiably rejected by the Jews.

Many believe that Christendom's belief is as different from the original faith of Christ preached by Jesus and the apostles, as Judaism is from the original institutions given by Moses. If this is so, the Jews' attack against Christendom's concept of Christ does not touch original New Testament Christianity at all. In other words: If Christendom's concept of Christ is incorrect, then Jewish rejection of it would not be rejection of the truth. Many believe that if the truth of the matter which lies in between had been preached by the Church to the Jews, the success rate of conversion would have been much higher as it was during the first century.

Christendom's concept of Christ is that he is part of an eternal triune God-head. It is believed that God consists of three persons: the Father, Son and Holy Spirit, each member being co-equal and co-eternal. Seeing that Jesus is a member of this eternal Godhead, it is naturally concluded that he must have existed before his birth, i.e. "pre-existed."

It is not difficult to understand or appreciate why this is commonly believed. On the surface, the Bible seems to uphold such a view. For

instance, the Hebrew word "elohim" from which our English word "God" has been translated, is usually plural in form. And, on several occasions the plural pronouns "us" and "we" are associated with it, suggesting that more than one person is involved. Jesus is plainly referred to as "God" and "Lord" in both Old and New Testaments, and Divine attributes are attributed to him. Jesus himself said "I and my Father are one" and "he who sees me sees the Father." He also said: "Before Abraham was I am" and, "Abraham rejoiced to see my day and saw it and was glad." He said to his Father in prayer: "Glorify me with the glory which I had with you before the world began." On another occasion he said to the Jews: "What and if you see the Son of man ascend up where he was before?"

These and other statements like them certainly seem to teach that Jesus existed in heaven before his birth as God, and it is not surprising that this conclusion has been drawn and gained wide-spread acceptance.

However, as every coin has two sides, so also do those statements quoted above. All the Scriptures which are quoted in favour of the Trinitarian view have another side to them which tells quite a different story.

Most Bible students will appreciate that very often, a certain Scripture, on the surface, will appear to teach a particular point, whereas deeper investigation reveals that there was more to it than what first met the eye; and that instead of teaching that particular point, it really taught something quite different.

For example, take the Lord's statement to Peter in Matt. 16:18: "Thou art Peter, and upon this rock I will build my Church." For centuries this was interpreted to mean that Peter was the rock upon which the Church would be founded, and Peter was thus regarded as the first Pope. Since the reformation, deeper investigation has revealed that the statement does not teach that at all.

When Jesus said: "You must be born again," he did not mean that a man has to return to his mother's womb and be literally and physically born again! When Jesus said that Lazarus was "asleep" he did not mean that he was having a snooze! When Jesus said: "Destroy this temple, and in three days I will raise it up," he did not mean that he would rebuild Herod's temple in three days. When Jesus said he will give "living water" he did not mean literal water. When Jesus said: "Beware of the leaven of the Pharisees," he was not referring to bread. And, when he referred to himself as "bread from heaven" he was obviously not referring to literal bread. His statement: "Unless you eat my flesh and drink my blood" was clearly not an encouragement of cannibalism! And his words: "Take eat,

this is my body - this is my blood" certainly does not mean that Jesus dug the bread out of his body and drained the wine out of his blood.

Very often, the statements of Scripture (especially the sayings of Jesus in the gospel of John) cannot be taken at face value or be interpreted literally. They frequently have a deeper hidden meaning which the superficial or prejudiced reader can easily miss. Many statements are of an enigmatical nature and have to be "spiritually discerned". And the most effective way of doing this is by comparing Scripture with Scripture, reading the Bible constantly as a whole, from beginning to ending, and allow it to interpret and explain itself. The apostle Paul himself refers to this principle in 1 Cor. 2:13: "...comparing spiritual things with spiritual."

The word of God must harmonize! It must be one harmonious whole. Whatever conclusions we reach, they must tie in with the rest of Scripture. Unfortunately, the Trinitarian concept of Christ fails to do this.

It is true that on the surface it seems to be well supported by the Scriptures, but there are many other Scriptures which tell quite a different story. This either means the Bible contradicts itself, or it is not being properly interpreted. The purpose of this thesis is to take all Scriptures into account, causing them to form one harmonious whole in relation to the origin and nature of Christ.

Here are some of the problems and apparent contradictions that will be investigated:

1. If the Divine title "God" (elohim) refers solely and exclusively to the Trinity, how is it that the same title is also given to the angels and Jewish judges? Does this make them part of the Godhead also? If the title "God" as applied to Jesus, makes him co-equal and co-eternal with his Father, the same would surely have to apply to the angels and Jewish judges.

2. If Jesus was equal with God, why did he say: "My Father is greater than I"? Even well after the earthly ministry of Jesus, the apostle Paul wrote in one of his epistles that "the head of Christ is God" (1 Cor. 11:3).

3. If Jesus was one and the same person as his Father, being equal with him, why did he say: "Why callest thou me good? There is none good but one, that is, God" (Mark 10:18). Why did the Son pray to the Father if they are one and the same person? Can a son be his own Father?

4. How could Jesus be "tempted in all points as we are" if he was "Very God of Very God"? The Bible clearly teaches that "God cannot be tempted."

5. The Bible teaches that God is omniscient. There is nothing He does not know. If Jesus is God in this total ultimate sense, how is it that he did

not know the date of his second coming? (Mark 13:32). Even after his ascension to heaven, God had to give him revelation (Rev. 1:1). "Revelation" means disclosure of knowledge hitherto unknown.

6. It is recorded in 1 Tim. 6:16 (and many other places) that no man has seen or can see God. Many people saw Jesus! If Jesus was God, why is it recorded after his ministry that no man has seen God?

7. If Jesus' statement: "Before Abraham was I am" etc. means that he actually existed as a personal conscious being before he was born, what are we to make of the following statement which God made to Jeremiah: "Before I formed you in the belly I knew you ..." Also, in Isa.45:1 reference is made to God holding Cyrus' hand centuries before he was born. Did Jeremiah and Cyrus also pre-exist? Or are such statements to be understood in the light of the doctrine of PREDESTINATION? There is a vast difference between predestination and pre-existence. "Predestination" is a Scriptural term defining a particular principle of operation of God. "Pre-existence" is not a Scriptural term. It is a totally unbiblical expression. When the true principles of predestination are fully understood, all the passages of Scripture which are commonly regarded as teaching the pre-existence of Christ appear in a completely different light.

8. Scripture teaches that Jesus has been exalted to the right hand of his Father as a result of his perfect obedience (Plp. 2:8-9). But if Jesus pre-existed as God on the throne in heaven, how can his return to that position be styled an "exaltation"? There is no higher position or status than God. If Jesus occupied that position prior to his birth, then going back to it could hardly be styled an exaltation. As it stands, he would be no higher now than he ever was. If he pre-existed as a co-equal with his Father, and is now exalted above that, he would be elevated to a position higher than his Father! And if Jesus and his Father are one and the same person, how are we to understand the Scriptures which refer to the Father exalting the Son and placing him at His own right hand? Did Jesus exalt himself and sit on his own right hand?

Unfortunately, the Trinitarian concept creates endless disharmony and contradiction. The result is that most who profess to believe it cannot understand or adequately define it. When pressed for an adequate explanation, most have to fall back on the well-worn excuse that "it is all a blessed mystery."

The doctrine of the Trinity is confusing and contradictory, and is therefore most unlikely to be a true concept of the Godhead. The Bible assures us that God is not the author of confusion and that His Word and Ways are not contradictory. We must therefore read His Word with great

care and attention and ensure that our understanding of Him is not confusing and contradictory.

DOES IT REALLY MATTER?

Does it really matter what view we take of Christ? Is it an issue that warrants study and research? To avoid controversy and division many would prefer to adopt a simplistic approach saying: "It Doesn't really matter what we believe as long as we believe Jesus died on the cross for our sins." Every Christian should want to avoid division wherever possible and certainly every Christian should believe that Jesus died for our sins. But every Christian should also want to increase in the knowledge of the Lord Jesus Christ and know him fully as he has been revealed. The Spirit constantly exhorts us not to be content with the milk of the Word but to advance to the meat. If avoidance of controversy and division means having a superficial knowledge of God and superficial fellowship with Christians, then a little bit of controversy could be a good thing!

Jesus would not sympathise with the modern simplistic, superficial approach. His question: "What think ye of Christ? Whose son is he?" Is clearly a direct challenge to exercise the mind to ascertain his true origin, nature and identity. His attitude towards study of the Word of God can be seen in Matt.24:15 where, in relation to the prophecies in the book of Daniel he said: "Whoso readeth, let him understand." Two things are stated here: 1. We must read the Word. 2. We must understand the Word.

"Wisdom is the principle thing, therefore get wisdom, and with all thy getting, get understanding" (Pr.4:7).

Paul's prayer for the Church was "that the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of glory, may give unto you the spirit of wisdom and revelation in the knowledge of Him, the eyes of your understanding being enlightened ..." (Eph. 1:17-18). His desire was that "we all come to the unity of the faith AND OF THE KNOWLEDGE OF THE SON OF GOD ..." (Eph. 4:13), "... increasing in the knowledge of God" (Col. 1:10).

"But grow in grace, and in the knowledge of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ. To him be glory both now and forever. Amen." (2 Pet.3:18).

These Scriptures express the desire of the Spirit. If we are walking in the Spirit our desires will be the same. It is in this spirit and with this desire that this thesis is being written. If it provokes deeper thought, increased knowledge and appreciation of the Godhead, then it will have

achieved its purpose.

I would like to conclude this chapter by quoting another writer whose sentiments I share: "Neither this writer nor any other has any right to dissect the person of his Saviour. We are not discussing, as men of science might discuss, created objects whose structure is open to examination without presumption, provided that we recognise that the same God made both the objects and ourselves. We are not, either, discussing merely ourselves, our powers and our problems, which we can do without offence if we acknowledge that all our powers are derived from our Creator, and none of our problems can be solved without His blessing. We are discussing the Son whom the Creator brought into the world to save sinners, and, necessarily, the Creator Himself in His inseparable involvement in that achievement. The creature, that is, is daring to gaze into the brightness and the sanctity of the Creator's councils, and this can only be done at all with the Creator's express permission, and can only be done fruitfully and acceptably if we take off our shoes from our feet, for the ground on which we tread is holy.

"We take with gladness all that the Scriptures reveal to us in plain terms, therefore, about the person of our Saviour. We venture, if we venture at all, outside this field only with trepidation and humility, praying as we search; "Keep back thy servant from presumptuous sin." And in case we are tempted, as has all too often happened, to play tug-of-war with holy things in seeking to maintain an opinion against the opinions of others, let us remember that our Lord is listening as we speak and reading as we write, and that His judgement on matter and motive is without mistake: while no matter how vehemently we might maintain that this is right and that is wrong, all our fire and urgency make no shadow of difference to the real truth, which is there unchangeable whether we have discerned it or not. We seek not to fight and win, but to search and find." (Alfred Norris: "A Disclaimer")

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CHAPTER TWO "ONE LORD"

It is more significant than what is often appreciated, that faithful Israelites throughout Old Testament times, to whom the oracles of God were committed; and who understand the original Hebrew language in which those oracles were written better than any of us, were nevertheless strict monotheists. Even though they knew that "elohim" was generally plural in form, they nevertheless clung tenaciously to the uncompound unity of God. The individual and indivisible oneness of God constituted the foundation of their faith, and it was constantly reaffirmed, reinforced and encouraged by the Holy Spirit in the various teachers and prophets throughout the centuries of Old Testament history. It was continually impressed upon the people that God was "ONE" - an unqualified, undivided unit; the one and only supreme Deity, Creator and Sustainer of all things.

When God first formed Israel into a nation after delivering them from Egypt, He affirmed His oneness to them as the very basis of their faith: "Hear O Israel, the Lord our God is one Lord" (Deu. 6:4). "See now that I, even I, am He, and there is no god with Me" (Deu. 32:39).

Notice particularly the personal pronouns "I," "Me" and "He." The fact that singular personal pronouns are used in reference to God is positive testimony of His simple unity and individual oneness. Such pronouns occur by the thousands in the Bible in relation to God, revealing and stressing His individual oneness. "I," "Me," and "Mine;" "He," "His" and "Himself;" "Thou," "thee" and "Thine," never have been, and never will be, correctly applied to more than one individual personality. It would be grammatically incorrect to use a personal singular pronoun in relation to God if more than one person was involved.

If more than one person was involved, we would expect plural pronouns such as "us," "we," "ours" etc to be used all the time in reference to God. For instance, when Jesus referred to a particular work that both he and his Father would perform in a believer he said: "We will come unto him, and make our abode with him" (Jn. 14:23). Jesus and his Father, although "one" in spirit, motive and purpose, were nevertheless separate individuals, and this is borne out by the usage of the plural pronouns. If Jesus pre-existed, one would have expected plural pronouns to be used all the time in reference to God. Instead, plural pronouns are only used on four occasions. On all other literally hundreds of occasions, the singular pronouns are used. If Jesus pre-existed, it would be difficult to reconcile

the statement made by God in Deu.32:39: "See now that I, even I, am He, AND THERE IS NO GOD WITH ME." The emphasis of singular pronouns here stresses that God is a single individual and that He is God by Himself - alone - with no one else; "THERE IS NO GOD WITH ME."

In passing, it should also be pointed out that although there are many references to the Holy Spirit and the work of the Holy Spirit in the Old Testament, the Hebrews still clung tenaciously to their monotheistic concept of God. They clearly did not regard the Holy Spirit as a separate part or person in the Godhead. They did not think of their God in terms of "two in one" or "one in two." His unity was uncompound.

I realise of course, as mentioned earlier, that the plural pronoun "us" is used in Scripture in relation to "God" and more will be said about this later. Suffice it to say in the meantime, that there are only four Scriptures in the Old Testament where plural pronouns are used in reference to God. The four texts are in Gen. 1:26, Gen. 3:22. 11:7. Isa. 6:8. If God is a Trinity, and plural pronouns occur for that reason, why is it that they only occur on four occasions? Why do they occur as an exception in Scripture and not as a general rule?

If the plural word "Elohim" were intended to teach that God is a Trinity, one would expect "God" to always be identified by this plural word. We find however, that this is not the case. The singular form "Eloah" is also used in reference to God. This is specially so in the books of the Old Testament poetry.

Forty-one of the fifty-six occurrences of "Eloah" are in Job.

MISGUIDED

Now, the Hebrews' strict monotheistic concept of God, in spite of their awareness of "Elohim" generally being plural in form, either means they were wilfully blind and ignorant with regard to the basic meaning of their own language, or that there was some other explanation which the Trinitarian has missed.

One thing is certain; the Trinitarian concept of God is totally incompatible with the God of the Hebrew faith. The moment a Hebrew is told that there are three persons, three essences, three "somethings" or "anythings" in the Godhead, and that these three distinct units or unities constitute only one unit or one unity - and that "tri-unity" is the God of Israel, the Yahweh of the Old Testament: - the moment a Hebrew is told this, he shrinks back and stands sternly aloof. The devout Hebrew points to the declaration on Horeb: "I am the Lord thy God. Thou shalt have no

other gods before Me.” And again: "Hear O Israel the Lord our God, the Lord is one."

Throughout the 4000 years of Old Testament history, God constantly reaffirmed and reinforced His individual oneness and upheld the monotheistic faith of His people. Time and time again He stressed that He alone was God, and that there was no other God with Him. Did He deceive and mislead the people? Did He tell them He was one when he was really three? Were the Hebrews misguided? Was the most fundamental and basic aspect of their faith astray from the truth? If they interpreted it incorrectly, why is there no record of God ever attempting to put them right? Is it conceivable that he would allow them to continue for so long with a totally false concept of Himself? If God was a Trinity, why didn't He clearly say so right from the beginning? He had nothing to lose by it. The Israelites would have believed Him and would have accepted the concept. After all, they had been accustomed to plurality of gods in Egypt and all the surrounding nations had more than one God.

This then, is the proposition: if God is a Trinity, and if it is now essential to believe this for salvation, why did He lead His people to believe otherwise during at least the first 4000 years of history? The Bible plainly declares that God does not change: "I am the Lord, I change not" (Mal.3:6). With God "there is no variableness, neither shadow of turning" (Jam. 1:17). He is the same from everlasting to everlasting. "God is not a man, that He should lie; neither the son of man that He should change His mind" (Num. 23:19). Sometimes, some of God's appointments change, as for example the ceremonial and ritual laws given through Moses, because He only ever intended them to apply during a specific dispensation, for a very specific reason.

But God Himself does not fit into the category of something temporary and transitional like ceremonial laws. He is eternal and changes not. If He has always been a Trinity He would have proclaimed Himself as a Trinity from the beginning when He first revealed Himself to man. He would never have emphasized that He was one individual - alone - by Himself.

GOD'S ONENESS IN THE OLD TESTAMENT

The oneness of God refers to the fact that there is only one person in the universe who is the supreme source of all things. Before the universe came into being, He was alone. The fact that there is only one God is an outstanding teaching in the Bible. It was the basic message of

the prophets and apostles. It is a major Bible truth.

Deu.6:4: "The Lord our God is one Lord."

2 Sam. 7:22: "Thou art great O Lord God; for there is none like thee, neither is there any God beside thee."

1 Chr. 17:20: "O Lord there is none like thee, neither is there any God beside thee."

Zec. 14:9: "...one Lord and his name one."

Mal. 2:10: "Have we not all one Father? Hath not one God created us?"

The Bible teaches God's unity not only by stating that He is one, but also by affirming that He is the only God. The word "only" means alone, by one's self, apart, to be solitary.

2 Kng. 19:15: "Thou art the God, even thou alone."

2 Kng. 19:19: "Thou art the Lord God, even thou only."

Neh. 9:6: "Thou, even thou, art Lord alone."

Ps. 86:10. "Thou art God alone."

Isa. 44:24. "I am the Lord who makes all things, who stretches forth the heavens alone, who spreads abroad the earth by myself."

The Father and Creator of the universe is clearly "one" - a sole individual. In the Old Testament times He was "alone" as God - the "only" God. THERE WAS NO OTHER. All others were excluded. Beside Him no other God existed. Consider the following Scriptures which teach this:

Deu. 4:35. "The Lord He is God; - there is none else."

Deu. 4:39. "The Lord he is God - there is none else."

1 Sam. 2:2 "There is none beside thee."

1 Kng. 8:60. "The Lord is God and there is none else."

Isa. 43:10. "I am He; before me there was no God formed, neither shall there be after me. I, even I, am the Lord and beside me there is no Saviour." (Notice the emphasis on the singular pronouns stressing that God is one specific person - a sole individual).

Isa. 44:8. God asks: "Is there a God beside me?" That is: "Is there another person in the Godhead besides myself?" The reply is: "Yea, there is no God; I know not any."

Isa. 45:5, 6, 14, 18, 21, 22: "I (not "we") am the Lord, and there is none else, there is no God beside me."

Isa. 46:5. "To whom will you liken me (not "us") and make me equal, and compare me, that we may be alike?"

Had God been a Trinity, consisting of three equal persons, it is most unlikely that He would have presented such a challenging question. For a start, He would hardly refer to the Godhead by the singular pronoun "Me"

if it consisted of more than one person. Instead, He would use the plural pronoun "Us." And, if there were three equal members of the Godhead, God would surely not present such a question which warned His people against making anyone equal with Himself.

God's own reply to the question is: "I am God, and there is none else; I am God and there is none like me." Had Jesus pre-existed at that time as an equal part of the Godhead, it is very difficult to fit such a concept in with the language in these statements.

In view of these forthright, unambiguous statements, stressing the individual oneness and undivided unity of the Lord, it is certainly no wonder that the Hebrews were such strict monotheists. God continually encouraged and strengthened their conviction by reaffirming this truth through His prophets throughout Old Testament times. The monotheistic concept of the Hebrews was obviously acceptable and pleasing to the Lord. He approved, confirmed and vindicated it constantly throughout the 4000 years of Old Testament history. It is exceedingly difficult to believe that God led people to believe that He was a sole individual during this long period when all the time He was really three persons. During this period the nations were quite accustomed to plurality of gods and would have accommodated to the concept of a Trinity without any difficulty. In fact, in view of the wide-spread polytheism at the time, they would have found the concept of the Trinity much more acceptable than the concept of God being one. Why then, didn't God plainly tell them from the start that He was three and not one? Throughout the whole period of Old Testament history the word "three" is never used in relation to God. It is always "one."

GOD'S ONENESS IN THE NEW TESTAMENT

The New testament is equally emphatic in its teaching on the oneness of God. Seeing that God never changes, we would expect this to be the case. The Old and New Testaments are quite harmonious in their teaching on this subject.

Jesus himself affirmed belief in the oneness of God and endorsed the monotheistic faith of the Hebrews. When asked by a Jewish scribe what was the greatest commandment, Jesus replied by quoting Deu. 6:4-5: "Hear O Israel, the Lord our God is one Lord, and thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart ..." (Mk.12:28).

Now, the scribe who put this question to Jesus, was, like all other Jewish scribes, an expert in the study of the Old Testament. And, like all

staunch Hebrews, he was a strict monotheist. (This is evident in the scribe's reply to Jesus). The scribes firmly believed in the individual oneness of God, and would fiercely reject any other concept which made God more than one. They took this stand on the basis of such statements as the one quoted by Jesus from Deu. 6.

Jesus was fully aware of how the Jews interpreted and understood the statement that: "... the Lord our God is one Lord," and he obviously quoted it in a way which agreed with Jewish conviction, because the Scribe replied: "You are right, teacher, you have said the truth: for there is one God; and none other but he: and to love him with all your heart ... and to love your neighbour ..." (Mk.12:32-33).

This whole passage is very instructive. In quoting the words: "Hear O Israel, the Lord our God is one Lord," Jesus not only endorsed the monotheistic faith of Israel ("one Lord"), but also identified himself with the Jewish people in acknowledging the Lord as "our God." This is very significant and important. Instead of Jesus identifying himself with the Lord, claiming to be an equal part of God, he did the very opposite. He identified himself with the people in their acknowledgement of, and dependence upon God. Jesus confessed the Lord as his own personal God as did the Jewish people. This is very different from claiming to be the supreme Deity Himself.

The Scribe's reply: "You are right, teacher, you have said the truth," reveals that the Scribe concluded that Christ's understanding of the oneness of God was identical with the monotheistic faith of the Jews. And Jesus' reply to this confirms that his own and the Scribe's concept of God's oneness were identical and not at all at variance.

The Scribe's response pleased Jesus. He had confessed belief in the one true God and had given expression to the importance of loving Him with the whole heart as well as loving one's neighbour. Jesus turned to him and said: "You are not far from the kingdom of God."

Now, if God is a Trinity, and if salvation cannot be obtained unless a person believes this, (as is sometimes claimed by the Trinitarians), how do we explain this recommendation given by Jesus to a man who was firmly fixed to a monotheistic concept of God?

Read carefully the account of Christ's discussion with this Jewish Scribe and ask the question: Did he leave the presence of the Lord Jesus believing that he was equal with God - the second person of a triune God? He clearly did not. He left believing that Jesus' concept of God was consistent with the Hebrew faith. And his declaration of belief earned for him the approbation of the Lord: "You are not far from the kingdom of

God."

DIFFICULT TO HARMONIZE

Consider also another statement made by Jesus to a Jew: "Why call thou me good? There is none good but one, that is God" (Mk. 10:18). Once again we ask the question: How would this Jew understand this statement concerning none being good but one, that is God? The answer is self-evident. He would immediately identify it with all those Old Testament statements which emphasise that God is one, and that there is "none else" - "none beside Him." He would immediately realise that Jesus adhered to the Jewish concept of God and endorsed it. The last possible conclusion that the Jew could draw from Jesus' statement was that he was claiming to be God himself or an equal part of God. Quite the opposite. Jesus deliberately repudiated any such claim.

On another occasion, Jesus said: "Call no man your father upon the earth, for one is your father, who is in heaven" (Matt. 23:9). This, once again was an endorsement of the Hebrew faith. Jesus was actually quoting and confirming the Old Testament which declares: "Have we not all one Father? Hath not one God created us?" (Mal. 2:10).

Again, in his prayer to his Father, Jesus said: "This is life eternal, that they might know thee the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom thou hast sent" (Jn. 17:3). Here, Jesus confesses his Father in heaven as "THE ONLY TRUE GOD." This harmonizes with the many Old Testament statements which declare the Father to be God "alone" - the "only" God. If Jesus was equal with his Father, one would have expected him to express himself something like this: "This is life eternal, that they might know us, the only true God." But he didn't; he referred to His Father as someone quite separate from, and superior to Himself. Throughout his whole ministry, Jesus never referred to himself as "God." There is not one single occasion on which Jesus appropriated the title "God" to himself. The Jews, who often misunderstood his teaching, falsely accused him of claiming equality with God, but Jesus himself never ever made such claims.

The more closely we study the teaching of Jesus, the more apparent it becomes that he agreed with, and endorsed the Old Testament teaching on the individual oneness of God. He identified himself with the monotheistic faith of Israel.

APOSTOLIC TEACHING

The apostolic teaching concerning the oneness of God, as presented in the book of Acts, and the epistles also endorses God's oneness.

Rom. 16:27: "To the only wise God be glory through Jesus Christ."

1 Cor. 8:4-7: "We know ... that there is none other God but one. ...To us there is but one God, the Father, from whom are all things ... and one lord Jesus Christ through whom are all things ... Howbeit there is not in every man that knowledge."

Here we are told that there is one God, the Father, and one Lord Jesus. Now, according to the simple law of mathematics, one plus one equals two. The Father is "one" (single individual) and the son is "one" (single individual). That makes two single individuals as is commonly expected in any father-son relationship. To say otherwise is irrational and unintelligible. Throughout his ministry, Jesus was clearly one individual, separate and detached from his Father, and he made it clear in his teaching and prayers that his Father was in heaven and was superior to himself.

1 Tim.2:5: "There is one God and one mediator between God and men, the man Christ Jesus" Gal. 3v20: "Now a mediator is not a mediator of one, but God is one."

Jesus is mediator between God and men. Now, a mediator must be of necessity a third party. A mediator mediates between two other parties. If the mediator belonged to, and was equally identified with one of the parties, he could not serve as a mediator between the two. He would be disqualified. If Jesus were God in the sense of being equal and of one and the same substance as the Father, i.e. if Jesus and his Father were one and the same person, then he could not be a true mediator between the two parties because he would constitute one of those parties himself, between whom he is supposed to be mediating. The fact then, that Jesus is a mediator nullifies the possibility of him being one and the same person as the Father.

Eph. 4:4-6: "There is ... one God and the Father of all, who is above all ..." The verse before this refers to Jesus as "one Lord." Here again "one plus one equals two" applies. Jesus is one and the Father is one. Each are separate individuals. Together they constitute two persons. Moreover, the verse teaches that in relation to the Son, the Father "is above."

1 Tim.6:17: "... the blessed and only Potentate, the king of kings, and Lord of lords, who only hath immortality, dwelling in the light which no man can approach unto; whom no man hath seen, nor can see."

Reference here to no man having ever seen God indicates that the writer is not referring to Jesus, for many men saw him. The reference is clearly to Father-God Himself who is the "only Potentate" - the only and sole source of immortality and power.

Jam. 2:19: "Thou believest that there is one God; thou doest well."

Jude v25: "To the only wise God our Saviour through Jesus Christ our Lord, be glory and majesty, dominion and power."

These then, are a selection of verses from the New Testament in which the oneness of God is taught. Both Old Testament and New Testament are united in their testimony on this matter. There is complete harmony between the two as one would expect if God never changes and if He is the author of both accounts. Never do we find in the Word of God statements such as "Hear O Israel, The Lord our God is three Lords." Or: "We, even we, are the Lord; beside us there is no Saviour; We are He and before us there was no God formed, neither shall there be after us." Such language is totally foreign to the language of the Bible. Yet, if God really consisted of three persons, one would expect to find this kind of language to be used.

"ONE MEANS ONE"

One Trinitarian writer has written the following statements: "Whenever Scripture speaks about God being "one" it never means the mathematical or number one but a compound unity; the unity of more than one person. The Hebrew word for "one" is "Echad." It is used hundreds of times in the Old Testament and is often significant of a COMPOUND UNITY; the unity of more than one, i.e. one crowd, one people, one nation. Gen.2:24 refers to "these two shall be one." Ezra 3:1 says: "People gathered together as one." 1 Chr.12:38 says: "All the rest of Israel were of one heart to make David King." The same is seen in the New Testament where we read: "As the body is one and hath many members, so also is Christ." Again, in Jn. 17:21-23: "That they all may be one ..." The word "one" stands for the unity of more than one, or, a compound unity. It is best represented by the word "united." In the Godhead there are three persons, but they are united; they are "one." The oneness of God is NOT numerical. From Genesis to Revelation, the God of the Bible is never manifested as the singular solitary numeral, or number one. The oneness of God is a Compound Unity. This Unity is Three Persons, existing in essential and eternal Being. The Unity of God is revealed in TRI-UNITY, the union of three in one."

Now, in reply to this let it firstly be said that it is agreed that the word

"one," translated from the Hebrew word "echad," sometimes means "united" as when a crowd of people gather together as one (Ezra. 3:1) etc. But the fact remains that each person in that crowd never ceases to be a separate individual. The prayer in Jn. 17 that all believers may be one does not express a desire for them to cease being separate individuals. They are "one" in the sense of being united in cause and company, but still very much separate individuals. Adam and Eve were clearly two separate individuals in spite of the fact that Scripture says: "these two shall be one."

The Hebrew word "echad" occurs approximately 500 times in the Old Testament, and no single instance can be produced where the word in any sense loses its numerical value; nor can it be denied that it is the basis from which all other numerals have their value. It is true that we have such words as "nation," "group," "assembly," but when we speak of a nation becoming "one" or of "one nation" as against two nations or more, there is absolutely no alteration of the numerical value of the numeral. Neither is there any alteration to the fact that the nation, no matter how "one" or united it might be, still consists of separate individuals.

If the references in Scripture to God being "one" mean that there are three united persons in the Godhead, we would be quite justified in concluding that they were three separate individuals united in cause, company and purpose. But most Trinitarians would not find that concept acceptable because it is generally believed that the Father, Son and Holy Spirit are one and the same person.

It should be pointed out that it would be totally misleading for anyone to try and give the impression that "echad" always and only means "united" and never refers to a mathematical or numeral one. There are literally dozens of places in the Old Testament where echad means "one" in a strictly mathematical sense, but many Trinitarian expositors cast a blind eye to this and fail to mention it.

For instance, the reference in Deu. 4:42 to "one of these cities" refers to a separate, single, individual city. The next occasion after this where the word echad is used is in Deu. 6:4: "Hear O Israel, The Lord our God is one Lord." The next occasion after this is Deu. 12:14: "The Lord shall choose in one of thy tribes." In each case the word "one" is to be understood in a definite mathematical sense.

Echad is very commonly used in Scripture in the sense of a single unit or undivided unit. It is used hundreds of times when referring to "one rib," "one day," "one year," "one sacrifice," "one spoon," "one kid," "one city" etc etc. Gen. 42:13 is a good example: "And they said, thy servants

are twelve brethren, the sons of one man in the land of Canaan; and, behold, the youngest is this day with our father, and one is not." Here, as in many other places, "one" means "single individual" - uncompound unity. The references to the Lord being "one" are to be interpreted and understood in the same way.

This should be self-evident by the fact that personal singular pronouns such as "I," "Me," "Myself" etc. are used in reference to the Lord. They could never be correctly applied to more than one individual personality. Also, as we have seen, in conjunction with these singular pronouns, the Lord constantly emphasizes that He "only" - "alone" - "by Himself" is God. These facts give very clear indications as to how we should interpret the word "one" when applied to the Lord.

The word "alone" as applied to God means "by oneself" - "unaccompanied." This is what is meant in 2 Kng. 19:15: "Thou art the God, even thou alone." Also Neh. 9:6: "Thou art Lord alone." The same word is used in Gen. 2:18 in relation to Adam before Eve was created: "And the Lord God said, it is not good that man should be alone;" i.e. by himself - unaccompanied. Also Gen.32:24: "And Jacob was left alone." 1 Sam. 21:1: "Why are you alone and no man with you?" This verse defines the word "alone" by saying "no man with you."

If there were three persons in the Godhead, God would surely say: "We only are God" or "We alone are God." But He never does express Himself in these terms. It is always "I."

The Hebrew race, to whose language the word "echad" belonged, maintained that God was "One" in a mathematical sense, and this was clearly endorsed by God throughout their history. It is rather ironical when Gentiles come on the scene, who often can neither read or speak the Hebrew language, and tell us that the Hebrews themselves, throughout their long history, never understood such a basic word as echad in its reference to their God.

"MONO-THEOS"

The word "monotheistic" means "one God." It comes from the Greek word "monos" which means one, alone, sole, solitary, single; and "theos" which means God. Hence, monotheism signifies the doctrine that there is one God in the sense that there is one Supreme Deity (the Father) who is a single individual and who has no equal. This is true monotheism - the faith of the Hebrews.

"Monos" occurs 47 times in the New Testament. It is translated

"alone" 21 times; "only" 24 times; "by ones-self" 3 times. For example: "Thou shalt worship the Lord thy God, and Him only shalt thou serve" (Matt. 4:10). The phrase: "only begotten" which is applied to Jesus 6 times in Scripture comes from the Greek word "monogenees" i.e. "mono" which means "only," and "genos" which means "offspring." It refers to the fact that Jesus is the single solitary Son of God ever to be born by conception through the Holy Spirit. Mono is translated "alone" in Jn 6:15 where we read that Jesus "departed into a mountain himself alone."

From these examples it should be evident that "monos" means "one" in a numerical sense - sole, single, solitary. This is borne out in many of our English words which contain the word "mono." For instance "monocle" which means single eye-glass; "monorail," which means single rail; "monogamy," which means being married to one at a time; "monograph," relates to a separate treatise on a single object or class of objects; "monolith," is a single block of stone; "monologue," is a scene in a drama in which one person speaks by himself etc.

With these thoughts in mind, attention is now directed to the fact that this same word "monos" is applied to God in the New Testament. For instance, in his prayer to his Father, Jesus said: "And this is life eternal, that they might know thee the only (monos) true God ..." Now Jesus was clearly not talking to himself. He was addressing his Father in heaven who was a separate individual. And, speaking to Him, Jesus freely and openly confesses Him to be "the only true God." In view of the fact that this word "only" come from the Greek "monos," Jesus' confession can only mean one thing: Father God is a single, solitary, separate being who has no equal. And this precisely, is the confession of the Hebrew faith. Jesus endorsed the monotheistic faith of the Hebrews.

The apostle Paul uses the word "monos" three times in relation to the Father in his first letter to Timothy: "the only wise God" (1 Tim. 1:17); "the blessed and only Potentate" (1 Tim. 6:15); "who only hath immortality" (1 Tim. 6:16). Also Jude verses 4 and 25: "the only Lord God ... the only wise God our Saviour."

"I AND MY FATHER ARE ONE"

Jesus and his Father are clearly separate individuals. All the basic laws of common-sense are violated the moment we try to make a Father and Son the same person. Such a concept is total confusion and Scripture plainly declares that God is not the author of confusion. The concept of a

father and son being related to each other in the closest possible sense yet nevertheless being two quite separate individuals is a simple concept, easy to be understood even by children. The apostle Paul tells us that there is "simplicity in Christ" but expressed a fear that, just as the serpent deceived Eve through his subtilty, so our minds might be corrupted from the simplicity that is in Christ (2 Cor. 11:3).

Jesus prayed to his Father, sometimes lifting up his head towards heaven to do so, and sometimes up a mountain. His Father was clearly a separate Being in heaven. How can we make sense of the Scriptures when they speak about Jesus ascending to the right hand of his Father in heaven if they are one and the same person and not two separate individuals? If Jesus and his Father are one and the same person, how could Jesus sit on his Father's right hand? It is like a man saying he is going to sit next to himself.

The separate individuality of the Father and Son is particularly brought out by Jesus in his words quoted in Jn. 8:17-18: "Your law says that if two men agree on something that has happened, their witness is accepted as fact. Well, I am one witness, and my Father who sent me is the other" (Living Bible). What could be plainer than this? According to the law, the testimony of two men was accepted as true if it agreed. The "two men" were two separate and distinct individuals. Jesus says that in like manner he and his Father are two separate and distinct individuals. He says: "I am one and my Father is the other." But if Jesus and his Father were one and the same person, the force of his argument would be destroyed, because it would be a case of bearing witness by himself to himself. This same principle applies, as we have already seen, to Jesus as mediator between men and God. A mediator must be a third party. If Jesus and the Father were one and the same person, he would be one of the two parties and could not serve as a mediator between the two.

Throughout his ministry, Jesus insisted that he and his Father were not identical. He insisted that he and his Father were separate in personality, essence, and being. The Father and the Son are neither equal nor identical. The Father existed before the Son and the Son received his life and being from the Father. These propositions are well supported by Scripture and shall be systematically covered in this thesis.

It is true that Jesus said: "I and my Father are one" (Jn. 10:30), but what did he mean? We know how the Jews interpreted his statement but they very rarely correctly understood the teaching of Jesus and it would be foolish for us to base our conclusion on what they thought he meant. They thought that Jesus was making himself God. They knew that "the

Lord our God is one Lord," and when Jesus said that he and the Lord were "one," they immediately concluded that he was claiming to be equal with God. In actual fact, Jesus repudiated this claim as shall be pointed out in a later section.

Jesus' statement: "I and the Father are One" means one of three things. (1) He was claiming to be equal with God. (2) He was claiming to be one and the same person as God, i.e. of one substance with Him. (3) He was claiming to be united in cause with his Father, i.e. en rapport with Him.

Seeing that Jesus repudiated equality with his Father and was not of one substance with Him, we are left with only the third alternative, i.e. Jesus was simply claiming to be intimately and inseparably united in cause with his Father. The footnote to Jn. 10:30 in the Ryrie Study Bible says: "The neuter form of "one" rules out the meaning that they are one person." "The Father and son are in perfect unity in their natures and actions." Perfect and unbreakable unity and concord existed between them. They were "en rapport." Jesus was totally dedicated to thinking and doing his Father's will. "Not my will, but thine be done" was the attitude that ruled his life. He was, in this sense, totally "one" with his Father. He only did the things that pleased his Father. Therefore, to see him was to see the Father.

It has already been pointed out in this thesis that the word "one" is sometimes used in Scripture to convey the sense of being "united." For example: a man and wife become "one" in marriage. In Gal.3:28 we are told that male and female believers become "one" in Christ. This doesn't mean that they cease to be separate individuals, but that they are united in mind, motive, outlook and objective. But, regarding their actual status in the Divine order as at present established, the male is still "head" of the female just as Christ is head of the Church. Moreover, the Father is "head" of Christ (1 Cor.11:3). From this it becomes evident that being "one" with someone does not necessarily mean being equal.

Unity of purpose and perfect accord exists between the Father and Son. In this sense they are "one." And Jesus prayed that this same unity would become a reality among his followers. It was his prayer that his followers "may be one, as thou, Father, art in me, and I in thee, that they also may be one in us ... I in them, and thou in me, that they may be perfect in one ..." (Jn. 17:21-23).

When Jesus prayed that his followers might be "one" in the Father and Son, he was not requesting that they become equal with the Father or Son, neither was he expressing a desire for them to cease to be individuals

and become part of the essence and substance of the Godhead. No! Jesus was simply praying for the Church to be permeated with the mind of God - to be united with him in spirit, thought and action. 1 Cor.6:17 puts it like this: "He who is joined to the Lord is one spirit with Him." Hence, all in the body of Christ who are joined to the Lord can say "I and my Father are one."

Referring to himself and Apollos, the Apostle Paul wrote: "Now he who plants and he who waters are one" (1 Cor. 3:8). Did he mean that they were one and the same person? By no means. He explains what he means in the next verse: "For we are labourers together with God." Paul, Apollos and God were united in a Divine work. They were "one." In exactly the same sense Jesus was one with his Father. As he said on one occasion: "My Father worketh hitherto and I work." Jesus and his Father were co-labourers, united in their work together.

"THESE THREE ARE ONE"

Sometimes 1 Jn. 5:7 is quoted to support the Trinitarian concept of God: "For there are three that bear record in heaven, the Father, the Word, and the Holy Spirit; and these three are one" (Authorised Version).

Vine's Expository Dictionary of New Testament Words has an interesting comment to pass concerning this passage of Scripture: "1 Jn. 5:7 is a verse which forms no part of the original; no Greek manuscripts earlier than the 14th century contained it; no version earlier than the 5th century in any other language contained it, nor is it quoted by any of the Greek or Latin "Fathers" in their writings on the Trinity. That there are those who bear witness in Heaven is not borne out by any other Scripture. It must be regarded as the interpolation of a copyist." (See "Three" p.133. of Vine).

The footnote in the Emphatic Diaglott says: "This text concerning the heavenly witness is not contained in any Greek manuscript which was written earlier than the 15th century. It is not cited by any of the Greek ecclesiastical writers; nor by any of the early Latin fathers, even when the subjects upon which they treated would naturally have led them to appeal to its authority. It is therefore evidently spurious; and was first cited (though not as it now reads) by Virgilius Tapsenis, a Latin writer of no credit, in the latter end of the 15th century; but by whom forged, is of no great moment, as its design must be obvious to all."

Jamieson, Fausset and Brown wrote in their commentary: "The only Greek manuscripts, in any form which support the words, "in heaven, the

Father, the Word, and the Holy Ghost: and these three are one. And there are three that bear witness in the earth ..." are the Montfortianus of Dublin, copied evidently from the modern Latin Vulgate; the Ravianus copied from the Complutensian Polyglot; a manuscript at Naples, with the words added in the margin by a recent hand; Ottobonianus, 298, of the 15th century, the Greek of which is a mere translation of the accompanying Latin. All old versions omit the words."

More conservatively oriented, The New Bible Commentary (Revised) agrees with these testimonies: "The words are clearly a gloss and are rightly excluded by the R.S.V. even from its margin" (p. 1269).

The editors of Peake's Commentary on the Bible pass this comment on the verse: "The famous interpolation after "three witnesses" is not printed even in the R.S.V., and rightly. It cites the heavenly testimony of the Father, the Logos, and the Holy Spirit, but is never used in the early Trinitarian controversies. No respectable Greek manuscript contains it. Appearing first in a late 4th century Latin text, it entered the Vulgate and finally the New Testament of Erasmus" (p.1038).

Scholars clearly recognize that 1 Jn. 5:7 is not part of the New Testament text. It is not a genuine part of the Bible. It is a spurious verse, resulting from forgery and is therefore without any authority. Honest Trinitarians do not use this verse in teaching their doctrine. Almost all modern versions and translations correctly omit the words of this verse.

However, even if it was insisted, or could be proved that 1 Jn. 5:7 was a valid portion of the Word of God, it would say very little with regard to the Trinitarian concept of God. Reference to the Father, Son and Holy Spirit being "one" does not necessarily mean that they are one and the same person, or that they are equal. As we have already seen, the word "one" is just as capable of meaning "united." Neither is there anything in the statement that suggests Jesus existed before he was born. The statement, if it was genuine, occurring as it does in the epistle of John, relates to the position of Jesus after his birth and ascension, and does not refer in any way to the period prior to his birth. By itself, 1 Jn. 5:7 is quite a bare statement into which Trinitarians have read volumes, but in actual fact it says nothing that can be quoted to support the common view. The same applies to several other verses where the Father, Son and Holy Spirit are mentioned together ...

OCCURRENCE OF THREE WORDS TOGETHER

A major argument used to support the doctrine of the Trinity is the fact that God, Jesus, and the Holy Spirit are mentioned together in various verses. It is generally felt that this proves the Trinity. This, however, is not the case at all. The fact that three words happen to be used in the same sentence is no indication in itself that the factors or persons mentioned are equal or even necessarily one, and the same essence or substance.

Some of the verses in which the Father, Son and Holy Spirit are mentioned together are as follows: Matt. 3:16-17, the baptism of Jesus; Matt. 28:19, the baptismal formula; 1 Cor. 12:4-6, the gifts of the Spirit; Jn.14:16, the sending of the Comforter; 2 Cor. 13:14, the benediction; 1 Pet.1:2, the elect.

Now, it cannot be denied that in these verses the Father, Son and Holy Spirit are mentioned together as co-workers, sharing in a Divine operation. But in all these passages, not a word or even a hint is given to suggest that they are all one and the same person or that they are equal. We have already seen that Jesus is clearly a separate person from his Father. This is particularly evident at his baptism. As Jesus emerged from the water a voice came from heaven above saying: "This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased." It is difficult to see how Jesus could be regarded as the same person as his Father. Should we interpret the baptismal scene at Jordan to mean that Jesus was pleased with himself and exercised the art of ventriloquism, causing his voice to be thrown out into the sky in order that it might return to him in the sight of all the people, giving them the impression that God was talking from above? There is nothing to be gained from spending time on the texts quoted above in which the three words occur together. They prove nothing in relation to the Father, Son and the Holy Spirit being co-equal or co-eternal, or in relation to these three being one and the same person. The evidence, in fact, when examined carefully, points in an entirely opposite direction. The fact that Peter, James and John are mentioned together repeatedly in the Bible is no indication that they are a "Trinity." Yet they are clearly "one." Why should it be any more true because God, Jesus, and the Holy Spirit happen to be mentioned in the same verse?

All that these passages of Scripture teach us is that there is a Father, Son and Holy Spirit, and all play a vital part in the Divine scheme of redemption. Much more in the way of Scriptural evidence would be required than these passages to support the concept of the co-equal, co-

eternal relationship between Father and son.

THRICE REPEATED PHRASES

Another group of Scriptures into which the doctrine of the Trinity is often read, includes those verses where a certain phrase is repeated three times. The three texts used in this way are: Isa. 6:3 and Rev. 4:8 which contain the words "Holy, Holy, Holy," and Num. 6:24-26 which reads: "The Lord ... the Lord ... the Lord ..."

It is generally believed that the three-fold repetition of "The Lord" in the Aaronic benediction in Num. 6 corresponds to the benediction in 2 Cor. 13:14 and relates to the Trinity.

But many verses, especially in the Psalms, could be quoted in which "the Lord" occurs four, five, six ... times in succession. Should we conclude, on that basis, that the Godhead consists of the same number of persons?

However, even if it could be proved beyond all doubt that the three-fold repetition of "the Lord" referred to the Father, Son and Holy Spirit, it still says nothing about them being one and the same person, nor does it make any reference to a co-equal relationship.

No Jewish writer before Christ, succeeded in constructing from such Old Testament passages the doctrine of the Trinity, and one Trinitarian expositor freely confesses that "such passages do not by themselves furnish a sufficient basis for the doctrine of the Trinity." (Christian Theology page 402 footnote).

The Jews themselves severely resent the imputation that their Scriptures contain any proof or even intimation of the doctrine of the orthodox Trinity, and Jesus and the Jews never differed on this subject, both maintaining that God is only one, and that this is the greatest truth revealed to man, setting it apart from the polytheism of the rest of the pagan world. It was only when the Jews failed to properly interpret Jesus' teaching, falsely concluding that he claimed to be equal with God, that all the trouble started and has developed into an exceedingly wide gulf since.

Regarding the three-fold repetition of the words: "Holy, holy, holy:" it is affirmed by Trinitarian expositors that "the fact God's attribute of holiness is repeated three times in the seraphim's adoration indicates that reference is made to the three persons of the Trinity sitting upon a throne. The term holy is used equally and appropriately of each of the persons in the adorable Trinity and is answered from the more excellent glory in the same language of plurality."

However, the word "holy" is simply repeated three times for emphasis, stressing that God is most holy. Repetition for emphasis is a common practise in Scripture. Consider the following examples: "O earth, earth, earth, hear the word of the Lord" (Jer. 22:29). Does this three-fold repetition teach a Trinity of earths? Obviously not. When Zedekiah, king of Judah was told that the Lord was going to "overturn, overturn, overturn" the throne of David, the three-fold repetition of the word "overturn" did not mean that there were three thrones to be overturned or that there would be three separate occasions on which the one throne would be overturned. No; the word is repeated for emphasis, to drive the reality of the point home.

It was for a similar reason that God gave Peter the same vision three times (Acts. 10:16). But who would be so foolish to suggest that it was repeated three times because the Father, Son and Holy Spirit gave him one each. Such a conclusion would be just as unwarranted as concluding that Jesus asked Peter three times: "lovest thou me," because He wanted Peter to confess that he loved the Father, Son and Holy Spirit.

To say that the repetition of: "Holy, holy, holy," teaches the Trinity is as unwarranted as saying Peter's three-fold denial of Jesus was really a denial of the Father, Son and Holy Spirit.

Once it is believed that God is a Trinity, all sorts of types are seized upon in Scripture to support the concept. Some Trinitarians have filled pages with these types, regarding the sun, moon and stars as a type; not to mention Abraham, Isaac and Jacob; the three feasts of the Lord; the three coverings of the tabernacle etc. etc.

In a book as thick as the Bible it is not difficult to find groups of things involving various numbers. If we believed that the Godhead consisted of five or six persons, we could soon find "types" in the Bible to support it. Multiples of all sorts of numbers occur in the Bible. So much so, that some men have spent a whole life-time studying Bible numerics. Naturally, in a book that frequently refers to various numbers, it is bound to include the number "three" and refer to groupings of three of various objects or persons. But to take hold of these and use them as types to prove the Trinity is most unsatisfactory. The indefiniteness and lack of support for the doctrine of the Trinity is particularly evident when expositors have to resort to this level to uphold their conviction. It is like clutching at straws. For every occasion on which the Bible uses the word "three," many more occasions could be quoted on which the word "one" is used. Every occasion in which three "somethings" are grouped together; many other occasions on which one "something" stands by itself could be

quoted.

Coming back to the three-fold repetition of the word "holy" in Isa. 6:3; it is interesting to notice how the New English Bible translates the verse: "And they (the seraphim) were calling ceaselessly to one another, holy, holy, holy ..." This translation has captured the significance of the three-fold repetition. It is expressive of ceaseless praise. The repetition of the word "holy" signifies endless adoration. The holiness of God is the central theme and He is pictured as receiving continual acknowledgement and praise for it.

To take the three-fold repetition in a literal academic sense and apply it rigidly to support a doctrinal prejudice, is to miss the whole point and by-pass an important truth.

One thing is certain: the prophet Isaiah who saw this vision was a Hebrew and therefore a strict adherent to the monotheistic faith of the Hebrews. There is no evidence of him changing his concept of God and believing that God was a Trinity after seeing this vision and hearing the three-fold repetition of the word "holy." In later chapters, as quoted earlier in this thesis, he is emphatic about the individual oneness of the Lord.

So then, emphasis on God being "three" is totally lacking in Scripture. This naturally makes any genuine enquirer after truth suspicious. If the Trinity is as major and important a doctrine as is often claimed ("necessary for salvation" as some claim), one would expect to find at least one positive, straightforward verse or statement in Scripture stating that God is "three." There is not one verse in the entire Bible which clearly and unambiguously proclaims this. On the other hand, there are literally scores of verses which emphatically and unequivocally affirm god is "one."

NO BIBLICAL AUTHORITY

The term "Trinity" never occurs in the Bible. It is not a Biblical term. The words "Trinity" and "triune" were never used by the writers of the Scriptures. The doctrine of the Trinity was unknown to the Israelites of the Old Testament and the Christians of the New Testament. This theory was not formulated until many years after the death of the last apostle. Theologians try to read between the lines of Scripture in search for the Trinity. Scripture texts are twisted and stretched in order to support the theory, but the fact still remains that the doctrine of the Trinity is not taught in the Bible.

An article on "Trinity" in The International Standard Bible Encyclopaedia p.3012 says: "The term "Trinity" is not a Biblical term, and

we are not using Biblical language when we define what is expressed by it as the doctrine."

In a recent book on the Trinity, Catholic theologian Karl Rahner recognizes that theologians in the past have been "... embarrassed by the simple fact that in reality the Scriptures do not explicitly present a doctrine of the "imminent" Trinity (even John's prologue is no such doctrine)" (The Trinity, p.22).

Graham Greene, a British convert to Catholicism, wrote an article for Life magazine in support of the Catholic Church's dogma concerning the assumption of Mary into heaven. In this article he admitted that there is no Bible authority for the Trinity:

"Our opponents sometimes claim that no belief should be held dogmatically which is not explicitly stated in Scripture (ignoring that it is only on the authority of the Church we recognize certain Gospels and not others as true). But the Protestant Churches have themselves accepted such dogmas as the Trinity for which there is no precise authority in the Gospels. (Greene, Graham. "The Catholic Church's New Dogma: The Assumption of Mary," Life, October 30, 1950, p.51).

The doctrine of the Trinity is not only unbiblical, but also anti-biblical. Not only is it true that the Bible gives no support for this theory, but its teaching is directly opposed to it. The Bible clearly states that God is a single individual person who has no equal. He is Creator and Father in the first and ultimate sense. And Jesus is His Son, specially created and formed in the womb of Mary by the overshadowing power of the Holy Spirit, which is the Divine energy-force of the Father by which He achieves all His operations and purposes.

If we were to confine ourselves to reading the articles on the Trinity in popular religious literature for laymen, we would conclude that the Trinity is everywhere and clearly taught in the Bible. However, when we start to read what the more technical Bible Encyclopaedias, dictionaries and books say on the subject, we come to an entirely different conclusion. The more the matter is studied, the more it is discovered that the Trinity is built on a very shaky foundation indeed.

The problems inherent in clearly explaining the Trinity are expressed in nearly every technical article or book on the subject.

The New Catholic Encyclopaedia begins: "It is difficult, in the second half of the 20th century, to offer a clear, objective, and straightforward account of the revelation, doctrinal evolution, and the theological elaboration of the mystery of the Trinity. Trinitarian discussion, Roman Catholic as well as other, presents a somewhat

unsteady silhouette" (vol.14, p. 295).

There is clearly something wrong somewhere when the most common and popular terms and designations of the Godhead are unscriptural. Scripture uses many terms in relation to God but never "Trinity". Danger lights immediately flash to strict Bible students when something that is claimed to be a major Bible doctrine cannot be expressed or defined in Biblical terms, and relies on non-Scriptural terms and records to uphold it.

In 1 Cor. 2:12-13 the apostle Paul says that Christians must speak the things of God **NOT IN THE WORDS THAT MAN'S WISDOM TEACHES**. Putting it simply and bluntly, Paul is saying that when you express and define the things of God, make sure that you do so in the language of the Word of God which has been inspired by the Holy Spirit. Paul says don't degenerate to man's terminology and definitions. Use the words and phrases given by the Holy Spirit.

Again we are exhorted in 1 Pet. 4v11: "If any man speak, let him speak as the oracles of God." That is, let your language be according to the language of the Word of God. Don't superimpose your own thoughts, expressions and definitions upon God's Word.

Isaiah, inspired by the Holy Spirit said: "To the law and to the testimony; **IF THEY SPEAK NOT ACCORDING TO THIS WORD IT IS BECAUSE THERE IS NO LIGHT IN THEM**" (Isa. 8:20).

Scripture leaves us in no doubt as to the importance of keeping our theology within the framework of Biblical terminology, and of the seriousness of stepping outside of it. So then, if "Trinity" is an unscriptural word for defining God, let us cease using it, and use the language of Scripture instead.

CONTRADICTION AND CONFUSION

The doctrine of the Trinity is drawn, not from the Bible, but from the Athanasian creed, which was drawn up several centuries after New Testament times. In a later chapter we shall cover the history of the Trinity and show how it gradually crept into the theology of the Church during the centuries following New Testament times.

The Athanasian creed defined the Godhead in the following terms: "The Father is God, the Son is God, and the Holy Spirit is God. And yet they are not three Gods, but one God."

The Trinity is further defined thus: "There is but one living and true God, everlasting, without body, parts or passions; of infinite power,

wisdom, and goodness; the Maker and Preserver of all things, both visible and invisible. And in the unity of this Godhead there be three persons, one of substance, power and eternity; the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit." (Nicene Creed).

"The Divine persons are not therefore separate individuals, but possess in common, one nature or substance, their distinction lying not in a separate substance, but in a manner in which they share the same substance." (Christian Theology p. 419).

"In this Trinity none is afore or after other, none is greater or less than another; but the whole three Persons are co-eternal together and co-equal." (Christian Theology p. 432).

A careful analysis of these statements and definitions reveals a striving and struggling with words on man's part in an attempt to make something which is illogical and contradictory sound logical and harmonious. These statements only reveal contradiction and confusion. How can anyone understand or make sense of "one God" being "three persons," when, at the same time those "three persons" are not "separate individuals?" How can God be three and one at the same time? How can He be "without body, parts or passions," and yet be "one substance?" How can the SON be from all eternity, co-eternal, and co-equal with his FATHER?

If the Godhead is without "passions" then Jesus clearly cannot be part of it. Heb. 4:15 assures that Jesus, as our high priest in heaven, is touched (can sympathize) with the feeling of our infirmities because he has experienced temptation himself. It is this very fact which qualifies him to be our high priest. If he has no passion - if he cannot "feel" and sympathize, then he is not qualified to be our high priest and could not effectively exercise such an office.

The concept of the Trinity, in every possible respect, is an impossibility and contradiction, and causes many basic aspects of the teaching of Scripture to break down. As pointed out before, God is not the author of confusion, and because the doctrine of the Trinity is confusing, it is most unlikely that God is the author of it. Certainly, His Word does not support it.

Jesus said it is life eternal to KNOW the only true God (Jn. 17). This implies that God's oneness is knowable - it can be understood. And it is not something that can be only understood by the highly intellectual. No, it can be understood by the simple, unschooled, uneducated "nobodies" whom God calls and for whom Jesus was praying (1 Cor. 1:26). There is a "simplicity" in the gospel and its preservation is worth contending for in

order that people might be full of enlightenment and not dark mystery and confusion.

NO MYSTERY

Almost every Trinitarian clergyman or layman, after prolonged discussion, attempting to explain how God can be both three and one - yet one substance - both Father and Son at the same time and in the same substance - have concluded by saying it is all a "blessed mystery" beyond the scope of man to understand, and we just have to accept it by faith.

The footnote on page 423 of Christian Theology frankly admits that it is obvious that no human language can utter this mystery - that there is an inadequacy of human words **AND AN ABSENCE OF DEFINITIONS FROM SCRIPTURE.**

And, on page 438 the same writer says: "But we are ever brought back to the thought that the Being of God is by Paul termed a "mystery" and we are commanded to worship the "Unity in Trinity and Trinity in Unity" **NOT NECESSARILY TO UNDERSTAND IT.** "The Bible doctrine of the Trinity," says Ralston, "is one of those sublime and glorious mysteries which the mind of man, at least while shrouded in clay, **CANNOT PENETRATE.** We may study and meditate until lost in thought, **YET NEVER CAN WE COMPREHEND** the mode and nature of the Divine being"

Other similar discouraging statements constantly appear in the writings of Trinitarians. "The mind of man cannot fully understand the mystery of the Trinity. He who would try to understand the mystery fully would lose his mind. But he who would deny the Trinity would lose his soul." (Harold Lindsell and Charles J. Woodbridge, "a Handbook of Christian Truth" p. 51-52).

Such a statement means that the concept of the Trinity should be accepted or else. But, merely to accept it as a doctrine without proving it would be totally contrary to Scripture. God inspired Paul to write: "Prove all things; hold fast to that which is good" (1 Thess. 5:21). The Bereans were highly commended as being "noble" because, instead of accepting the teaching of Paul without thought, examination and inquiry, they went home and diligently searched the Scriptures to make sure that what he taught was supported by the Word of God (Acts 17:11). The word "noble" is translated "open minded" by the Living Bible. The Bereans were prepared to consider another point of view. They did not have closed minds. They were not bound and enslaved by bias and prejudice. In other words: they were seekers after truth, willing to acknowledge that they

could be wrong in some of their concepts.

"A simple man believes every word he hears; a clever man understands the need for proof" (Pr.14:15). "To answer a matter before you have heard it out is both stupid and insulting" (Pr. 18:13). "God's wrath was kindled because they had found no answer yet had condemned" (Job 32:3). "Be ready always to give an answer to every man that asks you a reason of the hope that is in you ..." (1 Pet.3:15).

No Christian is duty bound to believe in the Trinity if he cannot understand or prove it from the Word of God. He is rather duty bound to base his convictions on, and prove them from the Word of God. There is good ground for deep suspicion when the Church sets up a major doctrine which has to be believed for salvation, but which is unintelligible and mysterious, and cannot be supported by the Bible.

A REVEALED SECRET

Regarding the word "mystery" in the New Testament, a few comments should be passed at this stage. "Mystery" may mean, and in contemporary usage often does mean, a secret for which no answer can be found, but this is not at all the meaning of the term "mysterion" in classical and Biblical Greek. In the New Testament, "mysterion" signifies **A SECRET WHICH IS BEING OR HAS BEEN REVEALED**, which is also Divine in scope, and needs to be made known by God to men through His Spirit (I.V.F.).

Vine's comment on this word is worth quoting: "Mysterion primarily means that which is known to the "mystes" i.e. initiated (from "mueo" to initiate into the mysteries; cp. Phil 4:12, 'mueomai', "I have learned the secret," R.V.). In the N.T. it denotes, not the mysterious (as with the Eng. word), but that which, being outside the range of unassisted natural apprehension, can be made known in a manner and at a time appointed by God, and to those only who are illumined by His Spirit. In the ordinary sense a mystery implies knowledge withheld; **ITS SCRIPTURAL SIGNIFICANCE IS TRUTH REVEALED** (my emphasis). Hence the terms especially associated with the subject are "made known, manifested," "revealed," "preached," "understand," "dispensation." The definition given above may best be illustrated by the following passage: "The mystery which hath been hid from all ages and generations: but now hath it been manifested to His saints" (Col.1v26). It is used of spiritual truth generally, as revealed in the gospel, 1 Cor. 13:2; 14:2 (Cp 1 Tim 3:9).

Among the ancient Greeks 'mysteries' were religious rites and ceremonies practised by secret societies into which any one who so desired might be received. Those who were initiated into these 'mysteries' became possessors of certain knowledge, which was not imparted to the uninitiated, and were called 'the perfected' cp. 1 Cor.2:6-16 where the apostle has these 'mysteries' in mind and presents the gospel in contrast thereto; here 'the perfected' are, of course, the believers, who alone can perceive the things revealed."

So then, 'mystery' in the New Testament basically means secrets that were once hidden and concealed but now have been revealed to the initiated (believers - those initiated into the body of Christ). For example, the call of the Gentiles is referred to as a "mystery" in Eph. 3:1-11, 6:19. Col.1:26-27. This truth was taught in the Old Testament but was not understood during those times; it was hidden and concealed. But in the New Testament times it was quickened by the Holy Spirit and revealed through the preaching of the apostles. It is thus styled "mystery" because it constituted a revealed secret. This is the basic significance of the word.

"Mystery" then, in New Testament usage, does not signify something mysterious and unintelligible - something that cannot be understood. Quite the opposite. It means something that was once hidden but is now revealed and understood. So we cannot shelter behind this word when it is associated with the Being of God, by saying the Godhead (Trinity) cannot be understood.

Whenever the word "mystery" occurs in relation to the Deity, it refers to something now revealed and understood. The fact that nothing is said about the "Trinity" in the New Testament, and the fact that the concept is mysterious - unintelligible - something which cannot be satisfactorily explained or defined, strongly suggests it is not a revealed secret at all, but a mysterious concoction of human reasoning and philosophy.

This then, is the proposition: the concept of the Trinity is a contradiction of terms - incomprehensible - unintelligible - unscriptural. On the other hand, the teaching concerning the oneness of God is straightforward, comprehensible, orderly, and above all else, Scriptural.

* * * * *

CHAPTER THREE

NO MAN AT ANY TIME HAS SEEN GOD.

In Ex.33:20 it is recorded that the Lord said to Moses: "You cannot see my face, for no man shall see me and live." The way in which this was understood by the Israelites can be seen by the way in which they reacted when they thought God had appeared to them.

For instance, when Gideon perceived that the one to whom he was speaking was "God," he exclaimed: "Alas, O Lord, for because I have seen ..." (Judg. 6:22). When Manoah, the father of Samson, thought he had seen God he exclaimed: "We shall surely die because we have seen God" (Judg.13:22). Both of these statements imply that they took Ex. 33:20 to mean exactly what it said: "no man shall see me and live."

In the New Testament there are five different verses which state no man has ever seen God:-

(1) Jn. 1:18: "NO MAN has seen God AT ANY TIME..."

(2) Jn. 5:37 "You have neither heard his voice AT ANY TIME nor seen his shape."

(3) Jn. 6:46 "Not that ANY MAN has seen the Father ..."

(4) 1 Tim. 6:16 "Whom NO MAN has seen, nor can see."

(5) 1 Jn. 4:12 "NO MAN has seen God AT ANY TIME..."

Notice how emphatic these statements are. It is emphasized that NO MAN (i.e. no exceptions) has seen God AT ANY TIME (i.e. throughout history). No one has heard His voice or seen His shape. But whilst these Scriptures are quite dogmatic that no man has ever seen God, other Scriptures seem to be equally dogmatic that men have seen and conversed with God. Abraham entertained the Lord; Moses saw and conversed with God; and Jacob actually wrestled with God. Not only that, but Jesus is referred to as "Lord" and "God" on many occasions and many people saw him, conversed with him and handled him.

If those in Old Testament times actually saw God, and if Jesus was God, how can we reconcile this with the statements above that no man has ever seen God? Also, if God is "one" in a numerical sense, how do we explain the fact that the Hebrew word for God (elohim) is plural in form and is sometimes associated with plural pronouns?

Can these seeming contradictions be reconciled? Do the Old and New Testaments harmonize in these vital areas of doctrine? The doctrine of the Trinity represents an attempt to do this but unfortunately creates more questions and contradictions than what it answers.

The fact that God said no man could see Him and live, coupled with

the fact that other Scriptures refer to men seeing and conversing with God either means (1) God didn't mean what He said in Ex. 33:20, or (2) He did mean it but did not have the power to carry it out, or (3) the passage in Ex.33:20 or the references to God appearing to men (or both) are incorrect, or (4) Men have NOT seen God and the records which say they have mean something else.

If the New Testament means what it says about no man having ever seen God, then proposition 4 is the only acceptable one. Deeper investigation into this whole subject will vindicate this conclusion. The answer to the apparent puzzle lies in a correct understanding and full appreciation of the principles of God manifestation.

GOD MANIFESTATION

The basic Bible teaching on God-manifestation is this: The One true God who is Father of all, whom no man has ever seen nor can see, has been visibly represented and manifested in various agents upon whom His power has rested and through whom He has spoken and performed wonders. The invisible God has revealed Himself - His power, wisdom and glory through various agents - prophets, priests, judges, kings, angels, and finally His only begotten Son. Because these "agents" were the Lord's representatives - because they spoke and acted for Him - because they were invested with His name and endued with His power, the Divine title "God" is applied to them and they are referred to as "God" in Scripture. But this does not, and was never intended to detract from the fact that in the ultimate sense, **THERE IS ONLY ONE TRUE GOD**, i.e. one supreme fountain and source of wisdom and power. "God-manifestation" is really, in a nutshell, the theme of the Bible. It is a grand and lofty subject and a very vast one. It brings us right down to the heart and soul of the Divine purpose and can be a very rewarding study, tying up many "loose ends" in Scripture. A true appreciation of this subject explains how Jesus can be called "God" when the Father claims that He alone is God. It provides the secret as to why "elohim is basically plural in form while God claims to be "one." It reconciles the various passages of Scripture which teach that no man has ever seen God, with the passages which refer to men seeing, talking and even wrestling with God.

To fully appreciate this subject, it will firstly be necessary to pass some comments on the name and titles of Deity. The whole subject is vast and extensive and the problem is, not what to say, but what not to say. I will try and keep my comments down to a minimum, but it is necessary to

say something about the name and titles to do reasonable justice to the whole subject.

THE NAME

When Moses asked God to reveal His name, He said, as the A.V. translates it, "I am that I am." And He said to Moses to tell the children of Israel: "I AM hath sent you" (Ex.3:14). Then, in verses 15-16 God told Moses to tell the children of Israel that He was "The Lord God of your fathers, the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob ... this is my name forever, and this is my memorial unto all generations."

In the Hebrew language, "I AM THAT I AM" is 'EHYEH ASHER EHYEH.' "I AM" is "EHYEH." In Hebrew "The Lord" is "YAHWEH" and comes from the same root as "EHYEH," and is the memorial name of Deity as Ex. 3:15-16 reveals. (In the past, the memorial name proclaimed at the bush has been commonly called "Jehovah" but most modern philologists and theologians agree that this is an incorrect pronunciation. It is now pronounced "Yahweh" by most authorities).

The word occurs some 6,800 times in the Old Testament, and also appears in a contracted form as "Yah." Both "Yahweh" and "Yah" have been incorrectly rendered in the A.V. by the words "Lord" and "God."

Many modern authorities believe that "Ehyeh" is incorrectly translated "I AM" in the A.V. Evidence is available to support the translation "I WILL BE," and the footnote in the R.S.V., New English Bible, Living Bible, Companion Bible, Emphasized Bible, Moffat etc. give this rendering.

However, whether or not the memorial name should be pronounced "Yahweh" or "Jehovah," or whether or not it means "I AM" or "I WILL BE," is of very little consequence at this particular stage of the subject, and I don't want to get bogged down in it. What is important to note is that whatever view we take, both agree on the personal pronoun "I" stressing the individual oneness of the Father.

TITLES OF DEITY

Many different Hebrew words are used as titles for the Father, and the A.V. (and other English translations) have unfortunately indiscriminately rendered most of them by the words "Lord" and "God."

The common use of "God" in the English language, is as little justifiable as that of the word "Lord." "God" is an Anglo-Saxon word, and, when first coined, was a term that could be applied to anyone of goodness and authority, without profanity.

"God" is a contraction of the word "good," a meaning which cannot be extracted from any of the original Hebrew titles from which it has been indiscriminately translated. Hence, the Anglo-Saxon word "God" simply signifies "good one." God is indeed good; exclusively so, as we are taught by Jesus himself when he refused to appropriate the word "good," saying to the one who styled him so, "why callest thou me good? No one is good except one, that is God." "God" or "Good one" was probably suggested to our English ancestors as a suitable English title for Deity by this saying of Jesus. However, it does not carry the meaning of the original Hebrew, and the Father never chose to designate Himself by this term. The idea of goodness is not contained in the original Hebrew titles at all, although, as already emphasized, there is no question about God's goodness.

In ancient times a name or title conveyed a meaning; it was expressive of some characteristic or peculiarity of the person named. Names and titles were not mere labels to distinguish an individual from other members in the family or society. They were significant of the personality, character or attributes of the one to whom they were given. Many examples are available in Scripture to demonstrate this.

Because the birth of Abraham and Sarah's son brought laughter, he was called "Isaac" which means "laughter." His name thus became a memorial to the goodness and power of God which provided a son in their old age. Pharaoh's daughter called Jochebed's son "Moses" (which means "drawn out") because she drew him out of the water etc.

The Father also has a name and many titles which convey specific meanings in their original Hebrew form, and the English words "Lord" and "God" do not express those original meanings at all. The Hebrew titles have not the remotest affinity to the English words "Lord" and "God." I think it would be true to say that the Hebrew word "elohim," translated "God" in our English Bible, is one of the most misunderstood and restricted words in the Bible. Most restrict its application to the Supreme Deity - the Father, or, in the case of the Trinitarian - to the Trinity; but Scripture does not place this restriction on it at all as we shall see.

EL

The first Hebrew title to consider is "EL." This Hebrew word has been translated "God" about 212 times, and "Elohim" is derived from it.

As often as this word "EL" passed before the mind of a Hebrew, the idea of POWER, MIGHT and STRENGTH would stand out in bold relief. Gesenius says "It always presented to the Hebrews the idea of strength and power." It is, in fact, translated "mighty," "great" and "strong" in a number of places in the Old Testament.

"EL," when applied to the Father, refers to Him as the great FIRST CAUSE - POWER UNCREATE. It refers to the absolute, omnipotent and independent power of the universe which emanates from the Father and is all pervading - the power by which all things are created and sustained.

Speaking of Himself in His address to the ends of the earth He says, "Look unto me, for I (not "we") am EL (power) AND NONE ELSE" (Isa.45:22). And to Israel He said: "Ye are my witnesses, and My servant whom I have chosen, that ye may know and believe Me, and understand that I, Yahweh, am He; BEFORE ME THERE WAS NO EL (power) formed, neither shall there be after Me" (Isa. 43:10).

In these passages, the title EL stresses that the Father is POWER "and none else." Before Him there was no power, neither shall there be after Him.

THE ONLY POTENTATE

These passages in the Old Testament are basically teaching the same truth which is taught in 1 Tim.6:15-16. Here the apostle Paul speaks of the Father as "the blessed and ONLY potentate - who ONLY has immortality, dwelling in the light which no man can approach unto, whom no man hath seen, nor can see ..."

"Potentate" comes from the Greek word "dunastes" and is akin to "dunamis" which basically means "power." The English word "dynasty" comes from dunastes and signifies "of great authority." The same Greek word is translated "mighty" in Lk.1:52 and "of great authority" in Act.8:27. In both cases the reference is to mortal men of high rank. They were "potentates."

How is it then, that these men (and others) are styled potentates when Paul expressly states that the Father is the "ONLY Potentate?" Also, in view of the fact that Jesus and the angels are immortal, how are we to understand the statement that the Father "ONLY hath immortality?"

Well the answer is basically quite simple. While it is true that Jesus and the angels are immortal, and men of high rank are called "potentates,"

their immortality and authority is DERIVED from ONE SUPREME BEING - FATHER GOD. They do not "have" it or possess it in an underived sense. It has been delegated or distributed to them from the one fountain-head. The Father "only HATH immortality" in the sense that He is the supreme and absolute SOURCE AND FOUNTAIN of it. With Him, it is an inherent and underived possession. No one gave it to Him; He has always had it from all eternity. He is completely self-contained and self-sustained, and depends on no one for His immortality and power. It belongs wholly to Him, and Him alone in this underived sense.

We read this in Rom.11:36: "For OF Him, and through Him, and to Him, are all things." The word "of" comes from the Greek "ek" and literally means "out of" or "from." Literally, this verse teaches that God is the source of everything. Everything comes "out of" Him. This is confirmed in 1 Cor.8:6: "To us there is but ONE God, THE FATHER, OF (out of) whom are all things ..." The Father is, therefore, the one sole supreme fountain and source of everything, including immortality and power.

The Father alone is the originator, source and fountain of all power and energy. He is self-existent - Uncreate. All other forms and manifestations of power and energy in the universe derive from Him.

The apostle Paul had this in mind when he said: "There is no power but OF (from) God" (Rom.13:1). Or, as Jesus said to Pilate: "You could have no power at all against me except it were GIVEN thee from above" (Jn. 19:11).

Every form of power, whether it be angelic or human, derives from the one and same great energy source - EL. He rules and is in total control of every situation in the whole universe.

The source of power then, in the universe, is ONE. It is an undivided unit. He is the focal centre around which the wheels of the universe turn. From Him irradiates whatever exists. Therefore, everything which exists is "out of" Him, as Paul teaches in Rom.11:36 etc.

GOD'S POWER - BASIS OF ALL POWER

Sometimes Christians encounter this kind of argument: "If God created everything, then He must have existed before everything, which means there must have been a time when God existed alone, without the stars, sun, moon and earth (Ps.90:2). If so, where did God find the materials to build the universe? Did He make everything out of nothing?"

There is a proverb which says: "Take nothing from nothing and

nothing comes," but some schools of divinity have reversed this and taught that out of nothing God made everything. The school of atheism goes much further by saying there is no God at all and everything made itself out of nothing.

The answer to the question is found in the significance behind the Hebrew title EL. God didn't make everything out of nothing at all. Everything came "out of" Him. His POWER was the source and basis of everything that was made. The prophet Jeremiah particularly stresses the fact that: "Ah Lord God; behold, thou hast made the heaven and the earth BY THY GREAT POWER and stretched out arm, and there is nothing too hard for thee." (Jer.10:12; 27:5, 32:17, 51:15). Elsewhere His power is called "Spirit."

Significantly enough, the Greek word translated "power" in many places in the New Testament is "energeo" from which our English word "energy" is derived. The Father's spirit is power or ENERGY which, because HE is creator, continually proceeds or pulsates "out of" Him. His Divine power and energy forms the basis of everything that exists from the star of the greatest magnitude to the minutest insect of the air or atom.

And, interestingly enough, Einstein the great Physicist propounded in his law of relativity that "energy is the basis of all matter." All matter is really compact energy.

It has taken almost 6,000 years for man to reach a conclusion which has been taught in the Bible since the very beginning.

Father God, then, is an inexhaustible source and fountain of power and energy. His power and glory and brightness is beyond our comprehension. As Paul says in 1 Tim.6:16: "Dwelling in light which no man can approach unto; whom no man hath seen nor can see." The greatest atomic explosion and the light of the sun would recede at the brightness of the Father who created the atom and the sun. Man, in his present state, would have more chance of surviving close exposure to the sun than exposure to the immediate presence of the Father.

Such, then, is the basic significance behind the title "EL." The Father is power. As Einstein once said: "Those who don't want to confess God, let them call Him THE NUMBER ONE POWER."

TOTALLY DEPENDANT ON GOD

God is omnipotent. He is almighty. He has infinite power. "With God all things are possible." God's power originates within Himself. Jesus, on the other hand, was not omnipotent, for the power he exercised

to perform miracles was received from God. It did not originate in himself - his Father gave it to him.

The position of Jesus in relation to his Father is beautifully summarized by Jesus himself: "The Son can do nothing by himself" (Jn.5:19). "I can, by myself do nothing" (Jn.5:30). "I do nothing by myself" (Jn.8:28). Jesus could only work when His Father worked: "My Father worketh hitherto so I work" (Jn.5:17). Jesus, along with the rest of God's creation, "lived and moved and had his being" in the Father. If the Father set His heart against all creation and gathered His Spirit and breath to Himself, all flesh would perish together (Job.34:14-15).

Jn.3:34 tells us that God GAVE Jesus the Spirit without measure. The Spirit descended upon him in bodily shape at his baptism in the Jordan, and took possession of him. This was the anointing which constituted him "Christ" (or the anointed), and which gave him the superhuman powers to perform miracles. This is clear from the words of Peter: "God anointed Jesus of Nazareth with the Holy Spirit and with power; and he went about doing good, healing all that were oppressed."

This statement alone is sufficient to indicate Christ's dependence upon his Father. If Jesus were "Very God of Very God" why was it necessary for him to be "anointed" with Spirit and power? He did no miracles before his anointing. He had no power of himself. This is why he emphasized: "By myself I can do nothing ... The Father that dwelleth in me, He doeth the works" (Jn.14:10).

On the cross the power was withdrawn and Jesus was left to the utter helplessness of his own humanity. He deeply felt the anguish of the hour, and cried out: "My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?"

Before his anointing, Jesus was simply a "body prepared" for the Divine manifestation that was going to take place through him. The preparation of his body commenced with the Spirit's action on Mary, and concluded when Jesus, being thirty years of age, stood approved in the perfection of a sinless and mature character. After the Spirit's descent upon him, he was the full manifestation of God in the flesh. The Father, by the Spirit, tabernacled in Christ among men. "God was in Christ" says Paul, "reconciling the world unto himself."

Jesus constantly stressed throughout his ministry that in all his mighty works he was not exhibiting his own inherent power, but only exercising the power he received from his Father. It was delegated power, not inherent; derived and not underived.

Because Jesus derived power from his Father, he was called "Immanuel" which means "GOD with us," or, more literally, "POWER

with us," for "el" is the Hebrew title conveying the idea of "power."

To see Jesus in action was to see the power of God in action. El was in him and pulsating through him; Jesus was a manifestation of God. Hence, when the people saw his mighty works they "marvelled, and glorified God, who had GIVEN such power to men" (Matt.9:8). "And they were all amazed at the mighty power of God" (Lk.9:43). And there was no confusion on these occasions in the people's minds about Jesus being God Himself; i.e. the Supreme Deity. They clearly recognized that he was a man empowered by God; a man who manifested the power of God, and who was therefore fittingly styled "Immanuel."

Thus, when the anointing POWER was withdrawn from him as he hung upon the cross, he cried out with a loud voice, saying: "Eli, Eli, lama sabachthani? Which is to say, My GOD, my GOD, why hast thou forsaken me?" (Matt.27:46. Ps.22:1). Sometime after this, Jesus said: "Into Thy hand I commit my spirit," indicating that his "spirit" and "El" were not one and the same.

There are many verses in the New Testament which emphasize the fact that Jesus received and derived all things from his Father - that without his Father he could do nothing and be nothing. He was completely dependant upon his Father for everything. He had no power or authority of his own. All was delegated by the Father to the Son. Consider the following examples:

Lk.1:32: "And the Lord God shall GIVE unto him the throne of ... David."

Ps.2:8: "Ask of me and I shall GIVE you the nations ..."

Jn.3:27: "A man can receive nothing except it be GIVEN him from heaven."

Jn.5:27: The Father "hath GIVEN him (Jesus) authority ..."

Jn.5:36: "... the works which the Father hath GIVEN me to finish ..."

Jn.6:39: "... and this is the Father's will ... that of all which He has GIVEN me I should lose nothing ..."

Jn.6:65: "No man can come to me except it were GIVEN of the Father."

Jn.13:3: "Jesus knowing that the Father had GIVEN all things to him."

Jn.17:1-2: "Father ... glorify the Son ... As thou hast GIVEN him power over all flesh, that he should give eternal life to as many as thou hast GIVEN him."

Jn.17:6: "I have manifested thy name to the men which you GAVE me out of the world: they were yours and you have GIVEN them to me."

Jn.19:11: "Jesus answered: You could have no power at all against me except it were GIVEN thee from above."

Eph.1:22: The Father "hath put all things under his (the Son's) feet, and GAVE him to be the head over all things for the Church."

Plp.2:9: "Therefore God has highly exalted him, and GIVEN him a name which is above every name."

Heb.2:13: "I (Jesus) will put my trust in Him (the Father) - Behold I (Jesus) and the children which God hath GIVEN me."

These are just a few of the many passages which refer to Jesus being given things by his Father. JESUS IS ALWAYS THE RECIPIENT. He depends upon and derives everything from his Father. We never read of the Father depending on the Son for life and power and possessions. Obviously not, because He alone is the source and fountain of all power and is self-sustained.

NOT A TEMPORARY PHASE

Some may feel that the Son's dependence on the Father was only a temporary arrangement during his days upon the earth in the flesh. It may be argued that once Jesus rose from the dead, things were different, and he attained to equality with the Father.

Such is not the case at all. After his resurrection, before he ascended to heaven Jesus made this statement: "All power is GIVEN to me in heaven (i.e. over the angels) and in earth" (Matt.28:18). Here, once again, that important word "given" occurs. Jesus freely confessed and acknowledged that the power he possessed had been GIVEN to him. It was not an underived inherent possession. He derived it from the great fountain source - Father God. This rules out equality because it is generally recognized that the giver of authority and power is greater than the receiver.

Dan.7:14 confirms Matt.28:18: "And there was GIVEN him dominion, and glory, and a kingdom ..."

The apostle Paul, writing at a time when Jesus had ascended to heaven, insists that Jesus still, "LIVES BY THE POWER OF GOD" (2 Cor.13:4). From this we learn that Jesus' position in relation to his Father has not changed since he ascended to heaven. He still depends upon the power and energy of his Father to live and minister. His endless life is only endless because he is drawing from the inexhaustible reservoir of his Father.

The Bible tells us that Jesus is the "wisdom of God." How do we

understand this? Paul explains it in 1 Cor.1:30 where he says God MADE Jesus wisdom, and righteousness, and sanctification and redemption. Jesus is what he is because the Father has given it to him. Of his own self he could do nothing, and he freely confessed this on a number of occasions as we have seen.

Jesus recognized the Father, the one true God, as his God. Jesus never claimed this position for himself. He did not pretend to be equal with God. He always regarded the Father to be superior to him, being his God. In the following Scriptures, Jesus refers to the Father as his God, or God is described as the God of Jesus: Matt. 27:46. Mk.15:34. Jn.20:17. Ps.22:1. 2 Cor.1:3. 11:31. Eph.1:3 1:17. Rev.1:6. 3:12.

Jesus revealed that he was not himself God, and that he was dependant on God, when he prayed to his Father. If Jesus were one and the same person and equal with God, why did he pray to God? Trinitarians claim that God, Jesus, and the Spirit all have one intelligence and one will. If Jesus and God share one and the same will and power of decision, it would seem like mockery for one person of a Trinity to pray to another person of a Trinity. Jesus showed that he is inferior to his Father and that his Father alone is the One supreme God by the fact that he prayed to him. Addressing his Father in prayer he said: "O Father, Lord of heaven and earth ..." (Matt.11:25). "O my Father, if it be possible ..." (Matt. 26:39, 42). "Father the hour is come" (Jn.17:1). Jesus spent all night in prayer on some occasions (Lk.6:12). He "offered up prayers and supplications with strong crying and tears to Him who was able to save him out of death, and was heard for his Godly fear" (Heb.5:7).

GOD RAISED HIM FROM THE DEAD

It is commonly believed that Jesus was equal with his Father because Divine attributes are attributed to him. Certain verses are quoted, for instance, to prove that Jesus was self-existent. Those verses are:

Jn.2:19: "Jesus answered and said to them, Destroy this temple and in three days I will raise it up."

Jn.5:26: "For as the Father has life in himself; so hath he given to the Son to have life in himself."

Jn.10:17-18 "... I lay down my life that I may take it again. No man takes it from me, but I lay it down myself. I have power to lay it down, and I have power to take it again. This commandment have I received ..."

In these passages Jesus talks about having life within himself and

power to take up life again after having laid it down. Many conclude from this that Jesus was self-existent, and therefore equal with his Father.

However, the fact is quite overlooked that when Jesus spoke about having life within himself he made it clear that the life was not inherent but delegated by his Father. The Father "hath GIVEN to the Son to have life in himself" is how Jesus put it. There is no equality in this. The life that Jesus possessed was RECEIVED from a higher source - the only fountain source. He derived it from his Father and depended on his Father for it. Had the Father never given it to him he would never have possessed it.

Notice also that when Jesus referred to having power to lay his life down and take it again he added the very important statement: "THIS COMMANDMENT HAVE I RECEIVED FROM MY FATHER." Once again it is evident that it was only through delegated authority from the Father that Jesus had power. It was only possible because the Father allowed it. Had the Father not allowed it, the Son would have been helpless and able to do nothing. "Of my own self I can do nothing" is what he said.

Regarding Jesus' statement that he had "power" to take his life again: most authorities agree that the Greek word from which it is translated ("exousia") means "authority," "right," "privilege." Looking at the statement in this light it seems that Jesus was saying that he had the authority, right or privilege to come back to life after he had died. This is certainly true. Jesus had the right to receive life after death because he was obedient unto death. He lived a sinless life, and therefore the Father would not allow him to remain in the grave and see corruption. The "power" that Jesus had to take up his life again was his SINLESS LIFE. 1 Cor.15:56 tells us that the power of death is sin, so it is reasonable to conclude that the power of life is a sinless life.

Many Old Testament prophecies predicted the resurrection of Christ. (Ps.16:8-11 etc.). Jesus could legitimately claim, on the basis of the authority of those prophecies alone, not to mention any personal Divine assurances that he received direct from his Father, that he had the right to resume life after death.

When Jesus said he had the power to take up his life he expressed confidence that his Father would raise him. It was not power in the dynamic sense for that left him as he hung upon the cross. It was "authority" - COMMANDMENT which he received from his Father; i.e. the taking up of his life would result from the Father's power and authority, exercised in accordance with the pledge given by the Father.

Literally, Jesus did not raise himself; the Father raised him as we shall see in a moment. But, because it was the Father's purpose and because the Father spoke through Jesus, Jesus could appropriately say that he had power to raise up himself. An example of this style of language, in which what a person has relation to in the Divine purpose, is considered as under his control and referable to his power, occurs in Jer.1:10: "See, I have this day set thee over the nations and over the kingdoms, to root out, and to pull down, and to destroy, and to throw down, to build and to plant." Literally, the prophet did none of those things, but was overpowered and slain, as nearly all the servants of God were; yet the things he predicted came to pass, and this is taken as a sufficient basis for the highly-wrought language quoted above, which imputes the result of Jeremiah's predictions to Jeremiah's own individual operations.

Jesus' statement: "Destroy this temple, and in three days I WILL RAISE IT UP" can be compared in principle with a statement made in Ex.40:18: "And MOSES REARED UP the tabernacle ..." In actual fact, Moses himself did not literally erect the tabernacle. This work was performed by other men acting under his authority.

In like manner we read in Mk.6:16 that "when Herod heard, he said, It is John whom I BEHEADED ..." In actual fact, Herod himself did not behead John at all. He delegated one of his officers to do it (v27). But, because the action took place through his authority, it is referred to as being done by himself when not even one of his fingers were used in the whole operation.

There are many examples of this kind of language in Scripture as well as our own contemporary speech. A pilot might say: "I'm going to take a plane up today." In actual fact he has no power within himself to get the plane off the ground. The power by which the plane is propelled into the air is separate from, and external to himself. But, as a pilot, he has the right and authority for that power to be released on his behalf to take him up.

A statement made by the apostle Paul is worth quoting here in connection with our subject: "But we had the answer of death IN OURSELVES that we should not trust in ourselves, but in God who raises the dead" (2 Cor.1:9). We learn from this that faith in God becomes the power of life in ourselves. In this sense, we have the power to take up our life again after death.

IMPORTANT CHRISTIAN CONFESSION

Regarding the resurrection of Jesus: there is not a single reference in any part of the Bible to him raising himself from the dead. If Jesus had the power in a dynamic sense to raise himself from the dead why did he cry out as he was dying, saying: "My God (El) my God (El) why have you forsaken me?" The Divine power was obviously withdrawn from him prior to his death. His body went into the tomb bereft of power.

If Jesus had total confidence in his own power and ability to raise himself from the dead, how are we to understand Heb.5:7: "In the days of his flesh, when he had offered up prayers and supplications with strong crying and tears UNTO HIM WHO WAS ABLE TO SAVE HIM OUT OF DEATH ..."

Repeatedly throughout the book of Acts and the Epistles it is affirmed in clear language that Father-God raised Jesus from the grave. In fact, it forms a vital part of the confession that a man must make if he desires salvation: "If you confess with your mouth the Lord Jesus, and shall believe in your heart THAT GOD RAISED HIM FROM THE DEAD, you shall be saved" (Rom.10:9). Also see Rom.4:24.

In Act. 2:24,32 we read that it was God who raised Jesus up, having unfastened the cords of death. Also Acts 3:15,26. 4:10, 5:30, 10:40, 17:31. Rom.8:11. 1 Cor.6:14, 15:15. 2 Cor.4:14. Gal.1:1. Eph. 1:19-20: "... according to His (the Father's) mighty power which He wrought in Christ, when He raised him from the dead ..." Also Col. 2:12, 1 Thes.1:10. 1 Pet.1:21.

There is an outstanding volume of Scripture which unambiguously proclaims that God raised His son Jesus from the dead by His own mighty power. It is impossible to offset this weight of evidence by pinning a couple of slightly enigmatical statements in the gospel of John against it.

"EL" IN OTHER NAMES

We return to what we were saying earlier about "EL." We have seen how Jesus was called "Immanuel" because the power of God (EL) dwelt in him and was manifested through him. To see Jesus in action was as good as seeing the Father Himself in action because it was His power performing the work. To hear Jesus preach was to hear the voice of the Father, for the words he spoke were not his own but the Father's who spoke through him (Jn.7:16. 14:10, 24).

Acts 2:22 expresses the position beautifully: "... Jesus ... A MAN

approved by God among you by miracles and wonders and signs, which GOD DID BY HIM" In other words, it was all God's doing - it was His power and His wisdom channelled and manifested through His own Son. Hence, to see Jesus was to see the Father (Jn.14:9).

Now, as we read carefully through the Bible we discover that the names of the men whose ministry manifested the wisdom and power of God (EL), also appropriately contain the same Hebrew title "EL." For example: SamuEL, EzekiEL, DaniEL, JoEL, ELijah, ELisha etc.

As in the case of Jesus, who was called "Immanuel," the names of these other men of God also contained the same Divine title. Like Jesus (although their ministry was obviously greatly inferior to his) they spoke and acted for God. They were appointed, anointed, energized and inspired by the same Divine power of the Father. Their position is expressed by the Psalmist in these words: "It is EL who girds me with strength ..." (Ps.18:32). In relation to their contemporaries, each of these men of God were, to a lesser and inferior degree, "Immanuel" - "God with us," because God communicated with the people through them.

In saying this, let me stress that I am not placing Jesus on the same level as these men. He was clearly of an infinitely higher rank and status, being the only begotten of the Father. Jesus was the greatest of all the prophets - the only prophet who was the direct and intimate Son of God and who lived a totally sinless life. He alone had the Spirit without measure. It could be said that all the other prophets and prophetic ministries preceding Christ's were a foreshadow of greater things to come. As in the case of John the Baptist's ministry, they were preparation ministries - ministries which, like John's, had to decrease while Christ's increased.

Jesus himself revealed that the prophets and righteous men before him knew that his ministry would far transcend theirs when he said: "Many prophets and righteous men have desired to see what you see, and have not seen them, and to hear those things which you hear, and have not heard them" (Matt. 13:17).

GOD MANIFEST IN HUMAN FLESH

"EL" has manifested Himself in many servants, especially and supremely in His own Son, our Lord Jesus Christ. By conferring His power upon His servants, He has worked His works and spoken through them. The invisible God, whom no man has ever seen, has made Himself visible in His works manifested through chosen vessels. In each

case, and pre-eminently in the case of Jesus, it was "God manifest in the flesh." That is: the flesh or human body of these men became the receptacle - vessel - instrument of God, through which He worked His works and manifested His thoughts, purposes, power and glory. To see these ministries in action was to see God. He possessed the men. To hear their messages was to hear God's voice. Hence, their messages usually started with: "Thus saith the Lord" or "Today if you will hear my voice ...". Had the Father Himself personally come down to the earth He could not have spoken more plainly or truthfully than He did through these chosen vessels.

As this subject develops it will become apparent that because divinely chosen vessels contained and manifested God's power and glory, they are referred to as "God." But the fact still remains, as taught in Scripture, that no man has actually ever set eyes upon the Eternal One - the great Father and Creator Himself (except Jesus, of course, who has been elevated to His right hand).

So, the basic principle of God-manifestation is that the invisible God, whom no man has seen nor can see, has been visibly represented and manifested by specially appointed servants who have been invested with His name and endowed with His power.

In relation to Jesus, Col.1:15 puts the matter in a nutshell: "Who is the image of the invisible God." Or, 2 Cor.4:4: "Christ, who is the image of God." (Also see v.6).

A very similar concept to the principle of God-manifestation is exhibited in businesses where one employed is vested with the name or title of the firm which employs him. Because he works for, and represents the firm, he speaks in its name and on its behalf.

A man working for Smith and Brown may answer the phone and say, "Smith and Brown." Yet, in actual fact, he is neither Smith or Brown, but someone with quite a different name. When a salesman goes out to do business, and promote the firm for which he works and which he represents; he does so in the full authority of its name and title. The firm delegates its authority to him. He merges his individuality in the name of the company he represents. His name may be Hodson, but when on official business, he can be described as "Smith and Brown calling," without confusion. To see and hear him is to see and hear the manager himself, for he speaks and acts according to the manager's wishes.

It is according to a very similar principle that "Lord" and "God" is conferred upon those who serve and represent Him. This is particularly evident in the case of the angels as we shall see in the next chapter.

CHAPTER FOUR ELOHIM - GOD - ANGELS

The Bible tells us of an order of beings that are subordinate to the Creator and yet of a higher nature than ourselves. They are the angels of God. The Lord Jesus was made "a little lower than the angels" and for the suffering of death was crowned with glory and honour. He is now "made so much better than the angels" (Heb.1:4); and all angels, authorities and powers are subject to him (1 Pet.3:22). That is, Jesus now has all power in heaven (Matt.28:18), with the exception of the Father to whom the Son is still subject (1 Cor.15:27).

The angels "excel in strength, do God's commandments, hearkening to the voice of His word." They are God's "ministers" or "messengers" which is the real meaning of the word "angel." They are servants of God "that do His pleasure" (Ps.103:20-22. 104:4. Heb.1:7).

The angels of God perform a very important work on behalf of the believers. In the words of Ps.34:7: "The angel of the Lord encamps round about them that fear him, and delivers him." The New Testament puts it like this: "Are they not all ministering spirits, sent forth to minister for them who shall be heirs of salvation?"

Many Scriptures reveal how Jesus uses the angels as his ministers and messengers to fulfil his will in relation to his Church. As already pointed out, the Father has given him this power in heaven as a result of his obedient and sinless life. (Cp. Pharaoh giving Joseph all power over Egypt. Pharaoh was only greater than Joseph on the throne. Everything else was made subject to Joseph except Pharaoh himself who made all things subject to Joseph (Gen.41:37-44). God highly exalted Joseph, making him "lord" throughout all the land (Gen.45:8). In this respect, Joseph was clearly a type of Jesus).

Time and space would not allow me to go into the scores of Scriptures which reveal the angels in the execution of Divine plans and purposes. Time and again they are revealed as instruments by which God executes His work - instruments directing the affairs of the nations - mostly unseen but yet active in pursuing the Divine purpose, constantly "ascending and descending" from heaven to earth (Gen.28:12).

The book of Daniel particularly draws aside the veil with regard to their activities, revealing their control of events related to the kingdoms and nations of the world. This aspect of their work is summed up in the words of the apostle: "The world to come hath he not put in subjection to the angels" (Heb.2:5). The present order is subject to them under the

control and direction of Christ, but the future will be subject to the saints under Christ (Rev. 3:21 etc), at which time we shall be "equal to the angels" (Lk. 20:36).

The Church will ultimately constitute a new order of angelic beings, who will take charge of the world's affairs and rule the world instead of the present order of angels who have been discharging this duty until the present time. The Lord Jesus and his Church will be the rulers. The difference in the form of their control will lie in this, that the angelic direction hitherto has been an invisible rule for the most part - providentially applied. In the age to come the rule of the Lord Jesus and his saints will be visibly and actively enforced in the eyes of all the world, and there will be no mistaking that manifestation of Divine power in the earth. This is what the second coming of Jesus Christ will be all about. Hence: "I reckon that the sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory which shall be revealed in us. For the earnest expectation of the creature waiteth for THE MANIFESTATION of the sons of God" (Rom.8:18-19).

"THE MANIFESTATION OF THE SONS OF GOD:" this is the central theme of the Word of God.

THE CHARIOTS OF GOD

In Ps.68:17 angels are referred to as the chariots of God: "The chariots of God are 20,000, even thousands of angels, and the Lord is among them as in Sinai, in the holy place." Thus, when Elisha prayed that his servant might see that those who were for them were more than those against them, he saw the mountain "full of horses and chariots of fire around about" (2 Kn.6:17). The angels had indeed encamped about them. (The reference to "fire" here in connection with the angels can be linked with Heb.1:7 which says the angelic ministers are "a flame of fire").

Now a "chariot" is a vehicle - something which one drives, and in which one rides. In the case of the angels, the rider and driver is God (El). In other words, angels are vehicles of the Father's Spirit and power. For this reason they are called "ministering Spirits." Each angel constitutes a ministration of SPIRIT. Each angel is an embodiment and manifestation of Divine power (El). The Father's power is concentrated in each angel and He uses them as His channel of operation. Collectively, in their multitudinous hosts (for there are armies of them) they are "ministering spirits" - instruments and vessels of God's power.

Because God (El) is in them, the angels have such names as

MichaEL, and GabriEL. The power of the Almighty possesses them. Each angel is a living manifestation of God. Their work is God's work. To see or encounter them is to see and encounter God.

The Lord is at the reigns and in complete control of all His angelic chariots. They are not separate or detached from God; they cannot act independently of God. After saying; "The chariots of God are 20,000, even thousands of angels," the Psalmist goes on to say: "AND THE LORD IS AMONG THEM as in Sinai ..." Without the Lord among them by His power, the angels would be like horses and chariots without a driver.

The prophet Habakkuk's reference to the events at Sinai is worth quoting here: "Thou (God) didst RIDE upon Thine horses and thy chariots of salvation." Verse 15 depicts God driving through the Red Sea in His angelic cavalry, causing it to divide.

David, speaking of Divine intervention in his life says: "He (God, "El" v2, 30, 32, 47) RODE upon a cherub and did fly; yea He did fly upon the wings of the wind." Here, David describes his deliverance in terms of the power of God riding or flying in an angel to come to his rescue, manifesting the might of God. (The word "wind" comes from the Hebrew word "ruach" which is translated "spirits" in Ps.104:4 in relation to the angels).

The angels are clearly the vehicles of God; instruments of El. They derive their power and energy from the One and Only fountain source. They live and move and have their being in the Father. Of their own selves they can do nothing. When the Spirit moves they move. Where the Spirit goes they go (Ezk. ch.1). They are the recipients and vessels of Divine power. They manifest God's power; they are energized by His power. In them we see a wonderful example of God-manifestation.

Recognizing the work which the angels perform, we now look at the style of Scripture in which God describes their activities. We will discover that constantly throughout the Bible, references to "God" refer to an angel or angels who are doing God's work. And this explains how some Scriptures can say that no man has ever seen God, whereas other Scriptures refer to men seeing God.

Take for example, Manoah's exclamation: "We shall surely die, because we have seen GOD" (Judg.13:22). In actual fact, Manoah did not see God at all in the sense of seeing the Eternal Father. What he saw was the "angel of the Lord" (verses 3, 6, 8, 9, 13, 15, 16, 18, 19, 20, 21).

In Gen.16 we are told of the flight of Hagar from her mistress Sarah and of the angel of the Lord finding her in the wilderness: "And THE

ANGEL OF THE LORD said unto her, I will multiply thy seed exceedingly, that it shall not be numbered for multitude ... And she called the name of THE LORD that spake unto her, Thou GOD (El) seeth me: for she said, have I also here looked after him that seeth me?" (verse 10-13).

In his words, the angel attributes to himself the power of God and ascribes to himself the purpose which is the purpose of God: "I will multiply thy seed exceedingly." Yet the angel is clearly not the Lord himself but an "angel OF THE LORD," and the angel speaks of "the Lord" having heard her affliction: and Hagar names the one that met her, who is called "the Lord" in the narrative, "Thou GOD seest me."

Here we have the names: "the Lord" and "God" used with reference to an angel. The angel expresses in the first person that which God purposes to do. It is evident from this form of language that the angels were such manifestations of God that they spoke His Word as ones appointed to execute His purpose. They spoke of doing His purpose as though they were God Himself. And there are many examples of this in Scripture as we shall see.

"ELOHIM" IS GOD IN FAMILY RELATIONSHIP

The Hebrew word "elohim" which is frequently translated "God" in the English Bible occurs about 2,470 times in the Old Testament. As pointed out before, it is derived from "El" and is generally plural in form. EL basically means "power" "might" or "mighty one," and ELOHIM basically means "powerful ones" or "mighty ones." We shall see that "elohim" frequently refers to those who are energised by, and who represent and manifest the Father.

There is no question or problem about elohim having a plural application. It is no embarrassment to those who hold to the monotheistic concept of God. It was certainly never any embarrassment to the Hebrews who lived during Old Testament times. When the subject of God-manifestation is fully appreciated, it would be more of a problem and embarrassment if elohim did not have a plural application.

Now, it is important to realise that ELOHIM DENOTES PLURALITY OF PERSONS BUT WITHOUT STATING THE NUMBER. There is absolutely no justification for limiting the number to three. Not one Scripture - not even the slightest hint is given in the Old Testament that elohim consists of three persons. Careful research on this matter reveals that when ELOHIM EXPRESSES PLURALITY IT

REFERS TO A FAMILY RELATIONSHIP WHICH EXISTS IN HEAVEN - a family relationship not merely consisting of three persons but thousands of persons, namely: THE MULTITUDINOUS HOST OF ANGELS WHO ARE TOTALLY IN ONE ACCORD WITH THE GOD-HEAD AND WHO FORM THE CHANNEL OF THE GOD-HEAD'S OPERATIONS. Elohim truly refers to compound unity - a unity involving plurality, but that plurality is not confined to a "Trinity" of persons but a multiplicity of persons. ELOHIM REFERS TO GOD IN FAMILY RELATIONSHIP.

Ps. 104:4 which is quoted in Heb.1:7 informs us that God "MAKES His angels spirits." That is: God makes or creates the angels. God is, therefore, their Creator and Father. And, if He is their Father, they must be His "sons" or "family." The following Scriptures state that angels are the sons of God: Job.1:6, 38:7, Dan.3:25. Ps.89:6. The way in which the Divine title "el" is incorporated in the name of the angels GabriEL and MichaEL indicates the closeness and oneness that exists between them and the Father. In fact, "Michael" means: "who is like God." And one of the wonderful prospects that Jesus offers those who gain eternal life is that they shall become "equal to the angels" (Lk.20:36). Ultimately we shall join the angels in high festival (Heb.12:22-23).

THE EVIDENCE

We shall now consider the evidence which supports the proposition that "elohim" has an application to the angels.

In Exodus chapter 3 we read about "God" (elohim) talking to Moses in the flaming bush. Acts 7:30, 35, 38 tells us it was an ANGEL.

Ps.97:7 says: "worship him all ye gods" (elohim). The New Testament quotes this passage like this: "And let all the ANGELS of God worship him" (Heb.1:6).

Ps.8:5 says: "For thou hast made him a little lower than the ANGELS" The Hebrew word translated "angels" here is "elohim," and some modern versions give us "God" instead of "angels." However, this passage is quoted in Heb.2:7 in these words: "Thou hast made him a little lower than the ANGELS." This settles it. The New Testament writer assures us that "elohim" in Ps. 8:5 refers to the "angels."

In these references we have positive proof that the New Testament writers recognised that elohim (God) in the Old Testament often referred to the angels.

There is no evidence to suggest that the New Testament writers

associated a "Trinity" with elohim. Think how ridiculous the statement "worship him all ye elohim (gods) would be if elohim referred to the Trinity. The verse refers to the elohim worshipping the Son of God. If "elohim" referred to the Father, Son and Holy Spirit, how could all three (which includes the Son) worship the Son?

In its context, Heb.1:6 refers to the elohim worshipping the Son in order to prove his superiority. But, if elohim referred to the Trinity, we would have to conclude that the Son is superior to all three members of the Trinity, which would be ridiculous, because he is regarded as one of the members himself.

Another verse which reveals a connection between elohim and angels is Zec.12:8: "... And the house of David shall be like GOD, like the ANGEL of the Lord." Here, the latter part of the sentence explains the former. Being like "GOD" (elohim) is explained to mean being like the ANGEL of the Lord. Jesus probably had this Scripture in mind when he said that his followers will become "equal to the angels." David was a type of Christ. In Hebrew, "David" means "beloved" which is one of the titles given to Christ (Eph.1:6). Some Old Testament prophecies actually refer to Christ by the name "David" (Jer.30:9 etc.). Hence, "THE HOUSE of David" referred to in Zec.12:8 which "shall be like God, like the angel of the Lord," can be regarded as a prophetic reference to the Church - the "house of God," which shall become equal to the angels at the resurrection. (Lk.20:36).

Prior to making the point about the saints becoming equal to the angels, Jesus had told the Sadducees that they erred, NOT KNOWING THE SCRIPTURES. (They denied the resurrection). Jesus' comment, followed by his statement that the saints will become equal to the angels, suggests that this equality was taught somewhere in the Scriptures. Zec.12:8 is probably one of those "Scriptures" Jesus had in mind.

Or, he may have had Gen.3:5 in mind which contains the statement "shall be as Gods" (elohim). This phrase in the Hebrew is identical with the phrase: "shall be as god" (elohim) in Zec.12:8.

Man was originally made lower than the angels but it was God's ultimate intention to make him equal with the angels. Adam's sin resulted in failure, but the purpose will succeed through the righteousness of the "second Adam" (Christ). Did Jesus have this in mind when he referred to the saints becoming equal with the angels?

MORE EXAMPLES

Scripture abounds with examples of "God" (elohim) referring to angelic ministrations. Once one becomes aware of this fact, he will come across text after text in his Bible readings which demonstrates this principle. Here are a few more examples:

In Gen.48:15-16 we read how Jacob blessed Joseph and said: "God, before whom my fathers Abraham and Isaac did walk, the GOD who has led me all my life long to this day, the ANGEL who redeemed me from all evil."

Gen.32:24-30 says: "And Jacob was left alone; and a MAN wrestled with him ... and he said ... you have striven with GOD ... And Jacob called the name of that place Peniel: for I have seen GOD face to face and my life is preserved."

The prophet Hosea refers to this incident in Jacob's life in these words: "In his manhood he strove with GOD; yea, he strove with the ANGEL, and he prevailed ... even THE LORD GOD of hosts, the Lord (Yahweh) is His memorial" (Hos.12:3-5).

Scripture often mentions that GOD provided Israel with the manna during her wilderness wanderings. Ps.78:24-25 say the manna was ANGEL'S food, i.e. "food provided by the angels."

We are also told numerous times that GOD gave Israel the law through Moses at Sinai. Gal.3:19 however, points out that it was actually "ordained by ANGELS." And a third witness is added by Stephen who affirmed that Israel "received the law at the institution of ANGELS" (Act.7:53).

These references to angels at Sinai confirm the statement quoted earlier from Ps.68:17: "The chariots of God are 20,000, even thousands of angels; the Lord is among them AS IN SINAI, in the holy place." (Deu. 33:2 could be read in conjunction with this also).

In Ex.3:4 we read about the LORD seeing Moses turning aside to inspect the burning bush. The same verse says that GOD called to him out of the midst of the bush, and verse 6 goes on to record Him as saying: "I am the God of your father, the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob. And Moses hid his face; for he was afraid to look upon God."

Then, in verse 14 He pronounced the memorial name: "And God said to Moses, I AM THAT I AM ..." (A.V.)

But, right at the very beginning of the chapter in verse 2, it is clearly stated that it was "the angel of the Lord" that appeared to Moses " in a

flame of fire." ("Flame of fire" immediately links this angel with those referred to in Heb.1:7 who are subordinate to Jesus. The verse reads: "And of his angels he says: Who makes his angels spirits and his ministers (servants) A FLAME OF FIRE"). Another example of an angel in "flame of fire" manifestation can be seen in Judg.13:20.

It is made clear in Acts ch.7 that Stephen believed an angel appeared to Moses on Sinai: "And when forty years were expired, there appeared to him in the wilderness of Mount Sinai, an ANGEL of the Lord in a flame of fire in a bush. When Moses saw it, he was amazed at the sight, and he drew near to behold it, the voice of THE LORD came to him saying, I am the GOD of thy fathers This Moses ... DID GOD SEND to be a ruler and deliverer BY THE HAND OF THE ANGEL which appeared to him in the bush" (Act. 7:30-35). "This is he who was in the Church in the wilderness with THE ANGEL who spoke to him in Mount Sinai, and with our fathers: who received the living oracles (the law) to give to us" (v38).

YAHWEH ELOHIM

The angels are clearly part of a Divine family - "sons of God." They are a mighty host of multitudinous number - "twenty thousand, even thousands," and this accounts (in part) for the plural word "elohim." The phrase: "angels that excel in strength" in Ps.103:20 is rendered "angels, you MIGHTY ONES" by the R.S.V. Angels are "mighty ones." They "excel in strength." The "strength" or "might" in which they excel is of course God's (El). Hence, because they are vehicles of the power of God (El), they are fittingly referred to as "elohim" - mighty ones.

This puts us in a better position to understand the oft repeated expression in Scripture of "Lord God" i.e. "Yahweh elohim."

Because "Yahweh" means "I am" or "I will be" (in which the singular pronoun "I" stresses the individual oneness of God), and because "elohim" is plural in form, the Trinitarian feels that this supports the concept of three Gods in one. However, as already pointed out, "elohim" is not used exclusively for the Godhead, and there is no Scriptural justification for limiting the plural word to only three persons. It relates to a multitudinous Divine family.

The phrase then: "Lord God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob," literally means: "I AM (the) MIGHTY ONES of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob." In other words, the Father is saying that He has a multitudinous army; He is the power and energizing force behind the angelic hosts which ministered to, and encamped about Abraham, Isaac and Jacob. He has a mighty

heavenly host at His disposal which He can send out at any time as ministering spirits to His people. The expression emphasizes that thousands - tens of thousands of mighty chariots are at His beck and call in which He can ride by His power, and through which He can manifest Himself in great acts of salvation and miracles. "The eyes of the Lord run to and fro throughout the whole earth, to show himself strong on behalf of those whose heart is perfect towards him" (2 Chr.16:9)

Looking at "Yahweh" in the future tense "I WILL BE," another important truth is conveyed. Abraham was promised a multitudinous seed. This promised "seed" is the body of Christ which is destined to become equal to the angels - members of the eternal multitudinous family of God. In the age to come, the power of God (El), will be manifested through the Church as it is now through the angels. This, in a nutshell, is God's purpose with the body of Christ. Abraham's seed is destined to become "elohim" - "gods" - "mighty ones" - equal to the angels. The Father's intention is to glorify and indwell - possess the body of Christ by His power and glory. Abraham's seed will become mighty ones for they will manifest the Father in fullness. Thus, "Yahweh elohim" is the declared purpose of the Almighty. It states that He will become mighty in Abraham's seed. It teaches by implication that Abraham's seed will become equal to the angels.

PLURALITY IN UNITY

The title then: "Lord God" (Yahweh elohim) signifies One Spirit (God IS Spirit) in a plurality of agents. "Lord God" signifies the One True God in multitudinous manifestation. The title indicates plurality in unity. And once we comprehend this multiplication and manifestation of Divine unity, many obscure passages in the Bible and seeming contradictions are made clear, and the mind is prepared to understand many of the deeper aspects of Theophany.

Though a multitude that no man can number, the elohim act as a single unit; which accounts for the word, though plural, being often treated in the singular. The innumerable angelic hosts are a multitudinous BODY - many members in one. The same principle applies to the BODY of Christ. The Church consists of a multitude called out of every kindred, tongue and nation, and made "one" in Christ. And their unity will be made more complete when they put on the "Divine nature," i.e. when "this corruptible will put on the incorruptible" at the resurrection. On that day they will manifest El like the angels and will constitute the elohim of the

new world. Such is the "glory of God" which awaits the redeemed in Christ.

The essential feature of the elohim is their unity not their plurality. They are made strong by One, even El. Though many, they operate as a unit. They are united together with Yahweh with ties that are indivisible. This is what is stressed in such common expressions as "He (Yahweh) is our God (elohim - mighty ones)" Ps.95:7. That is: the One Supreme Eternal Deity is manifested in a multitude of angels.

Something of the basic idea of Deity in multitudinous manifestation can be seen in Ps.68:11: "The Lord gave the word: great was the company of those that published it." And it is only several verses later that we read about the chariots of God being thousands of angels (v17).

It is important to remember that although "elohim" is plural, it is often used with a singular verb, indicating that though elohim may constitute a multitude, ONE Supreme Deity or power motivates and energises them all, thus revealing Deity in multitudinous manifestation. The power and immortality of the angels is derived from one and the same source - Father God. The Spirit-power emanates from Him and is embodied in them, individually and collectively, but is never separated or detached from the focal centre. The angelic power is therefore, the Father's power, multitudinously expressed, manifested through many bodies. To see the angels in action is to see the Father in action. Hence, their activities are attributed to God. When on a mission on God's behalf, all that they say and do is referred to in terms of God Himself doing and saying it Himself. But in reality, no man has ever seen the Almighty Himself.

This principle that is involved in God-manifestation is illustrated in the science of arithmetic which is the science of numbers. The basis of the science is the multitudinous expression of ONE. "One" is the great power of the arithmetical universe, and all other numbers resulting from the multiplication of one, cannot exclude or expunge the number one without destroying the system.

The Creator of the universe is, as Einstein put it, "The number one power." He is "Father - THE FIRST CAUSE." The whole of creation - the whole universe finds its basis in him as the science of numbers finds its basis in the number "one." Everything, including the Son of God, "came out of God." The Father alone is Uncreate. Everything else was "created" by Him.

To say that the Son is co-eternal and co-equal with the Father would be as confusing as to say that number two starts at the same time and

position as number one. Number one is always first and precedes number two and three. To say that one is three and three is one and that all three are equal results in confusion and contradiction. No amount of juggling with figures and playing with words will ever make sense of such a proposition. The apostolic warning to "avoid ... CONTRADICTIONS of knowledge falsely so called" could well apply to any attempt to make the Father and Son one and the same person.

MANY GODS IN HEAVEN

'For though there be that are called "gods," whether IN HEAVEN or in earth, (as there be gods many and lords many), but to us there is but one God ..." (1 Cor.8:5-6).

In this passage we are told that there are many that are called "gods" IN HEAVEN, but over and above them is the One True God. This reference to gods in heaven cannot be taken to mean idols. There are clearly no idols in heaven. In the light of the Old Testament teaching on "gods" it seems reasonable to conclude that the reference is to ANGELS.

We have already seen that the Hebrew word "elohim," translated "God" often refers to the angels. Well, it should now be pointed out that the same Hebrew word is also translated "gods" on many occasions, and often refers to the angels. It is also, of course, translated "gods" many times in relation to idols, not because they were anything of power, but were so esteemed by the idolater who styled them so.

So then, the English translators have translated elohim in several different ways. They have translated it as "God," "angels," "gods." We will now look at some examples of "gods" referring to angels.

We have already seen that the phrase: "Worship him all ye gods" (elohim) in Ps.97:7 is quoted in Heb.1:6 as: "Let all the ANGELS of God worship him." This reveals that the New Testament writer understood the Hebrew word elohim, translated "gods," to be a reference to angels.

We have also seen that elohim has actually been translated "angels" in Ps.8:5, and that the writer to the Hebrews agrees by quoting it as: "Thou madest him a little lower than the ANGELS." And, the point has also been made that the phrase: "You shall be as gods" (elohim) refers to man becoming equal with the angels. It certainly could not refer to becoming equal with the Eternal Father or idols.

Other examples of "Gods" or "gods" referring to angels are: 1 Sam.4:7-8: "And the Philistines were afraid, for they said, God, (elohim)

is come into the camp. And they said, Woe unto us, for there hath not been such a thing like this before. Woe unto us, who shall deliver us out of the hand of these mighty Gods? (elohim) These are the Gods (elohim) that smote the Egyptians with all the plagues in the wilderness."

In this passage the phrase "God is come into the camp" is translated: "The gods have come into the camp" by the R.S.V. Reference to these "gods" smiting the Egyptians immediately identifies them with the angels. Many Scriptures teach that the angels were used by God to punish Egypt and deliver Israel.

The phrase: "Worship him all ye GODS" in Ps.97:7 clearly refers to ANGELS as we have seen. With this in mind we read verse 9: "For thou, Lord, art high above all the earth: thou art exalted far above all GODS." That is: the Lord is far exalted above His angels.

Ps. 138:1: "I will praise thee with my whole heart: in the presence of the GODS will I sing praise unto thee." We can hardly imagine that the Psalmist meant he would go into an idol grove so that he could be surrounded by idols while he praised the Lord.

Dan. 2:11: "And it is a difficult thing that the king requires, and there is none other that can show it before the king, except the GODS, whose dwelling is not with flesh."

Dan.4:8: "But at the last Daniel came in before me ... in whom is the spirit of the holy GODS ..." Also repeated in verses 9, 18, and 5:11, 14.

PLURAL PRONOUNS

Once it is appreciated that "elohim" is basically expressive of Divine family, the association of plural pronouns such as "us" and "we" and "our" are to be expected and create no problem. Conversations obviously take place between the Lord and His angels and between the angels themselves, and when they do, plural pronouns are inevitably used. Isa.6:8 makes perfect sense in this light: "I heard the voice of the Lord, saying, whom shall I send, and who will go for US?" This is a vision of the Lord conversing with His heavenly host, arranging for someone to be commissioned on their behalf.

That such conversations do take place between the Lord's angelic servants is evident in 2 Chr.18:18. "I saw the Lord sitting upon His throne, and all the host of heaven (angels) standing on His right hand and on His left. And the Lord said, Who shall entice Ahab king of Israel, that he may go up and fall at Ramoth-Gilead? And one (angel) spoke one thing and another said another. Then there came out a spirit (angels are "ministering

spirits") and stood before the Lord, and said, I will entice him. And the Lord said to him, In what way? And he said, I will go out and be a lying spirit in the mouth of all his prophets. And the Lord said, You shall entice him, and you shall prevail."

Here is an example of the Lord conversing with His angels, and Divine conferences like this are probably taking place all the time. The first chapter of the book of Job also records a conference in heaven between the Lord and His angels.

Sometimes a particular mission only requires one angel to be commissioned. Other times a mission might require a whole company. This calls to mind the passage in Ps.68:11: "The Lord gave the word: great was the company of those that published it."

The more that this whole subject of angelic ministration is studied, the more evident it becomes that the Lord rarely does anything without using these servants of His. They are His agents - His channel of operation. His power in them accomplishes His purposes. He Himself, as King of the universe never vacates His throne. Rather, He sends out from His throne streams of power embodied in His supernaturally endowed servants, and through them performs mighty creative acts and wonders.

Thus, when the time came to refashion the earth and make it a fit habitation for man, God spoke and it was done. His Spirit moved through His ministering spirits and great creative acts were performed. Job.38:7 speaks about the angels shouting for joy and exulting during the period of creation.

Thus, when the time came to make man, we read: "And God said, let US make man in OUR image, after OUR likeness ..." (Gen.1:26).

The Lord is the prototype of His sons, both angelic and human. Angels are made in the similitude of the Lord (Num.12:8). Man also is made in the similitude of the Lord. Thus, angels and humans are the same as far as bodily shape is concerned. This is evident from various Scriptural descriptions of them. They are so like man in appearance, that men have entertained them unawares.

The Lord thus gave the directive to His angelic sons to make man in "our image" and this is what was done. The plural pronoun "us" and "our" has nothing to do with a Trinity. Such a concept is never taught in Scripture. The plural pronouns simply refer to a Divine directive given by God to His angelic messengers. And this in no way makes it any less a work of God. It was all of God for it was His power in His servants that performed the creative work.

What has been said in this section also applies to Gen.3:22 where we

read: "And the Lord God said, Behold, the man is become as one of US, to know good and evil ..." Also Gen.11:6-7: "And the Lord said, Behold, the people is one, and they all have one language; and this is only the beginning of what they will do ... come, let US go down, and there confound their language, that they may not understand one another's speech."

Such texts as these simply relate to consultation with or among the angels, with whom the Lord takes council before sending them forth.

The reference in Gen.11 to the "Lord" saying "let us go down" to the tower of Babel to confound their language, can be compared with Gen.18 where we read about the "Lord" and two other "men" going down to Sodom. This shall be dealt with in more detail in another chapter, but may it be pointed out here that the "Lord" and the other two "men" were angels also.

* * * * *

CHAPTER FIVE MY NAME IS IN HIM

In order to appreciate other aspects of the subject in hand, which will be developed in this thesis, it is necessary to point out that angels do not all occupy the same rank or position. Some are clearly more superior than others. Some occupy very high positions and others not so high. There is gradation of rank among them as there will also be among the immortalized members of the body of Christ when they become like the angels.

One will sit at the right hand of Jesus and another at his left. The 12 apostles will be given 12 thrones over the 12 tribes of Israel. Some saints will receive authority over 10 cities and others over 5. Some will simply be "doorkeepers".

"There is one glory of the sun, and another glory of the moon, and another glory of the stars; for one star differs from another star in glory. So also is the resurrection of the dead" (1 Cor.15:40-42).

All who are accounted worthy at the resurrection become "equal unto the angels" in the sense of obtaining immortality. All will be equal in this sense, as portrayed in the parable of the labourers who all received a "penny." But, in their immortal state, as with the angels now, there will be differences of rank and position.

Now the angel that God commissioned to superintend the exodus and Sinai activities was of very high rank. When Moses approached the burning bush, the angel said to him: "Draw not nigh hither: put off thy shoes from off thy feet, for the place whereon thou standest is holy ground." And, later on when Moses requested permission to set eyes upon him, he was told that he could not see his face, but only his back (Ex.33). In other cases, when angels of inferior rank appeared to men, the same demands and restrictions were not made.

Regarding this angel of high rank, something interesting is said about him in Ex.23:20-21: "Behold, I send AN ANGEL before thee, to keep thee in the way, and to bring thee into the place which I have prepared. Beware of him, and obey his voice, and provoke him not: for he will not pardon your transgressions: FOR MY NAME IS IN HIM. But if you shall indeed obey his voice, and do all that I speak; then I will be an enemy to your enemies, and an adversary to your adversaries. For my ANGEL shall go before thee."

In this we have an interweaving in the speech of the personalities of the Father and the angel: "If you shall indeed obey HIS (the angel's) voice

and do all that I (God) speak ..." Here, God is the ultimate source of all operations, but the angel was the channel through which they were accomplished. Because the angel had such a supreme position in the administration of the affairs of Israel, God says concerning him: "Beware of him, and obey his voice, provoke him not: for he will not pardon your transgressions." Since the angel possesses delegated authority, God ascribes to him the exercise of the power to forgive or to withhold forgiveness.

Of particular interest is God's statement with regard to this angel: "MY NAME IS IN HIM." This phrase is a vital key to the understanding of the subject of God-manifestation. Because the angel was on a Divine mission, speaking and acting on behalf of Yahweh, he was invested with the Yahweh name! Because the angel was name-bearer of the Father, he could speak in the name of the Father as if he were the Father Himself. Therefore, the Father's name and title is ascribed constantly to this angel.

The principle is very similar, as pointed out earlier, to a man or body of men becoming name-bearers of the firm or organization they represent. When they go out as representatives of that firm, speaking and acting on the manager's behalf, they are invested with the name of that firm. But this does not make them equal with the manager!

This same principle is exemplified in Gen.48:16 where Jacob said, concerning Joseph's sons: "Let my name be named on them." From that time forward Joseph's sons were called "Israel."

THE ANGEL WAS NOT JESUS

It is commonly believed that the angel commissioned to be Yahweh's name-bearer was Jesus in a pre-existent state - in his co-equal relationship with his Father. Many principles in Scripture are against this and some thought should be given to the proposition at this stage.

1 Cor.10:4 is often quoted to support the traditional view. Speaking about the Israelites under Moses during their wilderness experiences, the apostle Paul says: "and did all drink the same spiritual drink for they drank of that spiritual rock that followed them: **AND THAT ROCK WAS CHRIST.**"

The reference of course, is to Ex.17:6 where the angel told Moses that he would stand upon a particular rock at Horeb so that Moses would know which one to smite to obtain water for Israel. The Lord knew where the subterranean steam was situated and which particular rock should be struck to release the flow, so the angel stood on the appropriate site to

identify the position for Moses.

Those who believe that the angel was Jesus, read 1 Cor.10:4 like this: "... and the angel that stood upon that rock was Christ." But this is not what Paul says at all. It is reading something into the verse which is not there. Paul knew only too well that an angel stood on top of the rock and was quite capable of saying so if that was the point he was wanting to make. But, he did not express himself in this way and we are without justification for reading it to mean that. Paul clearly said that the "rock was Christ." He did not say that the angel on top of the rock was Christ.

Of course, someone might say, "Paul obviously referred to the angel on top of the rock because the literal rock itself could not possibly have been Christ." To reason this way is to miss the whole point of what Paul is saying. He is not talking in literal terms. He is talking in SPIRITUAL terms, and this is emphasized in the first few verses where he repeats the word "spiritual." He is drawing spiritual lessons and principles from the literal experiences of Israel, and what he says has to be "spiritually discerned." He says in verse 6: "Now these things were our EXAMPLES."

This word "examples" means 'types,' 'figures,' 'symbols.' Again in verse 11 he says: "Now all these things happened to them for EXAMPLES ..."

The expression: "and that rock was Christ" fits into the same category of spiritual, symbolic utterance as the phrase: "Hagar is mount Sinai" (Gal.4:25). This statement is made in the middle of an allegorical exposition and obviously cannot be interpreted literally. Hagar, the handmaid of Abraham, was not a mountain! Neither was Jesus a piece of rock.

In Matt.13:38 Jesus says: "the good seed are the children of the kingdom." What he meant was the good seed REPRESENTS or TYPIFIES the children of the kingdom. So also 1 Cor.10:4: the rock on Sinai represented or typified Christ.

When Jesus said, concerning the bread and wine, "this IS my body" and "this IS my blood," he didn't expect his words to be taken literally. He meant that the bread and wine REPRESENTED and SIGNIFIED his body and blood.

Let us now take a closer look at 1 Cor.10:4. It says that Israel "drank of that spiritual rock that followed them." Now, the word "of" is "ek" in Greek and literally means "out of." They drank "out of" or "from" that spiritual rock. Common-sense requires this for they obviously did not drink the rock itself. They drank what came out of it, namely, the water. (Mind you, even if Paul had said they drank the rock, it still would not

have necessarily created a problem because the Bible, as well as our own contemporary speech, contains many similar metonymical expressions. For example, we sometimes speak of "boiling the jug." By this we do not mean to literally boil the jug itself, but the water in it).

So then, it was not the literal rock which they drank, but the water that came out of it. And it was also the water which came out of the rock "that followed them." The rock itself did not follow them.

It is sometimes imagined that the volume of water that came out of that rock was comparable to what comes out of a kitchen tap, and that all the Israelites filed past one by one with cupped hands to have a drink. This would be quite ridiculous when one considers that there were hundreds of thousands of Israelites and they were not allowed up the Mount where the rock was situated. No, a tremendous volume of water gushed out of the rock and ran down the Mount like a river of living water and flowed out into the desert winding its way through the wilderness.

This is what we read in Ps.105:41: "He opened the rock, and the waters gushed out; they flowed through the desert like a river." The same point is also made in Ps.78:15-16.

1 Cor.10:4 says that this water from the rock "followed them," or, as the margin puts it, "went with them." This was vital for Israel's existence. There would have been little use in having a good drink at Sinai and continuing on their journey without further access to water. They needed the water every day and it was provided by this river that went with them, flowing through the wilderness.

The apostle Paul says this was all "spiritual." That is, it was all symbolic of something and has to be spiritually understood in relation to Christ. And this is not difficult to do. Jesus is the rock who was smitten for us - the rock of ages cleft for you and me. And, as a result of submitting himself to the smiting rod, he has become a river of life for the true and spiritual Israel whom he follows throughout their wilderness experiences in life, being near at hand at all times; a continual source of refreshment and sustaining power. "If any man thirst" he says, "let him come to me and drink." "Lo, I am WITH YOU (as the river "went with" Israel) always, even unto the end of the age."

Before leaving 1 Cor.10 it should also be pointed out that the reference to "Christ" in verse 9 in the A.V. is suspect. It reads: "Neither let us tempt Christ as some of them also tempted and were destroyed by serpents." Sometimes, on the basis of this it is thought that Christ must have been there with the Israelites at the time, in the wilderness.

However, many of the ancient manuscripts do not have

"Christos" (Christ) but "Kurios" (Lord). I know of at least 12 different modern translations of the Bible which give "Lord" instead of "Christ." The original passage in Ps.78:18 from which Paul is quoting agrees with this. It reads: "And they tempted GOD in their heart by asking meat for their lust." Also Ex.17:2: "...Why do you tempt THE LORD?" The reference is to the Father, manifest in His angel, and not a pre-existent Christ.

However, it wouldn't really matter if "Christ" proved to be the correct translation. It would make perfectly good sense to read it like this: "You must not put Christ to the test as some of the Israelites put the Lord to the test." After all, the whole purpose of Paul's exposition is to relate Israel's experiences to the body of Christ, for her exhortation and admonition.

One thing is certain: one would need a verse or verses that were not subject to ambiguities like this one before reaching definite conclusions.

A DIFFICULTY

Coming back to the common belief that the angel accompanying Israel was Christ, I will now share other reasons which make this concept difficult to accept.

Firstly, it is emphasized throughout the Old Testament that the angel is not the Lord Himself but an "angel OF THE LORD," and there is a vast difference. This angel is referred to as being "sent" by the Lord, and is only referred to as "the Lord" on the clearly proclaimed basis that the Lord invested him with His name: "My name is in him." If this angel was Christ, and Christ was one and the same person as Yahweh, the Father, how could the Father say "my name is in him?" Being a co-equal and co-eternal part of the Godhead, the Son's name would have already been Yahweh from all eternity. How could the Father put the Yahweh name in one to whom it already belonged as equally as it did to Himself, and who had possessed it as long as Himself? "My name is in him" implies that the name by which the angel shall be called is not his own, but the Father's.

The angel is clearly subordinate to God. He is "sent forth" as a servant, "doing His commandments, hearkening to the voice of His word" as do all the angels (Ps.103:20).

The angel manifested himself to Moses in the burning bush as a "flame of fire." This expression or designation immediately places him in the same category as the angels described in Heb.1:7: "Who makes His angels spirits, and His ministers (servants) A FLAME OF FIRE."

Now the context of this statement in Heb.1:7 is important to note.

The principle point being made is that angels are SERVANTS, sent forth to SERVE. There is a designed contrast between the quotation in Heb.1:7 which is taken from Ps.45:6-7. Angels are servants - ministering spirits, but Jesus is superior and they are subordinate to him. He is a mighty one (elohim) who has been promised a throne and who now sits on His Father's throne at His right hand. The point of contrast being made is that Christ sits upon the throne and angels are sent forth as servants from the throne. The writer makes a very clear distinction between Jesus and the angels. Jesus is not an angel. He is vastly superior to them.

The contrast comes out more clearly in verses 13-14: "But to which of the angels said God at anytime, SIT on my right hand until I make thine enemies thy footstool? Are they not ALL (no exceptions) ministering spirits SENT FORTH TO SERVE for the sake of those who shall be heirs of salvation?"

So, Jesus SITS on the throne, and the angels STAND and are SENT forth from the throne to serve (1 Kng 22:9). Jesus is infinitely superior, as the only begotten Son of the Father, and of greater rank than ALL the angels. The point is made in Heb.1:4 that Jesus is much better than angels as he has by inheritance obtained a more excellent name than they. Thus, "Let all the angels of God worship him" (v 6).

Now, think about this carefully. If Jesus pre-existed as a co-equal part of the God-head, then it naturally follows that after his resurrection and ascension he would regain the status he forfeited when he became a man. In other words: once back in heaven, he would re-possess the power and authority that belonged to him from all eternity in his pre-existent state as a co-equal with the Father. If he pre-existed as a co-equal with the Father then he must have sat on heaven's throne. He would naturally resume that position once he returned there.

The point is this: IF JESUS PRE-EXISTED CO-EQUALLY AND CO-ETERNALLY WITH THE FATHER, THEN HE SAT UPON THE THRONE IN HIS PRE-EXISTENT STATE. And this means that in relation to the angels, he was as superior to them then as he is now. And this being so, it would be impossible to identify him with any angel - even the most supreme. If it is wrong to bring Jesus down to the level of angelic ministration now, it would be equally wrong to do so during his pre-existent state when he was "Very God of Very God" as the Trinitarians claim.

Heb.1 clearly isolates Jesus from the angelic order and administration and places him in a position far exceeding and transcending theirs. He is on the throne and they stand around it and are sent forth as servants from

it. If Jesus was the angel sent forth to superintend Israel's wilderness wanderings, then he is immediately dethroned and placed on the same level as the subordinate angels sent forth from the throne as servants of the Lord.

ANOTHER DIFFICULTY

The identification of Jesus with the angel at Sinai and elsewhere particularly breaks down in another fundamental aspect. In fact, it completely upsets a vital principle set forth by the writer to the Hebrews.

In Heb.2:1-3 the writer argues from the less to the greater. He has in mind two revelations: (1) The Law of Moses given at Sinai through the angels, the violation of which was followed by strict and just punishment. (2) The revelation given through Christ which was infinitely greater. Transgression of it must of necessity be followed by a far greater and more terrible punishment. Hence, if men could not neglect the former, how much less the latter.

There is a definite and specific contrast presented in these verses between the ministration of the angels at Sinai and the ministration of Jesus. At Sinai, the "word" (law) was "SPOKEN BY ANGELS" (v2). But the "great salvation" of God by grace was "SPOKEN BY THE LORD" (v 3). The inferior dispensation of the law was given at the institution of angels (Acts 7:53. Gal. 3:19), but the transcending grace of God in the gospel came through Jesus Christ, the Son of God.

Now the point to be noticed is this: If Jesus was the angel who superintended the giving of the law at Sinai and who spoke to Moses, then the comparison between the two ministrations completely breaks down and is negated. It would mean that JESUS WAS THE CHANNEL OF BOTH LAW AND GRACE. Such a conclusion would be incongruous. It would make an absolute farce of the Scripture which says: "The law was given by Moses but grace and truth came by Jesus Christ" (Jn.1:17).

It is apparent that the writer to the Hebrews did not believe that the angel at Sinai was Jesus in a pre-existent state. He could not have made such a contrast and distinction between the two ministries had he believed Jesus was responsible for both.

The main point in the first two chapters of Hebrews is this: Jesus is far superior to the highest ranking angel. The angel who was commissioned to preside over Israel's affairs was a very high ranking angel as we have seen. He was invested with the Yahweh name. Jesus however, is greater. Moses was great also - the greatest prophet and leader

Israel ever had. But Jesus is vastly superior to him. In every respect, Jesus is exalted above all men and all angels. But he is still inferior and subordinate to his Father as we shall see. Although highly exalted he is not equal with his Father.

One Trinitarian writer has stated that: "The ANGEL OF JEHOVAH as used from Genesis to Malachi is another expression which contains implicitly the thought of the Trinity." (Christian Theology, p398).

This is quite a groundless statement and is fundamentally wrong. Angels are created beings - made and formed by God. God, being their Creator, clearly existed before them, so none of them could possibly be co-eternal or co-equal with Him. The very word "angel" suggests this. It means "messenger" i.e. "one sent," which implies servitude. And that, precisely, is what angels are. They are servants sent forth by God from the throne to minister on His behalf. And if Jesus pre-existed as an angel, then this must have been his position. He could not have been sitting on the throne with the Father enjoying co-equal status with Him.

Angels are clearly created beings. They have been "made" as we read in Heb.1:7: "Who (God) MAKES His angels spirits." As pointed out before, angels are referred to as "sons of God" because the Father made them. The Hebrew word "ben" translated "sons" is derived from "banah" which means to build. A son is one BUILT - made - created. The angels were made by God - by El, whose Spirit formed and illuminated them. His Spirit was their atomic nucleus - the organic principle that made them what they are. As intelligences created and made, they are "sons." The Father made them, so He is their great Paternal Power. Collectively, they are "sons of God," and individually, each one is a "son of God" (Dan.3:25, 28).

Angels, like Adam, were not "begotten." That is, they had no mother. They were simply "made" or "formed" in a few moments out of the elements by the power of God. Because they came into being through the creative power of God, they are referred to as sons of God.

Jesus however, as "Son of God" was entirely different. He was not created by the creative power of God. He was "begotten" by the generative power of God. The Father's presence overshadowed Mary and His generative power penetrated her ovum causing her to conceive and give birth to the Son of God. Never, in the whole of history, had such an event taken place. Jesus was the only man ever to be begotten of the Father like this. Hence, emphasis is made in Scripture on him being the "only begotten" Son of God. Being impregnated with the very "genes" of the Father as a result of Divine conception, Jesus naturally had a more

personal and intimate relationship with his Father than any angel. Hence, we read: "Being made so much better than the angels, as he has by inheritance obtained a more excellent name than they. For unto which of the angels said He at any time, Thou art my Son, this day have I begotten thee?" (Heb.1:4-5).

But the moment we believe that Jesus existed before his birth as an angel, we immediately destroy all these beautiful and intimate aspects of his Sonship, and make it artificial and unreal. If Jesus pre-existed as an angel, then the contrasts and distinctions between himself and angels in the epistle to the Hebrews lose their force and meaning.

THE MESSENGER OF THE COVENANT

Sometimes Mal. 3:1 is quoted to support the view that Jesus pre-existed as an angel: "Behold I will send my messenger (angel), and he shall prepare the way before me: and the Lord, whom ye seek, shall suddenly come to his temple, even the messenger (angel) of the covenant, whom ye delight in: behold, he shall come, saith the Lord of hosts."

In this prophecy, Jesus is referred to as "the messenger (angel) of the covenant." On this basis it is claimed he pre-existed as an angel. However, it is quite overlooked that this passage is a prophecy of what Messiah will be when he appears on earth, and has nothing to do with what he might have been before he appeared on earth. It simply states that when Messiah appears, he will minister as "the messenger of the covenant." Not a word - not even a hint is given in this verse that Jesus pre-existed as an angel. If he did, he could not have been co-equal or co-eternal with the Father, for angels are clearly subordinate beings.

While it is true that the word "messenger" has been translated from the Hebrew word "Malak" which is elsewhere translated "angel," it does not necessarily follow that everyone to whom "Malak" is applied is an "angel." This should be obvious enough from the passage now under consideration in Mal.3:1. In this same passage, John the Baptist is referred to as a "messenger" (malak) who shall prepare the way of the Lord. But John was not an "angel." Neither did he pre-exist as an angel. Yet, if we must conclude that Jesus pre-existed as an angel simply because "malak" is applied to him, we would need to do the same in relation to John the Baptist to be consistent. After all, the same title is applied to both in the very same verse. And let's face it: we read in Jn.1:6 that "there was a man SENT FROM GOD whose name was John."

The Hebrew word "malak," like its Greek equivalent "angelos,"

simply means "messenger" without stating or defining the nature of the messenger. Sometimes the messenger is angelic, and sometimes human. The same word is applied to both, for both are used as God's "messengers." It is left up to us to determine from each context where the word occurs whether the reference is to an angelic or human messenger. The translators have tried to help by translating the word as "angel" when they felt the reference was to an angelic messenger, and as "messenger" when they felt the reference was to a human messenger. There are many examples in both the Old and New Testaments of "malak" and "angelos" being translated "messenger" in reference to ordinary human beings. Significantly enough the English translators, although ardent Trinitarians, have translated malak as "messenger" in relation to Jesus in Mal.3:1 instead of "angel." Could it be that they realised that if they applied the title "angel" to Jesus, they would immediately dethrone him and put him in a subordinate position to his Father?

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CHAPTER SIX.

ABRAHAM'S THREE VISITORS

Another good example of the principle of God-manifestation operating in angels can be seen in Genesis chapters 18 and 19. In 18:1-3 we read: "And **THE LORD** appeared to him (Abraham) in the plains of Mamre: and he sat in the tent door in the heat of the day. And he lifted up his eyes and looked, and lo, **THREE MEN** stood by him: and when he saw them, he ran and bowed himself to the ground and said, My Lord, if now I have found favour in thy sight, pass not away, I pray thee, from thy servant."

In Trinitarian literature, it is frequently affirmed that these "three men" who visited Abraham constituted the "Trinity." The whole episode is regarded as a visitation of the Father, Son and Holy Spirit. This conclusion is unacceptable for several reasons:

(1) Scripture is emphatic that no man has ever seen God.

(2) The three men who appeared to Abraham were clearly three separate individuals. This does not harmonize with the general Trinitarian concept which states: "The Divine persons are not therefore separate individuals, but possess in common, one nature or substance ..." (Christian Theology, p.419).

(3) Abraham's visitors are referred to as "three **MEN**." This is quite different from saying they were **GOD**.

(4) The three men were not co-equal. They differed in status. One was superior in rank to the other two, and was the specific and official name-bearer and spokesman for the Lord. He was the main spokesman and it was to him that Abraham mainly addressed his remarks. This is particularly borne out in verse 17 on, where this high ranking angel, referred to as "the Lord," turned to the other two and said: "Shall I hide from Abraham that thing which I am about to do?" He was referring to the destruction of Sodom as the following verses point out.

After speaking about the impending destruction, verse 22 tells us that the other two angels turned and went toward Sodom, but **THE LORD** (the high ranking angel) remained with Abraham, and a lengthy conversation took place between them.

The verse which records their arrival at Sodom proves conclusively that they were angels and not members of a triune Godhead. This is what we read in Gen.19:1 "And there came **TWO ANGELS** to Sodom in the evening, and Lot ... seeing them rose up to meet them ..."

This is further confirmed by the New Testament reference to the

episode: "Be not forgetful to entertain strangers, for thereby some have entertained angels unawares." A careful reading of Gen.19 indicates that Lot was not, for some time, aware of the angelic nature of his visitors. Had these visitors been "Very God of Very God" he would surely have known!

Particular note should be taken of the title by which Lot addressed these angels: "And he said, Behold now, my LORDS, turn aside ..." (19:2, 18). The Hebrew word for "lords" is "adon" and simply means "sir" or "master." It is the same word used by Sarah in relation to her husband Abraham (Gen.18:12). It is applied to many different men in Scripture. Joseph was made "lord" by God as we read in Gen.45:8. Abraham's servant was called "lord" (Gen.24:18). Rachel called her father "lord" (Gen.31:35). Jacob addressed Esau as "lord" (Gen.32:4). Scripture abounds with many more examples. Calling a man or angel "lord" does not make him God or equal with God, and it is important to bear this in mind in relation to Jesus who is also referred to as "lord" many times. More will be said about this later.

"Adon" translated "lord," is an inferior title to "Yahweh" which is also translated "Lord." The high ranking angel who was main spokesman and who remained behind to speak with Abraham is called "Lord" (Yahweh) because he was name-bearer. The other two angels are called "lords" (adon) - they were of inferior rank. All three were clearly not equal. If all three were co-equal members of the Godhead, why didn't they all share the same Divine name? Why is the inferior title given to the other two?

GABRIEL?

The way in which Abraham ran towards his three visitors as soon as he saw "the Lord," along with the fact that he directed his words mainly to "the Lord;" suggests that he recognised him; he had seen him before. On previous occasions Abraham had received angelic visitations, and it is more than likely that it was this same angel who visited him on those occasions as well. This would account for Abraham springing to his feet and running towards him as soon as he saw him coming.

We are not told who this noble angel was. His name is not given, but it is interesting to indulge in a little speculation. Certain statements are made which link up with similar statements elsewhere, which could suggest a particular identity, namely: Gabriel, whose name means "God is mighty" or "God is powerful."

The main purpose for the angel visiting Abraham was to inform him

and his wife Sarah that the time had come at last for them to have the son God had promised them. Although they were both old and physically incapable of having a child, the power of God was going to make the impossible possible. The angel said: "I will certainly return to you according to the time of life; and lo, Sarah thy wife shall have a son. And Sarah heard it in the tent door, which was behind him" (Gen. 18:10). Believing that she was too old to have a child, Sarah laughed with incredulity. And the angel said: "Why did Sarah laugh ... Is anything too hard for the Lord?"

In process of time, their son was born according to the word of the angel, and they named him Isaac. Being born through special Divine intervention, and being the only begotten son of father Abraham, Isaac was a type of the Lord Jesus Christ. Isaac was "born after the Spirit" (Gal.4:29), and foreshadowed the true "seed" promised to Abraham, the Son of God himself (Gal.3:16). The offering up of Isaac as a sacrifice, as recorded in Gen.22, was a typical transaction pointing to the atoning sacrifice of Jesus Christ.

So then, Isaac was a child of promise. His miraculous birth foreshadowed the birth of Jesus. Prior to the birth of Jesus, a high ranking angel was sent to advise Mary of the forth-coming event. That angel was of course Gabriel. And Gabriel said to Mary: "For with God nothing shall be impossible" (Lk.1:37). The reason for saying this was because Mary had said: "How shall this be?" (v34). It is all very reminiscent of what we read in Gen.18. Sarah also wondered: "How shall this be?" And the angel on that occasion said similar words to what Gabriel said to Mary: "Is anything too hard for the Lord?" Could it have been the same angel on both occasions? It would have been very fitting and appropriate if Gabriel had not only informed Mary of the birth of her son, but had also informed Abraham and Sarah of the birth of their son who was to be a type of the one to come after.

The angel Gabriel also informed Zacharias of the birth of his son John the Baptist. Zacharias, like Abraham, was very old; and had passed the age of being able to produce children. His wife was in the same position. Zacharias, like Sarah, found the promise hard to believe. So the angel had to say to him: "I am Gabriel who stands in the presence of the Lord." In other words: "God is mighty" and nothing is too hard for him. (This is what the name "Gabriel" conveys).

It was also Gabriel who was sent to Daniel to inform him of a specific period of time that had to pass before the Lord Jesus Christ would be manifested (Dan.9:21-). Gabriel's own emphatic identification of

himself to Zacharias: "I am Gabriel" seems to be an intended pointer to the last occasion when his name appeared in the Scriptures some 500 years before in Dan.9.

There are marked likenesses between Gabriel's appearing to Mary, Zacharias and Daniel. All appearances relate to the birth of a special son. The similarity of Gabriel's work on these occasions with the work of the unnamed angel who appeared to Abraham to announce the birth of his son, could very well suggest that it was the same angel throughout.

ABRAHAM SAW CHRIST'S DAY

Jesus said on one occasion to the Jews: "Your father Abraham rejoiced to see my day; he saw it and was glad." (Jn.8:56). This statement is often quoted as proof that the angel who visited Abraham was Christ.

But notice carefully that Jesus did not say: "Your father Abraham rejoiced to see ME, and was glad." No! He said that Abraham rejoiced to see "my DAY and he saw IT and was glad;" and there is a significant difference.

"The DAY of Christ" is a very common theme in Scripture as the following selection of Scriptures reveal:

"... as you wait for the revealing of our Lord Jesus Christ, who will sustain you to the end, guiltless in THE DAY OF OUR LORD JESUS CHRIST" (1 Cor.1:7-8).

"For as the lightning flashes and lights up the sky from one side to the other, so will the Son of man be in HIS DAY" (Lk.21:24).

"The sun shall be turned into darkness and the moon into blood, before THE DAY OF THE LORD comes ..." (Act.2:20).

"God has appointed A DAY in which He will judge the world in righteousness by the man whom He has appointed ..." (Act.17:31).

The "day of Christ" repeatedly refers in Scripture to his triumphant millennial reign on earth when he will put down all rule and power. All things shall be subdued to him, and every knee shall bow and every tongue confess him as Lord. It is the time when he will judge the world in righteousness and fill it with peace. The earth shall be filled with the knowledge of the glory of the Lord as the waters cover the mighty deep. Sin will be vanquished and the grave shall lose its victory. In short, God's promise to Abraham shall be fulfilled: "In thee and in thy seed shall all nations of the earth be blessed." God will become "all in all" i.e. everything to everyone.

This "day of Christ" is referred to in Gen.22:17-18 where Abraham

was told that his "seed" (Jesus) would possess the gate of HIS enemies, and that in him all nations of the earth would be blessed.

In ancient times the gate of the city was the seat of authority. It was the place where decisions were made, decrees issued, and rulers received honour. To "possess the gate" was to be in total control of the city. Abraham was thus promised that the day was coming when his "seed" (Jesus) would rule and have total authority over all the cities in the world. The kingdoms of this world are destined to become his (Rev.11:15). This "day" was enough to make any righteous man rejoice and be glad.

Abraham, along with all the other heroes of the faith, "died in faith, not having received the promises, but having SEEN THEM afar off ..." (Heb.11:13). Through faith, Abraham could see Christ's day, afar off as it was in terms of historic time, and he was so confident about it that he rejoiced and was glad. His attitude stood in sharp contrast to the Jews in Christ's day who claimed to be Abraham's seed. They actually had the privilege of seeing Jesus face to face and witness his wonderful works, yet hated him and planned to stone him to death. Abraham on the other hand, who could only see Jesus by faith afar off, rejoiced at the prospect of seeing Christ's day, and by faith saw it and was glad.

Abraham not only saw the millennial day of Christ's reign, but also saw by faith another equally, if not more important day - the day when Jesus would be offered up upon the Mount as an atoning sacrifice. Abraham saw this in the offering up of his own son Isaac (Gen.22.).

Gen.22 therefore reveals two important aspects of the "day" of Christ. Firstly the day of atonement, and secondly the day of victory in possessing the gate of his enemies. And in addition to this, Abraham probably saw the day of Christ's birth foreshadowed in the birth of his own son Isaac. This was certainly an occasion of rejoicing.

BACK TO THE THREE MEN

Coming back to the episode when the three men visited Abraham, let us not miss the wonderful revelation of God-manifestation which it teaches. It provides another example of an angel becoming the name-bearer of Yahweh. Because the Lord vested His name in the angel, the angel was able to speak and act as if he were the Lord himself.

In harmony with this, we read in Gen.18:13: "And the Lord said to Abraham, Why did Sarah laugh, saying, Shall I of a surety bear a child, who am old? Is anything too hard for the Lord?"

While the narrative speaks of the angel as the Lord, the angel speaks of God as being a separate personality from himself, and there are many examples of this in Scripture.

A similar objective existence with regard to the Divine power, the Eternal Father; is seen in the 19th verse, where the angel says: " I know him (Abraham), that he will command his children and his household after him, and they shall keep the way of the Lord, to do justice and judgement." The angel does not say "he will keep MY way; but speaking of the "way of the Lord" recognizes the higher power of the Eternal, whose representative he was.

Consider also Gen.22. In the first few verses we read about "God" telling Abraham to take Isaac to a particular place to offer him as a burnt offering. Then, just as he was about to plunge the knife into Isaac's body, "THE ANGEL OF THE LORD called to him out of heaven" and told him to stop (v11-12). And in verses 15-16 we read: "And the angel of the Lord called to Abraham out of heaven the second time, and said: "By myself have I sworn, says the Lord ..." Here again is an example of "God" referring to an angel who was name-bearer and representative of the Lord.

Also consider Gen. 31:11-13: "The ANGEL OF GOD spoke to Jacob in a dream, and said, I am THE GOD of Bethel ..."

Again, in Ex.13:21 we read: "And THE LORD went before them by the day in a pillar of cloud ..." And 14:19 says it was "THE ANGEL of God" who went before them.

In later times an angel appeared to Joshua. Joshua lifted up his eyes and saw a man standing opposite him with his sword drawn in his hand. He told Joshua that he was "captain of the host of the Lord." ("Host" means "armies" and refers to the angelic armies which consist of thousands of angels). Notice in Josh.5:13-14 that the angel did not say he was the Lord Himself. He made no claim to be the Supreme Deity, but simply referred to himself as captain of the Lord's armies. But because he represented the Lord and was His name-bearer, he is referred to as the Lord Himself in verse 2: "And THE LORD said to Joshua ..."

And so we could go on. The Old Testament abounds with examples of angels being addressed as "Lord" (Yahweh) and "God" (elohim). And this fact enables us to reconcile the verses which say no man has ever seen God with those which say men have. It is also important to remember that angels never became equal with God simply because they were invested with His name or titles. This point should be kept in mind in relation to Jesus. He became Yahweh's name-bearer and the Divine title "God" was conferred upon him. However, it is clear from other Scriptures that this

did not mean he was co-eternal or co-equal with his Father. More will be said about this later.

NEW TESTAMENT CONFIRMATION

The New Testament contains examples also of this same principle of God-manifestation through angels. In Matt.1:20, 2:13, 19 we read about AN ANGEL OF THE LORD appearing to Joseph in a dream. And in 2:12, 22 it says Joseph was warned by "GOD" in a dream.

In Lk.2:8-12 we read about THE ANGEL OF THE LORD appearing to the shepherds, telling them about the birth of Jesus. In verse 15 the shepherds say: "Let us now go to Bethlehem to see this thing which THE LORD has made known to us."

Acts 7:25 tells us that Moses supposed that his brethren would have understood how that GOD by his hand would deliver them. Further on in the same chapter we are told that the deliverance was effected by THE ANGEL OF THE LORD.

In Acts 10:3 an ANGEL OF GOD appeared to Cornelius. In verse 4 Cornelius addresses him as "LORD," and in verse 30 refers to him as "a MAN." Then in v.33 he calls him "GOD." In verse 19 the angel is referred to as "the SPIRIT."

Each angel, as explained before, is a "ministering spirit" - a vehicle of El (Divine power). Each angel is a channel of the Spirit of God. The Father, through the Holy Spirit, ministers through them. The Father "is Spirit" as we read in Jn.4:24; and because He ministers His Spirit through the angels, they are called "ministering spirits." And, because Jesus now shares the Divine nature and is immortal, he is referred to as "a quickening spirit" in 1 Cor.15:45.

This now introduces us to the subject of: THE HOLY SPIRIT.

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CHAPTER SEVEN. THE HOLY SPIRIT

The Holy Spirit is commonly regarded as the third person in the Trinity - a person distinct from the Father and son, yet of the same substance - co-equal and co-eternal with them.

The proposition to be put forward in this chapter is that the Holy Spirit is not a person distinct from the Father and Son. God's Spirit is His power - the Divine energy through which He performs all His works and fulfils all His purposes. God Himself "is Spirit" as we read in Jn. 4:24. The Father and His Spirit are "one" - inseparable.

God's Spirit is His radiant invisible energy which proceeds from Him, as light and heat proceed from the sun. God and His Spirit are "one" in the same way that the sun and it's radiation are one.

Thus, the Holy Spirit is termed by the Father as "my Spirit" (Joel 2:28). In relation to the Father, it is declared to be the "Spirit of your Father" (Matt.10:20) or as the parallel reference in Mk. 13:11 says: "... the Holy Spirit." Ps.51:11 says "thy Holy Spirit;" Eph.4:30 says "Holy Spirit of God;" and Matt.3:16 says "the Spirit of God."

Now if God's reference to "my spirit" means a separate person, how are we to understand His reference to "my soul?" (Isa. 1:14). Does this also refer to a separate and distinct person from the Father, thus making "God the Father," "God the Son," "God the Spirit" and "God the Soul" - four Gods? If "my soul" or "my spirit" when applied to man do not mean persons distinct from the man himself, then it is certain "my soul," or "my spirit," as to the Father, cannot mean persons separate and distinct from Him. In 1 Cor. 2:10-12 man and his spirit is compared to God and His Spirit, and the spirit of a man is in him and not another person or identity.

Scriptures will shortly be provided to show that the Holy Spirit is God's power. It will become evident that because God works by the medium of His Holy Spirit in special agents, His work is often referred to as being accomplished by the Holy Spirit. The reason for this is simple - the Holy Spirit IS GOD. They are one and the same. The titles "God" and "Holy Spirit" are used synonymously in Scripture. The Holy Spirit is God in action - it is His energy-force at work. Thus, sometimes Scripture will say "GOD said ..." or "GOD did ..." and other Scriptures will say "THE HOLY SPIRIT said ..." It is the same thing in both cases. "God" refers to the source of the activity and "Holy Spirit" refers to the means by which the activity takes place. See Acts 5:3, 4, 9 where "Holy Spirit," "God" and "the Spirit of the Lord" are synonymous.

THE HEBREW CONCEPT

There are countless references to the Spirit of God throughout the Old Testament. It virtually opens with a reference to the operation of God's Spirit (Gen.1:2). Yet in spite of all the references to the Holy Spirit in the Old Testament, the Jewish people, to whom those oracles were committed and in whose language they were written; never believed that the Spirit was an actual person, separate from the Father. Had this been their view, they would have believed in two Gods, or a God who was "two in one." But they never reached this conclusion. Instead, they maintained their monotheistic concept of God which declared that God was one supreme individual. They believed that the Spirit was His power or energy by which He worked through angels and prophets and other men of His own appointment; and God reinforced and encouraged them in this belief.

The authors of the New Catholic Encyclopaedia (Vol.13, p574) make the following observations: "The Old Testament clearly does not envisage God's Spirit as a person, neither in the strictly philosophical sense, nor in the semitic sense. God's Spirit is simply God's power. If it is sometimes represented as being distinct from God, it is because the breath of Yahweh acts exteriorly (Isa.48:16; 63:11; 32:15). Very rarely do the Old Testament writers attribute to God's Spirit emotions or intellectual activity (Isa.63:10; Wis.1:3-7). When such expressions are used, they are mere figures of speech that are explained by the fact that the "ruah" was regarded also as the seat of intellectual acts and feeling (Gen.41:8). Neither is there found in the Old Testament or in Rabbinical literature the notion that God's Spirit is an intermediary between God and the world. This activity is proper to the angels, although to them is ascribed some of the activity that is elsewhere ascribed to the spirit of God."

The majority of New Testament texts reveal God's Spirit as something, not someone; this is specially seen in the parallelism between the Spirit and the power of God.

RUACH - PNEUMA

"Spirit" is translated from the Hebrew word "ruach" and the Greek word "pneuma." Pneuma is the Greek equivalent of the Hebrew ruach. The word means "to breathe" or "blow" - "air," "breath," "wind," "power," "animation," "the manifestation of one's power or energy."

The following Scriptures dealing with the subject of God's Spirit

harmonize with these definitions:

Ex. 14:21 tells us that the Lord caused the Red sea to go back by a strong east WIND.

Ex.15 emphasizes God's "POWER" (v.6) in the Red sea episode, and verse 8 says: "With the BLAST of Thy nostrils the waters were heaped up." The Hebrew word for "wind" and "blast" is RUACH, elsewhere translated "spirit."

Ps. 18:15 refers to God rebuking by "the BLAST (ruach) of the BREATH (ruach) of His nostrils." (Also Job.4:9.) Ps. 33:6 refers to heaven and earth made by the "breath" (ruach) of God's mouth and Isa. 11:4 says He slays the wicked with the breath (ruach) of His lips.

In Ezk. 37 the words "breath" and "breathe" occur frequently in relation to God breathing life into the dry bones. The Hebrew word in each case is "ruach" elsewhere translated "spirit."

Neh.9:30 says God warns BY HIS SPIRIT in His prophets. This is how the "Scriptures" came to us. Paul puts it like this: "All Scripture is given BY INSPIRATION of God" (2 Tim.3:16). The words "given by inspiration of God" come from the Greek word "theopneustos" which literally means "GOD-BREATHED." Every single Scripture owes its origin to the creative breath of God which is His "spirit." 2 Pet.1:21 says "holy men of God spoke as they were MOVED by the Holy Spirit." The word "moved" in the Greek means "borne along," "carried along," "impelled" as a vessel is carried along by the wind.

Jesus likened the Spirit to the wind in Jn.3: "The wind blows where it will, and you hear the sound of it, but cannot tell where it comes from, or where it goes: so is everyone who is born of the spirit." We read in Jn. 20:22 that "Jesus breathed on them and said: receive the Holy Spirit."

When the Holy Spirit came on the day of Pentecost "there was a sound from heaven as of a rushing mighty wind, and it filled all the house where they were sitting ... and they were all filled with the Holy Spirit" (Acts.2:1-4).

These examples from Scripture show that the basic concept behind "spirit" is to "breathe" or "blow." It relates to "vital force" or "power" or "energy." The Holy Spirit is Divine power and energy.

Sometimes God's power is simply referred to as "spirit" and other times as "Holy Spirit." The word "holy" means "set apart," "separate," "distinct," "special" - "for Divine use only." It is coupled with "Spirit" from time to time to emphasize that God's Spirit is distinct from all other "spirits" - especially the spirit of man which is deceitful above all things and desperately wicked, and which "lusts enviously" (Jam.4:5) Compare

this principle with various Scriptures which refer to a servant of God as a "man of God" and sometimes as a "holy man of God." Or, the Scriptures which refer to Jesus as a "child" as well as "holy child" (Act.4:27).

THE SPIRIT IS POWER

The following Scriptures reveal the Spirit as the power of God:
In Gen.1:2 we read that creation week commenced with the moving of God's SPIRIT. Jer.32:17 etc declares that God made all things by His great POWER. Job.26:13 says God garnished the heavens by His SPIRIT.

Mic.3:8: "I am full of POWER by the SPIRIT of the Lord."

Zec.4:6: "Not by (man's) might or power, but by My spirit ..."

Judg.14:6: "And the Spirit of the Lord came mightily upon him (Samson) and he rent him (the lion) as he would have rent a kid."

There are many examples of Samson receiving POWER as a result of God's SPIRIT coming upon him.

Lk.1:35: "The HOLY SPIRIT shall come upon thee, and THE POWER OF THE HIGHEST shall overshadow thee."

Lk. 24:49: "And, behold, I send the promise of my Father upon you: but tarry ye in the city of Jerusalem, until ye be endued with POWER from on high." Here we are told that the "promise of the Father" is "power from on high." This is further explained in Acts 1:5 as the "Holy Spirit." In these two passages we have the key to what is meant by "Holy Spirit," because both passages refer to the same thing. "Holy Spirit" is identical with "Power from on high." Hence, "Holy" is equivalent to "from on high," and "Spirit" is equivalent to "power." The word rendered "power" is "dunamis" (from which we have "dynamic," "dynamite" etc).

Acts 1:8: "You shall receive POWER when the HOLY SPIRIT is come upon you."

Acts 8:18-19: "And when Simon saw that through laying on of the apostles' hands the HOLY SPIRIT was given, he offered them money, saying, Give me also this POWER ..."

Act.10:38: "God anointed Jesus of Nazareth with the Holy Spirit and with power, who went about doing good, and healing ..." (Sometimes the Holy Spirit was given to a man but without giving him "power" to heal or perform miracles. For example: John the Baptist had the Holy Spirit from his mother's womb but never performed a miracle Jn.10:41). The "power" that Jesus possessed by which he performed miracles is referred to as "virtue" which went out from him Lk.6:9, 8:46.

1 Pet.3:18 says that Jesus was made alive after death by God's

SPIRIT but 1 Cor.6:14 and Eph.1:19-20 says Jesus was made alive by God's POWER: ... "according to the WORKING of His mighty POWER." These words are very descriptive in the Greek. "Working" comes from "energia" from which we get our English word "energy" (which Einstein's law of relativity proclaims to be the basis of all matter - the material universe). "Power" comes from "dunamis" from which we get the English words "dynamic" and "dynamite" etc.

The Holy Spirit is clearly the creative energy and power of God. It has explosive force.

The Spirit of God is all pervading. It fills heaven and earth. Hence, David confesses that there is nowhere a person can go to escape the presence of God: "Where shall I go from thy SPIRIT? Or where shall I flee from your PRESENCE? If I ascend to heaven you are there; if I make my bed in hell, behold you are there ..." (Ps.139:7-9). God's "spirit" is His "PRESENCE." This is also seen in Ps.51:11: "Cast me not away from your "PRESENCE;" and take not your HOLY SPIRIT from me." (This is a typical Hebrew parallelism in which the same thing is stated twice in different words. The Psalms abound with such parallelisms).

God is constantly in touch by the Holy Spirit with the whole universe. By His all pervading "force field" He is present everywhere at the same time. He is omni-present. He does not miss the smallest detail. He knows the very number of hairs on every head and not even a sparrow can fall to the ground without Him being aware of it. Yes, He is IN TOUCH with every little corner of His universe by His all-pervading Spirit. Hence, His Spirit is referred to as "the FINGER of God" (Lk.11:20).

NOT A PERSON

In saying that the Holy Spirit is not a person, what is really meant is that it is not a separate person from the Father. The Father and the Holy Spirit are inseparable, for the Holy Spirit is the Father's power. The Holy Spirit IS God - God the Father, and because the father is a person, the Holy Spirit has personality in this sense. The Father's voice, personality and attributes etc are injected into, carried and conveyed by the Holy Spirit. The Holy Spirit is not mindless power! It is the very medium by which God conveys instruction and manifests His love and presence. We must not therefore, separate and detach the Holy Spirit from the Father and make it something impersonal and abstract. "God IS Spirit."

The following Scriptures indicate that the Holy Spirit is God's

POWER and not a separate person:

People are referred to as being "clothed upon" by the Holy Spirit (Judg.6:34 marg. Also 1 Chr.12:18. 2 Chr.24:20). Some translations render it as "took possession of." The Spirit is mentioned as "poured out" (Isa.32:15. 44:3. Joel 2:28. Acts 2:17. 10:45). It is "shed" (Tit.3:5-6), "breathed" (Jn.20:22), and fills houses and persons (Acts 2:2, 4). Jesus was "anointed" with this power (Act.10:38). People were "baptized" in the Holy Spirit just as literally as they were baptized in water (Matt.3:11. Acts 1:5. 1 Cor 12:13). People filled with the Holy Spirit are said to "drink" of the Spirit (1 Cor.12:13). It is compared to the blowing wind (Jn.3:8).

All these characteristics of the Spirit reveal it as the Father's presence - His power and influence rather than an actual person or being. A person cannot be "poured out" or "clothe" another person. Can one person drink another person? Can a person be anointed (smeared) on another?

Can a man drink a flagon? No; he drinks the contents of the flagon. But because he is going to drink what the flagon contains, he says, by a figure of speech known as "metonymy;" I am going to drink a flagon. In like manner we speak of "boiling the jug" whereas what we really mean is that we are going to boil the water in the jug.

In like manner men cannot drink God in the sense of drinking Him as a person. Men can however drink what comes out of God, namely, His Holy Spirit, for it is energy and power. And when we come across Scriptures which speak about God being in us, we don't conclude that His actual person has entered us, anymore than we would conclude that the phrase "drink a flagon" means trying to slide a large glass vessel down the throat.

So then, the Holy Spirit is the power and influence of God. By means of the Holy Spirit the Father created everything and is everywhere present through it. It proceeds from the Father (Jn.15:26) just as light proceeds from the sun. By means of it He is in touch with the universe, and all His angels wherever they might be in the universe. Since the Holy Spirit is the Father's power, it is therefore considered just as much part of him as is His finger (Matt.12:28. Lk.11:20).

Jesus was begotten by the Holy Spirit (Matt.1:20). Since it is "the power of the highest," this therefore made Jesus the only begotten Son of THE FATHER. But, if the Holy Spirit is a person separate and distinct from the Father, then his begetting by the Holy Spirit would surely make Jesus the only begotten Son of the Holy Spirit. The fact that it didn't, proves that the Holy Spirit is what Scripture proclaims it to be - "the power of the highest."

Act.10:38 says "GOD anointed Jesus of Nazareth with the Holy Spirit." The Holy Spirit was not a separate person who anointed Jesus. No, it was God's power and that is why this Scripture says God did it. The Father anointed the Son with His own power.

NO PERSONAL NAME

The Father is clearly a person and His name is Yahweh. The Son is clearly a person and his name is Jesus. If the Spirit is a separate person from the Father and Son, what is its name? It would surely have a name if it is a person. But it has no name. No name is ever given to the Spirit in Scripture. The word "name" in Matt.28:19 does not mean that "Holy Spirit" is a name. This is how it reads: "... baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit." If this means that the "Holy Spirit" is a name, we would have to conclude that "Father" and "Son" are names also. "Father" and "Son" are not names but TITLES. The same applies to "Holy Spirit." It is a title. No name is ever given to the Holy Spirit because it is the energy-power of the Father by which He inseparably links Himself with His Son, the Church, angels and all of creation.

It is evident from the book of Acts which records the practise of baptism, that people were baptized into the name of Jesus (Act.2:38, 10:48, 19:5. Rom.6:3. Gal.3:27). Baptism into the name of Jesus Christ immediately links the believer with the Father and Son through the Holy Spirit. The Holy Spirit is the unifying power or influence which makes all parties one. Hence, the "name" of the Father, Son and Holy Spirit, into which believers are baptized is THE NAME OF JESUS. There is only ONE NAME given under heaven by which we can be saved - the name of Jesus Christ (Act.4:10-12). He is the only way. As he said himself: "I AM THE WAY, the truth and the life; NO MAN COMES TO THE FATHER EXCEPT BY ME" (Jn.14:6). The same applies to the infilling of the Holy Spirit. It is only through baptism into the name of Jesus that a person can be filled with the Holy Spirit (Acts 19:5-6).

If Matt.28:19 said "baptizing them in the NAME of the Father, in the NAME of the Son, and in the NAME of the Holy Spirit" or "in the names of the Father, son and Holy Spirit, we might have reason to suspect that the Holy Spirit was a person. But the verse does not read like that. It only contains the word "name" once, and it is in the singular number, and it is evident from the other records that the name into which New Testament believers were baptized was the name of Jesus. Baptism into this name

gave immediate access to the Father through the Holy Spirit. Evidence is available in Church history proving that baptism in the name of Jesus was practised for 300 years after Christ, and was changed by the Roman Catholic Church to accommodate the doctrine of the Trinity.

NEVER ADDRESSED IN PRAYER

There is not one prayer or song or exclamation addressed to the Holy Spirit in the Bible, neither is there one precept in all the Bible authorizing such prayer or song. Nowhere in Scripture are we told to love, honour, or worship the Holy Spirit, or to pray to it for assistance. Why, if it is a person, like the Father and His Son?

In the hymns of adoration recorded in Revelation, the Father and Son are mentioned but not the Holy Spirit. Why is reference to the Holy Spirit omitted if the Spirit is a third person of a triune God?

Rev.5:13 says: "Blessing, and honour, and glory, and power, be unto him (the Father) who sits upon the throne, and to the lamb (Jesus) forever and ever." Also Rev.7:10: "Salvation to our God who sits upon the throne, and to the lamb."

Why is there no reference to the Holy Spirit in these hymns of adoration if it is a co-equal member of the Godhead? Why is the Holy Spirit omitted?

The Bible frequently pictures the Father sitting upon His throne and Jesus sitting or standing at His right hand, but never refers to the Holy Spirit sitting on the throne with them, either on the left hand or elsewhere. If the Holy Spirit is a separate person from the Father and Son, why is there never any mention of him being enthroned or reigning with them?

The Father and Son are often associated together in judgement and redemption, and the coming kingdom is referred to as the kingdom of God and His Christ (Rev.11:15), but the Holy Spirit is omitted. Why?

In 1 Cor.11:3 we read: "But I would have you know, that the head of every man is Christ; and the head of the woman is the man; and the head of Christ is God." Now here is a specific order presented by the apostle Paul which he says he wants us to know about. He refers to woman, man, Christ and God, but makes no mention of the Holy Spirit. If the Holy Spirit is a person like the Father, Son, man and woman, and belongs to this "family" as a separate person, why is he left out?

NOT INCLUDED IN APOSTOLIC SALUTATIONS

In his greetings to the Churches, the apostle Paul never mentions the Holy Spirit. In his introduction to the Romans, he represents himself as an apostle of God the Father and Jesus Christ, but nothing is said about any third person.

He also neglects to mention the Holy Spirit in the greetings of the rest of his letters. His standard greeting is: "Grace be unto you, and peace, from God our Father, and from the Lord Jesus Christ" (1 Cor.1:3). The same greeting is repeated in 2 Cor.1:3. Gal.1:3. Eph.1:2. Plp.1:2. Col.1:2. 1 Thes.1:2. 2 Thes.1:2. 1 Tim.1:2. 2 Tim.1:2. Tit.1:4 and Philemon v3.

All of these greetings are without variation; the Holy Spirit is left out. The Father and Son are mentioned together repeatedly, but not the Spirit. Salutations and greetings never come from the Holy Spirit.

The opening words of letters written by other writers besides Paul also fail to mention the Holy Spirit (Jam.1:1. 2 Pet.1:2. 1 Jn.1:3. 2 Jn.:3. Jude v1). These all mention God and Jesus but not the Spirit. The Spirit is mentioned in 1 Pet.1:2 but not as a person.

One will notice also that the Spirit is not included in most of the doxologies and benedictions. One in which the Spirit is mentioned is in 2 Cor.13:14: "The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, and the love of God, and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit be with you all." But there is nothing in this which can be quoted as proof for the Holy Spirit being a separate person from the Father. Elsewhere, as we have seen, the Spirit is referred to as the Father's energy-force by which He keeps in contact with all things, and by which He holds all things together - especially the Church. His Spirit is the means by which we have fellowship and communion together. It is the binding power and influence.

The Spirit's relation to the Father is not that of one person to another person. The Spirit's relation to the Father is that of a power to a person. God's power is no more a person distinct from Himself than is His wisdom or love. Just because the Bible says: "God is love" we are not authorized to regard love as a separate personality distinct from the Father. Scripture often refers to the "wisdom of God" but again, no one would be justified in concluding that wisdom was a separate personality. Some Scriptures actually personify wisdom and treat it as a separate person, but this is typical of the Word of God which personifies many things, especially in poetical utterances.

The Father says "Thou" to the son and the son says "Thou" to the Father, but neither ever says "Thou" to the Spirit. The Father loves the son

and the son loves the Father, but neither is mentioned as loving the Holy Spirit. The Spirit is never denominated "the third" or "the third person" in Scripture.

In 1 Tim.6:13 Paul says to Timothy: "I give you charge in the sight of God ... and before Jesus Christ ..." But once again, the Holy Spirit is left out.

Being God's power, the working of the Spirit is the working of God and His Son, for this is the medium by which all Divine operations take place. When the Bible describes the Spirit as speaking (Rev.2:7), it refers to God speaking through His power. When the Spirit is described as making intercession (Rom.8:26-27), it refers to the intercession that Christ our High Priest makes for us through this power (Rom.8:34. Heb.7:25). Jesus is our ONLY intercessor; he is our one mediator. When Ananias lied to the Holy Spirit, he lied to God who was working through that holy power. When men "grieve" the Holy Spirit (Eph.4:30), they grieve God Himself whose power it is. To grieve or blaspheme against the Holy Spirit is just another way of saying the Father is grieved or blasphemed against.

If the Son and Holy Spirit are one and the same person, and are of equal status, how are we to understand Matt.12:31-32 which says a word spoken against the Son will be forgiven, but a word spoken against the Holy Spirit shall not be forgiven?

THE COMFORTER

The fourteenth, fifteenth and sixteenth chapters of John's gospel refer to the Spirit as "the Comforter," and the pronoun "he" is used in connection with the word. This has led many to believe that the Spirit is a person separate and distinct from the Father and Son. However, the reason for the use of the personal pronoun "he" is not necessarily for theological or spiritual reasons, but for a grammatical reason.

In the Greek language, like the Romance languages (Italian, Spanish, French, and others), every noun has what is called gender; i.e. it is either masculine, feminine or neuter. The gender of the word does not necessarily indicate whether it is really masculine or feminine - it is more of a grammatical tool.

All pronouns in Greek must agree in gender with the word they refer to, therefore the pronoun "he" is used when referring to the Greek word "parakletos" which is translated "comforter." Parakletos in the Greek is masculine in gender, therefore translators used masculine pronouns in connection with it. But this proves nothing as to personality, for the use of

masculine pronouns in Greek is no proof of personality. The Greek, unlike the English, uses masculine and feminine pronouns with reference to things and qualities as well as to persons. In Greek a field is masculine, a city is feminine, pain is feminine, a vine is feminine; but a vineyard is masculine, wind is masculine, silver is masculine; but a piece of silver money is neuter, a number is masculine, a shield is feminine etc, all through the lexicon of Greek nouns. It is absolutely no proof of personality that an object is masculine or feminine in Greek.

However, a neuter noun is never used in Greek to denote a person, except in the case of a diminutive, as a child, a demented person, or a person considered not as a person, but as an object. Therefore, since the word "Spirit" is always neuter in the Greek, it cannot be a person, and is always represented by the pronoun "it."

It is only in the gospel of John that the Spirit is referred to as parakletos - "Comforter." All other New Testament writers use the word "pneuma" which means "breath" or "spirit." Pneuma is a grammatically neuter word and is always represented by the pronoun "it."

However, the translators of the King James Version, being ardent Trinitarians and very much swayed by this doctrine, have generally mistranslated the pronouns referring to "pneuma" as masculine. One instance where they did not mistranslate is found in Rom.8:16: "The Spirit ITSELF beareth witness with our spirit, that we are the children of God." (Also v26. 1 Pet. 1:11).

Commenting on Jn.14:17, Professor J.H. Thayer of Harvard University said: "The pronouns in verse 17 are neuter in the best manuscripts." Professor Toy said: "The Alexandrine does not give the masculine." Professor Gardner of Chicago said: "The true antecedent of these pronouns in Jn.14:17, 16:13, 14 is to pneuma, and this is neuter of course, and a true grammatical rendering makes the pronouns neuter." Miles Grant states that the three oldest manuscripts of the New Testament; the Sinaitic, Alexandrine, and Vatican, use neuter pronouns instead of masculine in Jn.14. For this reason various versions and translations of the New Testament use neuter pronouns instead of masculine in Jn.14:16, 17, 26.

The Father's wisdom is personified and referred to as "she" and "her" throughout the book of Proverbs, but this does not mean that wisdom is a woman, separate and distinct from the Father. It does not mean that a woman forms part of the Godhead. So also the fact that the Comforter is referred to as "he" and "him" does not mean the Spirit is a person separate and distinct from the Father. It is, as in the case of wisdom, a

personification of a Divine attribute, namely, POWER.

If the simple gender of a noun were the basis for the personality of the Spirit, then the Spirit changed gender from the Old to the New Testament, for the Hebrew word for "spirit" in the Old Testament is in the feminine gender in a majority of cases, and in a masculine sense less often.

The fact that the word "Spirit" in the Greek is a neuter noun and should, to be grammatically correct, be represented by neuter pronouns such as "it;" I personally have no objection to using masculine pronouns such as "He," "Him" and "His," so long as I don't give the impression that I believe the Holy Spirit is a separate person from the Father and Son. After all, the Spirit is the Father's power and the Father is a person. Being the Father's energy-force, the Spirit is obviously impregnated with His personality and charged with His character. It is His presence - "God IS Spirit." You can't separate the Father from His Spirit. The two are "one" in the most intimate sense possible. Therefore, when the Spirit conveys instruction it is GOD speaking. When the Spirit performs wonders, it is GOD working. This being so, there cannot be any serious objection to referring to the Spirit as "Him" etc. It was possibly for this reason that a masculine noun such as "Comforter" was chosen by Jesus when referring to the Holy Spirit. Make no mistake about it: there is something very personal about the Holy Spirit - IT IS GOD.

ANOTHER THOUGHT

I will now run the risk of being accused of contradicting myself by saying that there is a certain sense in which the "Comforter" may refer to a specific person - someone separate from the Father and Son, but quite subordinate to them, namely: a specially delegated angel. It has already been pointed out in this thesis that angels are vehicles or channels of God's power. Through them, the Father ministers to His people. And, as we have seen, angels differ in rank. Some angels occupy very high rank. The special angel who was commissioned by the Father to accompany Israel out of Egypt and lead them into the promised land was a very high-ranking being. He was invested with the name of Yahweh and acted on His behalf. The Father's authority was delegated to this angel and the Holy Spirit was manifested through him towards Israel.

So then, a special angel was commissioned to watch over, and protect the Old Testament Church. Although it is never stated, this angel really functioned as a "comforter." His continual presence was a source of

comfort to the people. They were greatly encouraged in the knowledge that he was with them, guiding their affairs and giving them instruction from day to day through Moses. What this angel meant to the people can be seen from Moses' reaction when he thought the angel was going to stop accompanying them (Ex.33).

Is it possible that when Jesus promised the Church a "Comforter," that he had in mind a special high-ranking angel who would be commissioned (with thousands of angels under him) to stand by the Church and uphold and protect it as Jesus himself had done whilst on earth? Such angels, being "ministering spirits" would be an effective channel through which the Spirit could be ministered to each member of the body of Christ.

A number of things mentioned in Scripture give rise to such thoughts. For instance, In Jn.16:13 Jesus said that the Comforter will "SHOW YOU THINGS THAT ARE TO COME." Now, the greatest showing of things to come was the Revelation given to the apostle John. Rev.1:1 reads like this: "The Revelation of Jesus Christ, which God gave unto him, TO SHOW to his servants THE THINGS WHICH MUST SHORTLY COME TO PASS." Now the question is: How did Jesus "show" these things? Jn.16:13 says he would show them through THE COMFORTER, the "SPIRIT OF TRUTH." Rev.1:1 says "he sent and signified it BY HIS ANGEL." From this it seems reasonable to conclude that the "Comforter" is an "angel" or angelic ministration.

Throughout the book of Revelation, the angel is the Lord's spokesman, and he is constantly referred to as "the Spirit:" "He that hath an ear, let him hear what THE SPIRIT says to the Churches" (Rev.2:7, 11, 17, 29. 3:6, 13, 22). This angel was clearly involved and concerned with the Church. He represents and speaks on behalf of Jesus (Jn. 16:14). He actually speaks to John as if he is Jesus himself: "I am Alpha and Omega, the beginning and the ending, says the Lord ..." (Rev.1:8).

Angelic supervision over the New Testament Church as in the case of the Old Testament Church, is very apparent in the book of Acts. Angelic ministration and assistance was constantly given to the body of Christ. In Acts 5:19 the angel opened the prison doors after the apostles had been imprisoned by the high priest. Similarly after Herod had imprisoned Peter, we find the Angel of the Lord released his bonds (Acts 12:7-11). An angel instructed Philip to go and meet the Ethiopian eunuch (Acts 8:26). An angel assured Paul that God had given him the lives of all on the storm-tossed vessel (Acts 27:23).

Now the interesting thing about the angelic activity recorded in the

book of Acts, is that references to an angel are often coupled with references to the "Spirit." This leaves us with the distinct impression that the "angel" and "Spirit" are synonymous, i.e. they refer to one and the same. Here are some examples:

In Acts 8:26 we are told that "THE ANGEL" of the Lord spoke to Philip and told him to go to a certain place. The reason for this was because there was a certain man the angel wanted Philip to meet. When Philip came across the man, v.29 says: "Then THE SPIRIT said to Philip, Go near and join yourself ..." Then, when Philip's mission was completed, we read that "THE SPIRIT of the Lord caught away Philip."

In Acts 10:3, 7 reference is made to an ANGEL telling Cornelius to send for Peter. But Peter's mind had to be prepared for what lay ahead, so a vision was given to him. When the visitors finally arrived, v.19 says: "THE SPIRIT said to him, three men seek thee, arise ..." Also see Acts 11:12-13: "THE SPIRIT" occurs in v.12 and "angel" in v.13.

Knowing that the angels are God's ministers who minister on behalf of the heirs of salvation, it is not difficult to see them in the various references to "THE SPIRIT" in the book of Acts. They are clearly concerned about our salvation and are used by God as vehicles of His power to that end.

Hence, although Scripture never refers to the Holy Spirit as a co-equal part of the Godhead connected with the throne, it does speak about "SEVEN SPIRITS which are BEFORE THE THRONE" (Rev.1:4). Now this passage is very interesting, because instead of referring to Father, Son and Holy Spirit sitting on the throne, it refers to the Father and Son being on the throne and seven spirits before the throne. The "seven spirits" refers to angels of course, who are, as we have seen, "ministering spirits." Each angel, being a spirit (1 Kng. 22:21) and "holy" (Act. 10:22), is a holy spirit!

The fact that the seven spirits are "BEFORE the throne" confirms that they are angels - the seven archangels referred to elsewhere in the book of Revelation. The word "before" means "in the presence of" - "in front of." This is the position of the angels in relation to the throne. If the "seven spirits" referred to the Holy Spirit in the sense of a person, co-equal with the Father, why is He not seated on the throne with the Father and Son, and why is He referred to as "seven?" Being stationed "before" the throne is clearly an inferior position to being on the throne.

So then, instead of Rev.1:4-5 referring to Father, Son and Holy Spirit; it refers to Father, Son and angels. This immediately suggests an inseparable link between the Holy Spirit and angels. Once we understand

that the Holy Spirit is the power of God of which the angels are vehicles or carriers, the link between angels and the Holy Spirit becomes apparent. The angels are the Holy Spirit (God) in manifestation.

This three-fold division of God, Jesus and angels comes out again in 1 Tim.5:21: "I charge thee before GOD, and the Lord JESUS Christ, and the elect ANGELS ..." So there it is: God, Jesus, angels, but no reference to the Holy Spirit. There is no need; reference to the "angels" embraces the Holy Spirit.

Sometimes it is believed among Trinitarians that the benediction from Father, Son and Holy Spirit in 2 Cor. 13:14 proves equality. If so, what are we to make of Rev. 1:4-5 which speaks of the benediction of "grace and peace" coming, not only from the Father and Son, but also from the "seven spirits" (angels)? Are the angels equal with the Father?

The suggested link between the Holy Spirit and an angel should not be too difficult for a Trinitarian to receive in view of the fact that the "angel of the Lord" in the Old Testament is commonly regarded as being Jesus. If one member of the Godhead can be an angel, why not the other?

DOES IT REALLY MATTER?

Does it really matter whether we believe in the Trinity or not? It might be felt that the important thing is to believe that there is a Father, Son and Holy Spirit; and that it is of little consequence whether we believe they are separate persons or not, or whether they are co-equal or not.

Unfortunately, the Trinitarian view has some serious implications. The most serious is that it virtually makes the Father redundant. If the Holy Spirit is the source of all creative power and energy, and is responsible for all signs, miracles and healings etc; and the son is Saviour and Redeemer, what does the Father do? He is virtually ruled out as being unnecessary. He becomes a "sleeping partner."

The concept of the Trinity practically eliminates the Father. It fails to give proper place to His exclusive status. The effect of this is seen in the lack of emphasis on the Father in some Churches. Traditional theology is not very Father oriented. We hear a lot about the Holy Spirit and Jesus, but not so much about the Father.

The Father is "the number one power." He is the supreme fountain and source of all power and energy throughout the universe. Around Him the wheels of the universe turn. "For from Him, and through Him, and to Him, are all things: to whom be glory forever. Amen" (Rom.11:36). He is

"the blessed and only Potentate ... Who only has immortality, dwelling in the light which no man can approach unto; whom no man has seen, nor can see: to whom be honour and power everlasting. Amen" (1 Tim.6). He is the central figure on the throne. He is "ABOVE ALL:" "One God and Father of all, who is above all, and through all, and in you all" (Eph.4:6). In Him all live and move and have their being. It is He who issues the challenge: "To whom then will you liken me, or set up as my equal?" (Isa.40:25).

Jesus, throughout his ministry constantly acknowledged the greatness of his Father and freely acknowledged his dependence upon Him. His whole mission was to glorify the Father. It was only because the Father sent him that Jesus came in the first place. Jesus said: "I came not of myself, but He sent me." "For GOD so loved the world that HE gave His only begotten Son ..." The Father was the one who took the initiative and planned the whole scheme of redemption. And it was the Father who released the Holy Spirit Comforter: "...THE FATHER shall give you another Comforter ..." (Jn.14:16). All is of the Father. Had he not planned or permitted it, the whole world would never have seen His Son or the Holy Spirit. The Father's will is the controlling factor in the whole universe. Thus, Jesus said: "I came not to do my own will but His who sent me."

When the millennial reign of Christ is over, and all things on the earth are subdued to Jesus, then "shall the Son BE SUBJECT to Him (the Father) who put all things under him, that God may be all and in all" (1 Cor.15:28). From start to finish, the Son is subject and inferior to the Father. He went out of his way during his ministry to stress that the Father was greater. In view of this, it is doubtful that he looks upon the doctrine of the Trinity with favour, for it has raised him to a position of equality with his Father which he so vehemently denied.

The Church today needs to give the Father His proper place. Like the Scriptures, the Church needs to become more Father oriented. It is virtually impossible to do this while holding to the doctrine of the Trinity. If this thesis contributes towards restoring some sort of balance in this area, then at least one good thing will have been achieved.

* * * * *

CHAPTER EIGHT. "I SAID YOU ARE GODS"

In a previous chapter, attention was drawn to the fact that the Hebrew word "elohim," translated "God," is frequently applied to angels. It is generally plural in form and refers to God in family relationship. Because the angels are "sons of God" and vehicles of His power, manifesting the Father in their ministrations; they are therefore given the Divine title "God" (elohim). But just because the Divine title is conferred upon them, this does not mean that they are equal with God, and it is important to keep this in mind.

In this chapter we shall move on a stage further in our development of this subject by pointing out that not only is "elohim" applied to angels in Scripture, **BUT ALSO TO MEN**. We shall discover that the Divine title, translated "God" in most English Bibles, is sometimes used in relation to mortal men. When used in this secondary sense, the word "God" signifies someone who is a **REPRESENTATIVE** of the one true supreme God.

The Racovian Catechism, section 3, chapter one, puts it like this: "The term God is employed in the Scriptures chiefly in two senses. The former of these is when it designates Him who so rules and presides over all things in heaven and on earth, that He acknowledges no superior ... in this sense the Scriptures assert that God is one. The latter sense is when it denotes a Being who has received from that one God some kind of superior authority either in heaven or on earth among men, or power superior to all things human, or authority to sit in judgement upon other men, and is thus rendered in some sense a partaker of the Deity of the one God."

Hence, "elohim" has been translated "judge" and "judges" in relation to certain human beings. Those in Israel vested with the authority of administering God's laws were esteemed "elohim" - mighty ones - men authorised and empowered by El (God). They were God's representatives on earth among men - God's spokesmen. They were invested with Divine authority, and their task was to reveal God's law and judgements to the nation.

Deu.1:16-17 informs us that God charged the judges saying: "Hear the causes between your brethren, and judge righteously between every man and his brother, and the foreigner who is with him. You shall not respect persons in judgement; but you shall hear the small as well as the great; you shall not be afraid of the face of any man; **FOR THE JUDGEMENT IS GOD'S**" Again in 2 Chr. 19:4-6 we have the

commission given to the judges by the king: "And he said to the judges, Give due thought to your duties, **FOR YOU JUDGE NOT FOR MAN, BUT FOR THE LORD**, who is with you in judicial affairs."

Because these men judged on God's behalf and dispensed Divine decisions, they are called "elohim" in the Word of God. Israel was a theocracy - a nation governed by God through deputies, and because these rulers were God's representatives ruling over His kingdom on His behalf, they were invested with the Divine title. They were His name-bearers, invested with Divine power and authority to speak and act on God's behalf.

Take Moses for example, who was the great law-giver and greatest judge Israel ever had. In Ex.4:15-16 the Lord tells Moses that He will teach him what to say and do, and he in turn shall convey the message to his brother Aaron. "He shall be thy spokesman to the people; and he shall be, even he shall be to thee instead of a mouth, **AND THOU SHALT BE TO HIM GOD.**" (The A.V. says "instead of God" but there is only one word ("elohim") in the Hebrew text, and it should simply be translated "God").

From this we learn that Moses was God to Aaron. Moses was God to Aaron in the sense that God would speak through Moses to Aaron. As far as Aaron was concerned, to hear Moses' voice was to hear God speak.

Ex.7:1 is very similar: "And the Lord said to Moses, See, I have made thee God (elohim) to Pharaoh: and Aaron thy brother shall be thy prophet." As far as the Lord was concerned, Moses stood as God in relation to Pharaoh. For Pharaoh to hear Moses speak was to hear Divine declaration. To reject Moses was to reject God Himself.

Moses was clearly God's representative - his spokesman. Moses spoke in the Lord's name (Ex.5:23 etc). He was the Lord's name-bearer. Through Moses God manifested His power. Moses was a vehicle of El. Hence, when Moses performed a miracle, the magicians of Egypt had to confess: "This is the finger of God" (Ex.8:19). And Jesus appropriated the same expression in relation to the miracles he performed by the power of God for the same reason. (Lk.11:20). Jesus was the "prophet like unto Moses" promised in Deu.18:15. If therefore, Moses is called "God" because he was God's spokesman and representative, how much more Jesus is worthy of the title being the "son of God."

Jethro, Moses' father in law, said to him: "**BE THOU GOD** for thy people that you may bring the causes to God." (Ex.18:19). When Jethro told Moses to "be God," he clearly did not mean to claim equality with the Father and claim to be a part of the Godhead. The latter part of his

statement proves this: "... that you may bring the causes to God." Moses was simply God's representative, acting "in God's stead" and speaking "on God's behalf" as did Elihu in later times (Job.33:6. 36:2).

OTHER EXAMPLES

There are other examples of judges of Israel being called elohim. They are as follows:

Ex.21:6. Concerning the branding of one who wanted to accept life servitude with his master, we read: "Then the master shall bring him unto THE JUDGES." These words: "the judges," are "elohim" in Hebrew, and in this particular case refer to the Jewish judges. In other words, reading the text literally, the Jewish judges are "god" or "god's."

Again, in Ex.22:8 we read, "If a thief be not found, then the master of the house shall be brought to THE JUDGES" (i.e. "elohim"). Verse 28 says, "Thou shalt not revile THE GODS nor curse the ruler of thy people." The Hebrew word for "gods" is "elohim" and it refers again to the Jewish judges. (The "ruler" refers to the high priest Acts 23:5).

In 1 Sam.2:25 we read "If one man sin against another, THE JUDGE (elohim) shall judge him." Once again the reference is to the Jewish judicial system. In Sam. 28:13 reference to "a god" (R.S.V.) coming up out of the ground refers to Samuel's reappearance from the grave. Samuel was the greatest judge in Israel in his time and is fittingly referred to as "a god" (elohim).

It might also be pointed out in passing that David is referred to as being "as an angel of God" (elohim) In 1 Sam. 29:9. 2 Sam.14:17, 20. 19:27. As we have seen, angels are vehicles of God's power. They speak and act on His behalf. David, being king and judge in Israel, functioned in the same way. He is therefore said to be "as an angel of the Lord."

It should be evident from all of this that, although there is only "one God" in the sense of Supreme Deity - Father and Creator, there are many manifestations of God - other beings who represent Him and who are therefore called "god" or "gods."

The angels in heaven are called "God" and the Jewish judges and rulers on earth are called "god" also. There are therefore many "gods" in heaven and in earth but only one Supreme God who is "above all," namely, THE FATHER.

Thus, the apostle Paul writes: "For though there be that are called gods, whether in heaven or in earth (as there be gods many, and lords many), but to us there is but one God, the Father, out of whom are all

things, and we in Him; and one Lord Jesus Christ through whom are all things, and we by him" (1 Cor.8:5-6).

The "gods" in heaven are the angels of course, and the "gods" in earth are the Jewish judges. (Idols are also called "gods" and Paul may have had those in mind as well, not to mention various gentile rulers who styled themselves "gods").

Once again it is important to point out that although the Jewish judges were called "elohim," this did not mean that they were equal with the Father. Being invested with the Divine title did not make them co-equal with the Creator.

“THOU, BEING A MAN, MAKE YOURSELF GOD.”

Ps. 82 also refers to the Jewish judges as "gods" (elohim) and is particularly interesting, because Jesus quoted it during his ministry to defend himself against the charge made by his enemies that he claimed to be equal with God.

The Psalm reads like this: "God (elohim) stands in the congregation of the mighty; He judges among the gods (elohim). How long will you judge unjustly and favour the wicked?... I have said, You are gods (elohim), and all of you are sons of the most High. But you shall die like men and fall like one of the princes. Arise O God (elohim), judge the earth: for you shall inherit all nations."

The "elohim" in this Psalm who are referred to as judging unjustly and favouring the wicked are the Jewish rulers who had become corrupt. They constituted the "congregation of the mighty" - the "sons of the most high," i.e. sons of God, or "gods."

But in this Psalm reference is made to another "elohim" who "stands" in the congregation of the mighty. He takes a stand against the unrighteous rulers and severely rebukes and indicts them. He is referred to as "judge of the earth." He is the one who "shall inherit all nations." The reference is clearly to the Lord Jesus Christ. He is the true and righteous judge of Israel - the true Son of God. He is therefore "elohim" - "God." But this does not mean that he is equal with the Father as we shall see.

We now turn to the episode recorded in Jn.10:34-36 in which Jesus quoted Ps.82 in reply to the accusation that he claimed to be equal with God. During the time of Jesus' ministry, the Jewish leaders were "blind," "hypocritical," "full of extortion" and "iniquity" etc (Matt.23). Jesus called them "fools." They lacked discernment and could no longer judge justly or properly evaluate spiritual matters. This was particularly apparent in their

assessment of Jesus and their failure to properly interpret and understand his teaching. It was actually in connection with a dispute over his teaching concerning his relationship with his Father that Jesus quoted Ps.82. to them.

The Jews challenged Jesus saying: "If thou be the Christ, tell us plainly" (Jn.10:24). In answer, Jesus pointed to the miracles and works he had performed, saying: "These bear witness of me," and then he made a statement which the Jews completely misinterpreted and misunderstood and which is still very much misunderstood today.

Jesus said, "I and my Father are one." The Jews imagined he was claiming equality with the Father. They did not understand that Jesus was simply claiming to be UNITED with his Father in cause and purpose. He was simply claiming to be God's representative - God's Son. He was "one" in spirit with his Father; perfectly at one in mind, motivation, desire and objective. He was also "one" with the Father in the sense of being impregnated with the Father's "genes" through Divine begettal.

The Jews reacted to Jesus' statement "I and my Father are one" by accusing him of blasphemy. They said: "You, being a man, make yourself God."

Now, if that was what Jesus really was claiming - if he really was equal with the Father, "Very God of Very God," this was the time to say so. A more opportune time could not have presented itself. But what did he say? He certainly did not agree with, or confirm the statement made by the Jews. His answer to their accusation clearly shows that he denied equality with his Father and rejected all claim to being "God" in the sense that they tried to convey.

Jesus replied by saying: "Is it not written in your law, I said you are gods? If those to whom the Word of God was committed are called gods (and the Scriptures cannot be altered); then why do you charge me, whom the Father has sanctified and sent into the world, by saying, You blaspheme, because I said I am the Son of God?"

Notice very carefully the last statement in this defence of Jesus. He says: "Why do you charge me with blasphemy BECAUSE I SAID I AM THE SON OF GOD." This explains what Jesus meant when he said "I and my Father are one." HE WAS NOT CLAIMING TO BE GOD HIMSELF OR EQUAL WITH GOD. He was simply claiming to be THE SON OF GOD. This should have been obvious enough to the Jews in the statement "I and MY FATHER are one." In this statement Jesus refers to the God of Israel as "My Father." This clearly implies that Jesus was claiming to be THE SON of God, and not God Himself. And significantly enough, the

Jewish judges, referred to as "gods" in Ps.82:1, 6 are also called "sons of the most high" (God) in v6. Not that they were "sons of God" through Divine begetting like Jesus, but they were called sons of God nevertheless. This being so, the Jews were without ground for accusing Jesus of blasphemy for referring to himself as "son of God." Their own judges were called the same.

We now come to the real point of Jesus quoting Ps.82. Why, when Jesus was accused of claiming to be God, did he quote this Psalm in which Jewish judges are referred to as "gods" (elohim)? The answer should be obvious by now. Jesus' reply could be paraphrased something like this: "You have accused me of blasphemy because you have interpreted my statement to mean I claim to be God. This is not what I claimed at all. I simply claim to be the Son of God. However, even if I called myself God (elohim), you would still be in no position to charge me with blasphemy, because your own Scriptures (which cannot be altered) call the Jewish judges "gods" (elohim) because the Word of God was committed to them. If they can be called "elohim" without you concluding they were equal with God, then I can too. After all, I am Divinely appointed as judge; the Father has sanctified me and sent me to minister His Word, as is evident in the works and miracles that I perform. However, I have not called myself "God" but "the Son of God."

It is very significant that although Jesus as the great Judge of Israel was fully entitled to the Divine title "elohim," he never claimed it or called himself by it. He referred to himself as "son of God," "son of man," "son of David," but never "God." Why? Because he knew that the Jewish nation had become ignorant of the fact that Scripture called God's representatives "elohim," and if he started referring to himself as "God," they would immediately conclude that he was claiming to be the Father. Jesus clearly did not want the people to think he was the Father.

Had Jesus been "Very God of Very God" he would surely have said so. But he never made this claim. If he had, it would have been quickly thrown at him during the interrogation prior to his crucifixion when the Jewish authorities were frantically trying to find three consistent witnesses against him, in order to put him to death. By this time they seem to have been satisfied that at least he didn't claim to be God.

While Jesus was on the cross they said: "He trusted in God; let Him deliver him now if He wants him: for he said, I AM THE SON OF GOD" (Matt.27:43). Surely they would have said: "For he said, I AM GOD" if that is what he had been claiming. Again in v54 we read that the centurion and those that were with him said: "Truly this was THE SON

OF GOD." All references to Jesus being "God" come from outside himself, and do not mean that he was equal with the Father.

One final observation from Jn.10:34-36 and Ps.82. The Divine title "elohim," as applied to the Jewish judges is clearly used in the SECONDARY SENSE. It relates to those who have received authority from the one Supreme God - those who are His representatives. THE FACT THAT JESUS CHOSE A SCRIPTURE IN WHICH ELOHIM IS USED IN A SECONDARY SENSE, TO DEFEND HIMSELF AGAINST THE CHARGE THAT HE CLAIMED TO BE GOD IN THE FIRST SENSE, PROVES THAT HE DID NOT WANT PEOPLE TO REGARD HIM AS GOD IN THE FIRST SENSE BUT IN THE SECONDARY SENSE.

If it be insisted that Jesus is equal with God because the Divine title is given to him, then we are forced to conclude that Jewish judges, angels and even idols are equal with God, because the identical title is given to them.

THY THRONE O GOD

In the previous section we have seen that God addressed His representatives - the Jewish judges as "elohim." He called them "gods" saying: "I said, you are gods."

Now if the Father addressed the unrighteous judges of Israel by the Divine title "elohim," it is not surprising to find that He addressed His own Son by the same title. After all, Jesus is a righteous judge and has been appointed to "judge the world in righteousness." God the Father therefore addresses His Son as "elohim" in Ps.45:6-7: "But unto the Son He says, Thy throne, O God (elohim), is for ever and ever: the sceptre of your kingdom is a right sceptre. You have loved righteousness, and hated wickedness: therefore God (elohim), even your God (elohim), has anointed you with the oil of gladness above your fellows." (Also see Heb.1:8-9 where this Psalm is quoted).

There is an interesting contrast between this Psalm and Ps.82. In Ps.82 the rulers of Israel are addressed as "elohim" because they were commissioned to be the Father's representatives. But they failed in their mission and became corrupt. As a result they were deposed and stripped of their authority. Jesus however "loved righteousness and hated wickedness." He is a righteous judge, and therefore true "elohim" and the Father addresses him as such. He is a true representative of the Father and a perfect manifestation, and therefore qualified to reign as king. The

Father therefore gives him a throne saying: "Thy throne O God, is for ever and ever..."

The "throne" that the Father promised Jesus is the throne of David at Jerusalem (Lk.1:32). At the moment Jesus is seated on his Father's throne in heaven (Rev.3:21). But he will only remain at his Father's right hand "UNTIL I make your enemies your footstool" (Ps.110). That is, Jesus will only stay on his Father's throne until the time comes for him to return to Jerusalem to set up the throne of David, upon which he will reign as king over the earth for 1000 years. Thus we read this in Matt.25:31: "When the Son of man COMES in his glory, and all the holy angels with him, THEN shall he sit upon the throne of his glory." It is clear from this that Jesus will not sit upon the throne promised to him until he returns to earth. The saints will then reign with him.

It is important to realise that the throne promised Jesus was not the Father's throne in heaven. Ps.110 is very explicit. In this Psalm the Father tells the Son to sit at His right hand "UNTIL." This word defines a limit to being seated on the Father's throne in heaven. It is a temporary or transitional arrangement, until the time is right to set up David's throne in Jerusalem.

In passing, it should also be pointed out that the very position of Jesus AT THE RIGHT HAND of his Father, not only teaches that they are separate persons, but also teaches the Father's superiority over the Son. It is clearly the Father's throne in heaven. This is evident from the fact that the Father invites the Son to sit next to him. If the Son pre-existed from all eternity and shared that throne as a co-equal, he would not require an invitation to sit upon it. He would have equal right to it and would be entitled to sit upon it without being asked.

We read in Mk.10:37 that James and John wanted to sit on the left and right hand of Jesus in glory. Does this mean they were seeking equality with Jesus? By no means. They knew that was impossible. They simply wanted to be next in authority to Jesus. And this precisely is Jesus' position being at the right hand of his Father.

Jesus' reply to James and John is interesting. He told them that he did not have the right or authority to give such positions to men. He clearly implied that it was his Father's prerogative to do this. Rather a strange thing for Jesus to say if he was one and the same person as his Father and had equal power and authority.

It should be clear then, that Jesus is not made equal with his Father just because his Father addresses him as "elohim." Addressing him by this title certainly indicates that the Father has "highly exalted" His Son, but

not placed him on an equal footing with Himself.

Actually, a careful reading of the phrase: "Therefore God, EVEN YOUR GOD" reveals that the word "God" is applied to Jesus in a secondary sense. In this phrase the one true Supreme God is described as the Son's God - "EVEN YOUR GOD" (Heb.1:9). The Father confers the title "God" upon his Son, but makes it clear that He Himself remains His Son's God. Attention has already been drawn to the fact that Jesus frequently acknowledged that the Father was his God. He said: "My God, My God..." But there is not one single occasion recorded in Scripture in which the Father says to the Son: "My God..."

As in the case of the Jewish rulers, the Father calls His Son "elohim" to establish him as ruler and judge BEFORE MEN - to indicate that he is His representative. The title "elohim" was not given to make men think the son was equal with his Father.

The phrase: "Therefore God, even thy God," is followed with these words: "... has anointed you with the oil of gladness above your fellows." This again establishes the Father's superiority over the Son. The Father is the anointer. The Son is the anointed. This spells out DELEGATED AUTHORITY. The Son only became "God" because the Father appointed and anointed him as such.

MY LORD AND MY GOD

During New Testament times it was common for men to acclaim a man as God if he achieved something that was generally regarded as only being possible for God to achieve. For instance, when Herod gave an elaborate speech "the people gave a shout, saying, it is the voice of a god, and not of a man" (Acts 12:22). When Paul and Barnabas healed a cripple, the people "lifted up their voices, saying, The gods are come down to us in the likeness of men" (Acts 14:11). When Paul shook a deadly snake off his hand without any ill effects, the people said that he was a god (Acts 28:6).

These miracles were nothing compared to a dead body coming back to life again after being in a tomb for three days and nights. It is no wonder therefore, that when Jesus was resurrected and appeared to Thomas; Thomas exclaimed: "My Lord and my God" (Jn. 20:28). If men thought a man was a god because he could heal a cripple or survive the bite of a deadly snake, then we would quite expect them to exclaim: "My Lord and my God" to one who rose from the dead.

If Thomas thought Jesus was the Father himself, the one Supreme

Deity, then he was mistaken. However, it is most unlikely that his exclamation meant that. He had been instructed by Jesus over a three and a half year period, and knew that "God" was a title that could be conferred upon men who were God's representatives and vehicles of His power. The resurrection established Jesus' sinlessness and his claims to Divine Sonship. He was vindicated as the true judge and ruler of Israel - "Lord" and "God."

HE SHALL BE CALLED: THE MIGHTY GOD

Jesus is not merely "God," but "mighty God" as we read in Isa.9:6: "For unto us a child is born, unto us a son is given: and the government shall be upon his shoulder: and his name shall be called Wonderful, Counsellor, The mighty God, the everlasting Father, the Prince of Peace."

However, reference to Jesus as "mighty God" still does not make him equal with his Father. If the title "mighty God" meant equality, we would have to conclude that the angel Gabriel was also equal, because "mighty God" in Hebrew is "el Gibbor," from which "Gabriel" is derived. "GIBBOR" means "powerful," "warrior," "champion," "chief," "mighty," "strong," "valiant." And "EL" means "power," "might," "strength." Hence, "el Gibbor" means "mighty warrior" or "powerful champion" or "strong chief." It has a militant tone about it and relates to warfare. The New English Bible renders it as "in battle God-like." The title, as applied to Jesus, refers to him as a champion among champions. The "chief" among men - "captain of our salvation."

It is important to note that Isa.9:6 says the son's name "SHALL BE called... mighty God." It does not say his name "IS called..." It does not speak in the present tense as if it was already an established fact. Yet, if Jesus pre-existed as "mighty God," one would expect the statement to say his name "IS called..." instead of "SHALL BE..." The whole passage is a PROPHECY. It refers to things yet to take place and is therefore spoken in the future tense. The "Son" promised in the prophecy was destined to become "mighty God." He would not become such until after he was born. There is no suggestion in the passage that he already existed as mighty God when the prophecy was given.

TO WHOM WILL YE MAKE ME EQUAL?

The word "equal" is only used four times in Scripture in relation to the subject in hand. There are two references in the Old Testament and two in the New Testament. The two in the Old Testament are in Isa.40:25 and 46:5 where God issues this challenge: "To whom will ye liken me, and make me equal, and compare me, that we may be alike?" (Notice the emphasis on the singular pronoun "me," stressing the fact that the One Supreme Deity is speaking).

It can be inferred from these challenging statements that it is important to the Father to be recognised, known and accepted as the Number One Power of the universe, and that it is a serious matter to place someone else on an equal footing with Him. I believe that this is why Jesus went to such great lengths to disclaim equality with Him. If this is so, it is unlikely that the Father and son are very sympathetic towards the doctrine of the Trinity, which makes the two one and the same person and puts them on an equal footing with each other. I only say this because of the various statements made in Trinitarian literature that acceptance of the doctrine of the Trinity is vital for salvation, and that those who reject it are damned. If this judgement happens to be wrong, it could lead to very serious consequences for those who exercise it. All of us will be judged according to how we judge others.

Those who reject and condemn those who do not adhere to the doctrine of the Trinity, run the risk of being rejected by the Lord if they happen to be wrong. We all do well to heed the exhortation of Jesus: "Judge not that you be not judged."

The two New Testament passages of Scripture in which the word "equal" occurs are Jn.5:18 and Phl.2:6.

In Jn.5:18 we read that the Jews concluded that Jesus made himself equal with God because he said God was his Father. Once again, as usual, the Jews reached a wrong conclusion and completely failed to understand the simple truth that Jesus was teaching. They "erred," not knowing the Scriptures," and Jesus warned his disciples to "beware of their doctrine."

JESUS NEVER CLAIMED EQUALITY

Jesus never claimed equality with his Father. Not one verse can be quoted in which he did. If he was equal, then he had a golden opportunity to say so when the Jews accused him of it. But instead, he disclaimed it and affirmed the opposite: "Then answered Jesus and said to

them, verily, verily I say unto you, THE SON CAN DO NOTHING BY HIMSELF BUT WHAT HE SEES THE FATHER DO..." (Jn.5:19). Instead of claiming equality he denied it, and confessed his utter dependence upon his Father. But never in Scripture do we read of the Father saying: "The Father can do nothing by Himself, but what he sees the Son do." No, quite the opposite! He says: "To whom will you liken me and make me equal, and compare me that we may be like? I am God and there is none else. There is no God beside me. Before me was no God formed neither shall there be after me."

Contrast this language of the Father with that of the Son when he says: "My Father is greater than I" (Jn.14:28). How the Jews could ever have believed that Jesus claimed equality in the light of such statements is hard to understand. The position that Jesus took is beautifully summarised in Plp.2:8: "He humbled himself." Jn.8:50 in the Living Bible is worth quoting: "I have no wish to make myself great, God wants this for me."

Consider also some other statements made by Jesus: "I can by my own self do nothing" (Jn.5:30). "Why call me good, there is none good but one, that is God" (Mk.10:18). "To sit at my right hand and on my left is not mine to give" (Mk.10:40). "But of that day and that hour knoweth no man, no, not the angels in heaven, neither the Son, but only the Father" (Mk.13:32). "I honour my Father and seek not my own glory" (Jn.8:49-50). "Whosoever speaks a word against the Son of man, it shall be forgiven him, but whoever speaks against the Holy Spirit, it shall not be forgiven" (Matt.12:32). "My doctrine is not mine, but his that sent me" (Jn.7:16). "I came, not to do my own will, but the will of him who sent me" (Jn.6:38).

Constantly we read of Jesus being the Father's "servant" (Isa.42:1, 6. Zec.3:8 etc). Jesus was totally dependant upon, and subordinate to his Father and he clearly affirmed this on many different occasions during his ministry. We read about him praying to his Father, seeking help, strength and wisdom, as well as thanking and praising Him. Never do we read of the Father saying He was dependant upon, and subordinate to the Son. Never do we read of the Father praying to the Son for help and strength.

Throughout his whole ministry, Jesus was in total subjection to his Father and freely acknowledged his own inferior position before Him. It was plain nonsense - sheer folly and ignorance on the part of the Jews to accuse Jesus of making himself equal with God simply because he said He was his Father.

JESUS DENIED OMNISCIENCE

Most Trinitarian expositions present a number of Scriptures which are regarded as teaching the omniscience of Christ. On this basis it is said that Jesus was equal with the Father. The Scriptures usually chosen are the ones in which Jesus is referred to as knowing the thoughts of men. But this gift was not an underived possession. It was a gift or ability received by Jesus from the Father, when he received the Holy Spirit without measure for his ministry. Hence, on one occasion he freely confessed that he could only judge situations as a result of hearing a word from God: "I can by myself do nothing: AS I HEAR, I JUDGE..." (Jn.5:30). "The Son can do nothing of (out of) himself, BUT WHAT HE SEES THE FATHER DO..." (Jn.5:19). "My Father worketh hitherto and I work." "I say only what I am told to by the one who sent me" (Jn.8:26 Living Bible). "For these are not my own ideas, but I have told you what the Father said to tell you" (Jn.12:49 Living Bible).

"Discerning of spirits" and discerning men's thoughts is a gift of God through the Holy Spirit which Jesus naturally possessed as a result of receiving the Holy Spirit without measure. There are many examples in Scripture of other men of God possessing the same ability. Elisha discerned covetousness in the heart of his servant Gehazi etc, but the possession of such a gift did not make him omniscient or equal with God who had given him this gift.

There are a number of Scriptures which indicate Jesus was not omniscient. He "increased in wisdom" (Lk.2:52). If Jesus were God with infinite knowledge, how could he have increased in wisdom?

God's knowledge is underived and unacquired. His knowledge originates within Himself. "Who hath taught Him?" (Isa.40:13-14). Jesus was unable to do anything "out of" himself (Jn.5:19). He received his knowledge from the Father: "My Father hath taught me" (Jn.8:28).

God's knowledge includes all things past, present, and future. He knows all things. Jesus, on the other hand, was limited in knowledge, and he freely acknowledged it. He did not know the date of his second coming: "But of that day and that hour knoweth no man, no, not the angels in heaven, NEITHER THE SON, BUT ONLY THE FATHER" (Mk.13:32). Here, Jesus plainly declares that the Father knew something of which he was ignorant himself. Had Jesus been omniscient, he would have known the date of his return.

When the epileptic was brought to Jesus, he asked his Father: "How long is it ago since this came unto him?" (Mk.9:21). Jesus didn't know.

The Holy Spirit had withheld that piece of information so Jesus had to make his own enquiries. (Compare Elisha's experience recorded in 2 Kng. 4:27: "The Lord hath hid it from me, and has not told me").

Had Jesus been "Very God of Very God" and wanted people to believe he was omniscient, it is most unlikely that he would ask such questions as: "How long is it ago since this came unto him?" Asking such simple basic questions is not exactly the right way to go about establishing omniscience. Had Jesus wanted to establish omniscience he would have said something like: "This child has been like this from birth but I can still heal him."

Some may concede that Jesus was not omniscient during his earthly ministry but insist that since he has gone to heaven he has become omniscient. However, it is evident from Scripture that such is not the case at all. Since his ascension to heaven, Jesus still depends on his Father for revelation and knowledge. He only knows what his Father tells him. In Acts 1:6 we are told that Jesus would not answer a question in relation to the time when the kingdom will be established. He said, regarding the times and seasons of this event: "The Father has set them within His own control." The Kingdom that he was talking about will not be set up until his second coming, and, as we saw earlier; Jesus did not know the date of that event. So it is not surprising that he did not specify the time of the restoration of the kingdom. The Father had retained this knowledge in His power.

In Rev. 1:1 we are told that God gave Jesus the Revelation. Now, "revelation" means "disclosure of knowledge hitherto unknown" - "enlightenment on unknown facts." This revelation was given by the Father to the Son over 50 years after his ascension to heaven. Jesus was clearly, even at that stage, not omniscient. He was clearly not "Very God of Very God". If he was, he would be equal with his Father in all areas. He would be omniscient. The fact that he needed and received revelation from the Father proves conclusively that he was not.

Jesus then, only knows what the Father reveals to him. This was his position when he ministered on earth and this position has not changed since he ascended to heaven. Contrast the Father's position as outlined in Isa.40:13-14: "Who has directed the Spirit of the Lord, or being His counsellor hath taught Him? With whom did He consult for His enlightenment, and taught Him in the path of judgement, and taught Him knowledge, and revealed to Him the way of understanding?"

HIGHLY EXALTED BUT NOT EQUAL

There is no question or doubt about the high station of our Lord Jesus Christ. The Father has highly exalted His Son and has given him a name above every other name. Even the angels are made subject to him. However, although the Father has exalted His Son to His own right hand in heaven, Scripture is quite adamant that he is not equal with his Father. Writing some time after Jesus had ascended to heaven, the apostle Paul said: "The head of every man is Christ, and the head of woman is man, **AND THE HEAD OF CHRIST IS GOD**" (1 Cor.11:3).

Now, we have no difficulty in understanding what is meant by Christ being the "HEAD" of man. It means he is superior in rank. It most certainly does not mean "equal." Why then, can it not be seen that exactly the same applies to God being the "HEAD" of Christ? The Father is superior in rank in relation to His Son. They are not equal. The father is, as we read in Eph.4:6, "ABOVE ALL," and the "ALL" includes the Lord Jesus who is referred to in the fifth verse as "Lord."

1 Cor.3:23 says: "You are Christ's, and Christ is God's. This is just another way of saying Christ is the head of the Church and God is the head of Christ.

This Divine order or gradation of rank from man to Jesus to God is well illustrated in 1 Tim.2:5: "There is one God and one mediator between God and men, the man Christ Jesus." Jesus is clearly an in-between man - a third party, as separate and distinct from the Father as he is from each man. Jesus could not be a mediator if he were one and the same as one of the parties between which he was supposed to be mediating. Scripture points out that "a mediator is not a mediator of one" (Gal.3:20). But if Jesus and his Father are one and the same person, then Jesus becomes the mediator of only one party. In other words: he becomes a mediator between himself and the world which is ridiculous, because a mediator never does his own mediating. A mediator must be a third party.

Even at the end of the millennium, when all things have been subjected to Jesus in the earth, Jesus himself will still be SUBJECT to his Father who put all things under him (1 Cor.15:28). The word "SUBJECT" means "subordinate" - "to be under obedience." It is the same word used in Eph.5:24 in relation to the Church being subject to Christ: "Therefore as the Church is SUBJECT unto Christ..." Jesus is subject to his Father in the same sense as the Church is subject to Christ.

So then, as far as Scripture is concerned, Jesus was not equal with God during his earthly ministry; he is not equal during his ministry in

heaven, and will not be equal during or after his millennial reign. Throughout eternity, God is the head of Christ and Christ is subject to God.

THOUGHT IT NOT ROBBERY TO BE EQUAL

The fourth and final reference to the word "equal" is in Plp.2:6. The Authorised Version translation of this verse is a glaring example of Trinitarian bias and is very misleading. It reads like this: "Who, being in the form of God, thought it not robbery to be equal with God." As it stands, it appears to teach that Jesus regarded equality with God to be a legitimate claim. However, this translation of the King James Bible lacks support and confirmation from other reliable translations and Greek lexicons. But, quite apart from this, Scripture's repeated emphasis on the Son's subordinate position before his Father should, by itself, make us very suspicious of this translation of Plp.2:6.

Instead of teaching equality between the Father and Son, it actually teaches the opposite. The Revised Standard Version renders it like this: "Who, though he was in the form of God, did not count equality a thing to be grasped." In other words, although Jesus was the very Son of God, born through Divine conception and impregnated with the very "genes" of God, causing him to be the very image (form) of God; he never grasped at equality with God. He humbled himself and assumed the role of a servant. His high station and unique position did not "go to his head." He did not become haughty and full of pride, but humbled himself and conducted himself as a servant. For this very reason God "highly exalted him..."

A contrast can be seen between Jesus the "second Adam" and the "first Adam." The first Adam was made "in the form of God" - in His image and after His likeness. But he failed to remain humble and obedient. He reached for the forbidden fruit and grasped at equality with God. Therefore he was not highly exalted but abased. Instead of being exalted to the right hand of God, he was cast out of paradise. Jesus humbled himself and did not grasp at equality and was therefore exalted.

There is not therefore, one verse in Scripture which teaches equality between the Father and Son. The Jews accused Jesus of claiming equality, but as usual, they completely misinterpreted his teaching. And the tragedy is that Christendom has, to a large degree; built up a theology on the basis of that false interpretation, with this difference: the Jews were ready to stone Jesus to death because they wrongly construed his teaching to mean he was God; whereas Christendom has put to death those who refuse to

acknowledge him as "Very God."

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CHAPTER NINE "THE EVERLASTING FATHER"

Jesus said: "He who has seen me has seen the Father" (Jn.14:9). This statement is often interpreted to mean that Jesus and the Father are one and the same person. And Isa.9:6 is frequently quoted to support this: "And his name shall be called ... the everlasting Father."

Now, it cannot be denied that Jesus is referred to as "father" in Isa. 9:6, but are we expected to conclude from this that he is the Supreme Eternal Father who alone has immortality and who no man has ever seen? If, when Jesus said: "He who sees me sees the Father," he meant that he was the Father Himself, how can we reconcile other statements made by him that no man has ever seen the Father : "Ye have neither heard His voice at any time, nor seen His shape" (Jn.5:37. 6:46).

Another point that must also be considered is this: If Jesus pre-existed as Father-God, he would have been alive and on heaven's throne when Isa.9:6 was written. Why, then, does the passage read in the future tense: "He **SHALL** be called ... the everlasting father?" These words "SHALL BE called" clearly imply that, in relation to Isaiah's time (8th century B.C.) the son was not "Father."

The passage is a prophecy, and as such it speaks of something to be accomplished in the future which was not an accomplished fact at the time. In other words, at the time the prophecy was given, the Godhead did not consist of a son who was called "Father." This was something to take place in the future.

The prophecy simply stated that the time was coming when a special child would be born and a son given whose name would be called, among other things, "the everlasting father." There is nothing in the prophecy - not a single hint to suggest that this special son was already alive when the prophecy was given, and that this son was the promised Messiah in a pre-existent state - that this son was, in fact, Father-God Himself. The prophecy simply taught that some time in the future the Father would provide a special son for the salvation of His people - a son who was so special that he would be called "Wonderful, Counsellor, the Mighty God, the Everlasting Father, the Prince of Peace."

The words "shall be" clearly imply that, in relation to the eighth century B.C. when the prophecy was given, the "everlasting" office of "Father" had not commenced, and would not commence until **AFTER THE CHILD WAS BORN**. "Everlasting Father" was an office that would be given to the Messiah sometime after his birth. This is what Isa.9:6

teaches. Nothing is said about this son having an everlasting existence prior to his birth. There is no mention of any form of existence before his birth.

In relation to Isaiah's time, Isa.9:6 is prophetic and not historical. Whenever the Old Testament prophets spoke about Father God Himself, who is FROM everlasting as well as TO everlasting, they referred to Him as Father in the present tense. For instance: "HAVE we not one Father? HATH not ONE GOD created us?" (Mal.2:10).

Jesus confirmed this when he referred to "creation which God created" (Mk.13:19). Had Jesus himself been Father-God, creator of creation, this was his opportunity to say so. He could have said "creation which I created" or "creation which WE created," but he didn't. He attributed creation entirely to the Father, and in so doing, confirmed Malachi's statement: "Have we not all one Father? Hath not one God created us?" The apostle Paul puts it like this: "To us there is but one God, the Father, out of whom are all things" (1 Cor.8:6).

Paul often made statements like this: "Blessed be God, even THE FATHER OF OUR LORD JESUS CHRIST" (2 Cor.1:3). But he never says that Jesus is Father-God. We never read anything like: "Blessed be Jesus, even the Father and God of God our Father." All the basic laws of logic and common sense cry out against the suggestion that a son is his own Father and a Father is His own son and that the two are one and the same person.

It is stressed in Heb.2:11 that Jesus and his brethren all have one and the same origin. The Amplified Bible puts it like this: "... all have one Father." It is because of this fact - because God is the Father of Jesus as well as our Father, that Jesus is not ashamed to call us "brethren." Hence, after his resurrection he said to his mother Mary: "... go to my BRETHREN and say to them, I ascend to MY FATHER, and YOUR FATHER; and to MY GOD and YOUR GOD" (Jn.20:17).

It is important to note that after Jesus said: "He who sees me sees the Father" (Jn.14:9), he followed up his statement by saying: "... my Father is greater than I" (v28). This reveals that Jesus was not claiming to be the Father Himself when he said: "He who sees me sees the Father."

This becomes particularly apparent when he said on another occasion: "Call no man your father upon earth, for ONE is your Father, who is in heaven" (Matt.23:9). The words of Jesus here are almost a verbatim quote from Mal.2:10: "Have we not ONE Father?"

"VARIOUS APPLICATIONS OF "FATHER"

If there is only one Father, how are we to understand the words "everlasting father" as applied to Jesus? A careful comparison of Scripture with Scripture soon reveals a simple solution. The title "Father" is often applied in a secondary spiritual sense to men appointed by God to lead, govern, direct or "father" His people. And, in each case where the title is applied, the men to whom it is applied are never confused with Father-God Himself.

In 1 Sam.24:9-11 David addressed King Saul as "my father." In actual fact, Saul was not really David's natural father at all; Jesse was. Saul was King of Israel. He was governor - shepherd - head of the nation. He was God's vice-regent. In this sense David addressed him as "father."

In 2 Kng.2:12 Elisha said to Elijah: "My father, my father." But Elijah was not Elisha's father in the natural sense. He was in a spiritual sense though. Elijah was the great prophet of the day. In his time he was the nation's spiritual leader and advisor. He was the representative - the voice of Father-God. He exercised a father-like ministry to the people, instructing and admonishing them in the Spirit. He organized a school of prophets who, in relation to himself, were called "sons." Elijah was therefore addressed as: "My father, my father."

In 2 Kng.6:21 the King of Israel referred to Elisha as "my father," for the same reason that Elijah had been called the same.

In Gen.45:8 we read about God making Joseph a father to Pharaoh. Joseph was Father-God's representative and prophet. As a father cares and provides for his own, so Joseph ministered and provided for Pharaoh and his people, saving them from the ravages of famine. Pharaoh looked to Joseph and put his trust in him as a child does to his father.

In Isa.22:21-25, Eliakim the son of Hilkiah is made "a father to the inhabitants of Jerusalem, and to the house of Judah." The reason for this is stated in the same verse. It is because the Lord will clothe and strengthen him, and commit the government into his hand. So, much in the same way that Saul was called "father" by David because the Lord had committed the government into his hand, so Eliakim is told that he will be made "a father" to the nation, because the government will be committed into his hand.

This immediately takes us back to our text in Isa.9:6: "For unto us a child is born, unto us a son is given: AND THE GOVERNMENT SHALL BE UPON HIS SHOULDER: and his name shall be called ... everlasting father..." As in the case of Saul and Eliakim, Jesus is called "father"

because the Lord commits the government to him. And, significantly enough, the prophecy in Isa.22:22 concerning Eliakim is quoted in Rev.3:7 and is applied to Jesus. Eliakim, whose name means "God is setting up," was clearly a type of the Lord Jesus Christ whom the Father will "set up" on the throne of David as king over the whole earth. In that day he will be a "father" to all nations, nurturing and succouring them, and delivering them from famine and every other evil scourge as did Joseph in his day.

The words penned by the apostle Paul in 1 Cor.4:14-15 should also be included in the subject of spiritual fatherhood: "I write not these things to shame you, but as my beloved SONS I warn you. For though you have 10,000 instructors in Christ, you do not have many FATHERS: for in Christ Jesus I have BEGOTTEN YOU ("become your father" R.S.V.). And in verse 17 he refers to Timothy as his "SON." (Also in Plp. 2:19-22. 1 Tim.1:2). Paul had converted and cared for him in a spiritual sense, and therefore referred to him as his "son." Spiritually speaking, Paul had "begotten him" and given birth to him, and was therefore his "father" in the faith.

Abraham is also referred to as our father in a spiritual sense: "...the father of all them that believe ... our father Abraham ... the father of us all" (Rom.4:11-12, 16).

In view of all these men being called "father," how much more entitled Jesus was to be called by the same title. He is the only begotten son of the Eternal Father Himself. Through his great atoning work he has begotten us all to a living hope. Therefore, talking about his atoning work, Isa.53:10 says: "When he shall make himself an offering for sin, he shall see his SEED" (offspring - children). Calvary was a travailing - a giving birth to "seed" or "children." After the birth pangs of Calvary, the prophecy says he will see the blessed results and be pleased. We owe our new birth to his labour. In this sense he is our "father" and we are his "children."

Even before Calvary, Jesus addressed his disciples as "little children" (Jn.13:33). And, in Heb.2:13 the spirit of Christ says: "Behold I and the CHILDREN which GOD HAS GIVEN ME." (This is actually quoted from Isa.8:18 where the prophet Isaiah and his two sons which God had given him, were a type of Jesus and his two sons - Jew and Gentile believers which God gave him).

So then, in penning Isa.9:6, the prophet's mind was projected forward to the ministry of Jesus and beyond, declaring that the child to be born would be called "everlasting father."

The word "everlasting" reveals that this special son whom God was going to give His people was going to be given an endless life. He was going to live forever. And in this respect, he stands apart from all spiritual fathers before and after Isaiah's time. They were all mortal and died because none of them could conquer sin. The "EVERLASTING father" promised in the prophecy implies someone infinitely greater and superior. "Everlasting" implies someone who would conquer sin - someone who would have power over death.

But it is important to remember that Isaiah emphatically states that this was all something that "SHALL BE" and not something that already existed at the time. He did not say that his name IS called, as one would expect if he was talking about someone who already existed as a co-equal with Father-God. It is a PROPHECY of things to come and not a declaration of established historical facts.

The same applies to the prophecy concerning Jesus in 2 Sam.7:12-14. Here, God tells David that sometime in the future after he has died, "I will raise up your son after you, who shall proceed out of your bowels, and I will establish his kingdom. He shall build a house for my name, and I will establish the throne of his kingdom forever. I WILL be his Father, and he SHALL be my son." This last sentence is quoted in Heb.1:5 and is applied to Jesus, revealing that the prophecy related to him and not Solomon (although Solomon was a type of Christ in certain respects).

David then, is informed by God that sometime in the future after his death, God was going to raise up the Messiah from his seed. It would not be until then that God would be "his father, and he shall be my Son." This clearly implies that the Son of God did not exist at the time and would not exist until some future date when it was time for him to "proceed out of the bowels" of David. The last thought that would come into David's mind when this prophecy was given to him was that this promised son, in fact, was already alive and had existed from all eternity as a co-equal with the Father. If this was the case, he could not, in the true sense of the term, be David's "seed."

Ps.89:26-27 fits into much the same category as 2 Sam.7. It reads: "He SHALL cry unto Me, Thou art my Father, my God, and the rock of my salvation. Also I WILL make him my firstborn, higher than the kings of the earth." Once again this teaches that in relation to David's time, God's son is yet to come, and did not already exist.

Scripture makes it clear that Jesus became God's Son through BEGETTAL - DIVINE BEGETTAL - through the Holy Spirit power of the Father overshadowing Mary, causing her to "conceive." The words of

the Father Himself: "Thou art my SON, this day have I BEGOTTEN thee," stressed that it was through begettal that Jesus became God's Son. Mary's conception through the Holy Spirit was the means by which God produced a Son for Himself. There is no record of Him doing it any other way. In this respect Jesus was absolutely unique. Never before or since in the history of man, has God released His generative power and allowed it to penetrate and fertilize a woman's ovum, causing Divine conception. Jesus is the only man in history to be born in this way. He is distinctly the "ONLY BEGOTTEN of the Father." This is how he became Son of God - THROUGH BEGETTAL.

But, if Jesus existed as son of God before his birth, he could not have been son of God through begettal. God must have MADE him as He made the angels. In other words the original son of God would have been produced by a creative act without necessitating a woman or conception. And if this was the case, then Jesus would have been no more different or unique than the angels themselves. But the writer to the Hebrews clearly teaches that Jesus did not become son of God in the same way as the angels. His argument is as follows: "For unto which of the angels said God at any time, thou art My son, this day have I BEGOTTEN thee?" And of the angels God says, I have MADE my angels spirits..." (Heb.1:5-7).

Angels, by the creative act of God, were MADE sons of God. Jesus, however, became THE Son of God through BEGETTAL. And the moment we say that he existed before his birth and was originally MADE by the creative act of God, we place Jesus on the same level of sonship as the angels and make a farce of Mary's conception.

Before leaving Isa.9:6 the point should be emphasized that the words: "... his name SHALL be called - EVERLASTING father," simply teach that Messiah's everlasting existence had not commenced when the prophecy was given. In relation to Isaiah's time, Jesus was not "FROM everlasting" as is elsewhere declared of the Father. The Son's everlasting existence commenced at the resurrection as a result of his atoning work on Calvary. In the words of Heb.7:16: "Who has BECOME a priest ... BY THE POWER OF AN ENDLESS LIFE." From the time that Jesus was raised from the dead, he has possessed the power of endless life and is a "father" for all time to the Church. The New English Bible gives us: "Father for all time" instead of "everlasting father." The Douay version renders it: "Father of the age to come," pointing to his position as king of the earth during the Millennium.

"HE WHO SEES ME SEES THE FATHER"

More thought should now be given to the statement made by Jesus that: "He who sees me sees the Father." From what was said earlier it should be evident that Jesus was not claiming to be the Father Himself. He made it clear that the Father was greater than himself and that no man has ever seen the Father.

Jn.1:18 sheds some light on the matter before us. The apostle John, writing after Jesus had ascended to heaven, said: "No man has seen God at any time; the only begotten son, who is in the bosom of the Father (i.e. at His right hand), HE HAS DECLARED HIM."

This statement teaches that no one has ever seen Father-God, but Jesus, who is now at His right hand, HAS DECLARED HIM. As it is written in Heb.2:12 "I (Jesus) will DECLARE THY (the Father's) NAME to my brethren."

The word "DECLARE" means to "announce," "unfold," "SHOW." It was, of course, in answer to Phillip's question: "SHOW us the Father, and it sufficeth us," that Jesus said: "He who has seen me has seen the Father." The Father had shown - revealed - demonstrated Himself in the ministry of His Son. The works and teaching of Jesus were not of his own, but his Father's, who worked through him by His Spirit. In the words of Jesus: "My Father worketh hitherto and I work." Or, as we read in Acts 2:22: "Jesus of Nazareth, a man approved by God among you by miracles and wonders and signs, which GOD DID BY HIM."

Jesus was the vehicle of his Father and God. He was the vehicle and instrument of "El." For this reason he was called "ImmanuEL" and "mighty GOD" ("El"). Jesus was "God with us" - "God manifest in the flesh."

Jesus constantly emphasized that the doctrine he preached and the works he performed were not his own, and were not done through his own might and power. In his case it was "not by might nor by power, but by the Spirit of the Lord." His ministry was the outworking of the Divine power of the Father which he possessed without measure. He therefore attributed everything to his Father: "Of mine own self I can do nothing." Thus, when he performed his wonderful miracles he attributed them to God and gave him the glory: "But Jesus sent him away saying, return to your house, and show how great things GOD HAS DONE to you" (Lk.8:39). Hence, "The people glorified God, saying that a great prophet is risen amongst us; and that God has visited His people" (Lk.7:16.Matt.15:31).

To see Jesus at work and hear his preaching, was to see and hear the Father. "Jesus cried out and said, He that believes on me, believes not on me, but on Him who sent me. And he who sees me sees Him who sent me"(Jn.12:44-45). "If I had not done among them THE WORKS which no other man did, they would be without sin; but now have they both SEEN and hated both me and my Father" (Jn.15:24). In this statement, Jesus says that to see the WORKS that he performed by the power of God was to see the Father. This is what is meant when he said: "He who sees me sees the Father." Also: "Then said they to him, where is your Father? Jesus answered, You neither know me, nor my Father; if you had known me, you should have known my Father also" (Jn.8:19).

It all comes back to what was said in an earlier chapter about an agent going forth in the name of one who employs him, and transacts business in his name with full authority to do so. As a representative of the firm, he merges his individuality in the name of the company he represents. His name may be Brown, but when on official business, he can be described as "Jones and Company, calling" without confusion. To see and speak to him is as good as seeing and speaking with the manager.

Of course, in the case of Jesus, he was not someone unrelated to the "manager." He was no "outsider" drawn into employment. Jesus is the very, and only begotten son of the "manager." As such, he is "heir" to the whole business.

"JESUS CAME IN HIS FATHER'S NAME"

Jesus made a very simple but significant statement which provides the key to the understanding of many other statements. This is what he said: "I am come in my Father's name" (Jn.5:43). In this, Jesus says he is not the Father Himself, but that he has come in the name of his Father. The Father's name, as we have seen, is "Yahweh," and because Jesus came and ministered in that name, he is referred to by that name in certain Old Testament prophecies. Jesus was invested with the Divine name - he was His Father's name-bearer - His representative.

Jesus freely acknowledged that all his works were done "in my Father's name." Even many of the Jews from whom the Spirit of God elicited perfect praise said: "Blessed is the King of Israel WHO COMES IN THE NAME OF THE LORD" (Jn.12:13). And one thing is certain: those Jews did not believe that Jesus was Yahweh Himself.

Jesus said in his prayer to his Father: "I have manifested Thy name to the men which You gave me ... I have declared to them Thy

name" (Jn.17:6, 26). Jesus did not mean that he had gone around proclaiming the Yahweh name, calling out "Yahweh, Yahweh." There is no record of his doing so, and if he had, the Jews would have stoned him to death immediately because they regarded it as blasphemy of the first magnitude to utter the sacred name. What then did Jesus mean when he said that he manifested and declared the name of his Father?

The answer to this question is found in Ex.34:5-7 where the Lord "proclaimed the name of the Lord." This proclamation came to Moses in answer to His request to the Lord to "show me thy glory" (Ex.33:18). In reply to this, the Lord said: "I will make all My goodness pass before thee, and I will proclaim the name of the Lord before thee: and will be gracious to whom I will be gracious, and will show mercy on whom I will show mercy."

Then, in Ex.34:6-7 the name of the Lord was proclaimed in which His being gracious and full of mercy is emphasized: "And the Lord passed by before him, and proclaimed: "The Lord, The Lord God, merciful and gracious, longsuffering, and abundant in goodness and truth, keeping mercy for thousands, forgiving iniquity and transgression and sin..."

It is evident from this that the "Name" of the Lord ("Yahweh") is vitally linked with His Divine attributes of mercy, longsuffering, goodness, truth, and forgiveness etc. This is His "glory." There are many verses, especially in the Psalms, where the expression "name of the Lord" (Yahweh) is frequently used as a synonym for Divine mercy which brings salvation. Such is the "glory" of God.

These Divine attributes define what God is. "Yahweh" by itself does not state what God is. It tells us nothing about His character. If Yahweh means "I AM" this simply states that God exists, which is so obvious it hardly needs stating. It does not tell us what kind of God He is. It does not define His nature, character or attributes. But the complete proclamation of the name in Ex.34 tells us exactly what God He is: "I AM (Yahweh) merciful and gracious..."

However, we must remember that most modern Hebrew authorities agree that Yahweh means "I WILL BE." Taking this meaning, it suggests that the Father was looking to a special time in the future when He would manifest His glory in mercy and forgiveness for the salvation of mankind. This of course, introduces us to Jesus who manifested and declared the name of his Father. And what was it that Jesus manifested and declared? Jn.1:14 tells us: "And the Word was made flesh, and tabernacled among us, and we beheld His GLORY, the GLORY as of the only begotten of the Father, FULL OF GRACE AND TRUTH.

In manifesting and declaring the name of his Father, Jesus did not simply go around calling out "Yahweh." No, he displayed and manifested in his life and teaching the Divine grace and truth which brings salvation. This was the "GLORY" of the only begotten of the Father - "full of GRACE and TRUTH." By exhibiting these Divine attributes in his ministry, Jesus was declaring and manifesting the name of his Father.

Hence, the Father, looking ahead to the dispensation of grace that would come with the appearance of His Son, said: "I WILL BE ..." And when Jesus was finally manifested he said: "I AM HE;" i.e. "I AM HE WHOM THE FATHER SAID HE WOULD BE - GOD IS IN ME."

By His Spirit, "GOD WAS IN CHRIST reconciling the world to Himself" (2 Cor.5:19). Jesus was clearly "God with us - Immanuel." The "el" in this title, as we know, is one of the Divine titles for "God," and literally means "power," "might" or "strength." "Immanuel" emphasizes that the Father possesses the Son - dwells in His Son, not only in the sense of Jesus being a vehicle of his Father's Spirit, but also in the sense that Jesus, through Divine conception, is impregnated with the very "genes" of his Father.

The Yahweh name then, emphasizes the Divine attributes of mercy and grace. It speaks of forgiveness and salvation. It also occurs many times in Scripture in an abbreviated form - "YAH," but still conveys the same significance, and relates to the Father's character. In view of the fact that Jesus constituted the Father's name-bearer, it is not surprising that "Yah" forms part of his name. "Jesus" in the Hebrew language is "Joshua," which is literally "YAH shua," and means "Yah saves." So, the very name of the Father was embedded in His son's name, declaring His purpose to save by grace.

But once again it must be pointed out that just because the Father's name formed part of the son's name, this does not make them one and the same person. Neither does it make them co-eternal or co-equal. If it did, then we would have to conclude that others were equal with God also, because other men's names consisted of the name of Yah. For instance: ISAIAH (Heb."Yeshayah" i.e. "Yah has saved" or "Yah is helper"), JEREMIAH (Heb. "YirmeYAH i.e. "Yah will rise or Yah is high"), HOSEA (Heb."HowshaYAH i.e. "Yah is help"), OBADIAH (Heb. "ObadYAH" i.e. "serving Yah or "servant of Yah"), HEZEKIAH (Heb. "ChizqiYAH" i.e. "strengthened by Yah" or "Yah is strength"), ZEPHANIAH (Heb. "TsephanYAH" i.e. "Yah has secreted"), ZECHARIAH (Heb. "ZekarYAH" i.e. "Yah has remembered" or Yah has renowned") etc etc.

The names of many servants of God, prophets, priests and kings, have been impregnated with the name of Yah. Often, their names signified their mission - the message or work that Yahweh was accomplishing through them. But the greatest of all names is "Jesus" ("Yahowshua"). In him are combined all offices of prophet, priest and king. "God has highly exalted him, and given him a name which is above every name: that at the name of JESUS every knee should bow."

With these thoughts about the name of the Father in mind, the reader might like to reflect on the significance of Acts 15:14 which states that God's purpose in forming the Church is that She manifest and display the character and attributes of God - mercy, grace and truth ... In other words, to emulate Christ and be conformed to his example. In doing so, we become part of the Divine family - the elohim of eternity. And, as Jesus says, "I will write upon you the name of my God" (Rev. 3:12). The redeemed in Rev. 14:1 are referred to as having the Father's name written in their foreheads.

JOSEPH A TYPE

In the Lord Jesus Christ we clearly have a perfect manifestation and representation of the Father. The Father's glory is revealed in His Son who is "full of grace and truth" - full of all the moral and spiritual qualities and attributes of God. For this reason Divine names and titles are applied to him. This is how the Father has ordained it and that is how it must stand. Jesus is highly exalted. No other man born of a woman has perfectly manifested the Father as Jesus. Therefore no other man besides Jesus has been exalted to the right hand of the Father. In the Divine scheme of things it is Jesus or nothing as far as salvation goes. There is no other way and no other name. And because of the son's perfect obedience, the Father's will is that we should worship and adore the son. In fact, we cannot honour the Father unless we honour the Son.

Jn. 5:23 records Jesus saying: "All men should honour the son, even as they honour the Father; he who does not honour the son honours not the Father who sent him." In saying this, Jesus was not claiming equality with his Father. The statement can be compared with: "Honour thy father and mother" (Eph. 6:2). But this did not alter the fact that "the husband is head of the wife" (Eph. 5:23). Likewise, "the head of Christ is God" (1 Cor. 11:3).

Jesus occupies a similar position in relation to God as did Joseph in relation to the Pharaoh. This is what Pharaoh said to Joseph: "Thou shalt

be over my house, and according to your word shall my people be ruled: only in the throne will I be greater than you. And Pharaoh said to Joseph: "See, I have set you over all the land of Egypt. And Pharaoh took off his signet ring from his hand, and put it on Joseph's hand, and arrayed him in garments of fine linen, and put a gold chain about his neck; and he made him ride in the second chariot which he had; and they cried before him bow the knee: and he made him ruler over all the land of Egypt. And Pharaoh said to Joseph, I am Pharaoh, and without your consent shall no man do anything or go anywhere in the land of Egypt" (Gen. 41:40-44).

In view of the highly exalted position which Pharaoh gave to Joseph, it was recognized by all that Joseph was "EVEN AS PHARAOH" (44:18). And in exactly the same sense, Jesus is "even as God" and is called "God" in Scripture. But this does not make him equal with God any more than Joseph's exalted position made him equal with Pharaoh. In the Throne, Pharaoh was greater than Joseph. And Jesus said: "My Father is greater than I."

Joseph was a remarkable type of Jesus. The signet ring, garments of fine linen given to him by Pharaoh, and the people being commanded to bow the knee to Joseph; all find their perfect counterpart and fulfilment in the Lord Jesus Christ. Gen.45:8 tells us that God made Joseph "father" and "Lord" throughout all the land. Joseph, being made lord, and all the people being made to bow before him; unmistakably points to the Father making His son Lord, resulting in all men honouring and bowing the knee to him confessing him as lord.

NO MERE MAN

It should be clear from what has been said up to this point, that although this thesis does not endorse the doctrine of the Trinity, it does not reject the deity of Christ. Scripture clearly calls him "God" and every Bible student must recognize and acknowledge this. I have no hesitation in accepting the "deity of Christ" if, by "deity," it is meant that he was divinely begotten.

Jesus was no "mere man" as many suppose who believe he had an earthly mother. There was something more than "mere man" in one who could partake of human flesh and be tempted in all points as we are, yet without sin. There was something more than "mere man" in one who could, under such provocations as he endured, exhibit the wonderful restraint, the beautiful character, and the sinless life that Jesus revealed. That "something more" is revealed in his Divine begetting, and the Holy

Spirit anointing without measure. As a result of being born of a woman, Jesus inherited the same flesh nature as man. He was impregnated with her genes as well as his Father's, with the result that he inherited on his mother's side, impulses and propensities common to all flesh. But, being impregnated with his Father's "genes" as well, through the manner of his conception, he also inherited latent abilities far beyond our own - abilities which enabled him to conquer the propensities of the flesh, overcome all temptation, and manifest the qualities of his Father like no other man. Jesus clearly derived superior moral and spiritual power through his paternity. His parentage and education were both Divine, and as it was said: "Never man spake like this man," so it has to be said that never man thought as this man, or loved as this man, or felt as this man. He was a special man altogether, though a partaker of the same flesh and blood.

The Bible displays Jesus as the ideal man, and not a co-equal part of the Godhead. He was specially raised up and elevated by God. There is tremendous emphasis in Scripture on Jesus being MAN. He is referred to as "a MAN approved by God" (Acts 2:22); "one MAN, Christ Jesus" (Rom.5:15); "the MAN, Christ Jesus" (1 Tim 2:5) etc. During his ministry, Jesus seemed to prefer to refer to himself as "son of man," emphasizing his humanity.

Jesus is presented as "the prophet like unto Moses" (Deu.18:15. Acts 3:22. Matt.21:11); "made of a woman" (Gal. 4:4); "touched with the feelings of our infirmities ... in all points tempted as we are;" "learning obedience by the things he suffered ... offering up prayers and supplications with strong crying and tears unto him who was able to save him from death, and was heard in that he feared."

It is difficult to relate these terms to one who was God in the ultimate, absolute sense. Jam.1:13 plainly declares that God cannot be tempted, yet Jesus was subject to temptation. 1 Tim. 6:17 states that God cannot die, yet Jesus died. The Bible uses many terms in relation to Jesus that do not fit if he was equal with God. It describes him as being weary (Jn.4:6), as weeping (Jn. 11:35), as praying for strength (Heb. 5:7) etc.

Scripture teaches that "God was in Christ" (2 Cor. 5:19) to "strengthen him" (Ps.80:17. Isa. 11:2-3) that the world might be reconciled to Himself (2 Cor. 5:21). It therefore sets Jesus forth as an expression of the Father's love towards those who trust Him, in that through him is provided the means by which they can be redeemed.

Because of his perfect obedience - his complete conquest of sin, he was raised from the dead to die no more. In this he opened the way for redemption through the forgiveness of sins; he became the author of

eternal salvation to all who come to God through him.

"THE LORD SAID UNTO MY LORD"

David penned these words: "The Lord said unto my lord, Sit thou at my right hand, until I make Thine enemies thy footstool" (Ps. 110:1).

This verse is quoted several times in the New Testament. It is referred to for example in Matt. 22:41-46: "While the Pharisees were gathered together, Jesus asked them, saying, What think ye of Christ; whose son is he? They replied, The son of David. He then said to them, How is it then, that David, inspired by the Spirit, calls the Messiah Lord, saying, The Lord said unto my lord, Sit thou on my right hand, till I make your enemies your footstool? If David calls him Lord, how can he be his son? And no man had an answer. And after that no one dared to ask him any more questions."

Jesus' reference to Ps. 110:1 reveals that the verse refers to three persons: the Father, the son, and David. "The LORD (Father) said unto MY (David's) LORD (Jesus), Sit thou at my right hand until ..."

Now, it is commonly believed that because the Father and son are both referred to as "Lord," and because David addresses Jesus as "Lord," that the Father and son are the same person, co-equal and co-eternal. However, this conclusion is not justified.

For a start, it should be evident that "THE Lord" who "SAID" (i.e. "spoke") to "MY Lord" are two quite separate persons. If not, then we would have to interpret the passage to mean God was speaking to Himself. Also, the fact that "The Lord" invites "my Lord" TO SIT AT HIS RIGHT HAND clearly indicates two separate persons. If not, we would have to interpret the passage to mean God was inviting Himself to sit next to Himself.

What then are we to make of the fact that both Father and son are referred to as "Lord?" Does this not make them equal? By no means. This is more evident in the original Hebrew text. In the King James Bible and other English translations, the translators have indiscriminately translated two quite different Hebrew words into one and the same English word "Lord." In the Hebrew text, "The LORD" is YAHWEH, and "my Lord" is ADON. Literally, the text reads: "Yahweh said to my adon, sit thou ..."

So, the great memorial NAME is given to the Father, and a common Hebrew TITLE is given to the Son. This reveals in itself that the Father is greater and superior. The definite article emphasizes this: "THE Lord

said ..." The fact that the Father sits on the throne in the central position and invites the son to sit next to Him clearly reveals that it is the Father's throne, and that He is superior. The son sits next to his Father through Divine invitation only. The Father exalted him to that position. If the son were co-equal with the Father and had equal rights to the throne throughout eternity, he would not need to be invited to sit upon it. It would be his by right.

"Adon," translated "Lord" in Ps.110:1 in relation to Jesus is an inferior title to the name "Yahweh." "Adon" is, as mentioned above, a common Hebrew title. It is applied to many men in the Bible. In Num.36:2 Moses is called "adon" (Lord): "And they said, The Lord (Yahweh) commanded my lord (adon - Moses) to give the land for an inheritance by lot to the children of Israel: and my lord (adon - Moses) was commanded by the Lord (Yahweh) to give the inheritance ..."

This passage is particularly interesting because it has an almost identical construction with Ps.110:1. The psalm refers to Yahweh addressing adon, and relates to the Father speaking to Jesus. Num.36:2 also refers to Yahweh addressing adon, but relates to the Father speaking to Moses. Moses, like Jesus, was called "Lord" by the people. But no one would conclude from this that Moses was equal with the Father. And neither should it be concluded that Jesus is equal with his Father.

The following men are called "Lord" (adon) in Scripture:

ABRAHAM (Gen.18:12. 1 Pet.3:6. Gen.23:6, 11, 15)

ABRAHAM'S STEWARD (Gen.24:18)

ESAU (Gen.32:4, 5, 18)

POTIPHAR (Gen.39:16)

PHARAOH (Gen.40:11)

JOSEPH (Gen.42:10, 30, 33. 45:8).

MOSES (Num.11:28. 12:11. 32:25, 27. 36:2).

SISERA (Judg.4:18)

A LEVITE (Judg.19:26, 27).

BOAZ (Ruth 2:13).

ELI (1 Sam.1:15, 26).

SAUL (1 Sam. 16:16. 22:12. 24:8)

DAVID (1 Sam.25:24).

There are many references to David being called "Lord," not to mention Solomon and many others.

Angels also are addressed as "Lord" (adon). For example: Gen.19:2. Josh.5:14. Judg.6:13 etc.

Truly, as Paul says in 1 Cor.8:5, there are "Lords many," in heaven and earth. In New Testament times Caesar was called "Lord."

"Adon" in Hebrew means "to rule," "sovereign," "controller," "master," "owner." It was common during Biblical times for a man who was given authority over other men to be addressed as "Lord." It was an acknowledgement of his authority and superiority. For this reason, such men as Abraham, Joseph, Moses and David, whom God established as rulers over the people; were addressed as "Lord" by the people as an acknowledgement of the Divinely invested authority. But this did not cause them to conclude that these men were equal with God.

The same applies to the Lord Jesus Christ. To confess Jesus as "Lord" is not to confess he is equal with God. Rather, it is an acknowledgement of the Divine authority which the Father has vested on him. The Father has elevated His son above all men and even above the angels. The Father has appointed him as ruler and has committed the government to him, much in the same way as Pharaoh did to Joseph. Jesus is the appointed King over the whole earth. EVERY knee must ultimately bow to him. All men throughout all ages are inferior and subject to Christ. He is "Lord" in this sense. But he is clearly still subject to his Father. "The head of Christ is God."

So then, although there are, and have been "lords many," TO US THERE IS ONE LORD - JESUS CHRIST. In the Divine purpose there is only one supreme ruler whom the Father has chosen and appointed from men: His own son. All others, like Moses and David etc, were only a type or foreshadow of the greater One who was to come.

With these thoughts in mind we return to the passage in Matt.22 in which Jesus said: "What think ye of Christ? Whose son is he? They replied, The son of David. Jesus then said, How is it then that David, inspired by the Spirit, calls the Christ Lord ...?"

Jesus' question can only be appreciated when we understand the general Jewish concept of Messiah at the time. Most believed that the Messiah would be a descendant of David, and that both his mother and father would belong to David's family tree. In other words, they did not believe in the Divine begettal. They did not believe that God Himself would be the personal and direct Father of Messiah. They thought that both of Messiah's parents would be members of the human race. And, being descendants of David, they did not believe that Messiah would be superior to David. They thought a son could be equal with his father or fore-father, but not superior - certainly not superior to the great king David who was "a man after God's own heart."

So, Jesus put the question to them: "How is it, if Messiah is merely a natural descendant of David with a human mother and father, that David addresses him as "Lord." How is it that David acknowledges the superiority of Messiah? On what grounds is Messiah greater than David?"

They could not of course answer the question. There was only one answer - BY DIVINE BEGETTAL. Being the very son of God - the only begotten of the Father, Jesus inherited a higher station. "He has, by inheritance, obtained a more excellent name" (Heb.1:4). He is "heir of all things." So, although David himself was a great king and was addressed as "Lord" by his subjects, Jesus is greater, and David acknowledges this by addressing him as "Lord." By addressing Jesus as "Lord," David was, under inspiration, confessing the Divine sonship of Christ.

A DISTINCT LOSS

During his ministry, various Jews addressed Jesus as "Lord." (Matt.6:21, 25. 8:2. 9:28. 13:51. 15:22, 25, 27. 17:15. 20:30-33). In view of their strict monotheistic faith, it should be evident that when these Jews addressed Jesus as "Lord" they were not confessing him to be the Almighty Father-God of the Hebrew faith. And they most certainly weren't addressing him as Yahweh. Not only did they not accept Jesus as Yahweh, but they flatly refused to even pronounce the name. "Yahweh" never occurs in the New Testament. It is a Hebrew word and the New Testament was written in Greek. The Greek word for "Lord" is "Kurios," and it is basically a respectful title for anyone in authority. It is translated "master," "owner" and "sir" in the New Testament and is applied to various men in authority.

The names and titles of Deity can only be truly expressed in the Hebrew. A distinct loss is revealed when this subject is considered in the light of the Greek New Testament or Septuagint Old Testament. All the Hebrew names and titles are rendered by two Greek words - "Theos" and "Kurios," or, as they appear in our English version, "God" and "Lord." The fine distinctions of the Hebrew titles are not preserved in the Greek words which take their place. This is particularly obvious in the case of Ps.110:1. As we have seen, the Hebrew reads: "Yahweh said to adon, sit thou at my right hand ..." Whereas the Greek text in Matt.22:44 reads "kurios said to kurios, sit thou at my right hand ..."

No distinction is made at all between the two words as in the Hebrew. A study of the Hebrew names and titles is very rewarding and leads on to all sorts of exciting developments and revelation. Hopefully, this thesis

will provoke a desire to study and investigate Scriptures in more depth.

RULE IN THE STRENGTH OF YAHWEH

That Jesus was Yahweh's name-bearer and not Yahweh Himself, is indicated in the prophecy in Mic.5:4. This prophecy states that Jesus "shall stand and rule IN THE STRENGTH OF YAHWEH, in the majesty of THE NAME OF THE LORD HIS GOD." This expresses the position between the Father and son beautifully. The son is not Yahweh Himself, but rules in Yahweh's strength and in Yahweh's name. This is why Jesus said: "I am come in my Father's name."

The prophecy in Isa.11:1-3 tells us that Messiah would be given a quick understanding "in the fear of Yahweh."

The same distinction between Yahweh and his son can be seen in Ps.2:7 where Yahweh addresses His son saying: "Thou art My son, this day have I begotten thee."

The principle of God-manifestation which operates between the Father and son can be compared with a similar principle which operates between the son and the Church. Consider these words of Paul in 2 Cor.5:20: "Now then we are ambassadors for Christ, AS THOUGH GOD DID BESEECH YOU BY US; we pray you IN CHRIST'S STEAD be reconciled to God." Compare also the words of Jesus: "He who receives me receives Him who sent me" (Matt.10:40). Again: "He who hears you hears me, and he who despises you despises me; and he who despises me despises Him who sent me" (Lk.10:16). "Inasmuch as you have done it to one of the least of these my brethren, you have done it to me" (Matt.25:34-40).

In these passages, the Church is inseparably linked with Christ, and Christ is inseparably linked with his Father. But they are clearly separate entities and are by no means equal. The Church is so inseparably linked with Christ that it is actually called "the Christ" in 1 Cor.12:12. The body of Christ is "the anointed" of God; the representative and manifestation of Christ.

So close is the identification between Jesus and the Church, that he said to Saul: "Saul, Saul, why persecutest thou ME?" (Act.9:4). But nobody would interpret this to mean that Jesus and the Church were one and the same person, and that they were equal. Saul wasn't really persecuting Jesus personally, for he was in heaven. However, he was persecuting the Church with which Jesus was united in spirit, and therefore it was tantamount to doing it to Jesus himself. In the words

quoted before: "He who despises you despises me."

These examples help us to understand such passages as Zec.12:10, which, in the Authorised Version speak in terms of Yahweh Himself being pierced at the crucifixion. The Father Himself was clearly not crucified, but to crucify the son was as bad as crucifying the Father. As Jesus said: "He who despises me, despises Him who sent me."

In passing, it should be pointed out that the Authorised Version translation of Zec.12:10 is not supported by most revised versions. Many give "him" instead of "me," making the piercing apply totally to Jesus: "And they shall look upon HIM whom they pierced, and they shall mourn for him ..." The New Testament quotations of this verse confirm this rendering (Jn.19:37. Rev.1:7).

Another excellent verse which expresses God-manifestation in relation to Jesus is 2 Cor.4:6: "For God, who commanded the light to shine out of the darkness, has shined in our hearts, to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ." In this statement, God and Jesus are again presented as two separate personalities. God, who dwells in light unapproachable, whom no man has seen nor can see, has shined - revealed and demonstrated Himself in the face of Jesus Christ. Hence, to see Jesus is to see the Father.

2 Cor.5:19 puts it this way: "God was in Christ reconciling the world to Himself." Jesus was the receptacle or vehicle of God, being impregnated with His very "genes" and filled with His power. His ministry was the outworking of an indwelling God. Jesus was the visible manifestation of God's mental, moral and spiritual character and attributes. In every respect he was a perfect reflection and representation of his Father. He mirrored God. To see him was to see God.

THE BRIGHTNESS OF HIS GLORY-EXPRESS IMAGE

Jesus is the "brightness of God's glory" and "the express image of His person, upholding all things by the word of his power" (Heb.1:3).

The Greek word translated "brightness" means "off-flash," "reflection," "reflected brightness," "visible outshining," "effulgence," "radiated brightness." In short, Jesus reflects God's glory. In Jesus and his ministry can be seen a visible outshining of the glory of the invisible God.

"God's GLORY " immediately takes us back to Ex. 33-34 where it is associated with the Divine attributes of grace, mercy, compassion, longsuffering, forgiveness etc, on the basis of which salvation is obtained. There are many passages of Scripture which refer to God's glory in this

spiritual sense. It was certainly the grace and mercy and the truth of God which Jesus reflected and manifested in himself and his ministry: "We beheld his GLORY, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father, full of GRACE and TRUTH" (Jn.1:14). The "glory" was "grace and truth," for it is by grace alone that salvation was made possible. It is God's grace which causes us to glorify Him. It is the "glory of God."

The word "dwelt" in Jn.1:14 literally means "tabernacled." It speaks of Jesus being God's tabernacle. And, as most know, the glory of God resided in the tabernacle in old times and was manifested therefrom. Of course the "glory of God" has other applications as well, all of which were manifested by Jesus. In Jn.2:10-11 and 11:40 it is used in connection with Divine healing power and miracles, which, as we know, were wonderfully manifested in the ministry of Jesus.

Coming back to Heb.1:3, we read that Jesus is the "express image of God's person." The words "express image" have been translated from one Greek word "charakter," from which our English word "character" has been derived.

Barclay's comment on this word is helpful: "In Greek, "character" means two things. It means, first, a SEAL; and it means, second, the MARK, or impression that the seal leaves upon the wax. Now, the impression has the exact form of the seal; it reproduces exactly, and in every detail the shape of the seal."

Vine has this to say about the same word: "Charakter denotes, firstly, a tool for engraving (from 'charasso,' to cut into, to engross; Cp. Eng; 'character' 'characteristic'); then, a stamp or impress, as on a coin or a seal, in which case the seal or die which makes an impression bears the image produced by it, and vice versa; all the features of the image correspond respectively with those of the instrument producing it. In Heb.1:3 it is used metaphorically of the son of God who is the very image of God's substance."

In view of these comments, I believe Rotherham's translation of the Bible captures the basic significance of this verse in these words: "... an exact representation of His (God's) very being."

Jesus is the engraved expression of God. He is the essential reality of what God is. The Father Himself refers to His son in these words: "The MAN My fellow" (Zec.3:7). "Behold the MAN whose name is The Branch" (Zec. 6:12). Jesus is the likeness or impressed character of God. His character reflected God's moral attributes - holiness, love, and truth. Men could know what God's character or image was like by looking at the life of Jesus. Jesus was godly; He was God-like in character and conduct.

He was not "Very God of Very God" Himself; he reflected God's character in his perfect sinless life.

Jesus then, is the Father in manifestation, exhibiting and expressing His character and power. The Father is the Divine engraver, and His Word and Spirit the stamp with which He makes the Divine impression, producing His Image in the life of His Son and sons.

Thus, in the symbolic prophecy of the stone with seven eyes in Zec.3:9, which relates to Jesus; God says: "Behold, I will ENGRAVE THE GRAVING thereof." Jesus so totally yielded himself to the engraving work of his Father, that the Father was able, by His Spirit, to make a perfect impression of His character in him. The blessed purpose and result in all this is beautifully summarised in the same verse (Zec.3:9): "And I will remove the iniquity of the land in one day." And, in that day there shall be shoutings "crying, grace, grace" (Zec.4:7).

(It is interesting to note that the Greek word for "grace" is "charas" - another word from which our English word "character" has developed. "Grace," of course, is inseparably linked with the Divine name. It is a chief characteristic of God. Naturally, Jesus being the "character" of God in manifestation, was "full of grace").

Jesus, like the soft receptive wax, totally yielded himself to the Divine impressions his Father wanted him to manifest. He was "sealed" by God. (Jn.6:27). In ancient times anything which had the king's seal was regarded as having come direct from him, and was treated as being absolutely authentic and authoritative. (Esth.8:8-10). This was the position of Jesus in relation to his Father. Not only was he sealed by his Father, but was also the Father's "signet" (Hag.2:23). He was "the finger of God." He had complete authority to speak and act on behalf of Father-God. Whatever he said went. He could forgive sins. He was, and is worshiped. Such honour has the Father given to His only Son. To refuse to honour the son is to dishonour the Father.

It is also stated in Heb.1:3 that Jesus upheld all things by the Word of His (God's) Power. The sentence that follows indicates that the reference is to the work of purging sins: "When he had purged our sins ..."

The word "upheld" or "upholding" means to "bear," "carry," "bear up," and is very appropriate in connection with the purging of sin. It is well illustrated by the language of Moses: "I am not able to bear all this people alone because it is too heavy for me" (Num.11:14). But Jesus was able to fully bear the duty which God placed upon him, and he was able to do this by "the word of (God's) power."

Concerning the atoning work of Jesus, Isa.53:4 says this: "He has

BORNE our griefs and CARRIED our sorrows." Then, in verse 11 we are told how: "By his KNOWLEDGE shall my righteous servant justify many." Knowledge of what? The answer is: "The Word of God's power." Jesus upheld the righteousness of God and destroyed sin by the Word of God's power. From the time Jesus was born, the Spirit of God was upon him: "The Spirit of wisdom and understanding, the Spirit of counsel and might, the Spirit of knowledge and of the fear of the Lord; and was made of quick understanding ..." (Isa.11:2-3). At the age of 12 his knowledge and understanding of the Word of God was so great that the doctors and experts of the law were astonished at his understanding and answers. (Lk.2:46-47). It was his knowledge and application of the Word of God that put the devil to rout during the temptation in the wilderness. Throughout his whole ministry Jesus manifested a profound knowledge and understanding of the Word of God. Thus, in Revelation he is given the name: "The Word of God."

The phrase: "Word of His (God's) power" literally means: "Word out of God's Power." There are two specific thoughts involved: the "word" and "power." These two thoughts are brought together in Eph.6:17 in the expression: "sword of the Spirit." The "sword" is the Word of God, and the "Spirit" is the Divine power which quickens, anoints and wields the sword. It was precisely in this way that Jesus "upheld all things."

Since his resurrection and exaltation, the Father has given Jesus all power in heaven and earth. He now upholds all things in the same way: "by the word of God's power." In him "all things consist" i.e. "hold together," especially in the Church of which he is the head.

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CHAPTER TEN THE HISTORY OF THE TRINITY

1 Jn.3:5 teaches that Jesus "was manifested to take away our sins." This, in a nutshell, was God's purpose in sending His Son into the world. He was manifested to defeat, destroy and remove sin. How did Jesus deal with Sin? Well, to answer this question we need to ask another: What is sin? According to 1 Jn.3:4 sin is "transgression of law." In this sense, sin is an ACT - an act of disobedience.

Does this mean then, that on the cross, Jesus took away all acts of sin? No, he clearly did not, for acts of sin have continued to be committed by all men in all ages ever since. Something abstract like an act of sin cannot be transferred from one body to another. Even if it could, of what value would it be if acts of sin keep on being committed afterwards? Under the law of Moses, sin was artificially imputed from a man to a beast through the laying on of hands, but this was purely a symbolical action - a type or foreshadow of a much higher and deeper principle later to be manifested in the sacrifice of Jesus.

It is commonly believed that, in some mystical way which cannot be defined, the accumulated acts of humanity's sin were gathered up and placed on Jesus as he hung upon the cross, and were consequently taken away by his death. A little reflection however, reveals that such a view is rather limited and really fails to meet the essential facts of the case.

If all that was required to "put away sins" was that sins of mankind should be "imputed" to the sacrifice, why should the blood of bulls and goats not have availed? If our sins are simply laid on Christ in the same way as they were laid on the sacrificial animals (which were a mere artificial imputativeness), how is it that those sacrifices could never take away sins? If that were the principle involved, there would be no difference in this respect between the sacrifice of the Old and New Covenants. Consequently, this cannot be the principle.

The law was only a shadow of good things to come. If the association between Jesus and sin were precisely the same as that between the animal sacrifices and sin, then shadow and substance would be alike on one of the most important points, and that would be absurd. No shadow can ever equal the substance. "For the law having a SHADOW of good things to come, AND NOT THE VERY IMAGE OF THOSE THINGS, can never with those sacrifices which they offered year by year continually, make the comers thereunto perfect" (Heb.10).

A "shadow" or figure is that which represents something else of a

HIGHER character or principle; not something on the same level. A shadow only gives a GENERAL idea of the form of the object of which it is the shadow, not an exact representation of it. We must therefore, in considering the taking away of sin by Jesus, look for something in the mode of taking it away, of a higher character and principle than in the case of the animal sacrifices.

Under the law of Moses, when a sinner placed his hands on the head of an animal, he was symbolically transferring to the beast an act or acts of sin ALREADY committed. But this was only dealing with the EFFECTS or symptoms of sin. It did not touch the real CAUSE. The beast was totally incapable of taking away the cause of sin. This is evident by the fact that men continued to sin after the beast had been sacrificed, and all men consequently died. Trying to deal with sin according to this sacrificial system or principle under the law, was like trying to get rid of thistles by cutting them off at ground level as soon as they sprout up, and then putting them into a box, placing it on the fire to burn. But it is only a question of time before those thistles would all grow again. It would make no difference even if there were a shed full of boxes to put the thistles into as they sprouted from week to week, they would continue to grow and remain a menace. The only way to deal the death blow to the thistles is to strike at the root.

THE CAUSE OF SIN

Jesus came to strike sin at its root - to deal with the cause. He was not nailed to the cross so that acts of sin might be tipped out on him as thistles are tipped into a box. If that was what the cross was all about then Jesus should have remained on it for all eternity, because acts of sin are being committed all the time, just like the thistles which keep springing out of the ground when the root remains untouched.

What is the cause of sin? What is the source of every disobedient act? From whence does every act of sin spring? The answer is: IN THE FLESH. Paul clearly teaches in Rom.7 that sin has its source in the flesh. He refers to it as "sin in the flesh." By "sin in the flesh" he is referring to that bias in man's nature towards sin - that gravitational pull towards carnal things - those hereditary impulses and propensities which have a strong natural leaning towards things forbidden by God. It is from these impulses in the flesh nature that every act of sin springs. James refers to this impulse as "lust" (i.e. passion), and he says it is the root cause of all trouble: "What causes wars and fightings ...? Is it not your lusts within

you?" James taught that every temptation (incitement to sin) is triggered off by lust: "Every man is tempted when he is lured and enticed by his own lust" (Jam.1:14). The Bible speaks a great deal about man's lust, and gives it a number of different names and titles. One of these is "devil," and a separate thesis is available in which this is explained and expounded.

The flesh in its raw natural state is exceedingly lustful. It is not our fault, but rather our misfortune. We are all born with it. We have all inherited it; it is a hereditary possession - an inevitable inheritance for everyone born of a woman. It has been passed down to us from our first parents as a result of them allowing the serpent's philosophy to take root in their mind. From that time, that "old serpent" which is called "devil" in the New Testament, became a symbol of the sin it provoked; and a symbol of all men, organizations and institutions which "savour not the things of God."

Throughout history, up until the time of Jesus, no man born of a woman - no partaker of "flesh and blood" had been able to conquer the flesh. No man was able to get complete mastery of its desires and impulses. Sooner or later, all gave way and yielded. Sin had complete mastery over the human race. All were in bondage to their own desires: SIN REIGNED (ruled) UNTO DEATH - sin was "prince of the world."

Before eternal life could be released, the power of sin had to be broken. Sin's deadlock - sin's strangle-hold on the human race had to be smashed. Someone had to gain victory over this enemy before the way to eternal life could be opened up. Someone had to make a breach in sin's seemingly impregnable fortress, and topple this ruler from his position as supreme ruler over mankind.

Was it simply a question of finding a human sacrifice to whom acts of sin could be artificially imputed? No, as pointed out before: that would involve an endless process, as under the law, and would totally fail to deal with sin at its ground or root level. The ruler would still remain in his fortress.

It must be evident that if sin has its source in the impulses of the flesh; Jesus, in order to deal with it, would have to be born of a woman and partake of the same flesh. In other words, to deal with the power of sin, Jesus had to meet it on its own ground. To do battle with sin, Jesus had to encounter it on its own battleground - THE FLESH.

This indeed is what he did; and it was for this purpose that he had to be "born of a woman." Jesus had to share the same flesh and blood nature as man whom he came to redeem. Heb.2:14 emphatically teaches that Jesus shared "THE SAME" flesh and blood of which the rest of men are

partakers. And Paul calls it "sinful flesh" in Rom.8:3: "God sent His son in the likeness of sinful flesh." By "sinful flesh" Paul means a flesh nature which contains the impulses or propensities of sin - impulses which, if yielded to, result in acts of sin. Jesus of course, although he shared our nature, and experienced the impulses of the flesh which he inherited from his mother; never yielded to them, but completely conquered them and put them to death by yielding to his Father's Spirit. He was thus "tempted in all points as we are but without sin" (Heb.4:15). That is, he experienced the same desires and lurings but never succumbed. His whole life was a denial of self - a crucifixion of the will of the flesh. His life was governed by the rule: "Not my will (i.e. the will of the flesh) but Thine (God's) be done." "I came not to do my own will, but the will of Him who sent me." Finally, once and for all, in one great act of self-surrender, Jesus terminated his life of self-sacrifice by nailing the flesh to the cross and putting it totally to death.

It was a public, official, ceremonial climax to his life of self-denial. The cross was a climax to what had been a life of crucifixion of the flesh. Throughout his whole life he made the flesh know its master and refused to allow it to rule or govern his life. Sin failed to reign over Christ. He in fact, got the victory and reigned over sin. Jesus was the first and only man in history born of a woman to partake of "sinful flesh" yet not sin. He toppled the ruler from his throne. He made a breach in the enemy's fortress through which all can go who are prepared to follow and be identified with Jesus Christ. (Compare the David-Goliath principle in 1 Sam. 17:8-9).

Being a partaker of the same flesh as the human race, Jesus was a perfect representative of mankind and therefore qualified to be a perfect high priest, able to sympathize with the feelings of our infirmities. On the cross he represented us, but not as a poor weak sinner defeated by sin, but as a strong conqueror who gained total victory over sin, putting it to death in the body of his flesh. It is important and significant to note that Scripture never refers to Jesus dealing with sin "ON" his flesh, as you would expect if all the acts of men's sins were placed on him as he hung upon the cross. No, Scripture is emphatic that sin was dealt with "IN" Christ's flesh, and this was done through him partaking of the very flesh nature which contains the impulses which are the root cause of all acts of sin. Consider the following statements of Scripture: "Condemned sin in the flesh" (Rom. 8:3); "Having abolished IN his flesh the enmity ..." (Eph.2:15). "Yet now has he reconciled IN the body of his flesh through death" (Col.1:21-22). "Being put to death IN the flesh ..." (1 Pet. 3:18).

"Christ has suffered for us IN the flesh" (1 Pet. 4:1). "Who himself bare our sins IN his own body on the tree" (1 Pet. 2:24).

By God's grace, we are allowed to share Christ's victory as Israel shared in David's victory over Goliath, and reap all of its benefits if we are prepared to believe he is the Son of God and accept the cross as victory over sin. By committing ourselves to him and renouncing the old life of being controlled by the flesh, our sins are cancelled - taken away, and the promise of eternal life is made sure. Because our sins are cancelled on the basis of Christ's victory on the cross, Scripture says "He himself bare our sins in his own body on the tree."

ABSOLUTELY FUNDAMENTAL

It is absolutely fundamental to the original Christian faith that Jesus' work was wrought in human flesh. By this means and through this very process, sin was condemned and destroyed at its very roots; death was slain and a way to eternal life was opened up by resurrection. Because man's enemy - sin - the devil, was in the flesh; Jesus had to partake of the flesh to destroy it. This is clearly the teaching of Heb. 2:14. And this is why, as Heb. 2:16 says in the Authorised Version Jesus "took not on the nature of angels." Angels share the Divine nature in which there is no impulse to sin. This is why God "cannot be tempted." Had Jesus come in that nature he would not have been a suitable sacrifice for sin. He would not have been a true representative of man. He would not have been able to deal with sin at its root level, because there would be no "sin in the flesh" for him to condemn and destroy.

The apostle John makes the belief that the physical nature of Jesus was the same as ours a test of fellowship: "Every spirit that confesses that Christ has come in the flesh is of God: and every spirit that confesses not that Christ is come in the flesh is not of God: and this is that spirit of anti-Christ whereof you have heard that it should come, and even now already is it in the world" (1 Jn.4:2-3).

John's reference to Jesus coming in THE FLESH does not merely mean that he had skin like ours and looked like a man. Reference to him coming in the flesh goes much deeper than that. "Flesh" throughout the New Testament in relation to sin and the atoning work of Jesus; refers to that flesh nature of man which contains the impulses and propensities of sin. Jesus, although son of God through Divine begettal, was nevertheless "son of man" as a result of being born of a woman. As a result, he possessed "THE SAME" flesh and blood as the rest of mankind (Heb.

2:14). It is true as pointed out before, that Jesus was impregnated with the "genes" of his Heavenly Father as a result of his Father's generative power causing Mary to conceive. But he was equally impregnated with his mother's genes. So, although Jesus inherited remarkable latent powers from his Father, he also inherited the "infirmities" common to the human race from his mother. He is therefore able to be "touched by the feeling of our infirmities," because he has been tempted in all points like us.

Some may feel that it is dishonouring and degrading to our Lord to believe he had the same flesh nature as fallen man. But, according to John, those who deny this are "anti-Christ." Why? Because they rob him of his moral glory and take the chief virtue out of his example, reducing the cross to a pile of thistles tipped out on Christ's flesh with the roots still left in the ground. Nothing could be more derogatory to our Lord than denying he shared our nature and experienced the propensities common to man. Such denial undermines and negates the purpose of the cross in the most fundamental way possible, and leaves us with a mystical, artificial atonement; no different in principle from the animal sacrifices under the law.

If Jesus didn't share the same nature as the race he came to save, he could not have been tempted in ALL POINTS as we are. And if this was the case, what did he overcome? If there was nothing within him that could respond to temptation - if he was totally devoid of all desires and impulses of the flesh, then temptation could not be real to him. He could not in fact, in the true sense of the word, be tempted. And if this was the case - if his nature did not contain the basic human impulses and desires, then his mastery of the flesh becomes a hollow victory - a farce - something that anyone could have done had they the fortune to be born without flesh propensities. But herein lies the wonder and glory of Christ's work. In spite of the fact that he shared the same flesh nature he nevertheless gained total victory over it by crucifying its lusts, and by perfectly yielding to the Spirit of his Father. Jesus is the only man in history to do so. He stands forth as THE perfect example - a MAN among men - absolutely unique. For this reason, the many thousands in Rev. 5:11-12 sing with a loud voice: "Worthy is the lamb that was slain ..."

DEPARTURE FROM THE FAITH

The earlier reference to 1 Jn. 4:2-3 indicates that at the time of writing, (towards the end of the first century A.D.) the spirit of antichrist had already started to work. False teachers were already denying that Jesus

shared our nature. This is where the Gnostic heresy of the first century originated. Their reluctance to confess that Jesus shared the same flesh and blood gradually led to the development of what later became known as the "doctrine of the Trinity." Reluctance to confess that Jesus shared the same flesh nature as his brethren is one of the main contributing factors that led to the development of Trinitarianism. It was part of the "departure from the faith" that Paul predicted (1 Tim. 4:1)

As long as there were men alive who had seen Christ, there was some hope that his teaching might not become corrupted. But inevitably those who had known him became fewer and fewer. Even while they still lived there were strange ideas and practices abroad. The crucial test came with the new generation after the last of the men of the apostolic age were dead.

What was the next generation like? How had they kept the message entrusted to them? Parallel to this was the growth of a highly educated and vocal group with the danger of specialization and lack of balanced views.

The temptation to accommodate to contemporary 'science' or to the latest philosophical fad was always there. In a movement drawn mainly from the less-educated classes, the danger was all the greater. The most articulate leaders and the intellectual elite would be the most exposed to these influences and could easily lead an uninstructed and indiscriminating audience astray. The fashionable mysticisms and philosophies were ever present. There was plenty of temptation to depart from the "faith once delivered to the saints." It has been said that the Churches' greatest theologians were heretics. By this is meant the most lively brains were most likely to attempt to improve the traditional statements of belief, and in so doing went wildly off course. The temptation to try was obvious, especially if man had a smattering of contemporary philosophy, or an inclination towards the mysterious or occult, with mystic revelations and secret writings.

Significantly enough, the word "transgresseth" in 2 Jn. 9 which describes the action of those who denied that Christ shared the same flesh nature as all other humans, literally means in the Greek "to go beyond" i.e. exceed the limits. They no doubt thought that their new doctrine was "advanced" teaching and progress. But any doctrine which goes beyond the sacred page can only be a retrograde step resulting in the retardation of spiritual knowledge. Something as fundamental as Christ's nature cannot be changed without changing other important doctrines as well. It is like the key-stone to an arch: remove it and everything comes crashing down.

Most heresies were attempts to alter the traditional Christian faith to

make it more acceptable to contemporary thought. Small and apparently innocent were their beginnings in the hands of well-meaning friends of the Gospel, who by hair-breadth lines began to deviate from its simplicity in order to make it acceptable, or less unacceptable to their pagan friends. Like the beginning of strife, the beginning of error is "as when one letteth out water;" it wears wider and wider the channel, till there is a devastating flood.

THE CROSS OF CHRIST-A STUMBLINGBLOCK

"The offence of the cross" was the stumbling block. What was there to recommend such a one who had died such an infamous death? What was he more than other men who had been crucified by the authorities? They had crucified good men before him, and doubtless would do so again. Paul of course had no problem meeting this objection in his day, and made no compromise. "I preach Christ and him crucified," he boldly says, "to the Jews a stumblingblock, and to the Greeks foolishness."

Others unfortunately were less robust, and began endeavouring to "raise the dignity or status of Christ," as one writer puts it. They started adding to the plain teaching of Scripture that Jesus was "a man approved of God" - a man "made of a woman, made under the law," - "like unto his brethren," partaking of "the same" flesh and blood, "tempted in all points as we are." They began, by degrees, to explain away the human nature of Christ, and in so doing, explained away the true nature and purpose of his crucifixion.

The theories of Plato and his school were in the air of the first century, and being respectable and accepted were pressed into the service of the "improvers" of Christian doctrine as a harmless change, scarcely, if at all, to be called a compromise. Various were the views of the Platonists, and soon the "harmless change" had obscured the simple truth, and involved the religious world of that day in a whirlpool of ecclesiastical subtleties, into which, except for a remnant, the Christians were drawn, and the Truth was virtually lost, as Paul predicted: "For the time will come when they will not endure sound doctrine; but to suit their own likings shall they accumulate for themselves teachers to tickle their ears; and they shall turn away from the truth, and wander into myths" (2 Tim 4:3-4).

"All souls," said some of the Platonists, "were pre-existent, the body was of small importance. Christ's body held the soul of a god, or an emanation from God Himself." Others said that only in appearance had

Jesus been crucified - that an image of a man had apparently suffered, but it was an illusion of the senses. And here others seized upon the Platonic "logos," the personified wisdom of God. This "logos," they said, had entered into corporeal shape, and this was the Christ. The idea was eagerly caught up, Christian and pagan finding common standing ground. Against this, John, by the Spirit of God, strove in the famous first chapter of his gospel record, taking hold of their phraseology to emphasize the truth that Jesus Christ, son of man, was the true "logos" and sternly condemned those who denied that Christ came in the flesh. And again, as pointed out before, in his epistle he wrote: "Every spirit that confesses that Christ is come in the flesh is of God." But to deny this, he solemnly declared, was the spirit of anti-Christ.

But anti-Christ though it was, it grew apace. In explanation of the very evident pain that Christ had suffered, the supporters of the new theory maintained that he was above the feeling of pain; that the appearance of suffering was but an appearance, for he was of higher nature, though in appearance man. "Jesus was apparently, but not really of our race," was the teaching of those who sought to wed the prejudices of the allegorical Hebrews and the philosophical Greeks to the gospel of Christ crucified, in order to give it more "dignity" and "mystery," and make it more appealing.

THE Gnostics

The Gnostics followed the basic premise that all matter is evil. The human body is the source of pain and misery. Jesus as son of God, could not have been really all human. The particular philosophy advocated by Valentinus led to the conclusion that: "The divine Christ might have appeared, to blinded worldlings, as if he were tangible flesh and blood, but those with higher insight perceived that he was pure spirit and that the physical appearance was an optical illusion and mere semblance (Dokesis, whence this doctrine is labelled 'Docetism'). It was inconceivable that the divine Christ could have come "in the flesh" in any ultimately true sense. What people would have seen, had they been there at the time, would have differed according to their spiritual capacity" (Pelican History of the Church, vol.1. p.p.37-38).

P.Gardner-Smith states: "The Gnostics represented Christ as a wholly spiritual being, the immediate creation of the Supreme God and having nothing whatever in common with the world of matter which is the kingdom of evil. The body of Christ appeared to be real, but was in fact

only an appearance" (The Christian Religion: Its origin and Progress, vol. 2, part 1, p64).

Such is the background to the references in the letters of John, warning the believers against those who deny the coming of Jesus in the flesh. The Gnostics were a problem to the Church because their claim to a special superior knowledge was attractive to human nature - and they drew many away. Gardner-Smith observes: "The very name was an attraction to those who liked to think of themselves cleverer than their neighbours."

There is constant need to beware of a similar tendency. When we delve into the deeper things of God's sacred Word, we should be more and more smitten with humility and awe, and not puffed up with arrogance and pride in our knowledge. "In meekness instructing those who oppose themselves."

THE BEGINNING OF THE TRINITY

Gnosticism laid the seeds which led to the evolution of the doctrine of the Trinity. Their theory that Christ was a "wholly spiritual being" and not a partaker of the same flesh nature of man, immediately led to denial or modification of the virgin birth. Thus, Bethlehem ceased to be the beginning of Christ's existence.

Line upon line, here a little and there a little, the Truth lost and heresy gained, until about the middle of the second century (about A.D.150) when Justin Martyr, a Greek by birth, and by religion a Platonist, filled with the spirit of mysticism; embraced Christianity and had no small part in its corruption. He threw himself with ardour into the questions of the day, readily adapting the idea of the "logos" which he held as part of his Platonism.

But Justin Martyr cannot justly be described as a Trinitarian; he wrote much about the "logos," with many different and somewhat confused meanings; but principally as "The supreme reason" an attribute of God which had been given off as an emanation, and made into a separate person, or inferior God. He sought to identify this "inferior God" with the Creator in Genesis, and with the being who appeared to Abraham, Jacob, Moses and at various times in the Old Testament history. He taught that the "logos" became flesh in Christ, and that as an attribute of God, it had been from everlasting without beginning, which the son was not. He held the inferiority of the nature of Jesus, and speaks of his distinctness from God, calling him "the next in rank," and "next after God," and says that

men pray TO GOD THROUGH CHRIST. We cannot then, term him a Trinitarian in the usually accepted sense, but neither Unitarian nor Trinitarian, he seems vaguely to have professed a sort of Dualism. He contends for two Gods and two Lords, and quotes the "us" of Genesis 1:26 in support of his ideas. He declared God and Jesus Christ to be "numerically distinct," the emanation" not being equal of that from which it emanated. He seems To have been the first to teach the pre-existence of Christ.

The abilities of Justin Martyr were largely used in the recommendation of Christianity to the Roman heathen, and on one occasion he told a Roman Emperor that the divinity of the son of God should not be a strange thing to one whose own Jupiter was the father of many sons. To this point there was no confusion of the personalities of dignities of God and Jesus Christ. They were regarded as Father and son - two separate beings. But human philosophy, tending to extremes, gradually raised the status of Christ, finally making him "Very God of Very God," co-equal and co-eternal with the Father.

The theory of Jesus being an emanation from God was challenged, for it was argued that it was the kindling of one torch from another, and both must be equal. The storm raged, and one party cleaving to its false premises was forced to maintain the equality of Father and son. Long was the equality fought over, and driven by the logical stress of the primary error, the indivisibility of God was upheld; escaping one embarrassment, and opening the way for a thousand more, they declared that God and Jesus Christ were one and the same person - "one substance."

This gave scope for all manner of extraordinary deductions! If Christ was God, then God was seen and handled by men, which Scripture says is impossible. If Christ was God, then contrary to Scripture, God was tempted. If Christ was God, then the immortal God was crucified and died, which is a complete contradiction of terms. Well might such confusion be expressed in a well-known hymn as "Tis mystery all! The immortal dies! Who can explore his strange design?" Thus, the council of Ephesus in 431 A.D. decreed that "Mary was the mother of God," seeing Jesus Christ was God. Sometime after that, a dispute arose whether Anne, the mother of the virgin Mary, was to be termed the "Mother of the Mother of God," or "the Grandmother of God." Carrying back the matter step by step, the absurd and blasphemous conclusion was inevitably reached that Adam was the progenitor of God, since he was the ancestor of Mary. But this ridiculous state of things did not check the steady growth of the Trinitarian tree; these strange confusions had great appeal to

the philosophical spirit, and agreed only too well with the intellectual environment of the times. People love the bizarre, and mystery; the more mysterious and ridiculous a thing is, the more many people love it. A religion full of secrets that cannot be understood has always been more attractive and popular than one that is sound and makes sense.

It is truly significant and appropriate that the apostate Church is referred to in Rev. 17 as a great harlot and is depicted with the name "mystery ..." written on her forehead. The forehead represents the mind, the seat of all thought and conviction, and the word "mystery" is unashamedly used by the system to describe its Trinitarian concept of God: "a blessed mystery."

"It is not a little amusing," says Joseph Priestly, "to observe how the Fathers were constantly embarrassed with the heathens on the one hand, to whom they wanted to recommend their religion by exalting the person of Christ its founder, and on the other hand with the ancient Jewish and Gentile converts whose prejudices against polytheism they also wished to conciliate. Willing to please one, and anxious not to offend the other, they are particularly careful at the same time they give the appellation 'God' to Jesus Christ, to distinguish between him and the Father, giving a decided superiority to the latter." This fatal trimming to the prejudices of both sides runs distressingly through the history of the early centuries. The theological accommodation to moderated Gnostic influence as the years passed by, has a historical parallel in the decline of Israel after they had conquered the land. Within one generation of Joshua passing off the scene, corruption and apostasy was well established.

THEOPHILUS - FIRST TO USE WORD "TRINITY"

The first mention of the word "Trinity" in its Greek form "Trias" was by Theophilus, a Greek convert who became bishop of Antioch in Syria in the eighth year of the reign of Marcus Aurelius (168 A.D.). He used the word in the second of three books he wrote addressed to his friend Autolycus. Theophilus' allusion to the traditional Trinity - "the Father, the son and the Holy Ghost" - is quite nebulous at the best. It certainly is not the Trinity of the creed. Notice what Theophilus wrote in commenting about the fourth day of creation in the first chapter of Genesis: "And as the sun remains ever full, never becoming less, so does God always abide perfect, being full of all power, and understanding, and wisdom, and immortality, and all good. But the moon wanes monthly, and

in a manner dies, being a type of man; then it is born again, and is crescent, for a pattern of the future resurrection. In like manner also the three days which were before the luminaries, are types of the Trinity, of God, and His Word, and His Wisdom" (Ante-Nicene Fathers, "Theophilus to Autolycus").

Here is the first statement by a theologian that is supposed to teach the doctrine of the Trinity. But this statement is not the Trinity of the creed, but more a fanciful personification of attributes. He does not say that God is a Trinity of persons, or that the Holy Spirit is a part of that Trinity. His Trinity was composed of God, His word (Logos), and his wisdom.

Theologians have tried to read their Trinity into this statement, and yet even the editors of the 'Ante-Nicene Fathers' state in a footnote that the word translated "wisdom" in English is the Greek word "sophia" which Theophilus elsewhere used in relation to THE SON, not the Holy Spirit. Elsewhere, Theophilus plainly says "the true God is alone to be worshipped."

Both Catholic and Protestant theologians quote Theophilus of Antioch as the FIRST PERSON to write about this important doctrine. But isn't it strange that such a major doctrine was avoided in religious writings for nearly two centuries?

From the time of Theophilus, it was several hundred years before the doctrine of the Trinity became a part of the Catholic dogma. It was in the last 25 years of the fourth century that "what might be called the definitive Trinitarian dogma of 'one God in three persons' became thoroughly assimilated into Christian life and thought" (New Catholic Encyclopaedia, "Holy Trinity").

From this it is evident that this "central doctrine" of Catholicism and Protestantism was not a part of the "Faith once delivered to the saints." It was added later by other theologians who lived in a period when great declension from the Truth was taking place. Mosheim, in his 'History of the Church' and Gibbon, in his 'The Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire, (Ch. 21); both acknowledge that the word "Trinity" is not found in the Bible, and many theologians admit that it is not taught there.

IRENÆUS

In 177 A.D. Irenaeus also distinguished between the son and the only true God, and asserted the supremacy of the Father. He believed, and this is part of his Greek inheritance of thought; that the "logos" dwelt in

Christ, as the immortal soul dwelt in every man. He taught that Jesus suffered in his **WHOLE** nature in opposition to the Gnostics who said that only his manhood suffered as his God-head could not, being impassable.

TERTULLIAN

Tertullian, a Latin of Carthage and a lawyer, was converted to Christianity in A.D. 190, and became a famous father of the Church. He taught the pre-existence, but denied the eternity of the son, holding that the "logos" having existed from 'Eternity' with the Father, became the son in 'Time.' He says "the son is God in his nature because born of God - that is, begotten." When charged with teaching a plurality of Gods, he explained by saying that the Father is a Monarch, or single source of being, and the son and Spirit are His subordinates, or agents of His sovereignty.

Tertullian was the first to use the Latin word 'Trinitas.' Educated at Rome and Presbyter at Carthage, Tertullian laid the foundation of the Latin theology, which later was built upon by Cyprian and Augustine. Although he denounced Plato as a heretic, Tertullian expressed his theology in the terms of Plato's philosophy. He was among the first to teach the immortality of the soul and the endless torture of the wicked. Trinity and the immortality of the soul were developed and formulated into a system of theology by Augustine. Augustine's writings became the basic theology of the Roman Catholic Church.

Tertullian mentions the Trinity in his book written against Praxeas who held to the Monarchian theory. He wrote: "The mystery of the dispensation is still guarded, which distributes the unity into a Trinity, placing in their order the three **PERSONS** - the Father, the son and the Holy Ghost" (Tertullian. "Against Praxeas," "The Ante-Nicene Fathers").

CLEMENT AND ORIGEN

At Alexandria there was a famous school for the training catechumens, and some of its heads were not ashamed to call themselves Gnostics, though they avoided the more objectionable views of the heretics. Chief among these Alexandrians were Clement, who taught in the last decade of the second century, and his pupil Origen, one of the most learned Christians who ever lived. Only a few of Clement's writings have survived, but they enable us to see that in him the Church had a teacher who could present the faith of the Church in such terms as

would command the attention of the learned. Like the Gnostics, these Alexandrians thought chiefly of Christ as a Divine Being sent to reveal the Truth to men, and so to confer upon them the liberated blessings of knowledge; but unlike many of the heretics, they insisted that there can be no salvation without moral goodness, and that the promises of God are made to all men, and not a learned few.

The way in which Clement and Origen met the philosophers on their own ground was to get involved in intellectual wordiness and deduction in the same way. What a trap. Human reasoning comes to the fore and simple Biblical doctrine is lost sight of. A parallel today, in a sense, is the modernism of various Church leaders.

We will have a quick look at Clement's teachings to see what a contrast there is between him and the apostles 150 years before. He discusses the way in which Jesus could be both God and man; and tries to define the nature of the soul of Jesus. He states: "The principle of resentment and THE PRINCIPLE OF DESIRE ... WERE NOT IN JESUS." Hagenbach states: "Clement maintained that the body of Jesus was not subject to the accidents and influences of the external world with the same physical necessities as other human bodies; and Origen went so far as to ascribe to it the property of appearing to different persons under different forms" (History of Doctrine, vol.1, p244). It is not clear whether he is referring to before the crucifixion or after, but it would seem the former.

Clement sees "the rational human soul the necessary medium of the incarnation, since God could not be immediately united with a body." This suggests a way of thinking well on the way to the full-blown doctrine of the Trinity. Hegenbach sums up Clement's ideas about the person of Jesus in these words:

"But, after all, Clement refines the true human body of Jesus into little more than a kind of phantom ... he speaks of the eating and drinking of our Lord as only an accommodation to human nature, and calls it even ridiculous to think otherwise; for according to him, the body of Jesus was sustained by Divine power, but not by meats and drinks. Clement admits that his body was bruised and died; but still he maintains that THE PASSION WAS ONLY APPARENT, inasmuch as the suffering Redeemer FELT NO PAINS ... Clement also teaches that his divinity was veiled during his manifestation in the flesh ..." (History of Doctrine, vol.1, p.246). This excellently illustrates the evolution of Church doctrine as the human mind philosophises and tries to add to, and improve the Divine Word.

HIPPOLYTUS

In 220 A.D. Hippolytus, a Greek bishop believed in the Trinity, but not in the co-equal three, and he ascribed no personality to the Holy Spirit. In fact, it was long before personality was claimed for the Spirit, but at length from the reputation of the baptismal formula, and the tendency of the times to personify all things, caused some to look upon it as a person, and naturally enough this being admitted - as a Divine person. This change grew but slowly into place, and in 300 A.D. no Trinitarian forms of prayer were used in the Church.

THE ARIAN - ATHANASIAN CONTROVERSY

Specific attention was centred upon the doctrine of the Trinity early in the fourth century as a result of controversy between two Church leaders in Alexandria, Arius (256-336) and Athanasius (293-373).

Arius maintained that Jesus, although great, was in some way inferior to God. Athanasius, on the other hand, maintained that Christ was equal in every way with God. In 318 A.D. the controversy came into the open. Arius stated that if Jesus was really the son of God, then there must have been a time when there was a Father but no son. The Father, therefore, was greater than the son as Jesus declared him to be saying: "My Father is greater than I." In a local Church council held in 321 A.D. Arius and his friends were excommunicated from the Church because of this opinion. Arius however, had many friends and followers throughout all the Churches of Christendom. The false theory of the Trinity did not quickly attain a dominant position in the Church.

About the same time that the great controversy between Arius and Athanasius was raging throughout the Churches, the Emperor Constantine became the chief supporter of Christianity. The Emperor looked upon the Church as a great unifying force and was anxious for Christianity to become the universal religion of the Roman Empire. He wanted to avoid all internal strife within the Church. He reasoned that there must be a unified Church in order to have a unified empire.

THE COUNCIL OF NICAEA

Seeking to restore unity to the Churches, Constantine called a meeting of a general Church council. This was convened in the city of Nicaea (now Isnik) in Asia Minor in 325 A.D. Bishops and clergy of all Churches

were invited to attend the council with all expenses paid by the Emperor. The council of Nicaea in reality however, was a council of the Churches in the eastern section of the empire. While it is said that 318 bishops, besides lesser ecclesiastical officers were present, there were not 10 bishops present from the west. The council was not truly representative of the entire Church.

The two members of the Alexandrian congregation, Arius, a priest, who believed that Christ was not God, but a created being; and Athanasius, a deacon, who believed that the Father, son and Spirit are the same being living in a three-fold form (or in three relationships, as a man may be at the same time a father, a son and a brother); presented their cases.

Eusebius, known as the father of Church history, early in the council offered a compromise creed which used Scripture language instead of the philosophical terms used by Athanasius. The followers of Athanasius realized that a vote for Eusebius was really a vote for Arius because the Bible contains no statement of the doctrine of the Trinity. The compromise of Eusebius therefore, was rejected.

Emperor Constantine, who knew nothing about the theological facts being discussed, but was anxious to achieve unity, supported Athanasius. He knew it would be more palatable to the pagan philosophy extant at the time, throughout his empire.

The fact is generally overlooked that the council of Nicaea was not called by the Church leaders, as one might suppose. It was called by the Emperor Constantine, and he had a far from spiritual reason for wanting to solve the dispute that had arisen.

"In 325 the Emperor Constantine called an ecclesiastical council to meet at Nicaea in Bithynia. In the hope of securing for his throne the support of the growing body of Christians he had shown them considerable favour and it was to his interest to have the Church vigorous and united. The Arian controversy was threatening its unity and menacing its strength. He therefore undertook to put an end to the trouble. It was suggested to him, perhaps by the Spanish bishop Hosius who was influential at court; that if a synod were to meet representing the whole Church both east and west, it might be possible to restore harmony. Constantine himself of course neither knew or cared anything about the matter in dispute but he was eager to bring controversy to a close, and Hosius' advice appealed to him as sound" (A History of Christian Thought. Volume one page 258).

The decision as to which of the two men the Church was to follow

was a more or less arbitrary one. Constantine didn't really care which choice was made - all he wanted was a united Church and empire.

The majority of those present at the council were not ready to take either side in the controversy. "A clearly defined standpoint with regard to this problem - the relationship of Christ to God - was held only by the attenuated group of Arians and a far more numerous section of delegates, who adhered with unshaken conviction to the Alexandrian (Athanasius') view. The bulk of the numbers occupied a position between these two extremes. They rejected the formulae of Arius, and declined to accept those of his opponents - the voting was no criterion of the inward conviction of the council" (Encyclopaedia Britannica. eleventh edition article "Nicaea, Council Of," page 641).

Most of the bishops present finally signed the creed formulated by the Athanasian group. Those who would not sign, including Arius, Eusebius of Nicomedia, and Theognis of Nicaea, were banished and their books were burned publicly. (Arius and his friends were recalled from banishment by Constantine within three to five years after the council of Nicaea. They were examined and found to be without heresy)!

Thus the ideas of Athanasius - also a minority view - prevailed. The decision was in favour of the equality of the Father and son, and the phrase: "God of God, Very God of Very God" was framed. The rejection of Arianism was not blanket acceptance of Athanasius. Yet, the Church in all the ensuing centuries has been "stuck" so to speak, with the job of upholding - right or wrong - the decision made at Nicaea.

After the council, the Trinity became official dogma in the Church, but the controversy did not end. The debate went on for 56 years. The disputes got fiercer and fiercer and more Christians were killed by other Christians over that doctrine than were killed by all the pagan Emperors of Rome. It was a time of intense theological gladiatorship.

Athanasius was deposed by a great council at Tyre in 335 A.D. and was banished to Gaul. During the succeeding years, the followers of Arius and Athanasius were banished and recalled as various Emperors who ruled the empire favoured either one or the other of the theories.

The Trinitarians were hard put to it to hold the balance, even among the various constituents of the strange mixture of which the Christian Church was composed. How were they to reconcile the clamours of those who saw in the Trinitarian teaching of three Gods, a return to the polytheism of the heathen; with the demands of those who held that the exaltation of the one God was at the expense of two, equally great, powerful, and worthy of honour? The story of how they strove to

reconcile these mutually destructive theories is one of the most humiliating in Church history. The shifts, evasions and quibbles resorted to by the ablest men of the time are pitiful. Mild admiration for their ingenuity mingles with a hearty contempt for the pithiness of it all. Such is the price the Church paid for allowing itself to become corrupted from the simplicity that is in Christ.

The Nicaean council may be said to have settled, as far as the Church was concerned, the general outline of the doctrine of the Trinity. They condemned the attitude of Arius, and decreed his banishment; but despite his errors in certain departments, and the condemnation of the Church historians during the last century or two, one cannot but feel sympathy with him, when in private letter, quoted in a footnote by Milner, he writes:

"We are expelled because we agree not with him who publicly says, 'Always God, always the son; at the same time the Father, at the same time the son: the son co-exists with God without being begotten: he is always begotten yet unbegotten. God does not precede the son in thought, not for a moment. Always God, always the son: the son exists from God Himself.' We were condemned when we declared God, who had no beginning, existed before the son. That the son is not unbegotten nor a part of the unbegotten by any means, or of any subject matter, but that by will and counsel he existed before the times and the ages - before he was begotten, created, defined, or founded, he WAS NOT, for he was not unbegotten. We are persecuted because we say the son has a beginning, but God has not a beginning."

Truly, I would have to go into banishment with Arius, were I called upon to choose between that fate and subscribing to such a farrago of nonsense and contradiction as that which he antagonized.

Priestly says: "No sooner was the general outline of the doctrine of three persons in one God settled, than the orthodox began to divide upon questions of great nicety; and human passions and interests always mixing with these debates, the different parties anathematized each other with great violence."

The first dispute was as to the meaning of the word "person," and after years of quarrel, the expenditure of loads of parchment, and the sinking into the grave of many of the disputants, another council was held at Alexandria, at which they found they had believed the same thing all along, and had been disputing about words alone. Then the question was raised, and divisions took place, as to whether the Father from all eternity, could justly be so called, before He had a son.

It was at this council of Nicaea that the word "consubstantial" was

ecclesiastically born, a word that was to bear such bitter fruit in after years. The Greek equivalent is "homoousios." The semi-Arian's view was that Christ was of similar, but not identical substance with the Father. The Greek word homoiousis embodies this idea, and this difference of one letter gave rise to the cynical saying that the oceans of blood had been spilled for the sake of one iota. The term "consubstantial" soon came to mean individual identity, and also equality. It was now said that as the persons were of one individual essence there was only one object of supreme worship.

Little was made of the personality of the Holy Spirit at the council of Nicaea, it being mentioned in general terms, which might have betokened a person or an influence. As this was in doubt, the Emperor Theodosius called a council at Constantinople which met in 381 A.D. It was attended by about 150 bishops from the East. The council added the clause concerning the Holy Spirit which says: "... who with the Father and the son together is worshipped and glorified." Mosheim calls this the finishing touch on the structure of Trinitarianism, but as a matter of fact additions were made to the creed later. Still it may be said that with the ratification of this council of the personality of the Holy Spirit, the Trinitarian building received its coping stone.

Trinitarianism did not become the dominant and "orthodox" doctrine of Christendom until the time of Theodosius. Theodosius was the Emperor who made Christianity the state religion. The union of Church and State paved the way for the rise of the Roman Catholic Church. In the creed adopted by the council at Constantinople, Trinitarianism was made the official doctrine of the Church within the empire. All who disagreed were expelled from their pulpits and excommunicated from their Churches. It was the totalitarian rulership of the Roman Emperors and later the Roman Catholic Church that enabled the doctrine to maintain its place in a perverted theology.

Faithful believers, although outside the Roman Catholic Church, continued to believe the Bible teaching concerning the simple unity of God, and maintained that Father and son were separate persons. Northern Europe, converted by the great missionary Ulfilas (died 381 A.D.), embraced the Arian Christianity he taught. It was several centuries before the peoples of Northern Europe finally surrendered to belief in the Trinity and eventually became part of the Roman Catholic Church. Church history and history of doctrine reveal many faithful believers throughout the twenty centuries of the Church age who have repudiated the theory of the Trinity and have insisted on the Bible's teaching concerning the unity

of God.

In 451 A.D. the council of Chalcedon authorized the doctrine of the double nature of Christ, and Christ as son was declared co-equal with, and as a man, inferior to, the Father.

Though it has nothing to do with the growth of the Trinitarian idea, it is interesting to find the reason of the separation of the Greek and Latin Churches bound up with the disputes over the Holy Spirit. From the fifth century till the eleventh, the procession of the Spirit, whether from the Father or from the son, was disputed, till at length in 1054 the two Churches mutually excommunicated each other, and have remained apart ever since. The 10th century was remarkable in this connection for the institution of an annual festival in honour of Holy Trinity, and this was fixed to be on the first Sunday after Pentecost, and has been so kept by the Church of Rome and the Church of England since.

Quoting in part from Bacon, Macaulay, in a well known comment, discerningly says: "In the fifth century, Christianity had conquered Paganism, and Paganism had infected Christianity. The Church was now victorious and corrupt. The rites of the Pantheon had passed into her worship, the subtleties of the academy onto her creed. In an evil day was the ill-starred alliance stricken between the old philosophy and the new faith. Questions subtle, interminable, and unprofitable, exercised the minds of the lively and voluble Greeks. There was a sowing of the wind, and a reaping of the whirlwind."

These words of the great historian are a testimony to the fulfilment of Paul's warnings, and, with the history of this great departure from the simplicity of God's revelation of Himself, should give pause to any who think they stand, "to take heed lest they fall."

ACKNOWLEDGED BY VARIOUS THEOLOGIANs

Many theologians have frankly admitted that the doctrine of the Trinity is not taught in the Bible, and that it cannot be logically explained. They acknowledge that the teaching is incomprehensible and that it propounds a contradiction of terms.

For instance, Mr.F.J.Wilkin, M.A. D.D. Professor of Theology, Baptist College of Victoria Australia, made this statement: "In the Old Testament, the Unity of God was clearly affirmed. The Jewish creed, repeated in every synagogue today, was: "Hear, O Israel, the Lord our God is one Lord" (Deu. 6:4). **THIS WAS THE FAITH OF THE FIRST CHRISTIANS**, so Paul writes: "There is one God and Father of all, Who

is above all and through all and in you all" (Eph. 4:6). BUT GRADUALLY SOME ADDITION OR MODIFICATION OF THIS CREED WAS FOUND NECESSARY ..."

This statement is staggering in its frankness. It confesses that the doctrine of the Trinity is not contained in the Bible, that it differs from the teaching of the apostles, and that it was adopted by the Church only after many years of contention.

The writer of "Christian Theology," himself an ardent Trinitarian, virtually agrees. In his footnote on page 402 in which he quotes Strong, he points out that the Old Testament Scriptures "DO NOT by themselves FURNISH A SUFFICIENT BASIS for the doctrine of the Trinity, and therefore no Jewish writer before Christ had succeeded in constructing the doctrine from them." He also points out in his footnote on page 423 that there is "an absence of the definitions from Scripture."

Regarding the New Testament, the writer of Christian Theology states on page 405 that "During the apostolic and sub-apostolic period, the doctrine of the Trinity was held in an undogmatic form. There was no scientific or technical expression of it, nor was there any necessity, until heresies arose which demanded exact and guarded statements." The fact of the indefiniteness of the doctrine of the Trinity in the New Testament is acknowledged in his next sentence where he refers to "THE FACT OF THIS INDEFINITENESS ..."

On pages 393-394 the writer further acknowledges that the "doctrine of the Trinity in the Bible is as humid air. The cool WAVE OF REFLECTION THROUGH WHICH THE CHURCH PASSED, condensed its thoughts and precipitated what all along had been in solution."

On page 418 he agrees that the term 'Trias' was first used by Theophilus (180AD) in connection with God, His Word and His Wisdom. He then points out that it was somewhat later than this that the word 'Trinitas' was used by Tertullian. He agrees that the accepted formula for expressing the unity and tri-unity of God were first used by Tertullian.

He says on page 416 that the Church WAS FORCED TO CLARIFY ITS BELIEF in the Trinity AS A RESULT OF CONTROVERSY. Thus the Nicene creed emerged in 325 A.D. and a more explicit statement was given later in the Athanasian creed (449 A.D).

Now when all these statements are put together, it is evident that the writer of Christian Theology freely admits that:

(1) The Old Testament Scriptures do not by themselves furnish a sufficient basis for the doctrine of the Trinity.

(2) There is no scientific or technical expression of the doctrine in the New Testament.

(3) In Scripture the doctrine of the Trinity is an indefinite doctrine taught implicitly and not explicitly - "as humid air."

(4) The doctrine came into being several centuries after the apostolic age THROUGH REFLECTION as a result of controversy. Till then, it was not a clarified doctrine. The term "Trinity" was never used by the Church till this later period.

This development of the Doctrine of the Trinity immediately arouses suspicion in the mind of a devout Bible scholar. Any fundamental Bible doctrine which traces its development to post apostolic times (especially around the period that Paul and John warned that heresy would arise) and not to the apostolic period itself, is more than suspect. The fact that the Trinity is not a definite, clearly defined doctrine in the Bible is more than sufficient reason to think very carefully before embracing it.

THE BIGGEST WEAKNESS

The biggest weakness in the whole argument as set forward by the writer of 'Christian Theology' can be seen in a statement made on page 405. He says: "During the apostolic and sub-apostolic period, the doctrine of the Trinity was held IN AN UNDOGMATIC FORM. There was no scientific or technical expression of it, NOR WAS THERE ANY NECESSITY UNTIL HERESIES AROSE which demanded exact and guarded statements."

Let us think about this very carefully. As pointed out before, the doctrine of the Trinity is diametrically opposed to the monotheistic faith of Israel. Now the preaching of the gospel started in Israel's land. It was born there and for quite some time had its centre there. It was from Israel that the gospel worked its way out to Samaria, Galilee, and the uttermost parts of the earth where there were not only Gentiles, but also large colonies of Jews.

Rest assured, if the Trinity was the Christian concept of the Godhead at that time, then the whole of hell would have been let loose over it during the apostolic period. A controversy of unprecedented magnitude would have raged over this issue between Jews and Christians, and there would be a voluminous record of it in the New Testament. Consider the controversy that was encountered with the Jews during the first century over the doctrine of "Christ crucified" which was a stumblingblock to

them. Because their theology did not cater for a Messiah who died an ignominious death on a Roman stake, they fiercely resisted the message of "Christ crucified" and there is ample record of it in the New Testament. Consider also the controversy that Jesus and the apostles encountered with the Jews for simply not conforming to their Sabbath and dietary regulations, and other relatively minor traditions of the fathers such as washing up to the elbows before eating food. Yet these things, to a Jew, would be quite secondary and trivial compared to altering and modifying their monotheistic concept of God. "Hear O Israel the Lord our God is one Lord," was the greatest commandment in their creed. It was this that separated them from surrounding polytheism. It was this that made their religion unique. To teach or preach anything that violated their monotheistic concept of God would have stirred them up to a fanatical frenzy and wrath, and there would be ample record of it in the New Testament. Instead, there is not one single reference throughout the entire apostolic ministry to the Jews opposing the gospel on the ground that the Christians claimed Jesus was "Very God" - co-equal and co-eternal with the Father. No, not one reference! Why? Because the first century Christians didn't believe or teach it!

In view of Jewish dogmatism on the individual oneness of God, and the controversy that another concept like the Trinity would create, there would have been a need at the very outset for a doctrine such as the Trinity to be held in dogmatic form. The opposition and resistance that it would have received from the Jews would have forced it. It would have been one of the "hottest potatoes" that the Christians would have been called upon to hold at the time. In other words, the situation would have been the very opposite to what the writer of the Christian Theology has written.

Without any shadow of a doubt, if the Trinitarian concept of God was believed and taught by the Christians during New Testament times, it would have been absolutely necessary it give it "scientific and technical expression" because the "heresy" of the monotheistic Hebrews would demand exact and guarded statements!

Quite the opposite however was the case. Repeatedly throughout the New Testament, the oneness of God the Father is stressed, confirming the monotheistic faith which the Father firmly inculcated in the Hebrew nation over a period of several thousand years. There is no reference to the Trinity in the Old or New Testament. There is not a single reference to controversy between Jews and Christians over Jesus being God.

It is true, as discussed in an earlier chapter, that the Jews threatened

to stone Jesus on one or two occasions because, in their estimation, he claimed to be God, or equal with God. However, as we have seen, they completely misconstrued and misinterpreted his teaching, and in his reply to them on those occasions, he refuted and rejected the accusations. He made it clear that he did not claim to be God but "the Son of God," and that he was not equal with God because "of my own self I can do nothing." The Jews were obviously satisfied with his answers because they never charged him with claiming to be equal with God during his interrogation prior to crucifixion. Claiming to be equal with God would be blasphemy of the highest order to a Jew and they would have seized upon such statements in any trial when seeking to put him to death. But, significantly enough, no one made this accusation!

In passing, it should also be pointed out that the Jewish animosity towards Jesus when they THOUGHT he claimed to be God reveals how they would have reacted towards the Christians had they believed and taught the Trinity! The fact that there is no record of this happening indicates that the Christians did not believe or teach Jesus was God in the sense of being the "One God" of the Hebrew creed.

So when all the facts are put together, it seems obvious that the first century Christian's concept of the Godhead could not possibly have been the Trinity in any shape or form. If it was, heated controversy would have resulted and there would be ample record of war and debate over it. Such a situation would have necessitated exact and guarded statements of a very dogmatic nature from the very outset in order for it to survive. Christ crucified and God's acceptance of the Gentiles were two outstanding controversies between the Jews and Christians during the first century and they are accordingly well documented in the New Testament. The same would apply to the Trinity had it been taught in any shape or form in that period.

Anyway, since when do major Bible doctrines have to wait for heresy before receiving proper expression? If Jesus were "Very God of Very God," and if it was essential for salvation to believe this, it would have been preached from the very outset of apostolic preaching. Why hide it and conceal it if it was the truth?

In view of the facts of history and the Bible teaching, it would be closer to the truth to rewrite the section quoted before from Christian Theology in these words: "During the apostolic and sub-apostolic period, the doctrine of the Trinity was not held in a dogmatic or undogmatic form. There was no scientific or technical expression of it, nor was there any necessity until it arose as a heresy and demanded exact and guarded

statements."

On page 406 the writer of Christian theology quotes many post-apostolic writers who believed in the Trinity. No one would dispute the fact that there were many men during the centuries that followed the New Testament era who believed and taught this. The point that would be disputed is whether or not they taught the truth. Unfortunately, it doesn't really help to quote outside the authority of the Word of God because there were so many false teachers around, as the New Testament writers warned there would be. The Roman Catholics trace an unbroken line of Popes back to Peter to justify Popery, and can quote many Church "fathers" who agree with the system. The same applies to the worship of Mary, the worship of the saints and transubstantiation etc. Many "authorities" throughout history can be quoted who supported these doctrines which are now rejected by the Protestant Churches - and many of these so-called "authorities" were highly intellectual and eminent men in their time! But it must be upon Scripture and Scripture alone that we stand. If we find ourselves continually having to quote outside of Scripture from other sources to uphold our convictions, then there is something radically wrong with our convictions. And unfortunately, the Trinitarian concept relies so much on historical data outside the confines of the Word of God. In fact, a good ninety percent of the chapter on the Trinity in Christian Theology concentrates in this area.

Interestingly enough, talking about those who still held to the monotheistic concept of God during the period after the New Testament times, it is pointed out on page 408 of Christian Theology that during the time of Tertullian, the common people were constantly accusing him of preaching two gods and three gods. "Thus," the writer says, "there arose the acute problem of attempting to relate Christ to God and yet preserve the belief in monotheism." It is clear from this and other historical references, that the common people were generally against the Trinitarian concept which Tertullian and his intellectual and philosophical elite were trying to superimpose upon the Christian faith. They regarded it as a violation of monotheism and a reversion to polytheism. It only ever got off the ground and became established through strong arm methods - through meeting of the hierarchy presided over by an Emperor who was still basically pagan and whose Christianity was rather doubtful.

GREEK AND ROMAN METAPHYSICS

The Encyclopaedia Britannica, in one edition, states: "The propositions constitutive of the dogma of the Trinity were not drawn directly from the New Testament, AND COULD NEVER BE EXPRESSED IN NEW TESTAMENT TERMS. (My emphasis). They were products of reason SPECULATING on a revelation to faith - they were only formed through centuries of effort, only elaborated by the aid of the conceptions and formulated on the terms of GREEK AND ROMAN METAPHYSICS."

In short, the doctrine of the Trinity finds its source, not in the Bible but in pagan mythology. Triads of deities were prevalent in pagan mythology. Although many gods were worshiped in polytheistic nations, there were usually three deities which were considered as chief. Hinduism believed in one substance Brahman expressed in three personalities: Brahma, the Creator, Vishnu, the Preserver, and Shiva, the Destroyer. Persian Zoroastrianism believed in Ahura Mazda, the good deity, and Angra Manyu, the evil deity who were expressions of Mithra, the great primal cause. Confucius is reported to have written: "Tao (God) is by nature one; the first begat the second; both together brought forth the third; these three made all things."

Osiris, Isis, and Nephthys seem to have formed a triad of deities in Egypt. In Babylon the three were Ea, the god of watery wastes; Enlil, the lord of the storms; and Anu, the lord of the heavens. In Greece the three deities among many on Mount Olympus were Zeus, Hera, and Athena. The triad of deities that the Romans templed on the Capitoline Hill consisted of Jupiter, Juno, and Minerva. The three leading deities of the Germans were Odin, Thor, and Freyer.

Plato personified three eternal principles: Goodness, Intellect, and the Soul of All. Plato's philosophy prevalent in Greek and Roman thought was a major factor in bringing various false doctrines into Christendom. Although the Trinity of paganism and the Trinity of Christendom were not identical in all the precise details of definition, it is apparent that the one originated from the other. Pagans who apparently were not thoroughly converted became members of the Church, and as some of these men with great scholarly attainments assumed places of leadership as teachers and theologians, the theology of the Church was gradually paganized, resulting in three Gods instead of one, the worship of saints, purgatory, penances, Popery, Mariolatry, idols and images in places of worship, immortal souls, devil with pointed ears, pitch-fork and spear-headed tail

etc etc. The teachings of the Bible were re-interpreted and adjusted to fit the teachings of pagan philosophy. The reformation has cleaned up a lot of this error of the "dark ages" but the restoration work is not over yet! Whether we believe it or not, God plans to totally restore "the years that the cankerworm has eaten."

In support of what has been said, consider the following:

"Although the notion of a Triad or Trinity is characteristic of the Christian religion, it is by no means peculiar to it. In Indian religion, e.g., we meet with the Trinitarian group of Brahma, Siva, and Visnu; and the Egyptian religion with the Trinitarian group of Osiris, Isis, and Horus, constituting a divine family, like the Father, mother and son in medieval Christian pictures. Nor is it only in historical religions that we find God viewed as Trinity. One recalls in particular the Neo-Platonic view of the Supreme or Ultimate Reality, which was suggested by Plato ..." (Hastings' Bible Dictionary, Vol. 12, p.458).

Of course, the fact that someone else had a Trinity does not in itself mean that the Christians borrowed it. McClintock and Strong make the connection a little clearer: "Toward the end of the first century, and during the second, many learned men came over both from Judaism and paganism to Christianity. These brought with them into the Christian schools of theology their Platonic ideas and phraseology" (article "Trinity," Vol. 10, p.553).

No wonder the apostle Paul spoke so firmly against philosophy and gave strict warnings about it: "Beware lest any man lead you away through philosophy and vain deceit, based upon the tradition of men, according to the rudiments of the world, and not according to Christ" (Col.2:8).

In his book, "A History of Christian Thought," Arthur Cushman McGiffert points out that the main argument against those who believed that there was only one God and that Christ was a created being, was that their idea did not agree with Platonic philosophy. Such teachings were "offensive to theologians, particularly to those who felt the influence of the Platonic philosophy" (p.240). On page 243 he refers to a Christian by the name of Paul of Samosata who was opposed to Trinitarianism. In his beliefs about the person of Jesus Christ, he "rejected the Platonic realism WHICH UNDERLAY MOST OF THE CHRISTOLOGICAL SPECULATION OF THE DAY."

At the end of his chapter on the Trinity, McGiffert concludes: "... It has been the boast of orthodox theologians that in the doctrine of the Trinity both religion and philosophy come to the highest

expression" (Vol.1. p.247).

The influence of Platonic philosophy on the Trinity can hardly be denied. However, Trinitarian ideas go much further back than Plato as we have seen. "Though it is usual to speak of the Semitic tribes as monotheistic; yet it is an undoubted fact that more or less all over the world the deities are in triads. This rule applies to eastern and western hemispheres, to north and south. Further, it is observed that, in some mystical way, the triad of three persons is one ... The definition of Athanasius (a fourth century Christian who lived in Egypt, applied to the trinities of all heathen religions" (Egyptian Belief and Modern Thought, by James Bonwick, F.R.G.S., p.396).

It was Athanasius' formulation for the Trinity which was adopted by the Catholic Church at the Council of Nicaea in A.D. 325. Athanasius was an Egyptian from Alexandria and his philosophy was also deeply rooted in Platonism.

"The Alexandria catechetical school, which revered Clement of Alexandria and Origen, the greatest theologians of the Greek Church, as its heads, applied the allegorical method to the explanation of Scripture. ITS THOUGHT WAS INFLUENCED BY PLATO: its strong point was theological speculation. Athanasius and the three Cappadocians had been included among its members ..." (Ecumenical Councils of the Catholic Church, by Hubert Jedin, p.29).

"There is recognition on the part of exegetist and the Biblical theologians, including a constantly growing number of Roman Catholics, THAT ONE SHOULD NOT SPEAK OF TRINITARIANISM IN THE NEW TESTAMENT WITHOUT SERIOUS QUALIFICATION. There is also the closely parallel recognition - that when one does speak of unqualified Trinitarianism, ONE HAS MOVED AWAY FROM THE PERIOD OF CHRISTIAN ORIGINS TO SAY, THE LAST QUADRANT OF THE FOURTH CENTURY. It was only then that what might be called the definitive dogma 'one God in three persons' became thoroughly assimilated into Christian life and thought" (New Catholic Encyclopaedia, article "Trinity" Vol. 14, p.295).

It is interesting to recall the words quoted earlier from the Encyclopaedia Britannica, where it stated that "the propositions constitutive of the dogma of the Trinity were not drawn directly from the New Testament and could not be expressed in the New Testament terms. They were the products of reason speculating on a revelation to faith - they were only formed through centuries of effort, only elaborated by the aid of the conceptions and formulated in the terms of Greek and Roman

metaphysics."

"Metaphysics" is theoretical philosophy of mind - abstract or subtle talk - mere theory - based on abstract general reasoning (and not on the Word of God). The Bible refers to it as "Science (Grk. 'gnosis' i.e. 'knowledge') falsely so called, which some professing have erred from the faith" (1 Tim 6:20).

The Jerusalem Bible puts this very nicely: "My dear Timothy, take great care of all that has been entrusted to you. Have nothing to do with pointless philosophical discussions and antagonistic beliefs of the 'knowledge' which is not knowledge at all; by adopting this, some have gone right away from the faith."

Paul was not the least bit interested in, or sympathetic towards philosophy - especially Platonic philosophy which was so popular and universally accepted in his day. It mattered not to Paul that the whole world had virtually become converted to Platonism. He did not conclude that the majority are always on the right side. He could see it for what it was - abstract and subtle talk based on human reasoning and speculation, and totally foreign to the Word of God. He therefore refused to have anything to do with it and exhorted others like Timothy to follow his example.

True Christianity and Christian doctrine rests on the Bible alone, and is expressed in the language of the Bible. The moment we put the Scriptures aside and start listening to other voices instead, is the moment we start running the risk of becoming enmeshed in human philosophy and vain tradition. The Scriptures alone are able to make us wise unto salvation (2 Tim 3:15), and "if any man speak, let him speak according to the oracles of God." "If they speak not according to this Word it is because there is no light in them" (Isa.8:20). As said before: when a doctrine cannot be expressed in Scriptural terms but has to go outside Scripture for expression and support, there is bound to be something radically wrong with it. The serious Bible student will be suspicious immediately and will subject it to very careful and critical analysis. Such has been the approach towards the doctrine of the Trinity in this thesis.

This brings us to the end of Part one of the thesis in which we have set out to establish the individual Oneness of God. Father-God is One Person - the First Cause - the Number One Power of the universe. This is the true original monotheism taught by God from the very beginning. It has not changed. Jesus and the apostles endorsed it. Jesus is the Son of God and is neither co-equal or co-eternal with his Father. He is called "god" in the secondary sense because, being son of God, he is a full and

perfect reflection and representation of his Father.
This now brings us to Part Two: The Pre-existence of Christ.

* * * * *

CHAPTER ELEVEN THE PRE-EXISTENCE OF CHRIST

"Pre-existence of Christ" defines the doctrine that Christ existed before he was born. "Pre-existence" means "before existence." Literally, it means "to exist before existing," and as such is really a contradictory term. It is not surprising therefore, that the Bible never uses the term. The word "pre-existence," like the word "Trinity" is unscriptural. "Pre-human" would be a more accurate term or title for the view that Jesus existed before he was born, but Scripture never uses this word either. The Bible declares that Jesus was "foreordained" but not fore-formed. Jesus was "predestinated" but did not pre-exist. He had a "post-existent" experience as a result of being resurrected from the dead, but not a pre-existent experience!

There are basically two views on the pre-existence of Christ: (1) The Trinitarian view. If Jesus existed from all eternity with his Father, being co-eternal with Him, it is naturally concluded that he must have existed before his birth. This is the view taken by the Trinitarians. (2) Certain groups like the Jehovah Witnesses and the Plain Truth organization reject the Trinitarian concept of Jesus being co-equal and co-eternal with the Father, but still maintain Jesus pre-existed. They believe that at some unknown time, long before his birth, the Father made him or created him. It is thus maintained that Jesus became the son of God before Mary gave birth to him, and the reference in Dan.3:25 to "the son of God" is regarded as applying to the pre-existent son.

On the surface, a number of statements in Scripture give the appearance of teaching pre-existence. We read, for instance in Mic.5:2 that the "goings forth" of Messiah have been "from of old, from everlasting." Other Scriptures in the New Testament refer to Jesus coming from heaven, coming from "above," being "sent by God," and of being before Abraham and having glory with the Father before the world was etc.

However, if these Scriptures teach "pre-existence," why didn't the New Testament writers ever use that term? It was a very common term in New Testament times because Platonic philosophy, which was universally accepted at that time; advocated the doctrine of pre-existence. It maintained that all men pre-existed. Why then, did the New Testament writers avoid using the word in relation to the greatest man who ever walked upon the earth? Instead, they used the words "foreordain" and predestinate."

When the principles of Divine conception, predestination and Divine foreknowledge are properly understood; all the passages of Scripture which are commonly regarded as teaching pre-existence appear in quite a different light. As we pursue this subject in greater depth, we will discover that all the statements generally regarded as teaching pre-existence, do not actually teach that at all, but "predestination" instead.

DOES IT REALLY MATTER?

Does it really matter if we believe Jesus existed before his birth or not? Indeed it does! Believing that Jesus pre-existed from all eternity as "Very God of Very God", or that Father-God made him some time before he was born of Mary, has a profound effect on our understanding of the nature of his birth; his nature as a man; and the nature of his sacrifice, death, resurrection, and exaltation. Unfortunately, the pre-existence concept interferes with and upsets a number of fundamental truths relating to Christ. It makes of none effect and virtually nullifies certain basic principles relating to the birth, death and resurrection of Christ. I would go so far to say that it is virtually impossible to fully comprehend and appreciate the real significance and underlying principles of the sacrifice of Christ and his sonship, while holding to the doctrine of pre-existence.

The principles most affected by the doctrine of pre-existence will now be briefly summarized and then later developed and expanded in the ensuing chapters.

1. IT NULLIFIES MARY'S CONCEPTION

It is commonly believed that the pre-existent Christ was dissolved or transformed into an embryo, and then placed into Mary's womb to become clothed with human flesh. This process is called the "incarnation." But all the terms that popular theology employs to explain the process are unbiblical. "Pre-existent," "dissolved," "transformed," "embryo," "incarnation" etc, are never used in Scripture in relation to Christ's birth.

This process of a pre-existent Christ transforming himself into an embryo and being placed in Mary's womb, completely negates Mary's conception. The gospel records clearly state that Mary "CONCEIVED" through the Holy Spirit. (Matt.1:20. Lk.1:31, 35).

Now, "conceive" is a specific biological term with a specific meaning. It involves the female ovum, or egg; being fertilized as it passes down the fallopian tube. After fertilization, the egg divides into two then

four and so on, as the embryo begins to develop. It passes down into the womb and develops into a foetus. So then, "conception" takes place when the female ovum is penetrated by the fertilizing "seed."

But, if a pre-existent Christ was placed in Mary's womb as an embryo, Mary did not "conceive." An egg from her ovary was not used. Mary is therefore reduced to a mere "test-tube" into which an already existing Christ in embryonic form placed himself. He simply "used" Mary as an incubator. All references to Mary "conceiving" become artificial and false - a farce!

2. IT NULLIFIES SONSHIP

If Mary's conception took place through a pre-existent Christ entering her ovum or womb, why doesn't Scripture say that Mary conceived through the overshadowing of the Holy Son? Instead, it says she conceived through the overshadowing of the Holy Spirit: "The Holy Spirit shall COME UPON YOU ..." (Lk.1:35). This is clear enough. It was the Holy Spirit, and not a pre-existent Holy Son, that came upon Mary causing her to conceive. Now, if Mary conceived through the Holy Spirit coming upon her, it is evident that the Holy Spirit penetrated and fertilized her ovum, and not a pre-existent Holy Son. And if the Holy Spirit is a separate person from the Father and son as Trinitarianism contends, then why wasn't Mary's child called the Son of the Holy Spirit? Why was Jesus called the Son of the Father when it was by the Holy Spirit that Mary conceived? If Mary conceived through the Holy Spirit, and if the Holy Spirit is separate and distinct from the Father, Jesus would clearly be Son of the Holy Spirit and not the only begotten of the Father at all. It should be evident from this that the Holy Spirit is what Scripture declares it to be - the "power of the Highest" i.e. the Father's power. If Mary conceived through THE HOLY SPIRIT and the child produced is called the only begotten of THE FATHER, it is evident that the Father and the Holy Spirit are one and the same.

Here is another point: If Mary conceived through a pre-existent Christ entering her ovum or womb, how could this change him from being co-eternal with the Father into a Son of the Father? If an eternal God transformed Himself into an embryo, He would surely still remain the eternal God in an embryonic form, for He hasn't died during the transaction.

This example might help. Let us liken the Trinity to three brothers who are triplets - virtually the same age as each other and co-equal. If one

of them was to transform himself into an embryo and enter a woman's ovum and develop into a baby, how could that possibly make him the son of one of his brothers? In no way could such a feat, were it possible, make that man the son of one of his brothers. The mere thought and suggestion of it is foolish and ridiculous. Yet, this is basically what the doctrine of the Trinity requires a person to believe in relation to Christ.

There was only one way in which the Father could have a Son through Mary in the full and proper sense of the word, and that was through His own generative power penetrating and fertilising Mary's ovum, causing her to conceive. And this precisely is what the Word of God says took place. Until this took place, there was no Son of God, or to put it more precisely: there was no "only begotten of the Father."

Scripture emphatically declares that Jesus became God's Son through BEGETTAL - DIVINE BEGETTAL - the Father's power coming upon and overshadowing Mary, causing her to conceive. The words of the Father Himself are: "Thou art my SON, THIS DAY have I BEGOTTEN thee." This statement stresses that it was through begettal that Jesus became God's Son. And the words: "THIS DAY," clearly imply that prior to being begotten, Jesus was not God's Son. In other words, Jesus did not exist as Son of God prior to being born of Mary.

If Jesus existed as Son of God before his birth, he would not be Son of God through begettal. He would have been MADE by God as He made the angels. In other words, the original Son of God would have been produced by creative act without necessitating a woman or conception. And if this was the case, then Jesus was no different or any more unique than the angels. But the writer of Heb. 1:5-7 is at pains to show that Jesus did not become Son of God in the same way as the angels. His argument is as follows: "For unto which of the angels said God at any time, Thou art my Son, this day have I BEGOTTEN thee? ... And of the angels God says, I have MADE my angels spirits ..."

Angels by creative act, like Adam, were MADE sons of God. They had no mother. They were not begotten. Jesus however became THE Son of God through BEGETTAL. And the moment we say he existed before his birth and was originally MADE by the creative act of God, we place Jesus on the same level of sonship as the angels and make a farce of Mary's conception as well as the Father's announcement: "Thou art my Son, this day have I begotten thee." If Jesus already was the Son of God long before being begotten, and was addressed by the Father as such (which many believe on the basis of Dan 3:25), then there is no big deal in being called the Son of God when he appeared on the earth as a man.

The uniqueness of Christ's sonship is definitely undermined and weakened the moment we say he existed as a Son of God long before his birth. So did many others! There are thousands of angels and they are all "sons of God." God has made and created them that way. And if that is how the original Christ came into being, then he is no different or superior or any more unique than the angels.

But it is stressed in Hebrews chapter one that Christ is unique and superior to the angels by virtue of the way in which the Father brought him into existence. Never before or since in the history of man, has God released His generative power to fertilize a female ovum. Except for Mary, no other woman has ever conceived through the Holy Spirit. Jesus is the only man in history to be born through Divine conception. He is distinctly and exclusively the "ONLY BEGOTTEN of the Father."

3. IT NEGATES ALL HEREDITARY CONNECTIONS

If a pre-existent Christ entered Mary's womb as an embryo, and an egg from Mary's ovary was not used, then Jesus would have no hereditary attachment or connection with his mother or her ancestral line. As said before: Mary would simply be a "test-tube" into which Christ in embryonic form was placed as fertilized eggs are placed into an incubator.

It is a known medical fact that the GENES are the minute carriers of our hereditary traits. They are arranged in lines along the chromosomes, the tiny strands of genetic material found in the nuclei of all body cells. During fertilisation, 23 single chromosomes are contributed by the father (in a sperm cell) and 23 by the mother (in the ovum), so that the new individual has 23 pairs, with sets of genes from both parents. The child will thus grow up with characteristics inherited from both parents. (The Hamlyn Family Medical Dictionary p.158).

So then, if Mary did not "conceive" by the Holy Spirit in the strict biological sense of the term - if her ovum was not fertilized by the "power of the Highest," then the child born (Jesus) had no hereditary connection with her or her ancestral line. In reality, Mary would not really be the "mother" of Jesus in the usually accepted sense of the word.

Scripture plainly declares that the Messiah would be the "SEED" of Abraham and David, according to the flesh (Rom.1:3. Gal.3:16). The word "seed" comes from the Greek word "sperma" from which our English word "sperm" has been derived.

Does this mean then, that Abraham's and David's sperm was preserved and used to fertilise Mary's ovum? By no means! It simply

means that the ancestral line into which Abraham's and David's sperm had been injected, would be the same line out of which Messiah would come. This is what is meant when God promised the Messiah to David in these words: "I will set up your seed after you, WHICH SHALL PROCEED OUT OF YOUR BOWELS ..." (2 Sam.7:12). Messiah was to come out of the line which had been impregnated with Abraham's and David's genes. The genes, as we have seen, are the carriers of our hereditary traits; and by being born of a woman who was a direct descendant of Abraham and David, and who was therefore impregnated with their genes; Jesus also became the "seed" of Abraham and David in a real genetic sense. Through his mother, he has a personal, organic, family relationship with David and Abraham. This is what is meant in Rom.1:3 where it says Jesus is the seed (sperma) of David "ACCORDING TO THE FLESH." These words "according to the flesh" are rendered: "... on the human level," by the New English Bible. It simply refers to the fact that, on the human side through his mother, who was a direct descendant of David, Jesus had direct hereditary connection with David. He was therefore qualified to sit upon David's throne and reign as king. He was not the seed of David merely in a spiritual sense but also in a biological sense.

BUT, if Jesus pre-existed long before Abraham and David were born, and finally placed himself in Mary's womb as an embryo, he would have no true hereditary connection with Abraham or David. In other words, he would not be the true Messiah and would have no right to sit upon the throne of David. He would not be the true heir promised to David.

4. IT DENIES THAT JESUS WAS "THE SAME" AS US

In an earlier chapter, attention was drawn to the importance of believing Jesus shared "the same" flesh nature as man (Heb.2:14). He came to do battle with sin, and seeing that every sinful act springs from the impulses of the flesh, Jesus had to partake of the same flesh which contained those impulses. He came "in the likeness of sinful flesh" (Rom.8:3). By sharing the very nature over which sin had ruled and reigned since Adam, Jesus met sin on its own ground and was able to have a head-on encounter with it. He was able to deal with it at its root level and put it to death in his body of flesh by the Spirit. It is absolutely vital to the original Christian faith to believe that Jesus came in the same flesh as man and experienced the same impulses and temptations. To deny this is "anti-Christ" for it robs Jesus of his moral victory and glory in overcoming sin, and reduces the cross to a very artificial affair.

Now if Jesus had no real hereditary connection with his mother - if he did not develop within Mary as a result of her ovum being fertilized, then he would not be impregnated with any of her genes, and therefore would not inherit any of her human characteristics. If Jesus pre-existed as a sinless God or Son of God, and transformed himself into an embryo and entered Mary's womb, he would still remain a sinless God in embryonic form. He would not be able to be tempted (Jam.1:13). Every man is tempted when he is lured and enticed by the lusts of the flesh (Jam.1:14). But if Jesus was not impregnated with his mother's genes, but was a pre-existent sinless God placed in her womb as a fertilized egg is placed in an incubator, then he would be devoid of the impulses and propensities common to the flesh or human race. The fact however that Scripture says Jesus "was IN ALL POINTS tempted LIKE AS WE ARE" (Heb.4:15), reveals that he experienced the self-will which is contrary to God's will. This is indicated in many of his statements like: "I came NOT TO DO MY OWN WILL but the will of Him who sent me" etc. He was tempted in all points as we are "YET WITHOUT SIN," for temptation (being lured and enticed by lust) is not sin in itself; it only becomes sin when it is harboured and allowed to conceive (Jam.1:14-15). Jesus was never guilty of this. No sooner would a temptation come and he would suppress and crucify it with the Word of God. He refused to succumb to the propensities of the flesh and therefore sin never became established in his life. His Father in him by the Spirit gained victory over the enemy!

Many feel that it is dishonouring and degrading to our Lord Jesus Christ to believe he had the same flesh nature as fallen man. Yet if he didn't partake of this nature, he could not have dealt with sin at its roots. He would have been devoid of the common characteristics of the human race which he came to save and would not qualify as a perfect high priest. A high priest must be able to sympathize with the feelings and infirmities of man, and he can only do this if he has experienced them himself. Such was the position of Jesus. (Heb.4:15-5:2).

Reluctance to believe that Jesus shared the same flesh nature as man is a contributing factor towards the doctrine of the pre-existence of Christ and the Trinity. Reluctance to believe that Jesus inherited from his mother Mary the impulses and propensities common to the flesh nature of man, originally contributed towards the development of these doctrines. From early times it was recognised that if Jesus developed from Mary's ovum, he would be impregnated with her genes and would inherit sinful propensities. Not wanting to believe this, they found various ways of getting around it. One way was by believing that Jesus pre-existed and

transformed himself into an embryo and entered Mary's womb, thus bypassing the normal route of conception which involves fertilisation of the ovum by which the child is impregnated with the mother's genes.

It was reluctance to believe that Jesus partook of the same flesh nature as his mother, that led to the doctrine of the Immaculate Conception. This doctrine decreed that God prevented Mary from having the propensity to sin in her flesh, making her immaculate and sinless, so that she could conceive and give birth to a son who had no flesh propensities. This is the spirit of anti-Christ which the apostle John warned the first century Christians about. It denies that Christ came in the same flesh as his brethren and results in robbing him of his moral glory, making a hollow victory out of the cross. **ORIGINALLY, DENIAL THAT JESUS CAME IN THE SAME FLESH AS MAN LED TO THE DOCTRINE OF THE TRINITY AND PRE-EXISTENCE!**

5. IT MAKES CHRIST'S DEATH ARTIFICIAL

If Jesus pre-existed as "Very God of Very God" and was co-equal and co-eternal with the Father, it would be impossible for him to die. Scripture plainly declares that God is IMMORTAL, which means He cannot die. God cannot be tempted, sin or die, and this would be the position of Jesus were he God.

Hence, believing this to be the case, Trinitarians are forced to believe that Jesus didn't really die upon the cross. They accept that the body died but maintain that the real Christ - the real pre-existent eternal Christ survived the death of the body and lived on! In other words, they do not believe that the real Christ himself died at all.

Now Jesus plainly said: "I am HE who lives, and WAS DEAD" (Rev.1:18). Jesus never made any distinction between himself and his body. On another occasion he said: "Behold MY HANDS and MY FEET, that it is I MYSELF" (Lk.24:39). As far as Jesus was concerned, he and his body were "one." If his body died, he died, and this is what his confession means when he said: "I ... WAS DEAD."

According to Scripture, death is a time of "sleep" - a time of unconsciousness. "In death there is no remembrance" (Ps.6:5); "thoughts perish" (Ps.146:4): "the dead know not anything" (Ecc.9:5). If this is the case, then Jesus must have "slept" i.e. been unconscious when he was dead. This is actually stated in 1 Cor.15:20 where we read that Jesus is "risen from the dead, and became the firstfruits of them that SLEPT." This passage teaches that of all men who have entered the death-sleep, Jesus is

the first to rise from that sleep to eternal life. It clearly teaches that Jesus "slept" in his death state. If he didn't, his resurrection would not make him the first to rise of all who slept.

This is almost proof positive that Jesus was not "Very God of Very God." The word of God makes it clear that God neither slumbers or sleeps. He most certainly cannot die because He is immortal.

Now, if JESUS LOST CONSCIOUSNESS WHEN HIS BODY WAS PUT TO DEATH, IT IS MOST UNLIKELY THAT HE HAD CONSCIOUS EXISTENCE BEFORE HE HAD A BODY i.e. before he was born. In other words it is most unlikely that he pre-existed. He most certainly could not have pre-existed as "Very God of Very God" because He is eternal and cannot lose consciousness or die.

The sum of the matter is this: If God is "Spirit" and does not depend upon a body to live, then Jesus, if he were God, should not have "slept;" but remained conscious as an immortal invisible Spirit. The fact that consciousness ceased with the death of the body strongly implies there was no consciousness prior to having the body.

6. IT MAKES CHRIST'S RESURRECTION SUPERFLUOUS

If Jesus was the immortal God who lived from all eternity before he appeared in a human body and who lived on after the death of the body, why was his resurrection in the body so important? Why is such an issue made of it in Scripture? Why does the Christian faith depend upon it? If men must believe that he pre-existed before he "put on" a body without having been able to see him, could not men equally continue to believe he continued to exist after the death of his body without having to see him in it again? If people today can confidently affirm that their deceased friends live on without seeing them in the flesh again, could not the same have been affirmed of Christ without necessitating his resurrection? If he really was the eternal God who can never die, it would be a foregone conclusion that he survived the death of his body and lived on eternally. Such is the conclusion to which the doctrine of pre-existence leads, and it renders the resurrection of Christ superfluous.

The fact of the matter is that Christ's conscious existence and continuance in life depended on resurrection. Like all other men, he would have seen corruption and perished had the Father not raised him from the dead. The special and important significance of Christ's resurrection can only be appreciated when it is realised that HE WAS THE FIRST MAN IN HISTORY TO BE RAISED FROM THE DEAD TO LIFE

EVERLASTING. (Acts 26:23. 1 Cor 15:20. Col 1:18. Rev 1:5). He is a representative man - a true representative of the human race. He is a "specimen" ("firstfruits") of man in the totally saved and redeemed state. With Jesus and his resurrection from the dead, there has already happened what is yet to occur for all other men who belong to him. An anticipatory resurrection of the dead has already occurred in the resurrection of Jesus. In the resurrection of Christ, the head of the body, God "has given assurance unto all men" of the certainty of their own resurrection if they belong to the body.

But, if it is believed that Jesus pre-existed as an immortal being, what is so special about him being raised from the dead to immortality? He had already been immortal anyway prior to his birth, so tradition would have us believe. This immediately takes the edge off the various New Testament statements which present Christ's attainment to immortality after his death as a tremendous victory and breakthrough. But if he was "Very God" he couldn't miss or fail! The thought of an immortal sinless God losing His immortality is incongruous. It makes a mockery - a pantomime out of the whole ministry of Christ if he was "Very God" Himself.

Once it is accepted that Jesus did not exist before he was born - that, although born through Divine conception, he nevertheless was a man, sharing the same propensities as other men, and like other men was mortal and experienced the same feelings and infirmities of the flesh, and had to exercise faith and trust in God, and grow in the knowledge and wisdom of God - and, like other men, slept in the death state and would have corrupted and perished had God not raised him from the dead - when this is accepted; then Christ's resurrection and reappearance from the grave to eternal life becomes an astonishing victory and breakthrough! Without it, the hope of resurrection and eternal life would remain theological speculation, with no firm foundation in human experience. History would have no meaning, no goal, no purpose. As a human race we would be going nowhere. We would be, in Paul's words, "of all men, most miserable."

One point in passing: If the Angel of the Lord who appeared to men on different occasions during Old Testament times was the pre-existent Christ, then what happened to the pre-existent body in which he appeared during that period? It must have been immortal, which means it would not be destructible. If such a body existed, it is clear that Jesus will never "wear it" again. He was clearly raised from the tomb in the same nail-pierced body that was placed there (Jn 20:25-27), and he will return to the

earth in the same body also. (Zec 12:10. Rev 1:7). After all, it is his hereditary link with Abraham and David. If it was discarded, the link between himself and the holy ancestral line would be severed, and he would cease to be the promised "seed" of Abraham and David.

What then happened to the pre-existent immortal body? There is no doubt in this writer's mind that it never existed! We therefore need not trouble ourselves with questions concerning its fate.

7. IT MAKES A FARCE OF CHRIST'S EXALTATION

Scripture teaches that because of his OBEDIENCE unto death, God has highly exalted Jesus (Plp 2). Jesus is now sitting at the right hand of his Father, all angels and authorities having been subjected to him. He has been given a name above every other name, that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow.

But if Jesus was "Very God" and his flesh did not contain the propensities common to other men, it would have been impossible for him to be disobedient. Obedience would have been a matter of course without struggle or effort. If there was no bias in Christ's flesh towards sin as in the flesh of all other men, then sin would be impossible to him and he could not have been tempted. If such be the case, there is no real virtue in his obedience, and he is robbed of all moral glory as an overcomer, for anyone could live a sinless and obedient life if they were born without the impulses of sin in their nature!

Also, if Jesus pre-existed as co-equal with the Father and shared the throne with the Father from all eternity, a complete farce is made of the various Scriptures which declare that the Father has exalted him by placing him at His own right hand on the throne. In terms of the pre-existent status, Jesus would be no higher after his resurrection than what he was from all eternity during his pre-existent state. There is no higher status than being God and sitting on heaven's throne. If Jesus occupied that position from all eternity, his return to the same position could hardly be an "exaltation." It would simply be a resumption of the former status. And if Jesus was "Very God," nothing in heaven or earth could have prevented him from being restored to that position. It would be utterly incongruous to even think that the Eternal God could lose His throne or have it taken away from him! If Jesus was "Very God" it would be a foregone conclusion that His throne and glory were well and truly secured. And if this is the case, all references to the "obedience" and "exaltation" of Christ become hollow and empty, artificial and false. Such

is the outcome of the pre-existence concept.

If Jesus has been exalted to the Father's right hand as a result of his obedience, on what basis did he occupy a position on the throne as a co-equal with the Father throughout his pre-existent eternity?

Mary was told that her son "SHALL BE great" and that "the Lord God shall give to him the throne of his father David" (Lk 1:32). But, according to the pre-existent theory, Jesus always WAS "great" and sat on the throne throughout eternity.

It should be evident then, that the doctrine of the pre-existence of Christ makes a farce of many of the promises of God relating to His Son. The deeper we pursue this subject, and carefully consider the implications, the more evident it becomes that it interferes with, and upsets various basic and fundamental principles relating to the doctrine of Christ. It has wide-spread detrimental effects on Christology.

I will now conclude this section by setting out a list of contrasts between the teaching of the Bible and tradition:

"BIBLE TEACHING"

"TRADITION"

- | | |
|---|--|
| (1) God is one. | (1) God is three. |
| (2) Jesus was foreordained. | (2) Jesus was foreformed. Jesus pre-existed. |
| (3) Jesus was conceived. | (3) Jesus was transformed; incarnated. |
| (4) He shared the same flesh. | (4) He shared similar flesh. |
| (5) Jesus died and slept. | (5) Jesus didn't really die. |
| (6) His resurrection was vital. Without it, he would have remained unconscious and would have corrupted away. | (6) His resurrection was not vital. He survived the death of his body and would have lived on eternally whether resurrected or not. |
| (7) Jesus, since his resurrection has been exalted to a position never experienced what before. | (7) In relation to his pre-existent state, Jesus has not really been exalted at all. He is no higher now than he was as God's equal throughout eternity. |

* * * * *

CHAPTER TWELVE SENT FROM GOD

It is stated a number of times in the New Testament that Jesus was "sent from God." He is referred to as having come "from above" i.e. "from heaven." Jesus himself said that he "proceeded forth and came from God." These statements are commonly regarded as teaching the pre-existence of Christ. It is generally concluded from such statements that Jesus existed as a person in heaven prior to his birth, and that he decided to vacate heaven's throne to enter Mary's womb in order to become a man. However, we shall discover that these statements do not teach pre-existence at all. They simply teach the Divine conception of Jesus; his Divine origin.

As pointed out before, very definite and specific biological terms are used in Scripture to describe the birth of Jesus. Mary "conceived" Jesus through the Holy Spirit or "power of the Highest." Jesus was "begotten" by the Father and was therefore called the "SON of God". Through Mary, Jesus was the "SEED" ("sperma") of David and Abraham, and was therefore called "Son of man." Mary gave "BIRTH" to Jesus.

All the Scriptural descriptions of Jesus' birth indicate the creation of a new person by the generative power of God acting on Mary. There is no suggestion - not a single hint that Jesus personally existed in some manner prior to his birth. If a change from one form of existence to another were intended, it would have been more appropriate to use such words as "transform" or "incarnate." It is significant that Scripture never uses such terms in connection with the birth of Jesus. The words used are identical with those used in relation to the birth of every child; the only difference being, that in relation to every other child, conception took place through the generative power of man, whereas in the case of Jesus, it was the generative power of God. And may it be stressed at this point that there is no question or doubt in this writer's mind about the Divine paternity of Jesus. It stands as an unassailable truth and is so plainly stated in Scripture that it leaves no room for the idea that Joseph was the father of Jesus. Jesus clearly had no earthly father. Father-God was his literal, direct and personal Father, and Mary his mother. Of this there can be no question or doubt.

BIOLOGICAL FACTS

Biologically speaking, it is clear that conception requires the overshadowing presence of the male for the cell of human life to be vitalized. The male sperm PROCEEDS FORTH to unite with, and fertilize the female ovum, thus forming the embryo. Thus, we all "proceeded forth" and "came" from our earthly fathers in this sense.

But as far as Mary's conception was concerned, instead of man participating, the power of God participated. The "power of the Highest" "came upon" Mary. It proceeded forth from God and "overshadowed" her, fertilized her ovum, and started the process of generation which produced the greatest marvel of human history - the man Christ Jesus - Son of God and Son of Mary.

This is all beautifully expressed in the words of the angel Gabriel to Mary in Lk.1:35: "The Holy Spirit shall COME UPON you, and the power of the Highest shall OVERSHADOW you: therefore that holy thing which shall be born of you shall be called the Son of God."

The power of God, which is His creative energy-force by which He makes all things and performs all miracles, proceeded forth from His presence and overshadowed Mary. It "came upon" her, penetrated and fertilized her ovum without terminating her virginity, causing her to "conceive" and finally give birth. The power of God performed the same function and started the same reproductive process in Mary which is normally fulfilled by the male sperm. The simple, straightforward biological term "conceive" demands this conclusion.

That Mary herself regarded the overshadowing of the power of God as performing the same function as that normally performed through conjugal relationship, is indicated in her own expression: "Behold the HANDMAID of the Lord" (Lk.1:38). She said this in response to the angel's announcement that the power of the Highest would "OVERSHADOW" her. The Greek word "episkiazo" which is translated "overshadow" means "to cast a shadow upon," "to envelop," "to invest." This description of the power of God enveloping Mary, causing her to say: "Behold the handmaid of the Lord" can be compared with Ruth's comment to Boaz when she asked him to perform the duty of a husband: "I am Ruth thine HANDMAID: SPREAD therefore thy skirt OVER thine handmaid." Her request for Boaz to spread his skirt over her was just another way of saying "overshadow me" (Ruth 3:9).

Jesus then, clearly owed his origin to God. He was not exempt or an exception to the universal Divine rule that "out of God are all things." His

coming "out of God" was of course very unique and special. He came out of God in the sense that the power of God proceeded forth direct from His presence and overshadowed Mary causing her to conceive and ultimately give birth. Therefore, referring to his Divine origin, Jesus said: "I proceeded forth and came from God" (Jn.8:42). In saying this, Jesus was simply stressing that he was not born through the will of man or the will of the flesh, but of God. God was his Father, and not man.

"NEITHER CAME I OF MYSELF"

Now, if Jesus' statement: "I proceeded forth and came from God" means he pre-existed, and in his pre-existent state decided to vacate heaven's throne and glory, and voluntarily descended to earth and slipped into Mary's womb as an embryo; how are we to understand his very next statement when he said: "NEITHER CAME I OF MYSELF, but He sent me?" (Jn.8:42. 7:28).

The R.S.V. translates the statement like this: "I came not of my own accord, but He sent me." The Jerusalem Bible says: "Not that I came because I chose, no, I was sent, and by Him." The New English Bible renders it: "God is the source of my being, and from Him I come. I have not come of my own accord; He sent me."

Jesus plainly confesses that he had nothing to do with his birth and existence as a man. He had no control over it. He had no choice in the matter. And this of course, applies to all of us. We all proceeded forth from our earthly fathers in a seminal sense, and our testimony is the same: "I came not of myself, but he sent me."

This is quite incompatible with the view that Jesus pre-existed and voluntarily vacated his position in heaven to take up residence in human flesh on earth. Had this been the case, he could hardly say: "... neither came I of myself."

The same applies to another statement that he made: "My doctrine is not mine, but His that sent me" (Jn.7:16). Had Jesus pre-existed as omniscient God and voluntarily decided to descend to the earth, to teach people the true doctrine of which he is supposed to be the originator and recipient from all eternity, he could hardly say: "My doctrine is not mine, but His who sent me." But, if Jesus had no prior existence, and from the time of his birth grew in wisdom and knowledge which he received from his Father by the Spirit, as Scripture affirms he did (Lk.2:40, 52. Isa.11:1-4), then his statement makes perfect practical sense.

I believe then, that the simple biological terms "conceive,"

"begotten," etc are of fundamental importance and significance in relation to Christ's origin as Son of God. As simple biological terms they speak of the beginning of existence - they speak of a process common to all men at the end of which birth takes place, the only difference being, in the case of Jesus, his paternity. All the expressions used in connection with the birth of Jesus teach that the one born is a new being - a new person - one who has not lived elsewhere prior to birth.

As pointed out before: if a change from one form of existence to another were intended, such terms as "transform" or "incarnate" and "pre-existence" would have been used as they were in post-apostolic times. But Scripture never uses them. They belong entirely to the theology which was developed centuries after New Testament times.

So then, the Divine action involved in the coming of God's Son into the world is not something secret or mysterious. Instead, it is plainly stated and explained. The description in the Gospel narratives speak of the creation of a new person by means of God's power fertilizing Mary, and give no hint of that person personally existing prior to his birth. Against this simple truth is the somewhat mysterious and contradictory doctrine of the "incarnation" which teaches that a person was transferred from one body to another while still remaining a person between the two bodies. It teaches that God transformed Himself into an embryo and entered Mary's womb, and although Mary's ovum was not used in the whole process, the child born was nevertheless the "seed" of David and Abraham - impregnated with their genes.

"THEREFORE ... SON OF GOD"

Now a man is an embodiment of his father's mortal life-energy. As Jacob said when speaking about Rueben his firstborn: "My might, and the beginning of my strength" (Gen.49:3). Jesus of course, was not born of the will of the flesh, but of God. He was begotten of Mary through the power of the Spirit. This was the origin of his title: "The Son of God." The angel Gabriel put it like this: "THEREFORE, also, shall that holy thing that shall be born of thee be called the Son of God."

The "holy thing" born of Mary was a babe of flesh and blood, produced from her ovum and developed in her womb during the ordinary gestatory period of nine months. It was this babe which was declared by the angel's words to be the Son of God. This was in harmony with the whole operation. The power at work was the "power of the Highest;" the result was "the Son of God." This is what the angel said, and it is an

intelligible declaration, and it must have been made to be intelligible.

The angel's declaration clearly teaches that THROUGH DIVINE BEGETTAL, Jesus became Son of God. The Father Himself emphasizes this to His Son in these words: "Thou art my Son, this day have I begotten thee." But this statement is robbed of its force and power the moment we say Jesus existed as Son of God long before his begettal. The whole point of emphasis in the statement is that JESUS BECAME SON OF GOD THROUGH DIVINE BEGETTAL and not through some pre-existent existence. As mentioned earlier: if Jesus existed as Son of God before his birth, then God must have "made" or "created" him so. In that case, he is immediately placed on the same level as the angels. They were "made" and not "begotten," and are referred to as "sons of God."

The simple title of "Son" as applied to Jesus, as the only begotten of the Father, very strongly suggests that his existence is derived, and not external. The phrase "Son of God" implies that the Father was antecedent to His Son, and that the Son had his origin in, or "out of" the Father, to whom he would be subordinate. "THIS DAY have I begotten thee" is the language of Scripture, clearly pointing to commencement of days, as in the case of every other child. This view seems to be confirmed by Jesus when he said: "As the Father has life in Himself, so has He GIVEN the Son to have life in himself" (Jn.5:26).

Jesus therefore, though now possessed of inherent life, has been invested with it; it is not in his case underived. It is only the Great Uncreate, the Father, who can say: "I am, and there was none else before me." He ONLY hath (underived) immortality.

As pointed out earlier, during the centuries prior to the birth of Jesus, Father-God continually stressed that He alone was God and that there was no God with Him or like Him in heaven or in earth. Had Jesus pre-existed as "God" with the Father, such statements would not ring true.

When dealing with the significance of the Hebrew title "El" in an earlier chapter, it was pointed out that the Father is the great first cause - the number One power - power Uncreate. He alone is the source, originator and fountain of all power. He alone is the source of immortality and power, and before Him and after Him, no power (underived) was formed. All other forms and manifestations of power, especially that of Jesus, derive from the Father (Rom.13:1 etc). Everything which exists is "out of" Him, as Rom.11:36 and 1 Cor.8:6 declares. The Father is thus "above all" (Eph.4:6) in terms of status and rank. Nobody (including Jesus) is co-equal with the Father. He is clearly "above all."

And because everything and everyone has come "out of" God

(including Jesus), nothing and nobody is co-eternal with Him. He is the great Paternal Power of angels, Jesus, and ourselves, not to mention the rest of creation. His Spirit - power - energy, formed the basis of everything that has ever existed.

In Heb.2:11 we read that both Jesus and his followers "are all of one" i.e. all have one and the same origin. This in fact, is how the R.S.V. translates it: ... "have all one origin." This "one origin" is of course Father-God. Thus the Amplified Bible reads: "all have one Father," which is an echo of Mal.2:10: "Have we not all one Father? Hath not one God created us?" It is because we have the same origin in Father-God that Jesus is not ashamed to call us his brothers. Jesus, like his brethren, originated in the Father, although through a different process of conception. For this reason, Jesus addressed God as his "Father."

So then, Jesus had an origin - a beginning. His origin and beginning is traced to the same origin as every other man, namely, Father-God. Together, Jesus and his brethren are "children of God" - "joint-heirs" united by the same Spirit which causes us to cry "Abba, Father" (Rom.8:15-17).

The titles "Father" and "Son" both have very definite meanings. In Hebrew "father" is "ab," from which the Aramaic "abba" is derived. A father is one who begets - procreates; he is a progenitor - an originator. A son is one who is begotten - offspring - a descendant. A father always precedes a son in time.

The two titles of father and son indicate two persons, one of which has lived longer than the other. Equality in length of life is ruled out by the simple basic meaning of the terms. Co-eternality between a father and son is impossible. One who is as old as his father could not be a son, and to try and prove otherwise would involve contradiction and confusion.

And even supposing that the "wisdom" in Proverbs chapter 8 referred to Jesus in a pre-existent state, it is clearly stated in v22 that "The Lord CREATED ME at the beginning of His work, the first of all His acts of old" (R.S.V.). And in verses 24-25 it says: "I was BROUGHT FORTH." If this referred to Jesus in a pre-existent state, we would have to conclude that he was still "created" and "brought forth" by God. This does not conform to the co-eternal concept.

The idea then of a pre-existing Son, incarnate or embodied in a flesh son of Mary, is not taught or suggested in any of the Gospel accounts of the birth of Jesus. This idea has been deduced from other statements elsewhere - statements which, in a naked and detached form, superficially appear to teach pre-existence; especially to the prejudiced reader, but

closer examination brings to light quite a different interpretation.

"SENT BY GOD"

It is recorded that Jesus was "sent from God." He "came down from above" - "came down from heaven." But it is important to note that in these statements not the slightest hint is given that prior to his birth, Jesus had a personal, physical, conscious existence. This idea is usually read into these statements and assumed. But once the basic simple truth concerning the Divine begetting of Jesus is understood, these statements appear in quite a different light. Jesus clearly owed his origin to God. The Father's generative power proceeded forth from His presence, overshadowed Mary, entered her fallopian tube and fertilized her ovum, causing her to conceive and bear the Son of God. In a very real sense, Jesus was "sent from God" - "came from above" etc.

It is impossible to build the pre-existence of Christ upon the statements which say he was "sent by God." That these descriptions do not in themselves necessarily teach pre-existence in heaven can be seen by their application to other men of God besides Jesus.

John the Baptist is an outstanding case: "There was a man SENT FROM God whose name was John" (Jn.1:6). This is actually an echo of Mal.3:1: "Behold, I WILL SEND My messenger; and he shall prepare the way before Me ..."

The way in which John the Baptist was "sent from God" is very instructive in relation to Jesus. Prior to his birth, John's parents were unable to have children: they were childless. And, just before John's birth, they were well advanced in years (Lk.1:7, 36). Although it is not specifically stated in Scripture, it seems reasonable to conclude that they had reached the stage in life when their generative powers were dead. This is certainly suggested by Zachariah's unbelieving response to the angel Gabriel's promise that his wife Elizabeth would conceive and bear a son.

Physically speaking, it was impossible for Zachariah and Elizabeth to have a child. But nothing is too impossible for the power of the Highest to perform. And so the power of God overshadowed Zachariah and Elizabeth, quickened and re-vitalized their reproductive powers, inducing them to conjugate, causing Elizabeth to conceive and give birth to John.

In this respect John was very much a "man sent from God." Because his birth came about through the power of God quickening the generative powers of his parents, he is appropriately referred to as coming from God - "a man sent from God." Had the power of God never proceeded forth

from God to quicken the physical powers of his parents, he would never have been born. But it would be a mistake to conclude that he had a personal, physical pre-existence simply because he is referred to as being "sent from God."

Now if John is referred to as being "sent from God" because God's power made his birth possible, how much more must this be true in the case of Jesus. In John's case, the reproductive powers of his parents were regenerated, enabling his mother's ovum to be fertilized by his father's semen. In the case of Jesus however, no man was involved at all; the power of God went directly to Mary's ovum, causing her to conceive. Hence, the one born was "the Son of God." He was "sent from God" in a more direct and personal way than any other man who walked upon the face of the earth.

What has been said about John the Baptist equally applies to Isaac. His parents, Abraham and Sarah, went through life childless and reached the age when it was physically impossible for them to reproduce. Rom.4:19 refers to Abraham's "own body now dead, when he was about 100 years old" and "the deadness of Sarah's womb." It seems that God deliberately allowed this situation to develop to teach them to trust in Him, and to show them that nothing is impossible for Him - that their sufficiency must be of Him and not themselves. Even more important than that, He allowed this situation to develop to teach them (and us) a basic truth about the nature of the birth of THE seed of promise - Jesus Christ, of whom Isaac was clearly a type.

As in the case of Zachariah and Elizabeth, the reproductive powers of Abraham and Sarah were also quickened by the power of God, causing them to "have pleasure" (Gen.18:12), which resulted in conception and the birth of Isaac. Rom.4:17 refers to this in the words: "God, who quickens the dead." In its context, it is explaining how Abraham was able to become a father in his old age. It says in v20 that through faith Abraham WAS STRONG, which can be understood in the sense of "received strength" i.e. his physical reproductive powers were renewed by the power of God. Sarah likewise "received strength to conceive seed" by faith. (Heb.11:11).

Thus, we read in Gal.4:29 that Isaac was "born of the Spirit." In other words: he was a man "sent from God."

The quickening power of God had such a perfect reviving effect, that it actually restored in measure, some of Sarah's former attractiveness. Not long after being told by the Lord that she would have a son (Gen.18:10), we read about the king of Gerar being physically attracted to her

(Gen.20:1). It may seem strange that at the age of 90 Sarah could be coveted for her beauty, but there is a very satisfying harmony about the narrative if it is viewed in the light of the quickening power of God regenerating her body to make conception possible. The promised conception of Isaac involved the restoration of long lost physical powers. With this rejuvenation there came also a return of the physical attractiveness which had been Sarah's in earlier days. How perfect and wonderful are the operations of God. "He gives power to the faint; and to them who have no might He increases strength. They that wait upon the Lord shall renew their strength; they shall mount with wings as eagles ..."

The special nature of John's and Isaac's birth are not the only ones presented in Scripture as types of the birth of Jesus. Samuel and Samson were also born through special Divine intervention, and were types of the Deliverer. They all pointed to the fact that the great Saviour and Redeemer of mankind would not be born under normal circumstances. All these men in the past were "sent from God."

"COMMISSIONED BY GOD"

The phrase "sent from God," in relation to Jesus, does not only refer to His Divine begetting. The phrase is often used in Scripture in the sense of being COMMISSIONED by God. Acts 7:35 provides an example of this: "This Moses ... DID GOD SEND to be a ruler ..." And it is in connection with this statement that v37 says: "This is that Moses who said to the children of Israel, A prophet shall the Lord your God RAISE UP for you from among your brethren, LIKE UNTO ME; him shall you hear."

Because Moses was commissioned, inspired and directed by God to fulfil His will, he is referred to as being "sent" by God. The same applies to John the Baptist. He was filled with the Holy Spirit from his mother's womb and was Divinely commissioned to go forth in the power and spirit of Elijah (Lk.1:15-17). John himself said that he was "SENT to baptize with water" by God (Jn.1:33). He said on another occasion with regard to his baptism: "A man can receive nothing except it be given him from heaven" (Jn.3:27). Jesus therefore taught that John's ministry came "from heaven" (Matt.21:25). But no one would interpret this to mean that John pre-existed in heaven.

All the prophets of God came from God or were sent by God in the sense of being Divinely commissioned. In God's own words: "I SENT to you all My servants the prophets, rising early and sending them ..." (Jer.44:4). Jesus made the same point in the parable of the

servants being sent by the owner of the vineyard to the husbandmen (Mk.12:1-6).

Not only were these men "sent from God," but Hosea speaks of them as having been "with my God:" - "The watchman of Ephraim WAS WITH MY GOD" (Hos.9:8). Again, the reference to John being a man "sent from God," according to the literal reading of the Greek text is "sent from BESIDE GOD." But no one would argue pre-existence on this basis. This should be kept in mind in relation to Jn.1:1: "The Word WAS WITH GOD." The Word which Hosea and John and the other prophets spoke, originated with God. It was there with Him in the beginning. When the prophets spoke that word, they or their ministry, became the embodiment of it. In this sense, they were with God in the beginning. But this is quite different from saying they pre-existed. More about this later.

The basic idea of Divine commission in the words "sent from God" in relation to Jesus, is beautifully expressed and illustrated in Jn.17:18 where Jesus says: "As Thou (God) hast sent me into the world, even so have I also sent them (the apostles) into the world." The basic idea of "commissioned" is meant by the word "sent."

In this sense, even ancient heathen nations used by God to fulfil His purpose are referred to as being sent from Him. In Jer.51:53 reference is made to "spoilers" (Medes and Persians) going forth from God to destroy Babylon. Hence, in Isa.13:3 they are referred to as God's "sanctified ones" i.e. set apart for special Divine commission. In Ezk.30:9 we read about messengers (Babylonians) going forth from God in ships to terrify the unsuspecting Ethiopians. Such was the Divine commission at the time. We are obviously not meant to read this literally to mean that ships full of Babylonians sailed down from heaven to land upon the Ethiopians. The same applies to Ps.104:21 where we read about the lions "seeking their meat from God." This does not mean that they all stood in a group waiting for God to drop meat out of the sky. It simply means that God has provided prey in His creation for the lion's consumption, and this fact is expressed in terms of their meat coming from God. Thus, the preceding statement in the same verse says: "The young lions roar after their prey." Because God in heaven provides something on earth by His power or providential control, it is referred to as coming from heaven or "above." And in each case (and there are many examples), the last conclusion we are expected to draw is that pre-existence is implied.

"CAME DOWN FROM HEAVEN"

It is stated a number of times in Scripture that Jesus "came down from heaven" (Jn.3:13, 6:32-33, 38, 50-51, 58). In Jn.3:13 for instance we read: "And no man has ascended up to heaven, but he who came down from heaven, even the Son of man who is in heaven."

Since Jesus is said to have come down from heaven, it is commonly assumed that he must have existed there as a person prior to his birth. (I say "assumed" because nothing is actually said in this verse, or any of the others; about personal, physical, conscious existence there).

Actually, this verse in Jn.3:13 proves too much. It is generally believed that Jesus pre-existed as "God" - as a Spirit being, but this passage in John's Gospel says nothing about this at all. Quite the opposite; instead of saying "God the Son" or "The Son of God" came down from heaven, it says "The Son of MAN" came down from heaven. Now, "Son of man" is a title frequently applied to Jesus to emphasize his humanity. He was "born of a woman" - developed from a female ovum - was the "seed" (sperma) of David and Abraham - was clothed with the same flesh and partook of the same blood as man - was impregnated with a woman's genes. This is what is conveyed in the title "Son of man" in relation to Jesus. Did such a "Son of man" come down from heaven? Did such a Son of man exist in heaven before his birth? Definitely not. He could not exist **TILL THE SPIRIT OF GOD CAME DOWN** from heaven to fertilize the ovum of one of David's descendants. If Jesus existed in heaven as Son of man before his birth, we would have to enquire as to who his pre-existent mother was.

So then, "Son of man" emphasizes that Jesus had a human mother and was impregnated with human genes. But, he would never have existed as Son of man **HAD NOT THE SPIRIT OF GOD COME DOWN FROM HEAVEN TO CAUSE MARY TO CONCEIVE**. In this sense - in the sense of his Divine begetting, the Son of man came down from heaven. Such statements simply emphasize the Divine origin of Jesus. They stress that he is the only begotten of the Father. They have nothing to do with a pre-cosmic existence.

"BREAD OF GOD FROM HEAVEN"

Throughout the sixth chapter of John, Jesus emphasizes that he is the bread of God which came down from heaven (6:32-33, 38, 50-51, 58).

After having performed the miracle of feeding the five thousand (6:1-

14), the multitude sought Jesus again on the other side of Galilee, "not because of the miracles, but because they did eat the loaves and were filled." Knowing their motive, Jesus put their allegiance to the test by saying he was the true bread sent from heaven, alone able to impart life to man. Their desire to see him was tested by these words which he knew would be difficult and liable to cause offence. The gospel was for the humble and contrite who would not be offended under any conditions, or by anything that Jesus said, because of implicit trust.

The impurity of their motive for seeking him was made strikingly evident by their reaction to his words: "The Jews murmured at him because he said I am the bread which came down from heaven. Is not this Jesus, THE SON OF JOSEPH, whose father and mother we know? How is it then that he says, I came down from heaven?" (v41-42).

The general Jewish assessment of Jesus is revealed here. They believed he was the son of Joseph and not the Son of God. It was commonly believed that Jesus was "born of fornication" (Jn.8:41) i.e. conceived out of wedlock. Mary of course, conceived through the Holy Spirit, and was about 3 months pregnant when Joseph married her (Lk.1:39-40, 56. Matt.1:18). Mary and Joseph had only been married about 6 months when Jesus was born, so it was naturally assumed that fornication had taken place necessitating a rushed marriage.

The Jews were ignorant of the true facts. They were ignorant of the Divine origin of Jesus. They did not know that Mary conceived him as a result of God's power proceeding forth from heaven to overshadow her. Time and time again Jesus tried to convince them of his Divine origin by saying that he came from heaven - that he "proceeded forth and came from God" - that he came not of his own will or choice, but their hearts were heavy and dull and their eyes closed. For this reason Jesus spoke in parables and clothed the truth with enigmatical expressions. This style of presentation confounded the insincere and prejudiced, and caused them to turn away in disgust, but it did not turn away the sincere seekers of Truth who trusted in Jesus and genuinely loved him, even though they could not understand much of what he taught at the time.

Now the context of the sayings of Jesus in Jn.6 is important. His reference to being the true bread from heaven is based on the giving of the manna to Israel in the wilderness (see verses 30-32). An understanding of the analogy with the manna provides a vital key to the understanding of his teaching.

In verse 32 the manna is described as "bread from heaven." But does this mean that the physical bread itself existed in heaven before appearing

on the earth? Did it descend through space, weaving and wafting its way down past the stars, finally to land on earth? Is that what is meant by the manna coming down from heaven? Or does it simply mean that it was produced on the earth by the power of God from heaven?

In view of the fact that the manna was corruptible (it bred worms and stank if left too long Ex.16:20), it is almost certain that it did not exist in heaven prior to appearing on earth. Jesus taught that nothing corruptible dwells in heaven. It is a place where moth and rust do not corrupt (Matt. 6:19).

The manna was "from heaven" in the sense that the power which produced it came from heaven. Man did not grow or develop it. The reference in Ps.78:25 to the manna being "Angel's food" (i.e. food provided by the angels), coupled with the fact that it is stated in Ex.16:13-14 and Num.11:9 that the manna fell with the dew, suggests that the Spirit of God manufactured it through the angels within the confines of the earth.

Jesus refers to himself as the "true" bread from heaven. By "true" he means ANTITYPICAL. The manna was a type or foreshadow. Jesus is the real or true thing.

As "Son of man," Jesus was mortal and corruptible. He had "THE SAME" flesh and blood as man (Heb.2:14). Hence, Scripture says his flesh would have seen corruption had he not been raised from the dead on the third day. Being mortal and corruptible, the "Son of man" clearly could not have existed in heaven prior to being born of Mary; in the same way that the manna could not have existed in heaven prior to appearing on the earth. Reference therefore to the Son of man coming from heaven like the manna must be understood in the same way. His substance or body was "manufactured" or "prepared" by God's power proceeding forth from heaven and coming upon Mary. In this sense he was "from heaven."

"From heaven" emphasizes his Divine origin - the Divine begettal. But unlike the manna which profited only temporarily, meeting only temporal or carnal needs; Jesus' words were "spirit and life" and brought eternal salvation. And instead of his body being left unattended and breeding worms and emitting a stench in the tomb, it was raised to eternal life and saw no corruption. It returned to the place of its origin - to Father God in heaven. In this sense, Jesus returned to where he came from - to where he was before. He is thus infinitely greater than the manna. He is THE bread of THE life.

"ASCEND UP WHERE HE WAS BEFORE"

In Jn.6:62 it is recorded that Jesus said: "What and if you shall see the Son of man ascend up where he was before?"

Two important points should be observed before attempting to interpret this statement:

(1) It forms part of a very symbolical and enigmatical section of teaching which cannot be interpreted literally or on face value. In all the preceding verses Jesus has been referring to himself as "bread from heaven" which men must "eat" to gain eternal life. He said: "Except you eat the flesh of the Son of man, and drink his blood, you have no life in you."

As usual, the Jews took him literally and failed to spiritually discern his parabolical-type utterances. They found such teaching repugnant, for they viewed cannibalism and blood-drinking with abhorrence. Even many of his disciples interpreted him literally, and said: "This is a hard saying; who can hear it?" Or, as the New English Bible puts it: "This is more than we can STOMACH; why listen to such talk?" And from that time many of them turned back and ceased to walk with Jesus.

It is important to observe that it is in this context of highly figurative language that Jesus makes the statement: "What and if you shall see the Son of man ascend up where he was before?" And we shall discover that Jesus no more intended us to interpret this literally than in the case of the eating of his flesh and drinking of his blood. Jesus did not literally and physically exist in heaven prior to appearing on earth, and neither did he expect people to literally and physically eat his flesh and drink his blood. His words must be "spiritually discerned," and not be taken superficially on face value.

(2) The second important point to observe is that Christ's statement about ascending up where he was before, forms part of the discourse in which he compares himself to the manna which God provided "from heaven" for Israel. As already pointed out, the fact that this manna was referred to as "bread from heaven" does not mean that it existed as bread in heaven prior to appearing on earth, but rather that it had its ORIGIN in heaven. Power from heaven produced it. Similarly, Jesus was of Divine origin - "from heaven," since the power of the Highest was sent from heaven to bring about conception in Mary.

God, by His Spirit, descended to earth to overshadow Mary, causing her to give birth to a "Son of man" capable of conquering sin in the flesh. And when this mission was accomplished, He withdrew this "Son of man"

to heaven, having changed his nature from that which is corruptible to that which is incorruptible - from a "natural body" to a "spiritual body" (1 Cor.15:44-45). Thus, in the ascension of Jesus, the Spirit ascended up where it was before, though in a different form. It descended as the power of God - the radiant generative energy-force of the Almighty, and ascended as a Son of man made immortal through victory over sin, sharing the Divine nature. It was a case of: "So shall my word be that goes forth out of my mouth; it shall not return to me void." The Word of God went forth and His power proceeded from heaven to overshadow Mary, causing her to give birth to Jesus. And Jesus, the very materialization of God's Word and power, finally ascended to the place of his origin. God's Word and Power returned to Him in the form of His own Son - a "Son of man" - a true representative of the human race, yet a personal physical embodiment of His own person and character.

IMPORTANT TO NOTICE

It is important to notice that Jesus referred to the "SON OF MAN" ascending up where he was before. What was said earlier about the "Son of man" coming down from heaven also applies here. It really proves too much if quoted to support the pre-existence of Jesus.

It is clear that Jesus did not become "Son of man" until born of Mary. As such, the "Son of man" could not have existed prior to his birth. If he did, we are faced with the problem of finding a pre-existent mother.

So then, reference to Jesus as "Son of man" ascending up where he was before, does not mean that he personally and physically existed prior to his birth. It simply means that he has returned to the place of his origin - the source of his being. It is to be understood much in the same way as various statements in Scripture which refer to man returning to the ground from which he came. Such statements do not mean that each man had a personal physical existence in the dust of the earth prior to his birth. No! They simply mean that the dust of the ground is the source of man's being: "Dust thou art and unto dust shalt thou return." The vital elements required for man's existence are contained in the elements of the earth, and he is impregnated with them through his mother and father. When he dies, man returns to the earth.

Jesus however, although Son of man, did not come from the earth. He was begotten by God Himself. He was "the Lord from heaven."

It was not fitting therefore, that he should remain in the tomb where his flesh would see corruption and ultimately become as the dust of the

earth.

Jesus then, proceeded forth and came from God in the sense that the generative power of God caused Mary to conceive and give birth to him. In this sense, Jesus "was with" the Father prior to his birth as all men were with their fathers in a seminal sense. We all proceeded forth and came from our father when our mother conceived us.

So real in fact is a person's existence with his father prior to birth, that the writer to the Hebrews based a vital argument and established an important truth upon it. He proved the superiority of the priesthood of Melchizedec over the priesthood of Levi by pointing out that Levi was in the loins of Abraham when he paid tithes to Melchizedec. As far as he was concerned, because Levi was in the loins of Abraham when he paid Melchizedec, it was as good as Levi himself paying the tithes: "One might even say that Levi himself, who receives tithes, paid tithes through Abraham, for he was still in the loins of his ancestor when Melchizedec met him" (Heb.7:9-10).

So then, Levi was with his father and paid tithes before he was born, but he did not pre-exist - he did not have separate, personal conscious existence.

The same principle is exemplified in Rom.5:12: "Wherefore, as by one man (Adam) sin entered into the world, and death by sin; and so death passed upon all men, IN WHOM (in Adam) all have sinned."

As Levi was "in" Abraham and paid tithes to Melchizedec, so every man was "in" Adam when he sinned, and, in this seminal sense, participated with him in that sin. The results of Adam's sin are imputed to all his posterity by virtue of that organic unity of mankind by which the whole race at the time of Adam's transgression existed, not individually, but seminally, in him as its head. Its essence was not individualized; its forces were not yet distributed; the powers which now exist in separate men were then unified and localized in Adam; Adam's will was yet the will of the species. In Adam's free act, the will of the race revolted from God and the nature of the race corrupted itself. The results of Adam's sin in the form of a sinful, mortal nature are imputed to all his descendants therefore, not as something foreign to them, but because it is theirs. Adam and his posterity are one. There is a natural organic unity between Adam and his seed. Adam was not merely the representative of the human race; he WAS the human race. But, thanks be to God that He has provided a "second Adam" who, although a partaker of the same flesh as fallen man, being "made in the likeness of sinful flesh," never succumbed to the propensities of the flesh, but denied himself expression of the self-will

and crucified it in his body of flesh. And God's grace, on the basis of our faith, imputes the victory of His Son to all who believe, thus opening up the way for eternal salvation.

"THE SPIRIT QUICKENS - THE FLESH PROFITS NOTHING"

After saying that he would ascend up where he was before, Jesus added these words: "It is the Spirit that quickens (gives life); the flesh profits nothing: the words that I speak to you are spirit and life."

In its context, Jesus is explaining that when he said eternal life depended on eating his flesh, he was not talking in literal, physical terms, for "the flesh profits nothing." In other words, Jesus explains that there is nothing profitable about his physical flesh. Nobody would profit by eating it. As he said on another occasion: "Call me not good ..." (Mk.10:18). There was nothing "good" or "profitable" about the flesh body of Christ. It contained the propensities common to man which he inherited from his mother, and left to itself, would only grow old and die and corrupt in the grave. But the character and words of Christ were "good" and "profitable" for they came, not from the flesh, but from God. They were DERIVED from the Father and did not spring out of the flesh. All of Christ's goodness came from God as a result of totally yielding to the Father's will and crucifying the will of the flesh. Hence, Jesus stressed that "the flesh profits nothing," and that it is the Spirit which gives the life. Because of the Divine anointing upon him, the words that he spoke were Spirit and life.

Jesus was the receptacle of God's goodness. God, by the Holy Spirit, dwelt in the flesh and blood body of His Son. It was His "tabernacle." Through Jesus, the Spirit declared the purpose of God and spoke the life-imparting words of salvation. Eternal life was bound up in these words of the Spirit which found expression through the flesh and blood body of Jesus.

Thus, when he told the people that he came down from heaven as the bread of life, he was not only referring to the fact that he was conceived by the power of God, but also referred to the words of eternal life which the indwelling Spirit from heaven was speaking through him. These words spoken by Jesus were a direct message of life from heaven. Jesus was "bread from heaven" and salvation depended on eating him in this sense. The Spirit's message of salvation had to be assimilated and digested by all who desired life. Hence, the words of Jesus: "The words that I speak are Spirit and life." One must partake of Jesus in the sense of assimilating his

words in order to obtain eternal life. It is a case of: "Thy words were found and I did eat them" (Jer.15:16). And because Jesus is "The Word of God," it is, symbolically speaking, a case of eating him.

It is very significant to note in connection with all of this, that the well known statement: "Man doth not live by BREAD alone, but by every WORD that proceeds out of the mouth of God doth man live," occurs in the context of the giving of MANNA (Deu.8:3). It typified Christ.

Jesus used the words "bread" and "meat" (food) a number of times during his ministry to signify Divine teaching (Matt.24:45. 16:5-12. Jn.4:31-34). Being a teacher of Divine precepts and principles, he was therefore "bread from heaven." He provided in his doctrine, good spiritual food for the people by which they could obtain eternal life.

It should be evident then, that the "Son of man" did not exist in heaven prior to his birth. It was the power of God which constituted him Son of man through Mary's conception which came from heaven. Some saw him ascend to heaven (Acts 1:11), and he ascended as "Son of man" as well as "Son of God." He went away bodily, but had not come from heaven bodily. Neither did he leave a body in heaven as the pre-existence concept requires, thus adding more mystery to the "blessed mystery" of the Trinity. This unfortunately, is where the concept becomes quite absurd, for it requires two bodies; both immortal: the one LEFT in heaven when Jesus supposedly divested himself of it to enter Mary's womb, and the one that he took back to heaven when he ascended as "Son of man."

Jesus was "made of a woman." He was nailed to the cross, taken down, buried, rose again from the dead, and lives forevermore, because his Father has given him endless life - immortality. All that experience affected him as a real physical, bodily being, and so real is the connection between what he WAS and what he IS, that the marks of his crucifixion were pointed to by himself after his resurrection, and will be seen when he comes again (Lk.24:36-43. Jn.20:26-27. Zec.12:10). He clearly returns as "Son of man" (Matt.26:64). The body that rose from the dead, ascended to heaven and will come again, is clearly the same body that was nailed to the tree - the body that was produced by the power of God in Mary's womb and which grew from a baby to a boy to a man - the "Son of man."

What happened to the pre-existent body? There wasn't one! If there was, the pre-existent Christ would be an entirely different person and character from the one born of Mary. The one born of Mary was impregnated with her genes as a result of developing from her ovum, for it has already been pointed out that 23 chromosomes are contributed by the mother in the ovum, and 23 by the father. Now, the genes are the minute

carriers of our hereditary traits, and it is through them that each child grows up with characteristics inherited from both parents. The personality and character of each person is very much determined by those genes. But if Jesus pre-existed, he would not be impregnated with any of Mary's genes and possibly none of his Father's "genes" (all depending on how the Father made him). This being the case, Jesus would be an entirely different character and personality - so different that it would not be right to even think of them as one and the same person.

"COMETH FROM ABOVE"

Concerning Jesus, John the Baptist said: "He that cometh from above is above all: he that is of the earth is earthly, and speaketh of the earth: he that cometh from heaven is above all" (Jn.3:17, 31. 8:23).

Jesus was "not of this world" or "of the earth" in the sense that he was not conceived through the will of man or the will of the flesh. Jesus did not originate through a fleshly or carnal act. He was not the product of earthly or carnal desire. He originated in God. The Spirit took the initiative with regard to Christ's conception and not man. Jesus therefore "came from God." He "came from above" - "from heaven."

It is important to note, once again, that nothing is said in these statements about Jesus personally, physically and consciously pre-existing. This is usually read into the statements and assumed. These statements simply affirm his Divine origin.

There is also another sense in which Jesus was "not of this world" and "from above." In 1 Jn.2:16 the "world" is defined as "the lusts of the flesh, the lust of the eye, and the pride of life." And as the preceding verse says: "If any man love the world, the love of the Father is not in him." Thus, Jesus said: "My kingdom is not of this world" (Jn.18:36). By this he did not mean that his kingdom would never be established upon the earth, but rather that his kingdom, when established upon the earth, will be based upon heavenly principles and not on the fleshly carnal principles so evident in the Jewish and Roman constitution. There is a wisdom which proceeds from the earth and is "earthly, sensual and devilish." There is also a wisdom which is "from above" and is "pure, peaceable, gentle, open to reason, full of mercy ..." (Jam.3:14-18).

A man who loves the world and is governed by the "lust of the flesh" is "from beneath" or "earthly." But one who has been born of God - spiritually regenerated, and has the love and wisdom of the Father dwelling in him, is "from above" in a spiritual sense. Thus, Jesus told

Nicodemus that he must be "born from above" (Jn.3:3) if he wanted to inherit the kingdom of God. When a man repents and is converted and yields his life to the transforming power of God, a new birth is effected and he is "born again" and becomes a new creature. Old things pass away and all things become new.

It is the same Spirit which effects this new birth which effected the birth of the Son of God himself. Thus, Jn.1:12-13 says we become "sons of God ... born of God." Our new birth originates in heaven as his did. In this sense we are "from above" and "not of this world;" we are in "heavenly places in Christ Jesus." We look beyond the carnal and worldly things which pertain to the present constitution and look to the spiritual realities which are in Christ and his kingdom. Peter said: "... see that you love one another with a pure heart fervently: you have been BORN AGAIN, not of corruptible seed, but incorruptible, by the Word of God, which lives and abides for ever" (1 Pet.1:22-23).

So then, the expressions "cometh from above," "cometh from heaven," "not of this world" etc as applied to Jesus, have nothing to do with pre-existence. They relate to Divine begettal.

"HE HAS SEEN AND HEARD"

After saying that he came from above, Jesus said: "And what he has seen and heard, that he testifies" (Jn.3:31-32). Sometimes this is interpreted to mean that Jesus saw and heard things in heaven prior to his birth, which means he must have pre-existed.

It is important to note that Jesus said he TESTIFIED to the things he saw and heard: "And what he has seen and heard, THAT HE TESTIFIES." In other words, Jesus' testimony consisted of the things he saw and heard. He spoke about them and shared them during his ministry. Thus, what he saw and heard can be ascertained by the testimony he gave during his ministry. What did he preach? Did he talk about being in heaven and describe what he saw up there and what he used to do up there? By no means! THERE IS NOT ONE STATEMENT MADE BY JESUS IN WHICH HE STATES THAT HE ONCE LIVED IN HEAVEN AS A CONSCIOUS BEING. Certainly, reference is made to him coming from heaven, but as we have seen, such references simply refer to his Divine conception.

Jesus never talked about living in heaven as a physical being and this is very significant. His testimony therefore, did not consist of descriptions of heaven. He preached the gospel. And one does not have to read very far

in the four Gospels to find that the testimony of Jesus was based on the Law, Psalms and Prophets - the Old Testament as we know it today. So well did he know these Scriptures, and so much did he base his ministry upon them, that he was ultimately given the name: "The Word of God." He was a living embodiment and expression of it.

However, of his own self he could do nothing, as he freely confessed. Unless the Father worked, he could not work: "My Father worketh hitherto and I work." He totally depended upon his Father's Spirit and anointing to quicken the Word to him in order that he might give effective testimony. Isa.11:1-4 tells us that Jesus relied upon the Spirit of God to give him knowledge, wisdom and understanding. We therefore read in Jn.3:34 that "He whom God has sent speaks the words of God, for God gives not the Spirit by measure to him." This is a very enlightening passage because it not only states that Jesus received the Spirit without measure, but also explains why. The reason given is that he might "speak the words of God." That is, Jesus received the Spirit so that he might TESTIFY. And this statement in Jn.3:34 is directly linked with verses 32-33 where it is stated that "what he has seen and heard, that he TESTIFIES."

It is not difficult to put two and two together. The Father, through the Spirit, caused the Son to see and hear things which enabled him to give powerful and effective testimony.

There are many ways in which God can cause a man to hear and see things by His Spirit. It could be by visions. It could be by dreams. It could be by angelic visitation. It could be by the direct still small voice of God Himself (See Job 33:14-, Num.12:6-).

One of the most common ways in which God causes a man to see and hear things is by quickening the mind by His Spirit through the reading of His Word. Hence, the Psalmist's prayer was: "... quicken thou me according to thy Word" (Ps.119:25). Again: "Open (unveil) mine eyes that I may SEE wondrous things out of thy law" (Ps.119:18).

There can be no doubt that through all these different operations of the Spirit, God caused Jesus to see and hear things that he needed to know to testify to the Truth. On one occasion Jesus said: "I do nothing of myself; but my Father has taught me and I speak these things" (Jn.8:28). "For I have not spoken of (out of) myself; but the Father who sent me, he gave me a commandment what I should say and what I should speak" (Jn.12:49). Many prophets of God saw and heard things in times past through the Holy Spirit but they did not pre-exist, and Jesus likewise did not pre-exist in spite of being the greatest of all.

ANOTHER REASON

There is another good reason for concluding that the things Jesus saw and heard were not seen and heard in a pre-existent state. If Jesus was shown and taught things in heaven that he needed to know in order to testify on earth, it was all a waste of time because once he became a baby he lost all former knowledge and had to start from scratch like every other new-born child. Scripture makes it very clear that from childhood, Jesus had to go through a process of learning: "And the child grew, and became strong in spirit, filled with wisdom: and the grace of God was upon him. And Jesus increased in wisdom and years and in favour with man and God" (Lk.2:40, 52). Therefore, everything that Jesus testified during his ministry was based upon what he was taught from his birth onwards (also see Isa.11:1-4). The claim is never made in Scripture that Jesus taught from pre-existent knowledge.

"WHAT HE SEES THE FATHER DO"

On another occasion Jesus said: "Verily, verily, I say unto you, the Son of man can do nothing of himself, but what he sees the Father do: for what things soever He doeth, these also doeth the Son likewise" (Jn.5:19).

What were the things that Jesus saw his Father doing? The context provides its own answer, namely: the mighty works that the Spirit was performing through Jesus himself (v17, 20, 30. Also see 9:4, 14:10). Jesus was an instrument in his Father's hand. He was, in a sense, a spectator of the mighty works which were being performed.

This is particularly illustrated in the episode of the woman with the issue who sneaked up through the crowd, and although Jesus was unaware of what was going on in the crowd, God was aware and as soon as the woman touched Jesus, the Father released a flow of His healing virtue through His Son, causing Jesus to turn around and enquire as to who had touched him (he didn't know who had touched him. He was not omniscient). This episode illustrates the principle behind Christ's confession: "The Son of man can do nothing out of himself, but what he sees the Father do: for whatever things He doeth, these also doeth the Son likewise." For this reason, when Jesus healed someone, he would often say: "Return to your house, and show how great things GOD HAS DONE to you" (Lk.8:39).

"HE HATH SEEN THE FATHER"

Jesus said: "It is written in the prophets, And they shall all be taught of God. Every man therefore that has heard, and has learned from the Father, comes to me. Not that any man has seen the Father, except he who is of God; he has seen the Father" (Jn.6:45-46).

On the basis of this passage it is sometimes thought that Jesus must have pre-existed because it says: "... he who is of God has seen the Father." Seeing that the Father is in heaven and cannot be seen by any man in the mortal flesh state, it is felt that Jesus must have been up in heaven prior to his birth.

However, the phrase "he who is of God" cannot be confined to Jesus. It is not used exclusively in Scripture in relation to him. It is used of all men who hear God's voice and who discern the message of the Spirit. For example, Jn.8:47: "He who is of God hears God's words: you (i.e. the reprobate Jews) therefore hear them not, because you are not of God."

3 Jn.:11 is worth quoting in this connection: "He that doeth good is OF GOD; but he who doeth evil HAS NOT SEEN GOD." When the positive and negative propositions here are paralleled, the obvious implication is that those who are "of God" have "SEEN GOD," and those who "have not seen God" are "not of God."

The phrase "seen God" is obviously meant to be understood spiritually and not literally. In a spiritual sense, all who hear God's words and do them, have "seen God." Those who do not hear God's voice and disobey Him, have NOT "seen God."

This spiritual language can only be properly understood in the faith realm which sees the invisible. Compare Moses, who, by faith, "saw Him who is invisible" (Heb.11:27). Abraham also saw the day of Christ and saw it so clearly through faith that he rejoiced and was glad. All the heroes of faith could see the invisible things of God afar off, and were fully persuaded concerning them (Heb.11:13). Isaiah saw Christ's glory and spoke of him, even though it was to be another 800 years before he was born (Jn.12:41). In every case, it was a question of the EYES OF THE UNDERSTANDING being enlightened (Eph.1:18), "looking at the things which are not seen" (2 Cor. 4:18).

Actually, a careful reading of Jn.6:45-46 strongly suggests that the phrases: "he hath seen the Father," "has learned of the Father," "all taught of God," are all synonymous phrases and relate to those referred to in v44 who are drawn to Jesus by the Father. Even today in our hymns and chorus books such expressions as: "But WE SEE Jesus, crowned ..."

occur, not meaning of course that we can literally see the physical being of Christ. It is a faith confession and has to be spiritually discerned.

Even if the statement in Jn.6:46: "... he has seen the Father" applied solely to Christ, and meant that he actually saw the Father, we would still be quite unjustified in building a pre-existence case upon the statement. After all, there were many ways in which the Father could grant the Son a vision of Himself on earth without necessitating pre-existence. For example, see 1 Kng. 22:19. Isa. 6:1-5. Ezk. 1.

Jesus' words: "... not that ANY man has seen the Father," when examined in the immediate context, means "not that ANYBODY AND EVERYBODY." The following sentence confirms this: "EXCEPT he who is of God, he has seen the Father."

Before leaving this section, it should also be recalled that Jesus said: "He who has seen me has seen the Father." To see Jesus was to see God for he manifested the Father. Jn.15:24 is particularly interesting: "If I had not done among them THE WORKS which no other man did, they would be without sin: but now they have both SEEN and hated both me and MY FATHER." To see the works of Jesus was to see the Father.

"THE JOY SET BEFORE HIM"

The belief that Jesus saw and heard things in heaven during a pre-existent state unfortunately affects one's understanding and appreciation of many statements in Scripture concerning him.

If Jesus experienced heaven's glory prior to his birth, his situation and experience as a man appears in an entirely different light from that of his brethren and ancestors - David and Abraham etc. Heb.2:17 says Jesus "in all things had to be like his brethren." Yet, if he experienced the glory of heaven prior to his birth he had an outstanding advantage over all men. His probation period with its temptations and endurance would be made considerably easier by virtue of the joy and glory he had experienced beforehand. But Scripture is emphatic that it was "for the joy that was SET BEFORE HIM" that he endured. Reference is never made to the joy that was behind him. Jesus' wonderful endurance on the basis of the joy that was set before him is robbed of a great deal of its virtue if he had experienced this joy from all eternity prior to his birth.

The apostle Paul tells us that we are "saved by hope, BUT HOPE THAT IS SEEN IS NOT HOPE. For who hopes for what he sees?" (Rom.8:24). This basic principle of God's dealings with His sons is

virtually nullified in the case of Jesus if his hope of glory in heaven was experienced prior to his existence as a man. If Jesus tasted heaven's glory from all eternity prior to his birth, the whole principle of faith and hope is greatly weakened and minimised in his earthly experience as a man, making him very different from his brethren in the most basic respect. Let's face it: if we could taste heaven's glory prior to living by faith and hope on the earth, the things on earth would indeed be "strangely dim" and unattractive by comparison, and would not present much of a temptation, or require much effort to overcome. If this was the case with Jesus, the edge is taken off his victory and he is robbed of much of the moral glory he deserves as an "overcomer."

If Jesus pre-existed, the force of the argument in 1 Cor.15:46 is lost. Paul says: "Howbeit that was not first which is spiritual, but that which is natural; and afterward that which is spiritual." He is talking about the natural and spiritual body, i.e. the mortal and immortal body. Man has a mortal body first, and after that an immortal body if he lives by faith and proves obedient to God. But if Jesus pre-existed, then for him, the divinely appointed order is reversed - first spiritual then natural, then spiritual again. Once again this is contrary to a fundamental principle of God's dealings with the brethren of Christ, whom he was supposed to be like in all things.

In Plp.2:8-9 we are told that God has highly exalted Jesus because he humbled himself and became obedient to death. This is a very important truth. Jesus had been highly exalted because he was obedient. This is consistent with God's dealings with all His sons. The Divine principle of bestowing honour and glory has always been on the basis of firstly subjecting to tests and trials. Obedience during the allotted probation periods results in glory and honour. Never does God bestow glory and honour first, before carrying out tests and trials.

Jesus then, as a true representative of the human race, and captain of our salvation - the firstborn among many brethren, received his glory from God on the basis of his obedience. But if he pre-existed as a co-equal with his Father, he could hardly be exalted above that. Therefore, the words: "God has highly exalted him," would have to really mean that he was simply restored to his original rightful status.

This would mean that in relation to his original pre-existent status, his status after resurrection and ascension would be no greater or higher at all. A farce is therefore made out of the statement that "God has highly exalted him." In relation to his original pre-existent status, Jesus is not "highly exalted" at all, for he could never be higher than what he was if he

was equal with God.

But if Jesus is accepted as a man specially raised up by God - a man who, like all other men, had no previous conscious existence - a man who started life in an animal's food trough and who, during his life before his ministry was a simple humble carpenter - a man who, even during his ministry when filled with the Spirit without measure had to say: "The foxes have holes and the birds of the air have nests, but the Son of man has nowhere to lay his head" - a man who never tasted the pleasures or comforts and glory of this life, but humbled himself and condescended to the small and weak things, finally submitting to the shame and ignominy of the cross and the rude and churlish behaviour of both Jews and Gentiles - if Jesus is accepted in this light then the phrase: "God has highly exalted him," really means something and has a deeply satisfying and meaningful application.

Jesus has been promoted. God has lifted and exalted him to heights of glory, rank and fame that he had never experienced before in his whole living memory. Imagine how exciting and dramatic his ascension to heaven would have been, having never been there before. For the first time in history, a man born of a woman - a representative of the human race - God's only begotten Son, enters into the very presence of the Eternal Almighty Father Himself and ascends the throne and sits at his right hand. What an occasion. What a scene. At long last a "Son of man" gained victory over sin and qualified to not only be made immortal himself, but also to bestow that immortality on others who are prepared to identify with him. It is this joy that was set before him which enabled him to "endure the cross and despise the shame."

But the beauty and reality of all this is destroyed the moment we imagine that Jesus sat upon the throne in heaven prior to his birth. If this was the case - if Jesus was really "Very God of Very God" and sat upon the throne throughout eternity, one can imagine the angels standing to attention as he returns to the throne, thinking to themselves: "Well, what else could you expect; it was inevitable - a foregone conclusion that he would return and sit upon the throne. After all, he is "Very God" and it would be incongruous to even think there was the remotest possibility that he could lose the throne."

Another question in relation to all this is: "If Jesus was highly exalted because of obedience, on what basis was he highly exalted during his pre-existent state?" It seems strange to attribute glory and honour to him on the basis of obedience when it belonged to him anyway, and was his from all eternity. If he was "Very God," disobedience was impossible anyway,

for God cannot be tempted and cannot sin. So if it was impossible for him to be disobedient, why all the emphasis on him being exalted because of obedience? The whole story, from start to finish takes on the appearance of a Divine play act. It all seems so unreal and lacks a deep ring of truth. It totally distorts and mystifies the beautiful doctrine of God-manifestation in Christ.

It is quite evident that Jesus has been highly exalted by his Father because of his obedience. His exaltation has been worked for - earned by sweat and blood. Because he earned and deserved it, the Father gave it to him. His exalted position then, is DELEGATED and not innate. He has DERIVED it from his Father and it was not an underived position which he was entitled to by virtue of being co-equal with the Father. The same applies to Heb.1:4 where we read that Jesus has obtained a more excellent name BY INHERITANCE. Through Divine begettal - through being the "only begotten of the Father," Jesus has inherited his more excellent name, and not through some pre-cosmic existence. Verse 2 says he has been "APPOINTED heir" by God. All of these statements stress that his position of power and authority is delegated and not innate - bestowed as a result of being conceived by the power of God and not because of some pre-existent status.

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CHAPTER THIRTEEN

"WHOSE GOINGS FORTH HAVE BEEN FROM OF OLD"

As a result of Adam and Eve's sin, a bias towards sin became fixed in their flesh nature, and has been passed on to all their posterity. It is called "sin in the flesh" and simply refers to the impulses or propensities in the flesh which have a natural bias or inclination towards things forbidden by God. It is impossible for a man born of a woman to not inherit these propensities. It is not his fault that he inherits them, and he is only blameworthy if he yields and succumbs to them. To do so is SIN i.e. disobedience, and the penalty for this is DEATH. The sinful propensities of the flesh are often referred to as the "devil" in the New Testament, because they were originally inculcated by the serpent. (The word "devil" is simply a surname for the serpent. A separate thesis is available dealing with this subject).

Throughout history, no one was able to fully conquer the lusts of the flesh. Sooner or later, every man yielded to the sinful propensities in his flesh and committed sin, resulting in death. Sin therefore "REIGNED unto death." It was the prince and ruler of the world, completely dominating and enslaving all men, bringing them into bondage.

Now, God had three alternatives to remedy the situation.

1. He could have ignored sin and let man have eternal life in spite of his fallen condition and sin. The result would have been to violate His own righteousness and principles of government, and the earth would have been populated with a race of immortal sinners.

2. God could have immediately destroyed Adam and Eve and made a fresh start by creating another couple. But to do this would virtually mean defeat, which is impossible for God. He is able to bring good out of evil, and this is what He intended to do:

3. God planned to send forth one born of a woman - one who would be a woman's "seed" and therefore a partaker of the same flesh nature of the condemned human race - a nature containing the same propensities which had ruled over and enslaved the whole human race - but one who would not yield to those propensities but overcome and crucify them instead. In other words, God planned to produce from the human race a conqueror of sin - one who would breach the wall of the enemy and lead the captives through into victory. God's grace was such, that He was prepared to accept one man's victory as a basis for the salvation of many. And in that victory the righteousness of God was upheld and maintained. It was impossible for a righteous sinless God to grant release of eternal

life until sin's deadlock and strangle-hold had been broken. And, in his mercy, God only required one man to break it - His only begotten Son. All others were too weak and powerless!

So, no sooner had Adam and Eve sinned than God declared His purpose of redemption to them. He promised that sometime in the future a woman's "seed" would deal the death-blow to man's enemy (Gen. 3:15).

This promise is quite simple and straightforward. The promised Deliverer, being a woman's "seed" was obviously going to be produced from a female ovum, and therefore impregnated with human genes. This being so, he would inevitably inherit characteristics common to the human race - the "flesh." Of course, Adam and Eve were not told that the generative power of God would fertilize the ovum, thus causing the Deliverer to be equally impregnated with Divine "genes," making him "Son of God" as well as "Son of man." This piece of information was added later in history.

The last thing that God's promise would convey to Adam and Eve and those after them was that this promised "seed" already existed - in fact existed long before there was a woman to produce it. The concept of a woman's seed existing before the woman who produced it is ridiculous. The way which the promise is worded would convey the opposite impression. The simple implication of the promise to Adam and Eve is that one day, sometime in the future, God would cause a woman to give birth to a Deliverer who would conquer sin and death. The New Testament expresses it precisely in these terms: "When the fullness of time was come, God sent forth His Son, made of a woman, made under the law, to redeem them that were under the law" (Gal. 4:4).

From the first Messianic promise in Gen. 3:15 on, the bloodline or genealogy of Jesus is recorded and preserved in remarkable detail, and it would all seem so pointless and senseless if in fact he existed long before all his listed ancestors, and in fact, was really their creator. This has the unfortunate effect of turning the genealogies into something artificial and false. It makes a farce of them.

If Jesus existed before the human race and transformed himself into an embryo and placed himself in Mary's womb, still remaining the same pre-existent personality in embryonic form, then in no way could he be, in the real and true sense of the term, a woman's "seed," or the "seed" of Abraham and David. To affirm that he was is to violate all the basic laws of biology and heredity.

"ABRAHAM'S SEED"

Abraham was promised that "in thy seed shall all nations be blessed" (Gen. 22:18). The apostle Paul comments on this in Gal. 3:16 and assures us that "that SEED is Christ" (as pointed out before, the Greek word for "seed" is "sperma," indicating direct, personal hereditary connection. Jesus was to be "seed" of Abraham in a real genetic sense).

Would Abraham imagine that this seed of promise already existed and was "Very God" Himself? No way! Every way in which the promise is viewed it clearly and simply taught that sometime in the future a direct descendant of Abraham would spring out of his genealogical line and become a great blessing to mankind.

The same promise was made to both Isaac and Jacob. The line of Ishmael and Esau was rejected. The line of Isaac and Jacob was chosen instead, as the genealogical channel through which the Messiah would come.

Of Jacob's 12 sons, the Lord chose Judah to be the next Messianic link in Abraham's line, through which the promised seed would come. We read in Gen. 49:10 that the "law-giver" (Messiah) would come "from between his (Judah's) feet," which is just a euphemism for "from his semen." Once again, the language hardly accommodated the view that the one promised already existed. Certainly, none of the Old Testament patriarchs or their Hebrew descendants extracted this concept from the promises and prophecies given concerning Messiah. Throughout the whole 4,000 years of Old Testament history, the Hebrew people never concluded that their Messiah already existed and was "Very God" Himself.

There can be no doubt that the New Testament writers believed Jesus was a direct descendant of Judah (through Mary), for it is written in Heb. 7:14 that "IT IS EVIDENT that our Lord sprang out of Judah." Thus, in Rev. 5:5 he is referred to as "the lion of the tribe of Judah."

Moses, the great law-giver, although not part of the genealogical line through which Jesus came, being of the tribe of Levi and not Judah; nevertheless typified the coming law-giver and leader (Jesus), and was given the following revelation concerning him: "The Lord thy God will raise up unto thee a prophet FROM THE MIDST OF THEE, OF THY BRETHREN, LIKE UNTO ME; unto him ye shall hearken" (Deu. 18:15).

The apostle Peter quoted these words and applied them to Jesus as recorded in Acts 3:22. 7:37. The emphasis is clearly laid upon the fact that Jesus was raised up from the midst of his Jewish brethren, and in this

respect, as well as the respect that he would deliver his people, he was like Moses. It is most unlikely that Moses and all others who were acquainted with this promise, would conclude that Messiah existed from all eternity, and that he would one day descend from heaven as an embryo and deposit himself in the womb of a Jewess belonging to the tribe of Judah, so that the legal requirements of the promise could give the "appearance" of being fulfilled.

David in particular received some very precious promises regarding the coming of Messiah - promises which are very difficult to adapt to the pre-existent view. He was told that "When thy days be fulfilled (i.e. when you are dead) and you shall sleep with your fathers, I will set up your seed after you, WHICH SHALL PROCEED OUT OF YOUR BOWELS, and I will establish his kingdom for ever. I WILL BE HIS FATHER, AND HE SHALL BE MY SON ... " (2 Sam. 7:12-14).

There can be no doubt that this prophecy relates to Jesus for it is applied to him in the New Testament in Heb. 1:5 and Lk. 1:32-33.

David's conviction concerning this promise was later expressed in Ps. 132:11: "The Lord has sworn in truth to David; He will not turn from it: Of THE FRUIT OF THY BODY will I set upon thy throne."

God promised David that SOMETIME AFTER HIS DEATH ("When you sleep with your fathers") a special "seed" would spring forth from his line and would sit upon his throne. And, although this "seed" would proceed out of David's bowels and be the fruit of his body, God nevertheless would be "Father" also, and the seed would be His "Son."

The fact that this "seed" of David would not sit upon the throne until after David's death, immediately excludes Solomon from being that seed of promise. Solomon was born and sat upon the throne before David died.

It is evident then, that God promised to preserve the line of David (being the line of Abraham, Isaac, Jacob and Judah), causing it to ultimately produce the promised Redeemer whose kingdom would be established forever. The thought that this Redeemer was already alive and had existed from all eternity as Almighty God, is the last thing that would pass through David's mind on the basis of the promise given him. Nowhere is it suggested that he, or any other of his descendants adopted this concept of a pre-existent Messiah.

"THE PROMISE TO MARY"

Prior to conceiving by the Holy Spirit, Mary was told that her Son "SHALL be great ..." This language hardly applies to one who has

existed from all eternity as the great omnipotent God. Such a God has always been great so why speak in terms which imply He will not become great until born of Mary? The simple inference from the promise given to Mary is that her child will grow up to become a great man - the greatest ever born! The concept that this promised child pre-existed as God and was great from all eternity as part of the Godhead, robs the promise of its simple basic teaching and turns the whole story into a pantomime.

Mary was also told that her Son "SHALL be called the Son of the Highest; and the lord SHALL give him the throne of his father David; and he SHALL reign over the house of Jacob for ever; and of his kingdom there shall be no end" (Lk. 1:32-33).

But if Jesus existed from all eternity and reigned as Almighty God over the house of Israel (as he must have if he was God), then what is so special or significant about the promise to Mary that her Son shall be given a THRONE and REIGN over the house of Jacob for ever? This would be his right - position - privilege anyway as a co-equal part of the Godhead if he pre-existed as such. It is very difficult to apply these promises in a deeply meaningful and practical way to one who pre-existed from all eternity as a co-equal part of the Godhead.

THE APOSTLES

Consider also the teaching of the apostles. They never proclaim belief in a pre-existent Messiah who assumed human form. Listen to Peter's preaching: "David, ... being a prophet, and knowing that God had sworn with an oath to him, that of the FRUIT OF HIS LOINS, according to the flesh, He would raise up Christ to sit on his throne" (Acts 2:30).

The apostle Paul wrote that Jesus Christ our Lord was "made of the seed (sperma) of David according to the flesh, and declared to be the Son of God with the power ..." (Rom. 1:3-4).

In fact, the very opening sentence in the New Testament focuses attention upon the fact that Jesus Christ is "the son of David, the son of Abraham" (Matt. 1:1). And Luke presents the genealogy of Jesus back through his mother Mary to David, Judah, Jacob, Isaac, Abraham; right back to Adam who is referred to as "the son of God" (Lk. 3:38). Jesus, through his mother's line, was son of Adam, and therefore constantly referred to himself as "Son of man." (The Hebrew word "Adam" is frequently translated "man." The title "Son of man" literally means "Son of Adam," which Jesus was through his mother).

The human genealogy of Jesus through his mother as recorded in

Lk.3 is one of the most exhaustive and complete genealogies in Scripture. All of Jesus' human ancestors are systematically presented right back to Adam. The whole thing is a farce if he was really their Creator and existed before them.

Jesus himself stressed the inseparable genetic relationship he had with David in these words: "I Jesus have sent mine angel to testify unto you these things in the Churches. I AM THE ROOT AND THE OFFSPRING OF DAVID" (Rev. 22:16). Thus, the New Testament opens at Matt. 1:1 stressing the human aspect of his origin and virtually closes in Rev. 22:16 on the same note. It was obviously important as far as Jesus was concerned, to be recognized not only as "Son of God" on his Father's side, but also "Son of David" or "Son of man" on his Mother's side. During his ministry he was frequently addressed as "Son of David," and one thing is certain: those who addressed him as such did not believe he existed before David.

The words of Jesus in Rev. 22:16 are an echo of the voice of the Old Testament prophets which he knew so well. Both Isaiah and Jeremiah in particular stressed the fact that Messiah would spring forth from the line of David. In Isa. 11:1 we read: "And there shall come forth a rod out of the stem of Jesse (David's father), and a branch shall grow out of his roots." Also Jer. 23:5: "Behold, the days come, says the Lord, that I WILL raise for David a righteous branch, and a king SHALL reign and prosper, and SHALL execute judgement and justice in the earth". Jer. 33v15 is similar: "In those days, and at that time, will I cause the branch of righteousness to grow up for David, and he shall execute judgement and righteousness in the land."

Notice again the future tense in all these prophecies in the words "will" and "shall." The natural inference from these statements is that Messiah did not exist when they were given, and would not exist until God raised him up out of the line of David. This is certainly how the Old Testament faithfuls understood it.

THE ROOT OF DAVID

There is no difficulty understanding how Jesus is the offspring of David, being a direct descendant of David through Mary, but how could he be the "root" of David? Some see in this evidence that Jesus must have existed before David and that David owed his origin and existence to him.

According to 1 Pet. 1:20, Jesus was "foreordained before the foundation of the world" i.e. God's eternal purpose in Christ was ordained - planned - appointed before the world was created. Jesus was destined to be the Messiah and Saviour of the world long before Abraham and David existed. Abraham and David etc owed their existence to it. Without Christ as the foundation of God's purpose, you cannot make sense of Abraham and David; there is no point or purpose in their existence. Their place in Bible history only makes sense when God's purpose in Christ is seen as the root and foundation of their life. Abraham and David were simply links in a chain that has its start and finish - its beginning and ending in Christ. In this sense he is truly the alpha and omega; the beginning and ending of God's eternal purpose. Jesus is the first to be Saviour of the world and the last. There was no one before him and there will never be another after him!

As we shall see, Jesus was the reason - the divine motive for creation, and God's purpose which centred in him became the root or basis - the foundation of all developments in history, especially the unique holy genealogical line recorded in Lk. 3 which goes from Adam to Christ, covering a period of 4,000 years.

Some traditional orthodox scholars who believe in the Trinitarian concept of God, interpret the phrase: "root of David" to mean the creator of David. However, the word "root" does not mean creator. A root in a family tree is something created, not the creator. This is certainly evident in Isa. 53:2 where Jesus is referred to as a root that will grow up out of dry ground.

We have seen that Jesus is the "offspring" of David in a literal biological sense, being a physical descendant. Can the word "root" also be interpreted in a literal biological sense? If so, we would have to conclude that Jesus was David's ancestor - that he was not only David's progeny but also progenitor. But in order for Jesus to be David's progenitor would require him to pre-exist, not as God, but as a married man with children so that a family tree could develop, out of which David could come. But most who believe in the pre-existence of Christ would not find such a concept acceptable.

Does this mean therefore, that the word "root" is devoid of any biological significance? Not necessarily. It is interesting and significant that the parent cells control the specific design of a baby, and it is a design that will follow a pattern passed along a chain of inheritance going back to the biological roots of the family. It is now a known and accepted fact that the biological roots of a family determine the design of a baby.

It should be evident that if God wanted a holy genealogical line to be involved to produce His son, He would set in place the biological roots accordingly. In this sense therefore, Jesus could be described as the root of the tree out of which David came. The gene pattern or design of David and others before and after him, who formed links in the genealogical line, was based on God's foreordained and eternal purpose concerning His own son!

The word "root" also occurs in Rom. 11:16-18 and is generally applied to Abraham or the promises made to him. Vine says it is used metaphorically of "cause." Jesus was certainly the root of David in this sense - the cause or reason, not just for David's existence, but also the Messianic promises and prophecies given to him.

"IF HE COMMIT INIQUITY"

Coming back to 2 Sam.7, attention should be drawn for a moment to the fact that after telling David that Messiah would proceed out of his bowels, God said: "If he commit iniquity, I will chasten him ..." (verses 14-15). Now consider what an absurd statement this becomes if the one to whom it referred already existed as a member of the Godhead. God cannot be tempted and cannot sin! In view of this, it would be absolutely incongruous for such a statement to be made concerning Him. Reader, in all seriousness, can you imagine Jesus, sitting on the throne in heaven as a co-equal with the Father, while this prophecy was sent forth to David? Can you picture one member of the Godhead listening to a message being delivered in which it is stated that he will be chastened by another member of the Godhead if he commits iniquity? The very thought of it is preposterous.

Scripture clearly teaches that God cannot be tempted with evil, which means He cannot sin (Jam.1:13). Evil cannot dwell with Him and He hates all workers of iniquity (Ps.5:4-5). If Jesus pre-existed as God it would be too silly for words to speak of him in terms of: "If he commit iniquity I will chasten him." It is inconceivable that God would commit iniquity, and the fact that it was possible for Jesus to do this - the fact that he was tempted (Heb.2:18) and died, is proof in itself that he was not "Very God of Very God."

We read in Heb.5:8 that Jesus "LEARNED OBEDIENCE by the things he suffered." He was "MADE PERFECT through suffering" (Heb.2:10). Once again it is quite incongruous to affirm such things of one who is an omnipotent and omniscient God. Such a God by

His own intrinsic holiness and sinless perfection is "obedient" and does not have to "Learn" it. Such a God IS perfect without having to be "MADE perfect through suffering." These kinds of testimonies preclude Jesus from being "Very God" on the most fundamental basis possible.

We read in Lk.2:52 that Jesus "increased in wisdom and stature, and in favour with God and man." These words make sound practical sense when applied to one who is born and goes through the normal procedure of developing in body and mind. But to apply them to one who is supposed to be Very God Himself ...! If Jesus was really Very God Himself it seems so absurd to speak of him as increasing in wisdom and favour with God. Did he gain favour with himself? If he pre-existed as God, he must have lost all former knowledge and had to learn all over again!

Assuming it were true, and Jesus being God, increased in favour with God; on what grounds could it be said that he increased in favour with God merely because in his new state he grew from a baby to a youth? Did his transfer from heaven to earth cause him to lose favour? If so, how? For he never sinned at any stage during the whole period.

The same applies to the statement in Acts 2:22: "Jesus of Nazareth, A MAN APPROVED BY GOD ..." The word "approve" means to pronounce something as good and acceptable after examination and consideration. It often involves giving approval after having put the matter to the test. This was certainly the case with regard to God's approval of His Son. Even before he started his ministry, the Spirit of God drove him into the wilderness to be tempted to see if he would use the power he had just received for his own gratification or for God's glory. But if Jesus was "Very God" he could not have been tempted, and if he had possessed divine power from eternity, it seems strange that he should be put to the test to see if he would refrain from using it irresponsibly to satisfy his own desires.

"GOINGS FORTH FROM OF OLD"

We have seen that over a 4,000 year period, from Adam through Seth, Noah, Shem, Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, Judah and David etc right down to Mary; the promised "seed" of Messiah was coming forth. This in fact is the point made in Mic.5:2: "But thou, Bethlehem Ephratah, though thou be the least among the clans of Judah, yet out of you shall come forth to me one who is to be ruler in Israel, WHOSE GOINGS FORTH HAVE BEEN FROM OF OLD, FROM EVERLASTING" (A.V.).

(Matt.2:6 applies this to Jesus).

This passage is often quoted to support the pre-existent theory. It is commonly thought that the words: ..."whose goings forth have been from old, from everlasting," mean that Jesus has been moving about on missions throughout eternity.

Some careful research however, shows that this is not what the prophet meant. The Hebrew word "motsaoth" translated "goings forth" does not mean walking or moving about on missions. It only occurs twice in Scripture. It occurs here in Mic.5:2 where it is translated "goings forth" and in 2 Kng.10:27 where it is translated "draught house." At first sight, there may appear to be no connection between the two, but in actual fact the basic significance is similar in both cases.

"Draught house" refers to a latrine or privy, and is translated this way by most translations. Now a latrine is a place for human outgoings or emanations - a place for the emptying out of the bowels, and the basic literal meaning of "motsaoth" in Hebrew is "outgoings," "emanations," "issue."

Strongs Concordance gives "family descent" among the meanings of this word. In other words, "goings forth" can relate to human emanation in the sense of seminal outgoing, as evidenced particularly in a genealogical line. The basic sense of this is expressed in 2 Sam.7:12 where God said to David: "I will set up your seed after you, WHICH SHALL PROCEED OUT OF YOUR BOWELS."

Rotherham's Emphasized Bible gives a very literal and exact translation of Mic.5:2 in these words: "...whose COMINGS FORTH (i.e. seminally) have been from of old ..." And this harmonizes with the immediate context of Mic.5:2. In the first part of the verse God says: "But thou Bethlehem ... Judah ... OUT OF YOU shall he COME FORTH unto Me ... whose COMINGS FORTH have been from of old ..." In other words, the way in which Messiah would come forth out of Judah is the same way in which he had been coming forth from of old, namely: through seminal outpouring. This is why it is emphasized in the New Testament that he is the "seed" or "sperma" of David who was of the tribe of Judah. Remember Heb.7:14: "It is evident that our Lord SPRANG OUT OF JUDAH."

The Good News Bible has caught the sense of the Hebrew by translating the text as follows: "The Lord says, Bethlehem Ephratah, you are one of the smallest towns in Judah, but out of you I will bring a ruler for Israel, WHOSE FAMILY LINE GOES BACK TO ANCIENT TIMES." This is almost identical with "family descent" given by Strong's

concordance.

The Messianic "seed" goes right back to the promise in Gen.3:15 concerning the woman's seed that would crush man's enemy. From that time the "seed" started "going forth" or "coming forth" down the specially prepared holy genealogical line. It had therefore indeed, been "from of old, from everlasting."

The word "everlasting" literally means "age-lasting," without specifying how long. It can mean "limitless time" but is also often used in the sense of limited time. For instance, circumcision, the old Mosaic covenant and the Levitical priesthood etc are all referred to as being an EVERLASTING covenant (Gen.17:13. 1 Chr.16:17. Ex.40:15. Num.25:10-13). In each of these cases, the covenants were not perpetual - they were not intended to continue throughout eternity. They were "age-lasting" - they operated for a specific limited period of time - quite a long time - but were not endless.

This coming forth of Messiah referred to by the prophet Micah is reminiscent of God's promise to Abraham concerning the seed of promise: "He that shall COME FORTH OUT OF THINE BOWELS shall be thine heir" (Gen.15:4). Reference in Gen.49:10 to the law-giver coming out from between Judah's feet fits into the same category. As pointed out before, such expression is a euphemism for seminal outgoing. The same promise was made to David: "I will set up thy seed after thee, which shall proceed out of your bowels" (2 Sam.7:12). Messiah is thus referred to as "the fruit of thy (David's) body" in Ps. 132:11, or "fruit of thy loins" (Acts.2:30). There is tremendous emphasis on this in Scripture. All the prophets and faithful Hebrew servants of God during Old Testament times knew from these prophecies that God was preserving a holy seed - a holy genealogical line out of which Messiah would spring forth when the fullness of time arrived. Altogether, from the time of its inception in the promise to Eve, to the time of fulfilment when Mary gave birth to Jesus, a period of 4,000 years had gone by. When Micah gave his prophecy over 3,000 years had passed. His statement was quite apt therefore when he spoke of Messiah's comings forth being "from of old, from everlasting." And one thing seems certain: none of the Old Testament Hebrew scholars took out of his statement the idea of pre-existence. Neither did the first century Christians. This pre-existent interpretation originated during the ensuing centuries when many turned away from the true doctrine of Christ.

It is interesting to note that the Hebrew word "motsa'oth" is derived from "motsa" - a word which is translated "spring" a number of times in

Scripture, conveying the same basic idea of "emanation," "issuing," "springing forth," "comings forth." It is also translated "bud" in relation to the "tender herb." This ties in perfectly with the basic idea of "goings forth" in Mic.5:2. This is particularly illustrated in the Messianic prophecy in Ps.132:17 where God speaks of making "the horn of David to BUD." This was just another way of expressing the prophecy in Isa.11:1: "And there shall COME FORTH a rod (shoot - twig) OUT OF the stem of Jesse, and a Branch shall grow OUT OF his roots." The New English Bible's translation of Mic.5:2 harmonizes beautifully with this: "Whose roots are far back in the past, in days gone by."

"Motsa" is also translated "proceeded out" or "thing that is gone out" in relation to the emanation of words from the mouth. Although I do not believe that this is the significance of "goings forth" in Mic.5:2, it is nevertheless true in itself that from of old (from Gen.3:15 onwards), there have been "goings forth" of Divine utterances from the mouth of God through the prophets concerning His Son Jesus. In Dan.9:25, "goings forth" means "declaration," "proclamation" or "pronouncement." Declarations concerning the mercy to be manifested through Messiah had been made "from of old." "In the beginning was the word ..."

Before leaving Mic.5:2 it is also significant to note that the emphasis is not upon Messiah going out from God and coming down to Bethlehem in the form of a babe. Micah does not say anything about an already existing Messiah coming down from heaven to become a baby on earth, as one would expect if he was seeking to teach the pre-existence concept. He says the reverse. He says that Messiah would come forth out of Bethlehem Judah after which he would go forth to God.

This point is also emphasized in Jer.30:21: "... their prince (Jesus) shall be one of themselves: their ruler shall come forth from their midst, and I (God) will cause him to draw near, and he shall approach unto Me: for who else would dare to approach Me says the Lord."

* * * * *

CHAPTER 14 "IN THE BEGINNING WAS THE WORD"

In the preceding chapter it was pointed out that right from the beginning of human history, the Father promised a Saviour. In Gen.3:15 a "woman's seed" was promised who would crush man's enemy. As we saw in Mic.5:2, "from of old, from everlasting" the holy seed started coming forth down its Divinely prepared line. And, during this period of 4,000 years of "goings forth," promise after promise was made by the Father concerning His Son. From the beginning right through to the birth of Christ, the Word of God promised and proclaimed him.

It is clear that God's purpose in His Son was no after-thought. It was not a last minute decision. It was purposed from the very beginning - from the very outset of human history and even before that. This truth is taught in the famous opening statement of John's Gospel: "In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. The same was in the beginning with God. All things were made through him; and without him was not anything made that was made. In him was life: and the life was the light of men ... And the Word was made flesh, and tabernacled among us, and we beheld his glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father, full of grace and truth" (Jn.1:1-4, 14).

"LOGOS"

"Logos" is the Greek word translated "Word" in this passage in John's gospel. It is actually a very common word in the New Testament and Old Testament Greek, with a basically simple meaning.

"Logos" occurs over 300 times in the New Testament, in 208 of which it is translated "word," which is its simple basic meaning.

Strong defines Logos as SOMETHING SAID (including the thought); by implication a TOPIC (subject of discourse), also REASONING (the mental faculty) or MOTIVE ..."

Young defines it as "a word, speech, matter, reason."

Vine says it denotes "the expression of thought ... as embodying a conception or idea ... discourse, speech ..."

Interestingly enough, it is from the Greek word Logos that we get our English word "logic," which of course, has to do with reason, thought - the word, an expression of a previous thought, as words reveal thought. As Oxford's dictionary puts it: "Science of reasoning, proof, thinking, or inference ..."

"Logos" is translated by more than 20 different English words in our New Testament, and is used for utterances of men as well as utterances of God. Logos is translated "communication," "doctrine," "intent" (i.e.purpose), "preaching," "reason," "saying," "speech," "talk," "tidings," "utterance" etc.

As I said before, it is a very common word with a basically simple meaning. Its basic significance then, is "something said" i.e. spoken word - verbal utterance, including the thought and reasoning which the spoken word expresses.

With these thoughts in mind, we go back to Jn. 1:1. "In the beginning something was thought, purposed, promised - said by God." And the way in which a capital "W" is given to "Word" indicates that a very special word is meant. It suggests that in the beginning something very special and specific was thought, purposed and promised by God.

Jn.1:14 reveals what this special purpose or promise was: "And the Word was made flesh and dwelt among us ... THE ONLY BEGOTTEN OF THE FATHER ..." This is a key verse. It clearly reveals that the "Word" (thought - purpose - promise) of God in the beginning related to Jesus. In other words, Jn.1:1 teaches that from the very beginning God had thought about and spoken about His Son. And so He had as we have already seen. From the promise in Gen. 3:15 right through the volume of the Old Testament, the red thread of Divine redemption which centres in, and revolves around Jesus, weaves its way throughout, binding all the books of the Bible together, giving them their essential and outstanding unity.

In fact, it is evident from certain statements in the New Testament in which the language of the old natural creation in Gen.1 is spiritually applied to the new creation in Christ, that the Father intended the old natural creation to be a type of the new spiritual creation in His Son (Cp. 2 Cor.4:6). This can only mean one thing: The Father planned and purposed to have an only begotten Son and make him the centre of His purposes even before He created the earth. The Son existed in the Father's mind long before the foundation of the world. Jesus was clearly there at the beginning in the "Logos" (thought, purpose, promise) of God.

Eph.3:11 expresses it in a nutshell when it refers to the "ETERNAL PURPOSE" which God purposed in Christ.

The emphasis then in Jn. 1:1 is that God's purpose in His Son was no last minute decision. The Father intended to have a Son from the very beginning, long before the world was made. In fact, God's purpose in His Son was the sole motive for creation. It was through His purpose in His

Son that all things were made. This is what is behind the statement in Jn. 1:3: "All things were made through him; and without him was not anything made that was made." It was through Christ - through the Father's purpose in him, that the world was made (v 10).

This eternal purpose in Christ is emphasized throughout Scripture. Nathanael said: "We have found him, of whom Moses in the law, and the prophets, did WRITE, Jesus of Nazareth" (Jn.1:45). The opening statement in the epistle to the Romans, like John's gospel, emphasizes that God's purpose in Jesus had been "PROMISED before by His (God's) prophets in the holy Scriptures." 2 Tim. 1:9-10 tells us that God's "PURPOSE and grace was given us in Christ Jesus before the world began, but is now made manifest by the appearing of our Saviour Jesus Christ." Tit.1:2-3 speaks of the hope of eternal life which was "PROMISED (in Jesus) before the world began, but which has at the proper time (fullness of time) been manifested." Thus, when Jesus was manifested, he said: "Lo, I come, in the volume of the book it is WRITTEN of me, to do thy will O God" (Heb.10:7). He was "fore-ordained before the foundation of the world."

"THE WORD BECAME FLESH"

In the light of "Logos" meaning "thought," "purpose," "promise" etc, the phrase: "The Word (Logos) became flesh ... the only begotten of the Father ..." should be self explanatory. It simply means that when Jesus was born and manifested in flesh and blood, God's eternal purpose became a physical reality - an accomplished fact - it became substance in his person. The thoughts concerning Jesus which had received expression in the spoken Word or Logos of God from the very beginning, became embodied in the "man Christ Jesus." The "Word became flesh" - the promise materialized. Prior to his advent in the flesh, Jesus only existed as a thought and promise. But when he was born, the thought and promise became clothed with substance and reality. It became a person. It was manifested as the Son of God.

In view of this, it is singularly fitting that John should personify "Logos." This plan and purpose conceived in Christ was like the presence of a person motivating and impelling the Father, giving meaning and purpose to His acts of creation, the call of Abraham, the choice of David etc. Jesus was clearly with his Father from the very beginning.

The idea of PERSONALITY is not conveyed in the original meaning of the Greek word "Logos" itself. The idea of the "word" referring to an

actual physical person is not contained in the original word itself. This idea is read into it when the principle of personification is overlooked or missed. The same applies to Pr. 8 where the wisdom of God is personified and referred to as a woman, and we shall focus attention on that shortly.

"HIS NAME IS CALLED THE WORD OF GOD"

John, in his gospel, does not say that the "Word" was a pre-existent Christ. He says it "was made flesh" and became "the only begotten of the Father." Before the Word became the only begotten of the Father, it was plainly and simply a "Word," i.e. a thought or promise of God. And because it originated in God and belonged to Him, it "was God." But when the command went forth for Gabriel to approach Mary, and the generative power of God proceeded forth to overshadow her and bring about conception, the Word materialized and became flesh - "flesh and blood," in the person of Jesus Christ.

And, because Jesus was the materialization and fulfilment of the Word of God, and because he upheld that Word during his life and ministry, implicitly obeying it at all times; he was very fittingly given the name: "The Word of God" (Rev. 19:13). But this name was clearly given to him AFTER his birth and ministry on earth. Nowhere in Scripture are we told that he existed as a person by that name prior to his birth.

This is where the mistake is so often made. Because the title: "Word of God" is given to Jesus in Rev. 19:13, it is assumed that "the Word" in Jn.1:1 must mean he existed as a person in the beginning before he was born. But Jn.1 clearly teaches that the Word was not the person of Jesus till it "became flesh." Then, and only then did Jesus, "the only begotten of the Father" exist.

It is important to note that Rev. 19:13 does not say that Jesus "WAS called," but "IS called" The Word of God. John does not apply the title "Word of God" to Jesus during any period prior to his birth. He talks in the present tense - "IS called." Nothing is suggested in Rev. 19:13 or anywhere else that Jesus existed as a person before his birth with this title or name.

According to Rev.19:12, the name "Word of God" given to Jesus is a name "that no man knew but he himself." Jesus refers to it in Rev.3:12 as "My NEW name" which will be written on all overcomers. It is thus described in Rev.2:17 as a "new name written, which no man knows except the one who receives it."

Now, if Jesus pre-existed as the "Word of God" - if this was his

"name" from all eternity prior to his birth, it could hardly be described as a "NEW name" after his ministry on earth.

The fact that it is said that no one knows the name but Jesus himself also implies that it must be a new one. In other words, it could not fit in the same category as other names and titles revealed in the Scriptures long before his birth such as "Wonderful," "Counsellor" etc. To be a "new name" which no one knew, indicates that it was not mentioned or applied to Jesus prior to his birth. Therefore, the "Word" in Jn. 1:1 could hardly refer to the person of Christ in a pre-existent form. He was not known or called by that name until he revealed it in the Revelation given to John long after his ascension to the right hand of God.

In passing, it should also be pointed out that if Jn. 1:1-2 was seeking to establish that Jesus was "Very God," one would expect to find him referred to as "God the Word" rather than "the Word of God." "Of" comes from the Greek "ek" and literally means "out of" or "from." And if Jesus came "out of" God, as is taught in the title "Word OF God," he must have owed his existence to his Father, as explained earlier. This means that the Father preceded him in time, and therefore rank. This is emphasized in the title "the only begotten of the Father."

The significance of the words "begotten" and "Father" in Jn. 1:14 should not be missed: "And the Word was made flesh, and dwelt among us, and we beheld his glory, the glory as of the only BEGOTTEN of the FATHER ..." Again this indicates a process begun by the Father, resulting in a Son in the way described in Lk.1:31-35. Such is the teaching of John, and it does away with the mystery involved in the concept of a pre-existent Being divesting Himself of His Being, while retaining his life and conscious existence, and entering Mary's womb.

The word "begotten" indicates action by two persons, a father and a mother, to produce a third person. But, if the "Word" were ALREADY a person there would be three: a Father who had previously created a Son, or having a Son who never began (which is absurd), and a woman who could not meet the requirements of a proper conception because the person she gave birth to lived long before, and was really her God and Creator. Thus a heavy fog of superstition and mystery is made to hang over and obscure the otherwise simple and straightforward teaching of the origin of Jesus.

Jesus then, at his birth, became the living embodiment of the plan and purpose (Logos) of God. This is basically what is meant by "the Word became flesh." All of God's words and promises concerning a Saviour, which had been declared from the beginning, took physical shape and

found tangible form and existence in Jesus. Jesus was an expression or a manifestation of the life which had been with the Father from the beginning. The Father manifested Himself in His Son. Being "full of grace and truth" Jesus revealed the glory of God.

Jesus was the Logos lived out in speech and action, not merely a thought and purpose of God written on scrolls as before his birth. And, since he was a fulfilment and embodiment of the Word of God, he is appropriately given the new name: "THE WORD OF GOD."

SOME EXAMPLES

The concept of: "... the Word was made flesh" meaning God's thoughts or Word of promise being materialized is demonstrated elsewhere in Scripture in relation to other works of God. For instance, speaking about creation, we read in Ps.33:9 that God "spake, and it was done; He commanded, and it appeared." For example: "And God said, Let there be light: and there was light" (Gen.1:3). All things were made, or came into being, through His Logos i.e. Word or command. Prior to its existence, creation was with God in the form of Logos; i.e. it was a thought and purpose. As Ps.33:6 says: "By the Word (Logos - LXX) of the Lord were the heavens made ..." Had the Lord never thought and purposed creation, it would never have been created. The bringing of it into existence was a materialization of the Logos. As far as the animals and Adam were concerned, it was a case of the Logos being made flesh, for God spoke, and it was done. It is not difficult to conclude from this that the words used in Jn. 1:1-3 are drawing attention to the fact that the creation of Jesus was like every other act of God's creation, i.e. preceded by a word spoken by God.

Consider Ps.147:15, 18-19: "He sends forth His commandment upon the earth: His WORD runs very swiftly." Here, the word of God is personified, representing a messenger swiftly running forth to fulfil His will. The same applies to Ps.107:20 "He SENT His Word and healed them, and delivered them from their destruction."

Listen to Isa.14:24: "The Lord of hosts has sworn, saying, Surely as I HAVE THOUGHT, so shall it come to pass; and as I HAVE PURPOSED so shall it stand." In this particular case, God was talking about His purpose to destroy the Assyrian army. This purpose was with God in the form of "Logos" before it became concrete reality. When it was fulfilled it was a materialization of Logos. Also see Isa.42:9, 46:11.

Isa.55:11 has a particularly real application to God's purpose in His Son: "So shall my Word (Logos) be that goes forth out of my mouth: it shall not return unto me void ..." From the beginning, the Logos of God intended a woman's seed to become a Saviour. And this Divine thought and purpose did not return to God void - empty - without shape, form or substance. Jesus was "born of a woman" and as a "Son of man" bodily and physically ascended to the right hand of the Father in heaven. The "Word" from heaven which promised Jesus, and the "power" from heaven which fulfilled the promise by causing Mary to conceive, finally returned to heaven as a physical reality - "flesh," in the person of Jesus. It accomplished that unto which it had been sent. It was a case of "ascending up where it was before" (Jn.6:62).

The New Testament is consistent with this teaching about the operation of the Logos of God. 2 Pet.3:5-7 says "... by the Word (Logos) of God the heavens were of old, and the earth standing out of the water and in the water ... But the heavens and the earth, which are now, by the same WORD (Logos) are kept in store, reserved for fire on the day of judgement and destruction of ungodly men."

"Through faith we understand that the worlds were framed by the Word of God" (Heb.11:3).

It is also noteworthy that although the writer to the Hebrews speaks in very exalted terms of Jesus, "Logos" is used of GOD'S MESSAGE and not of Jesus himself. See Heb.2:2. 4:2, 12. 7:28. 12:19. 13:7, 22.

Everything in the universe has been made through the Word or command of God. Nothing has come into existence without a word firstly coming from Him. All things have come into being as a result of His thinking, reasoning, planning and command. And all of His thoughts and plans in creating the universe were motivated by, and had their single objective in His only begotten Son and the Divine family that would be developed through him.

"WAS WITH GOD" ... "WAS GOD"

Jn.1:1 says "The Word WAS WITH GOD, and the Word WAS GOD." This does not mean that "the Word" was a separate personality, for John in his first epistle uses language very similar to this, saying, "the life ... WAS WITH the Father." Must we give "life" a separate existence and make it a separate person from the Father? No. Here again is the figure of personification, used many times in Scripture elsewhere.

The phrase: "the life - was WITH the Father" in 1 Jn.1:1-2 runs

parallel with the statement in Jn. 1:4 which says "IN Him was life." Life is an attribute of God, like wisdom, and is IN Him and WITH Him, and by giving it to His Son He manifested it to the world. When Jesus appeared, being the receptacle of Divine life, he manifested the life which had been with the Father from the beginning.

There is then, no justification for concluding that "life" had a separate personal existence from God simply because it says "the life ... was WITH the Father." The same applies to the phrase "the Word was WITH God." It was with God as life was with Him - as an attribute, because "Logos" stands for His thoughts and the expression of thoughts. And, because "a man is as good as his word" the WORD IS THE MAN. Hence, "The Word WAS God."

God's Word, in the sense of verbal utterance, is an expression of His thoughts, for all intelligent words spring from thought and reasoning. Every "Word" from God is a revelation of His own personal mind and will. Before the Word was spoken and revealed in verbal utterance, and committed to holy writ, it was with God, secretly tucked away in His omniscient mind as a concept or plan. This is particularly so with regard to His purpose in Christ. It "was God" because such plans and purposes cannot be separated or detached from Himself. They are direct, personal attributes and possessions of His.

Hence, the Greek word "pros" translated "with," does not merely mean "company," but "the most intimate communion." Nothing can be more intimate than one's own thoughts and purposes. "For what person knows a man's thoughts except the spirit of the man which is in him?" (1 Cor.2:11).

So then, the Word was "with" God in the same sense that life was "with" God. Both are attributes of God and dwell with Him like wisdom and other attributes, and are sometimes personified in Scripture. (In Pr. 8:22 wisdom is referred to as being "possessed" by God in the beginning). The "Word" referred to in Jn. 1:1 that was with God, specifically relates to His thoughts and purposes from the beginning to send His only begotten Son into the world. In this sense, Jesus has been "with" the Father from the beginning. In a similar sense, the prophets were also "with God" prior to their birth and ministry, as we saw earlier from Hos.9:8. They existed in the Logos of God - the thoughts of God, long before they were born, and were therefore promised and spoken about by God long before they appeared. This particularly applied to one of the greatest prophets - John the Baptist. Jn.1:6 states: "There was a man sent FROM God whose name was John." The literal reading of the Greek text here is "sent FROM

BESIDE God." As far as the Logos of God was concerned, John was with God before he was born. But he clearly did not pre-exist. The phrase "sent from God" simply means John was foreordained - predestined - ordained and destined in God's mind for a specific ministry long before birth. Exactly the same idiom occurs in Jn.7:29 in relation to Jesus when he said: "I am FROM Him (God), and He has SENT me." The form of the Greek is the same as in Jn.1:6 in relation to John the Baptist.

PROVERBS CHAPTER EIGHT

' 'W'isdom" is often used in Scripture as a synonym for the Word of God, by which all things were made. For example: "He has made the earth by His power, He has established the world by His WISDOM, and stretched out the heavens by His UNDERSTANDING" (Jer.10:12). As mentioned before, "Logos" carries with it both the idea of verbal utterance and the thought, reasoning, wisdom and understanding behind it. Wisdom is an attribute of God like the Word and Life, and is also personified in Scripture. This is particularly evident in Pr.8:22-23: "The Lord possessed ME in the beginning of His way, before His works of old. I was set up from everlasting, from the beginning, or ever the earth was." Here, wisdom is spoken of as a person separate from God.

Now because Jesus is referred to as "the wisdom of God" (1 Cor.1:24), it is sometimes felt that the reference to wisdom in Pr. 8 as a person separate from God from the beginning, applies to Jesus in a pre-existent state.

There are several reasons for not agreeing with this conclusion. The main reason is because wisdom in Pr.8 is represented by a WOMAN, which accounts for all the pronouns being in the feminine gender. For example "HER" (v 1); "SHE" (v 2-3). If it be denied that an attribute of God is being personified here, and it be claimed that the reference is to a literal person separate from God, then we would be forced to conclude that the person must be a woman and not a man. And this immediately disqualifies the pre-existent Christ application, and creates the embarrassment of finding a place in theology for a pre-existent daughter of God.

Wisdom is clearly personified here. An attribute of God is represented by a woman and is thus treated as a separate entity. Such personification was very common in ancient poetical-type discourse, and failure to recognize this can lead to all sorts of weird and fanciful

interpretations and conclusions. Such personification is very effectively used to create special interest in the narrative and cause the particular lessons and principles involved to make a more vivid impression on the mind of those being instructed.

Many principles are personified in the Bible and it is done with great advantage. The following examples of personification can be considered: WISDOM (Pr.8. 3:13-15. 9:1). LOVE (1 Cor. 13:4-8). OBEDIENCE (Rom. 6:16-17). SIN (Rom.7:8-11). CARES OF THE WORLD AND RICHES (Mk. 4:19, Matt. 6:24). COMMANDMENTS (Pr. 6:20-22). SORROW (Jn.16:6) etc.

The personification of abstract things like sin, love, wisdom etc, makes them far more easily understood than they would be if spoken in precise, literal language. There is a warmth and expressiveness in such style of speech which is characteristic of the Word of God in many places - especially in the book of Proverbs and the parables of Jesus. Even our own contemporary language and mode of expression would be sadly deprived if we took out of it all personification and metaphor. We would be left with a very dry, bare, matter-of-fact and dull form of communication.

A careful study of Proverbs chapter 8 in connection with chapter 7 soon reveals the reason for the wisdom of God being personified and treated as a woman. In chapter 7, Solomon speaks of the adulteress who stands on the street corner calling out to those who pass by, trying to entice them to come to her and commit sin. Chapter 8 carries straight on and provides the contrast. Here, the wisdom of God is also presented as a woman standing in the street calling out to all who pass by, trying to entice them to come in to her and dwell with her and receive life, strength, health and wealth. And this style of speech in which God's attribute of wisdom is personified and spoken of as being WITH Him, fits into the same category as Jn. 1:1-4 where the Word of God is referred to in similar terms.

Carrying on in the same poetical, metaphorical vein; Pr. 8:22 describes the origin and outworking of wisdom. It originated in God, and by it He made everything, causing great rejoicing among the angels as they saw His creative works of wisdom unfold before them (Job.38:7).

The main point being stressed in Pr.8:22-31 is expressed in Pr.3:19: "The Lord by wisdom has founded the earth: by understanding has He established the heavens." Also see Job.28:12-28. Again: "O Lord, how manifold are your works. In wisdom you have made them all: the earth is full of your riches" (Ps.104:24. 136:5).

Pr.8 is thus encouraging the reader to seek wisdom on the basis of the fact that it was by wisdom that God created and made all the wonders and marvels of creation. What an inducement!

God and His wisdom are as inseparable as God and His Word. His wisdom is WITH Him and IN Him in the same way that His Word and Life are. And these attributes of God are often personified for the purpose of more expressive and effective meaning.

A good example of how inseparable God and His wisdom are, can be seen in a statement of Jesus, where, instead of saying "God said," he says "the wisdom of God said." (Lk.11:49).

And, it should also be pointed out in passing, that while it is true that Jesus is referred to as "the wisdom of God" in 1 Cor.1:24, verse 30 makes it clear that he was MADE such by God: "Who of God is made unto us wisdom." Jesus BECAME the wisdom of God through the Spirit of the Lord resting upon him: "And the Spirit of the Lord shall rest upon him, the spirit of wisdom ..." (Isa.11:2). "And the child grew, and became strong in spirit, filled with wisdom" (Lk.2:40). Because Jesus was filled with, and manifested the wisdom of God, he was called "the wisdom of God," in the same way that he was called "The Life" and "Word" because he was full of the Life and Word of God.

SPIRIT OF CHRIST IN THE PROPHETS

It is in connection with the principle of Jesus existing in the Logos of God that 1 Pet.1:10-11 can be understood where it speaks about "the Spirit of Christ" being in the Old Testament prophets, "testifying beforehand the sufferings of Christ, and the glory that should follow."

The Logos which materialized in the person of Christ, was the same Logos which inspired the prophets to testify.

Reference to "the Spirit of Christ" being in the prophets is sometimes quoted as proof that Christ existed during the Old Testament period. Yet, when we read about John the Baptist going forth in "the Spirit and power of Elijah" it is rarely concluded that Elijah was actually present inspiring and empowering John. Prior to the statement in Lk.1:17 that John the Baptist would go forth in the Spirit and power of Elijah, v15 states that "he shall be filled with the Holy Spirit from his mothers womb." It is evident from this that "the Spirit and power of Elijah" was just another way of saying "the Holy Spirit." They refer to one and the same thing - the power of God. Elijah's name in Hebrew conveys this for it means "the power of God" or "God's power." His spirit and power was God's.

Why then, was John the Baptist's ministry explained in terms of going forth in the spirit and power of Elijah? Why doesn't it say that he went forth in the spirit and power of the Holy Spirit? The reason is because it was the Divine purpose for John's ministry to be similar to Elijah's. The work of the Holy Spirit in John's ministry closely resembled Elijah's ministry. And to indicate this, the angel Gabriel informed John's father that his son would go forth in the spirit and power of Elijah. Thus, in this one simple phrase, the whole nature and purpose of John's ministry was beautifully epitomised, and John's father, who knew his Scriptures well, would understand the import of it.

The "SPIRIT OF CHRIST" which was in the prophets was also the HOLY SPIRIT. It is not difficult to deduce this from Peter's epistle. In 1 Pet. 1:10 he refers to the Old Testament prophets, and then in v11 says "the Spirit of Christ was in them" and "testified" through them concerning the sufferings and glory of Christ. This is clear enough. Now Peter elsewhere states that the Spirit which testified through the Old Testament prophets was "the Holy Spirit." This is what he says: "For the prophecy came not in old time by the will of man: but holy men of God spoke as they were moved BY THE HOLY SPIRIT" (2 Pet.1:21).

That the "spirit of Christ" is just another way of saying the "Holy Spirit" is taught in Acts 16:6-7. In v.6 we read about the "Holy Spirit" forbidding the apostles to go to Asia. Then in v.7 it says that "the Spirit of Jesus" would not allow them to go to Bithynia. (The Authorized Version only gives it as "the Spirit" but practically all modern translations agree that it should be "the Spirit of Jesus").

Another verse which links the spirit of Jesus and the prophets is Rev. 19:10: "The testimony of Jesus is the spirit of prophecy." That is, the same Spirit which spoke through the prophets is the same Spirit by which Jesus gives testimony, namely: the Holy Spirit. Jesus, like all the prophets, was inspired by the Holy Spirit. The same Spirit that was in him was in the prophets.

There is only one Spirit, namely: God's (Eph.4:4). It was this Spirit that worked in all the prophets (Neh.9:20, 30. Isa.63:11), and inspired them to testify prophetically of Christ. Later, this same Spirit was given to Jesus and was manifested through him without measure. This is one of the reasons for God's Spirit being called "the Spirit of Christ." The same Spirit that operated in him also operated in the Old Testament prophets. Many of the things that characterized his ministry as a prophet also characterized the prophetic ministries of the prophets in old time. Many of them, especially those who were reproached, suffered and were killed,

were a type of the greatest prophet who was to come after them - the Son of God himself. To claim pre-existence on the basis of the phrase "spirit of Christ" being in the prophets, is as unjustified as claiming that Jesus was alive and reproached in the days of Moses because Heb. 11:26 says Moses "esteemed the reproach of Christ greater riches than the treasures of Egypt."

Actually, the title "Christ" in the phrase "Spirit of Christ" really suggests the significance of the phrase. "Christ" means "anointed," and relates to the Holy Spirit by which the Father anointed His Son. Jesus did not become "the Christ" until anointed with the Holy Spirit at his baptism at the age of 30. The prophet Daniel in fact, predicted the precise year of this event when Jesus would manifest himself as the Christ in a remarkable time prophecy recorded in Dan.9. But, if the reference in 1 Pet.1:11 to the Spirit of Christ being in the prophets means Jesus was alive during the days of the Old Testament prophets as "Christ," then Daniel's time prophecy which specifically predicts the year when Jesus would become Christ is turned into a farce.

If "Christ" means "anointed," and if Jesus pre-existed as "Christ," it must be asked: "Who anointed him with the Spirit during his pre-existent state?" If he was "anointed," he must have RECEIVED Divine power from a source external to himself - from Father God who is the only source, which means it was not, as in the case of the Father, an underived possession. In other words, if Jesus pre-existed as "Christ," he could not have been "Very God of Very God."

Why then, does Peter use the expression "Spirit of Christ" if he is referring to the Holy Spirit? Why didn't he say "Holy Spirit" and be done with it? I believe that the answer to this question is basically the same as the answer to the question concerning John the Baptist, whose ministry in the Holy Spirit is referred to as going forth in the spirit and power of Elijah. Because the ministry of the Holy Spirit in his case was so similar to Elijah's ministry, he is referred to as going forth in Elijah's spirit and power. And in a very similar way, because the prophets preached the sufferings and glory of Christ, and because their life and experiences typified Christ, the Holy Spirit which inspired them is fittingly called "the Spirit of Christ" - it was precisely the same Spirit with which Jesus was anointed and by which he became "the Christ."

Throughout the whole volume of the Word of God, the Holy Spirit was ministering Christ through the prophets in the spoken and written Logos of God. Hence, Nathanael was told by Philip: "We have found him of whom Moses in the Law and the prophets did write, Jesus of

Nazareth."

In fact, the Spirit of Christ (i.e. the Holy Spirit's prophetic inspiration concerning Christ) was so precise and direct in testifying to Christ through the prophets, that one of them - Isaiah, was moved to speak as if he were Christ himself. The very words of Christ are put into his mouth and he speaks them forth as if he was Christ himself: "Listen, O isles, unto me; ye people, from afar; the Lord has called me from the womb; from the bowels of my mother has he made mention of my name. And he has made my mouth like a sharp sword ..." (Isa.49:1-2)

Isa.49 is the second "Servant" passage in the book of Isaiah, and practically all Bible commentators agree that to none other than Messiah can the servant here be applied suitably. The words put into Isaiah's mouth are the words of Christ to the world. The work of the Holy Spirit in the prophet here could not be more fittingly expressed than in the terms of "the Spirit of Christ" being in the prophet.

In Isa 8:18 the prophet Isaiah says: "Behold, I and the children whom the Lord has given me, are for signs and for wonders in Israel from the Lord of Hosts." Here, Isaiah refers to himself and his two sons as performing a special sign ministry. This passage is quoted in Heb.2:13 and applied to Jesus and his brethren. Isaiah was clearly regarded as representing and typifying Christ.

In view of all this, a better phrase than "Spirit of Christ" could hardly be chosen to reveal in a few words the primary function of the Holy Spirit in the ministry of the prophets. The Holy Spirit revealed Christ through the prophets. Christ was the central theme - the pivotal point of the Logos of God ministered by the Holy Spirit through the prophets.

"HE WAS BEFORE ME"

Once we appreciate the eternal nature of the Logos - the eternal purpose of God in Christ, a basis is laid for a deeper appreciation of such statements as this one made by John the Baptist concerning Jesus: "He who comes after me is preferred before me: for he was before me" (Jn.1:15).

According to Strong's Concordance the Greek word "protos" which is translated "before," means "foremost in time, place, order of importance." It is used both ways in the New Testament, i.e. in the sense of TIME and RANK.

Jesus was well before John in time as far as the Logos of God was

concerned. As we have seen, he was "in the beginning." God's purpose in him was eternal. Even as far as the written Logos is concerned, Jesus was specifically promised in Gen.3:15 and was clearly in the Father's mind at the beginning of creation when He said: "Let there be light." John the Baptist does not appear in the written Logos till over 3,000 years later, the first reference being to him in Isa.40:3. So, in terms of the revelation of the Word of God, Jesus was 3,000 years before John. He was "foreordained before the foundation of the world" (1 Pet.1:20).

This statement made by Peter about Jesus being "FOREordained" is really the key to John the Baptist's statement about Jesus being "beFORE" him. As already pointed out, the Greek word for "before" is "protos," which is derived from "PRO" which means "FORE." The word "FOREordained" in the Greek is "proginosko" and means "to know before," or to ordain, appoint, determine before.

So, when we come across John the Baptist's statement that Jesus was "before" him, we ask the question: "In what way was Jesus "before" John?" Tradition usually replies by saying Jesus existed before John. But Scripture knows no such doctrine. Scripture teaches that Jesus was **ORDAINED** before, i.e. "foreordained," which is a synonym for "predestined." It was emphasized earlier in this thesis and it should be emphasized again, that the term "pre-existence" is unscriptural. The Bible never states that Jesus **EXISTED** before his birth. The term "predestinated" and "foreordained," however, are quite Scriptural, and when the principles of predestination are understood, all the statements which are commonly interpreted to mean pre-existence suddenly appear in a new light. The Bible clearly teaches that Jesus was **ORDAINED** and **DESTINED** in the Logos of God before his birth, and, indeed, before the foundation of the world. John the Baptist gave expression to this fact when he confessed that Jesus was "before" him.

Jesus was also "before" John in the sense of **RANK**. Actually, "protos" is translated "chief" eleven times in the New Testament. For example: "And whosoever will be **CHIEF** among you, let him be your servant" (Matt.20:27). The Revised Standard Version renders it as: "Whoever would be **FIRST** among you ..." which indicates how the word "first" in our own contemporary speech is used in the sense of **RANK** or **STATUS**. Mark's version in the Authorized Version also translates "protos" as "first" in this instance (Mk.9:35).

Hence, Rotherham's Emphasized Bible translates John the Baptist's words concerning Jesus like this: "He was my chief." The Emphatic Diaglott renders it: "He is my superior."

"Protos" is also translated "best" in Lk.15:22. In the Authorized Version "protos" is mostly translated "first." Significantly enough, it is only translated "before" in Jn.1:15, 30. This is one of the many examples of Trinitarian bias in the King James Version.

Jesus then, was "before" John in point of time as far as the Logos of God was concerned, being "foreordained before the foundation of the world;" and was also first in rank, as indicated when John said he was unworthy to undo Jesus' latchet. "He must increase and I must decrease" said John on another occasion.

That one does not have to pre-exist to be preferred before or above another is well illustrated in 2 Sam.6:21 where David said to Michal, Saul's daughter: "It was before the Lord, WHO CHOSE ME BEFORE YOUR FATHER AND BEFORE ALL HIS HOUSE to appoint me ruler over the people of the Lord, over Israel." In the Divine Logos and foreknowledge, David WAS BEFORE SAUL. In reality, chronologically speaking, Saul was born before David and reigned as king before David.

Jacob also was preferred before Esau, even though Esau was born first. As far as the Logos of God was concerned, Jacob was first, and received the blessings of firstborn. Even before Jacob and Esau were born, God told Rebekah that "The elder shall serve the younger" (Rom.9:10-13). Jacob was clearly "first" in the Divine thoughts and plan (Logos) although born last. And this applied to many other men who, although not firstborn in order of birth or physical existence, were nevertheless given the title, rights and privileges of firstborn. And this applies to Jesus in a very real way, not merely in relation to John the Baptist, but to all men, as will be pointed out when more specific attention is given to the subject of "FIRSTBORN."

ALPHA AND OMEGA - BEGINNING AND ENDING

Jesus is the "Alpha and Omega," the "First and the Last," the "Beginning and the Ending" (Rev.1:8, 11. 21:6. 22:13).

"Alpha and Omega" are the first and last letters in the Greek alphabet. Jesus is clearly the "Author and Finisher of our faith" as we read in Heb.12:2. The Christian faith begins with him and ends with him. From the very beginning, when the promise of Divine redemption was promised in Gen.3:15, right through to the end of the Old Testament era, Jesus has been the foundation stone - the sole basis on which God's plan has developed. And the same applies from the time of his birth through to the end-time. He is the foundation and focal centre of the eternal purpose of

God. Hence, Jesus is not only referred to as the "offspring" of David, but also the "ROOT" (Rev.5:5. 22:16).

Jesus is the beginning and ending of the purpose of God. From start to finish, the Divine Logos and programme centres in, revolves around, and depends upon him. He is the "seed" of promise referred to in the very beginning and he is the one who, at the end of the millennium when the seventh millennium of man's history is complete, when all enemies, including death, shall have been conquered; will deliver up the kingdom to his Father so that God may be "all in all" (1 Cor.15:23).

Jesus' reference to himself in Rev.1:8 as being the "beginning ..." is also explained in v5 as "the first begotten of the dead." Or, as Col.1:18 puts it: "He is the beginning, the firstborn from the dead." Jesus is the "firstfruits of them that slept" (1 Cor.15:20); the "first to rise from the dead" (Acts 26:23). He is thus "firstborn among his brethren" (Rom.8:29), or, as Rev.3:14 puts it: "the beginning of the creation of God." He will also be the "ending" or consummator when he completes the Divine purpose by totally eradicating death in the earth, thus allowing his Father to become "all in all."

Sometimes the reference to Jesus being the beginning of the creation of God in Rev.3:14 is regarded as teaching he was created before the Genesis creation. But the creation referred to in Rev.3:14 is not the creation of trees, birds and animals etc as in Gen 1, but rather the creation of men and women. The words "create" and "creation" are used frequently in this spiritually regenerative sense in the New Testament (Eph.2:10, 15. Cp. 4:23-24. Col.3:9 Revised Standard Version Gal.6:15. Jam.1:18. 2 Cor.5:17).

The context itself of Rev.3:14 indicates that it refers to the new creation and not the old. Verse 11 refers to holding fast to the "crown." Verse 12 refers to becoming a "pillar in the temple of God," and makes mention of "NEW Jerusalem" and the "NEW name" which will be written on all overcomers. Verse 21 refers to sitting with Christ on his throne. The whole context is dealing with the regeneration and ultimate glorification of believers, and not the original creative acts of God as recorded in Gen 1.

If the reference to Jesus being the "Alpha" and "beginning" means he pre-existed and was created before creation, what does "Omega" and "ending" mean?

The phrase "beginning of the creation of God," whatever way we interpret it, still teaches two basic truths: (1) Jesus had a beginning. (2) He is a created being. This being so, Jesus could not possibly be "Very God of

Very God." The Father is Uncreate and has no beginning. Jesus could not possibly be co-eternal with the Uncreate seeing that he is a created being.

On several occasions in the Old Testament, Father God is referred to as: "... the first and the last" (Isa. 44:6. 48:12). The significance of this is indicated in Isa. 43:10 which records him saying: "Before me there was no god formed, neither shall there be after me." Jesus was clearly not the first and last in this sense, but he is in the sense of being conquerer of sin and Saviour of the world.

"NEITHER BEGINNING OF DAYS"

Heb.7:3 might appear to contradict the foregoing remarks, and it is sometimes quoted to support the pre-existence concept. It reads like this: "Without father, without mother, without descent, having neither beginning of days, nor end of life; but made like unto the Son of God; abideth a priest continually."

The first thing to notice about this statement is that it is talking initially about Melchizedec. If the description: "without father, without mother, without descent, having neither beginning of days, nor end of life" means pre-existence, then this must have been Melchizedec's position, because these words in Heb.7:3 are affirmed of him. Was he also a member of the Godhead?

It should be evident that this is not the correct way to interpret the passage. Heb.7:3 provides a comparison between the PRIESTHOOD of Melchizedec and the priesthood of Christ, to show that the latter is superior to the Aaronic priesthood. It has nothing to do with the origin of Christ.

This should be evident from the fact that Jesus clearly had a mother (Mary) and Father (God). His family line of descent is well documented in the gospel records, and even Heb.7:3 says "it is evident that our Lord sprang out of Judah."

Jesus also had an end of life when he died. After his resurrection he declared: "I am he who lives, and was dead" (Rev.1:18). He is now alive "forever more" since his Father raised him from the dead (Acts 3:19-20).

The key phrase in Heb.7:3 is "MADE LIKE UNTO," translated "resembling" by the Revised Standard Version. This explains how Melchizedec was "without father ..." He is so "MADE" in the narrative in Genesis. The portrait drawn there is one designed to represent the Son of God. Anything that would have marred the picture in serving that purpose has been left out. Not only so, but certain omissions are shown to have

been made to teach definite lessons. Paul argues not only from the **UTTERANCES** but also from the **SILENCE** of Scripture, showing that sometimes an argument can be built, not only on what Scripture says, but also on what it does not say. In fact, in this particular case, Paul bases his exposition almost as much on what Scripture does not say about Melchizedec as on what it does say.

One of the omissions of Scripture is any reference to the death of Melchizedec. There is also no reference to the relinquishing of his office. Therefore, in the pages of Scripture he abides a priest continually, and a type is provided of the everlasting priesthood of Christ.

Melchizedec's father is never mentioned in Scripture, nor his mother, nor is there any record of his descent; there is no mention of the beginning of his days, nor any reference to the end of his life. One commentator puts it like this: "Of whose father, mother, pedigree, birth and death we have no account." This is a very free translation but quite intelligible and consistent with the context.

The words: "without father, without mother," are not of course, a description of natural facts. If they were, then Melchizedec would not be made like unto the Son of God who had both a mother and Father and sprang out of the tribe of Judah, being the offspring of David and the seed of Abraham. If Melchizedec literally did not have father and mother, he would be God Himself who alone is Uncreate.

It is also said of Esther that she had "neither father nor mother" (Est.2:7). But how foolish it would be for us to immediately conclude on this basis that she never ever had natural parents. A little reflection and discernment soon reveals that the phrase simply means her parents were dead. What then, is meant by the statement that Melchizedec had neither father nor mother? The significance of the statement is explained by the following statement which says he was "**WITHOUT DESCENT.**" In Greek "without descent" is "**A-GENEA-LOGEETOS**" which literally means "without genealogy." Vine gives its meaning as "**WITHOUT RECORDED PEDIGREE.**"

Once again this is not a description of natural facts, for Jesus certainly had a genealogy as already pointed out. And Melchizedec could not literally be without descent. It would be ridiculous to imagine that Melchizedec had no ancestors. Paul's exposition has nothing to do with trying to prove that Melchizedec never had ancestors. He is simply showing that Melchizedec did not **INHERIT** his priesthood through physical descent from a line of priests. The narrative concerning Melchizedec in Gen.14 is so framed in facts and omissions as to

foreshadow Christ in this matter, who also did not inherit his priesthood through physical descent from a line of priests.

This then, is the first of Paul's arguments drawn from the silence of Scripture. Scripture does not provide Melchizedec with a genealogy. It was both unusual and remarkable that nothing is said about Melchizedec's ancestry, for two reasons:

(1) It is the very reverse of the habitual practise of GENESIS. Genealogies are a feature of Genesis; long lists of man's ancestors constantly occur. But Melchizedec arrives on the scene, as it were, from nowhere, and that in itself is quite unusual.

(2) But more important - this is the reversal of the rules which governed priesthood - particularly the Aaronic priesthood. Under the Jewish law a man could not under any circumstances become a priest unless he could produce an unbroken and certificated pedigree going back to Aaron. He had to trace an unbroken line of descent from Aaron. If he had not that genealogy, nothing in the world could make him a priest. The whole Jewish priesthood was founded upon genealogy - descent. Personal qualification hardly entered into it at all. Character and ability figured little at all. The main essential was the pedigree.

Failure to establish their title to priesthood by genealogy resulted in being debarred from the priesthood. In connection with this see Ezra 2:61-63. Nehemiah 7:63-65. On the other hand, if a man could produce a pedigree reaching back to Aaron, apart from certain specified physical blemishes, nothing on earth could stop him being a priest. Genealogy - "descent" - was literally everything.

So the first difference between the Aaronic priesthood and the Melchizedec priesthood was this: the Aaronic depended on genealogical descent and the priesthood of Melchizedec depended on Divine bestowal and personal qualifications. Melchizedec's priesthood was based on what HE WAS, and not on what he HAD INHERITED. It is the difference between a claim based on LEGALITY and a claim based on PERSONALITY.

Paul later goes on to show how Jesus is the true priest not because of what he has inherited but because of what he is and what God has made him (Heb.7:16). Jesus' authority is in himself because God has given it to him direct. It came to him from no man.

"Having neither beginning of days, nor end of life" is another statement made on the basis of the silence of Scripture. Scripture says nothing about when Melchizedec began his priesthood and makes no reference to when he ended it; no information is provided of when he was

born and when he died. So, as far as the Biblical record is concerned, he is left to abide "for ever" in the minds of his readers. There he is in Scripture, as it were, perpetually a priest.

Nor is anything said of any successor to him. He has no recorded priestly descendants. In all this, the very silence of Scripture makes him resemble the Son of God. Jesus does not take his office from another; neither has he any successor - he abides a priest "forever."

Again it should be pointed out that if these statements in Heb.7 concerning Melchizedec were literally true, it would mean that he is still alive as High Priest which would mean that we have two high priests: Melchizedec and Jesus. One thing is certain: Jesus could not have been a high priest after the order of Melchizedec until Melchizedec firstly existed. Or, more to the point - until the oath in Ps.110:4 was announced, for it was this oath that qualified Jesus to be high priest after the order of Melchizedec as we read in Heb. 5. He could not be such a high priest before that oath was given.

So then, from Heb.7:1-3 we can collect 5 great qualities in the priesthood of Melchizedec as it relates to Jesus: (1.) It is a priesthood of RIGHTEOUSNESS. (2) PEACE. (3) ROYAL - King-Priest. (4) PERSONAL and not inherited. (5) ETERNAL for there is no end to his priesthood. These are the qualities which differentiate the priesthood of Melchizedec from the Aaronic.

Sometimes the question is asked: "Who was Melchizedec?" Nobody knows, not even the inspired writer to the Hebrews. While it would be interesting to know, the knowledge would spoil the picture. Some have conjectured that Melchizedec was Shem, but if so, the whole point of what the writer to the Hebrews says about Melchizedec would be destroyed because we can trace Shem's genealogy, identify his mother and father, and ascertain the beginning and ending of his days. We would have to interpret the picture in the light of the identity, and Paul's lessons could not be adduced. We must be content not to know.

"BEFORE ABRAHAM WAS - I AM"

After saying: "Abraham rejoiced to see my day: and he saw it and was glad," Jesus also said: "Before Abraham was, I am" (Jn.8:58). This statement fits into the same category as John the Baptist's when he said: "He who comes after me is preferred before me, for HE WAS BEFORE ME." As already pointed out, Scripture teaches that Jesus was ORDAINED BEFORE the foundation of the world, but never teaches that

he EXISTED BEFORE. Jesus was pre-ordained or predestinated, but never pre-existed. The word "pre-existed" is unscriptural and a Bible student is under no obligation to use it. To do so is to depart from the speech of the holy oracles.

When Jesus said he was before Abraham he was simply giving expression to the fact that he was foreordained before the foundation of the world. He was in the Logos of God from the very beginning, long before Abraham ever lived. The Jews of course, as usual, took his words at face value without exercising any spiritual discernment, and concluded that Jesus was claiming to have physically existed before Abraham, making himself greater than the great patriarch. "Then took they up stones to cast at him ..."

When Jesus said: "Before Abraham was, I am," the question naturally arises in one's mind, what did he mean by "I am?" I am who, or what?

This was not the only time when Jesus used that affirmative expression "I am." In this very same chapter we read that Jesus said: "When you have lifted up the Son of man, then you shall know that I AM" (Jn.8:28). Again, in the next chapter we read that: "Some said, This is he; other's said, He is like him: but he said, I AM" (Jn.9:9). Also in Jn.18:4-8 we are told that when the Jewish leaders said they were looking for Jesus of Nazareth, "Jesus said to them, I AM." In each case the translators have added the word "he," making it read "I am HE," which suggests to us that the explanation is to be found in the context. "Before Abraham was, I am he." Or, as we read in Matt.11:3: "I am he that was to come."

It is important to remember that Jesus' statement here is in the immediate context of his previous statement that "Abraham rejoiced to see my day and saw it and was glad," and it should be interpreted in that context. It could be paraphrased something like this: "I am he who was promised long before Abraham and whose day Abraham rejoiced to see."

As explained in an earlier chapter, the "day of Christ" which Abraham saw by faith was the triumphant reign of Christ when he shall, as promised to Abraham, "sit in the gate of his enemies." By faith, Abraham saw this day "afar off" (Heb.11:13). It was clearly the DAY of Christ that Abraham saw and not Christ himself, otherwise Jesus would have said Abraham "saw ME and was glad." Instead, he said "he saw IT (the day) and was glad."

Hence, in its strict context, Jn.8:58 is virtually saying: "I am he whose day was promised before Abraham." Or: "My day was promised before Abraham and here I am, the one whose day Abraham rejoiced to

see."

It is important to note that Jesus did not say: "Before Abraham was I WAS" as it is frequently misread. Jesus was not claiming to be physically and literally older in years than Abraham. This is quite evident in his prior remark with regard to his "day." Jesus was clearly talking about the ultimate Divine purpose in himself which was ordained before the foundation of the world.

If Jesus was literally older than Abraham, such statements as: "Jesus himself began to be about 30 years of age" (Lk.3:23) are rendered false. In a natural and physical sense, the Jews were quite right when they said to Jesus: "You are not yet 50 years old." They were very good at judging things in the natural realm, but they had missed the point entirely; Jesus was not talking in natural or physical terms.

"I AM THAT I AM"

Sometimes the statement: "Before Abraham was, I am" is linked with Ex.3:14, where the Divine Name is pronounced as: "I am that I am" to Moses. On this basis, it is concluded that Jesus was alluding to the Divine name when he referred to himself as "I am." It is therefore believed by many that he was in effect, telling the Jews that he was "Very God" and therefore pre-existed.

There are several fundamental objections against this view: "I am" in the New Testament comes from the Greek word "eimi" AND HAS ABSOLUTELY NO CONNECTION WITH THE HEBREW "YAHWEH" WHICH HAS BEEN DERIVED FROM "EHYEH," TRANSLATED "I AM" IN EX.3:14. (Most Hebrew scholars agree that "ehyeh," translated "I am" indicates the etymology of "Yahweh").

As explained in an earlier chapter, the original name and titles of Deity can only be truly expressed in the Hebrew language. A distinct loss is revealed when the subject is considered in the light of the Greek New Testament or Septuagint Old Testament. "Yahweh," "El," "Eloah," "Elohim," "Adon," "Adonai" etc are all indiscriminately rendered by the two Greek words "Theos" and "Kurios," which in turn, have all been indiscriminately translated "God" and "Lord" in most English versions of the Bible. The fine distinctions of the Hebrew titles are not preserved in the Greek or English words selected to take their place.

The Greek word "eimi" translated "I am" in the New Testament, is a very common word in Greek and is very often used in the New Testament. It occurs literally hundreds of times and is applied to all men and women

in all situations. For example, a blind man referred to himself as "I am" in Jn.9:9: "Some said, This is he: others said, he is like him: but he (the blind man) said, I AM." Even the apostle Paul said: "By the grace of God, I AM WHAT I AM" (1 Cor.15:10). I can imagine how this would be interpreted had it been stated by Jesus!

It should be evident from these examples that "I am" in the New Testament has no connection with "I am" ("ehyeh") in Ex.3:14. There should be no doubt that the blind man and Paul were not claiming to be God. Instead of "I am" in the New Testament connecting with "ehyeh" in Ex.3:14, it connects with "I am" ("aniy") in Ex.3:6. This is evident by comparing Matt.22:32 with Ex.3:6.

Now it should not be forgotten that the Jews in New Testament times had a fanatical superstition about pronouncing the Divine name. Any mention was scrupulously avoided and was strictly forbidden at the pain of death. To pronounce it was regarded as blasphemy - a sin of the first magnitude. This custom, which had its origin in reverence, was founded upon an erroneous rendering of Ex.20:7 and Lev.24:16 from which it was inferred that the utterance of the name constituted a capital offence.

There is no record of Jesus or his apostles ever pronouncing the sacred name. Had Jesus ever pronounced it, this would have been the first charge brought against him at his trial before the Jewish Sanhedrin at which some of the sharpest legal minds were present. If Jesus was pronouncing the sacred name every time he said "I am," the problem of finding two or three witnesses at his trial whose accusation was in agreement, would never have arisen.

At Jesus' trial the high priest asked Jesus: "Are you the Christ, the Son of the Blessed? And Jesus said, I AM: and you shall see the Son of man sitting on the right hand of power and coming in the clouds of heaven." Then the high priest rent his clothes, and said, What need we any further witnesses? You have heard the blasphemy: what think ye? And they all condemned him to be guilty of death" (Mk.14:61-64).

This violent reaction was not because Jesus claimed to be God when he said "I am." In saying "I am" he was simply answering in the affirmative the question: "Are you the Christ, the Son of the Blessed?" If his reply "I am" was a claim to be God, it seems strange that he immediately follows it up by referring to himself as "Son of man": "And Jesus said, I AM, and you shall see the SON OF MAN sitting on the right hand of power ..." If he was claiming to be "Very God" why didn't he say so instead of referring to himself as "Son of man?" It was clearly his reference to sitting at the right hand of God that led them to accuse him of

blasphemy and not the words "I am." Interestingly enough, Mk.15:26 says the superscription of Christ's accusation was: "THE KING OF THE JEWS." This is very different from accusing him of being "Very God," yet if that is what he claimed surely such an accusation would have been written up over his cross.

CHRONOLOGICAL ERROR

To insist that Jesus was alluding to the Divine name when he said: "Before Abraham was, I am," would involve him in a fundamental chronological error. If "I am" refers to the Divine name, we would have to conclude that Jesus was teaching that this name existed and was known before Abraham. Such a conclusion would be chronologically incorrect and therefore Jesus cannot have meant that. You see, the Divine name was declared for the first time to MOSES and not before. God Himself taught this in Ex.6:3 when He said: "I appeared to Abraham, Isaac and Jacob by the name of God Almighty ("El Shaddai"), BUT BY MY NAME YAHWEH ("I am") was I not known to them."

This is fairly clear. The Divine name was not known to Abraham. It was not revealed until 400 years later in the days of Moses. Therefore, the words of Jesus "BEFORE Abraham was, I AM" could not be regarded as a reference to the Divine name.

It is true of course, that early chapters of Genesis which pertain to the period before Moses and Abraham, use the Divine name (e.g. Gen.4:26). The reason for this is because Moses was the author of those chapters and was writing for people who were acquainted with the Divine name.

There is then, no evidence that Jesus was alluding to the Divine name in Jn.8:58. And yet, even if he did appropriate it to himself, this still would not constitute proof that he was "Very God" Himself. As explained earlier, because he represented his Father and came in his Father's name and manifested it in grace and truth, he is referred to by that name in Scripture. He was invested with the name of his Father, and even his disciples have been called out among the gentiles to be a "people for His name." And, as Jesus promised: "I will write upon him (each disciple) the name of my God."

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CHAPTER FIFTEEN PREDESTINATION

"Known unto God are all His works from the beginning of the world" (Acts 15:18). God, being omniscient, and having complete control of history, has the ability of "foreknowledge" (Acts 2:23. 1 Pet.1:2). He can foresee and therefore foretell the future - years - thousands of years in advance. He is able to determine beforehand every event, great or small. His ability to predict incredible things - things that did not exist or show any sign of existing at the time, is demonstrated time and time again in Scripture. "The Lord of hosts has sworn, saying, Surely as I have thought, so shall it come to pass; as I have purposed so shall it stand" (Isa.14:24).

God's foresight and foreknowledge enables Him to foresee and foreknow every person in history long before they exist. In His omniscient mind they exist long before they are born. Long before they become alive as physical beings, they already live unto God in His thoughts and purposes. So real is their existence in God's mind, and so sure is their future physical existence, that God often speaks about them as if they already exist. As Rom.4:17 puts it: "God ... speaks of the non-existent things that He has foretold and promised as if they already exist."

EXAMPLES

The Lord said to the prophet Jeremiah: "Before I formed you in the belly, I KNEW YOU; and before you came forth out of the womb I sanctified you, and I ORDAINED YOU a prophet unto the nations" (Jer.1:5).

Here we are told that God knew Jeremiah before he was born. How would this be interpreted if it was affirmed in relation to Jesus? No doubt it would become a key verse to prove his pre-existence. But no one who believes in the pre-existence of Christ is prepared to affirm that Jeremiah pre-existed. Yet this language applied to Jeremiah is every bit as strong as the language applied to Jesus which has been interpreted to teach pre-existence.

Jeremiah did not have to exist as a physical person before his birth for God to know him. God's foresight and foreknowledge enabled Him to foresee and foreknow Jeremiah before he was born. God's purpose required a prophet like Jeremiah; His plan demanded Jeremiah's existence; his person was therefore as clearly visible and present to the

Father's omniscient mind and thoughts (Logos) as if he had stood before him in actual fact. The prophet Jeremiah, like John the Baptist and others, especially the Lord Jesus Christ, was "with" God before birth.

Jeremiah was "foreordained." This is what Jer.1:5 teaches: "BEFORE you came out of the womb ... I ORDAINED you ..." Jeremiah was "before ordained" - ordained a prophet before his birth - "foreordained." This is the key to understanding how God knew him before he was born. God did not know him before his birth because he "EXISTED before," but because he was "ORDAINED before." The doctrine of "pre-existence" is never taught in Scripture in relation to any man, including Jesus. It belongs to Platonic philosophy and not the Bible. The Bible teaches "predestination" which is the same as being "foreordained."

Attention has already been drawn to the fact that Jesus was "FOREORDAINED before the foundation of the world." Jesus is first and foremost in God's eternal purpose. It is in this light that we interpret the Scriptures which say he was "before" John the Baptist and "before" Abraham. He did not EXIST before (i.e. "pre-exist") but was DESTINED before (i.e. "predestined") or ORDAINED before (i.e. "foreordained"). In this sense he was "with" God from the beginning and God knew him.

The word "foreordained" as applied to Jesus in 1 Pet.1:20 comes from the Greek word "proginosko" which literally means "to know before." It is actually translated "know before" in 2 Pet.3:17. Thus, 1 Pet.1:20 teaches us that the Father knew His Son before the foundation of the world. As in the case of Jeremiah, God knew Jesus before he was born, through foreknowledge. Jesus was in the omniscient mind from the start.

Proginosko is also translated "foreknow" and "foreknew" in the following verses: Rom.8:29: "... for whom He (God) did FOREKNOW, he also did predestinate to be conformed to the image of His Son." The New English Bible renders it like this: "God knew His very own before ever they were ..." But one thing is certain, none of us pre-existed, and neither did Jesus. There is a vast difference between the Bible teaching on Divine foreknowledge and predestination; and Plato's philosophy on pre-existence which the Church has incorporated in its theology.

The verse in which proginosko is translated "foreknew" is Rom.11:2: "God has not cast away His people whom He FOREKNEW."

So then, the word "foreordained" means to "know before" and expresses the thought of ordaining or appointing a situation for a person, or a person for a situation, in advance - sometimes long before their birth. One who is divinely ordained for a specific ministry exists in God's mind

long before birth. He is "with" God, and lives unto him.

The word "predestinate" is clearly closely related to "foreordain." This is evident in Rom.8:29: "For whom He did FOREKNOW (i.e. "foreordain") He also did predestinate."

"Predestinate" comes from the Greek word "proorizo" and means to mark out beforehand or determine before. It is actually translated "determined before" in Acts 4:28. It is also translated "ordained" in 1 Cor.2:7 but should more literally be translated "pre-ordained" according to the Englishman's Greek Concordance.

It is emphasized four times in the New Testament that the members of Christ's body have been "predestinated" (Rom.8:29, 30. Eph.1:5, 11). God knew each one and marked out each one before birth. Eph.1:4 puts it like this: "He (God) has chosen us in him (Christ) before the FOUNDATION OF THE WORLD, that we should be holy ..." Yes, we all existed in the Logos - the mind and purpose of God long before we were born. But we did not pre-exist. None of us had conscious physical existence prior to our birth, and neither did our Lord Jesus Christ.

CYRUS

Over one hundred years before he was born, God addressed the following message to Cyrus the king of Persia: "Thus says the Lord to HIS ANOINTED, to Cyrus, WHOSE RIGHT HAND I HAVE HELD ... I have CALLED YOU BY NAME: I have surnamed you ..."

We have here a reference to God holding a man's hand over a century before the man was even born. He refers to him by name and calls him His "anointed" long before he had a name and long before he was "anointed." How would this kind of statement be interpreted if it was addressed to Jesus? Reference to the holding of the hand strongly suggests PHYSICAL existence prior to birth, and if such a statement had been made in relation to Jesus it would no doubt be regarded as proof positive that he pre-existed. If so, then to be consistent, we should interpret it the same way in relation to Cyrus. And if we are not prepared to do that, but prefer to interpret the passage in the light of predestination principles, we should also be prepared to apply the same principles of predestination to Christ.

If Cyrus could be in heaven with God holding his hand without pre-existing, then surely it can be seen that Jesus likewise could have glory with his Father in heaven before he was born without pre-existing. The statement of Jesus in Jn.17:5 that he had glory with the Father before the

world was, must in the same way be understood in harmony with the elementary facts of the testimony. The glorification of Jesus was a pre-determined purpose with the Father from the beginning. In this sense Jesus had glory with the Father before the world was. That the glory of the Son was in the Father's mind long before birth, is evident from the countless prophetic testimonies inspired by the Holy Spirit throughout the centuries prior to his birth. Prophet after prophet was moved by God to declare the glory of Messiah. Such glory was with the Father from the very beginning, planned and prepared for His Son. And the Son, at the end of ministry, knowing the time had come to be glorified with that glory, addressed his Father in prayer saying: "And now, O Father, glorify thou me with thine own self (i.e. with Divine nature - immortality) with the glory which I had with you before the world was" (Jn.17:5).

The glorified Christ, as a purpose, existed from the beginning. His person was as clearly visible and present to the Father's mind as if he had stood before Him in actual fact, in the same way that Jeremiah stood before the Lord as a prophet before his birth. The same applied to Cyrus. He was present to the Divine contemplation as really as if he existed, and this accounts for the style of language which, if separated and detached from the rest of Scripture and rigidly construed, would imply pre-existence.

"ALL ALIVE UNTO HIM"

On exactly the same principle, the purpose to raise a dead man is expressed by ignoring his death, and assuming his continued existence. Thus Jesus deduced the resurrection from the fact that God styled Himself the God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob, at a time when these men were dead. So sure and certain was their resurrection in the foreknowledge of God, He spoke as if they had already been raised to life. As far as the omniscient mind was concerned, they were already alive. This is what is behind the statement: "For He is not the God of the dead, but of the living: FOR ALL LIVE UNTO HIM" (Lk.20:38). A careful study of the context of this statement reveals that it is in connection with RESURRECTION to life that it is made.

Resurrection to life is so sure in the plan and purpose of God that He ignored the death of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob and spoke as if they had not died at all, but still lived, by referring to Himself as their God: "I am (not "was") the God of Abraham ..."

So certain is their life after death through resurrection, that in the

mind of God who sees the end from the beginning, they are alive already, "for all live unto Him." In the Father's mind they were present already, in the same way that Jeremiah and Cyrus etc are referred to as being alive when in fact they had no physical existence at all.

If Abraham, Isaac and Jacob, although dead "lived unto God," because He planned to make them alive, how much more must the Son of God himself have "lived unto God" before the Father caused him to come alive as a real physical tangible being.

SPEAKING OF NON-EXISTENTS AS THOUGH THEY EXISTED

This principle of Divine expression is expressed in the words of Paul quoted earlier from Rom.4:17: "God who quickens the dead, AND CALLS THOSE THINGS WHICH BE NOT AS THOUGH THEY WERE." In other words, things which do not exist, but which God intends to bring into existence, are spoken of as if they already exist. God adopts this form of speech to emphasize the certainty of fulfilment. If He plans to do it, it is as good as done. A more effective way of emphasizing this could not be found than in the way He has chosen, by speaking as if it is already an accomplished fact.

The particular case in point in Rom.4:17 is the seed of Abraham. So certain was God's purpose to give Abraham seed, that although he had reached the age of 99 and still had no seed, and was physically powerless to produce any, God spoke to him in terms that He had already given it to him, saying: "I HAVE (not "will") made you a father of many nations." In actual fact, through his wife Sarah, Abraham was childless. He didn't have one single child through her. Yet God said "I HAVE made you a father of many nations." So certain was the fulfilment of His purpose with Abraham, that God spoke as if it was already an accomplished fact.

This principle of Divine expression is very common in Scripture, and only makes sense in the light of the doctrine of Divine foreknowledge and predestination. Failure to take this into account will result in an interpretation that conflicts with the rest of Scripture. If we took the statement: "I HAVE made you a father of many nations," at its face value without exercising spiritual discernment, we could easily conclude that the "many nations" into which God was going to make Abraham already existed, i.e. pre-existed. The word "have" clearly means "intend." The same applies to "had" in Jn.17:5: "... glorify me with the glory which I HAD with you before the world was." The Father INTENDED to give

glory to His Son from the foundation of the world.

"BEFORE THE FOUNDATION OF THE WORLD"

It is in connection with these same principles that the words of Jesus in Jn.17:24 should be interpreted: "Thou (the Father) lovest me FROM THE FOUNDATION OF THE WORLD." Jesus was not teaching that he existed as a person from the foundation of the world; but that the Father regarded him with love from the beginning, and that therefore, to the Father's mind, he was present. In the foreknowledge of God, Jesus "lived unto Him." In the words of Peter, "He was FORE-ORDAINED before the foundation of the world, but MANIFESTED in the last times."

Remember how the same style of language was used in relation to Jeremiah who was "ORDAINED-BEFORE" he came out of his mother's womb. God knew him and loved him and sanctified him as a prophet long before he physically existed. Cyrus likewise was loved by God long before he existed as is indicated by God holding him by the hand and anointing him prior to his birth. The same style of language is used in reference to the disciples of Christ: "He has chosen us in him before the foundation of the world: having predestinated us." If God CHOSE us before the foundation of the world, He must have LOVED us before the foundation of the world, because it is only through love that He has chosen us. He knew us and loved us in Christ before we were born. "For God knew His own before ever they were, and also ordained that they should be shaped to the likeness of His Son" (Rom.8:29 New English Bible).

The apostle Paul, in Rom.9:23 uses particularly bold language when he speaks of God's "vessels of mercy which He had BEFOREHAND PREPARED FOR GLORY, EVEN US, WHOM HE HAS CALLED." Notice the past tense here. From the very beginning God actually prepared us for His glory. His intention from the beginning has been to give us glory. In terms of His foreknowledge, we have had glory with Him before the world was. Our prayer can therefore be the same as the captain of our salvation: "Glorify me with the glory which I had with you before the world was." The Father never intended to only glorify His Son. His intention has always been to create a "body" out of His Son - the Church, which would be glorified through the atoning work of the Son. This is the eternal purpose of God in Christ and it has existed in His mind as an accomplished fact since before the world was.

2 Tim.1:9 states that God's purpose and grace "was given us in Christ

Jesus before the world began." This Divine purpose has for its ultimate goal the glory of God, i.e. immortality - Divine nature. We all had this in God's purpose "before the world began." We can therefore, quite legitimately, pray to the Father for the glory which we have had with Him before the world was. Such a prayer is really a request for Jesus to return and change our mortal bodies into immortal bodies, fashioning them like unto his glorious incorruptible body. When this takes place, the kingdom of God in all its fullness will have come. Hence, on that day, Jesus will say: "Come ye blessed of my Father, inherit the KINGDOM PREPARED FOR YOU FROM THE FOUNDATION OF THE EARTH" (Matt.25).

The glory then which Jesus had before the world was, was the glory which God purposed for him from the very beginning. Literally and physically he did not have the glory before the world was, anymore than he was literally and physically "slain from the foundation of the world" as described in Rev.13:8. He was of course, typically slain in the sacrifices offered from Abel onwards, but not literally. The institution and existence of these animal sacrifices from the beginning were unmistakably designed by God to point to the ultimate sacrifice of His own Son, "the lamb of God who takes away the sins of the world." This proves conclusively that he existed in his Father's mind and purpose from the very beginning.

Stress is often placed on Jesus' statement that he had glory WITH the Father (Jn. 17:5). The Jehovah Witnesses' New World Translation renders it like this: "So now you, Father, glorify me ALONGSIDE yourself with the glory that I had alongside you before the world was."

But the Greek preposition "para" translated "with" in the A.V. and "alongside" in the J.W.'s translation also occurs in Jn.1:6: "There was a man sent FROM (Grk. "para") God, whose name was John." If the preposition in Jn.17:5 requires the literal pre-existence of Christ, then to be consistent we would have to conclude that John the Baptist pre-existed also. It is interesting to note that the J.W.'s inconsistently translate Jn. 1:6 as follows: "There arose a man that was sent forth as a representative of God: his name was John." Any hint of pre-existence has been completely removed.

God then, who knows the end from the beginning, foresaw the glory that He planned for His Son and proclaimed it through the prophets. The ultimate glory of Jesus was in the mind and purpose of the Father from the very beginning. It was not necessary for Jesus to pre-exist to have glory with his Father. Just as an architect sees and knows the beautiful details of his proposed construction, and the glory of it is with him even before the site is prepared, or the foundation stone laid, so the glory of Jesus was

with the Father "before the world was." God is the great Architect, and His plan has centred in Jesus "the lamb slain from the foundation of the world" - the chief cornerstone foreordained before the foundation of the world. The whole building will duly be fitly framed together to constitute its part in the kingdom "prepared ... from the foundation of the world."

The "glory" that Jesus had with his Father is the subject of prophetic testimony throughout the Old Testament. It was with the Father constituting the focal centre of His purpose so He inspired the prophets to declare it. 1 Pet. 1:10-11 makes the point that the prophets in old time testified concerning "the sufferings of Christ and the GLORY that should follow."

The order stated here is very important: firstly suffering, and then glory. This has always been the Divine order for all the sons of God, and THE Son of God himself was no exception, being the "firstborn among his brethren" and being "made in all points like unto his brethren." But tradition's pre-existent theory negates this, insisting that Jesus had the glory first, then suffering, then glory again.

Heb.2:10 makes it clear that Jesus was made perfect by suffering. But if he pre-existed in heaven as "Very God" he must have been perfect then. To become "perfect by suffering" would therefore involve the omnipotent, omniscient Creator losing His perfection and having to regain it by suffering. This is exceedingly difficult to accept. The Bible says nothing about Jesus having a pre-existent perfection which he had to lose. There is no record of him being made perfect by pre-existence or "immaculate conception." Scripture emphatically declares that he became perfect "through suffering."

ISAIAH SAW HIS GLORY

The prophet Isaiah saw the suffering of Jesus. He saw him "despised and rejected of men; a man of sorrows acquainted with grief." He also, in the words of Jesus, "saw his glory, and spake of him" (Jn.12:41). Jesus made this statement at the end of two quotations from the book of Isaiah. The first quotation is in Jn.12:38 which is taken from Isa. 53:1 and deals with the sufferings of Christ. The second quotation is in Jn.12:40 which is taken from Isa. 6:10 and deals with Christ's glory as we read in the first verse: "I saw the Lord sitting upon a throne, high and lifted up, and his train filled the temple." It was with this in mind that Jesus said: "These things said Isaiah when he saw his (Messiah's) glory and spake of him."

Isaiah lived over 700 years before Christ, and this vision that the Father gave him of Messiah's coming glory, only serves to show how real that glory was with the Father before His Son was born. It was so sure of fulfilment that God caused Isaiah to see it as an accomplished fact in prophetic vision. No wonder Jesus, being familiar with such revelations of his forthcoming glory, prayed to his Father asking Him to glorify him with that glory.

It is also significant that when Jesus quoted from the book of Isaiah as recorded in Jn.12:38-40, he chose to put the suffering passage before the glory passage. This is how it was in his experience.

The glory and throne that Isaiah saw in relation to Jesus was mentioned by Jesus during his ministry in these words: "When the Son of man SHALL COME in his GLORY, and all the holy angels with him, THEN (i.e. when he comes) shall he sit upon his THRONE of his GLORY" (Matt.25:31). Jesus' throne of glory is the throne of David which he will restore in Jerusalem when he returns to rule over the earth.

On that day he will, as we read in Isa.24:23, "reign in Jerusalem and before HIS ANCIENTS gloriously." It is difficult to make sense of the reference here to "ancients" in relation to Jesus, if he existed before all his ancestors. This reference to Jesus reigning on the throne in Jerusalem before his ancients has an interesting connection with God's promise to David in 2 Sam.7:16. David was told that his kingdom and throne would be established by his son (Jesus) "BEFORE THEE." These words "before thee" mean "in your presence." In other words, David would witness his throne being established by Messiah. This of course will necessitate David's resurrection, and this precisely is what will take place at the second coming of Jesus. When Jesus sits on the throne and reigns before David, not to mention Abraham, Isaac and Jacob etc, it will be a case of reigning before his "ancients" or ancestors. But if he pre-existed before them as their Creator, they could hardly be styled "ancients" in relation to himself.

Of course, when Jesus returns, he himself will be "ancient of days" because he is now almost 2000 years old, having received immortality since his resurrection. But, from an historical point of view in relation to his ancestors, they are still his "ancients."

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CHAPTER SIXTEEN "THE FIRSTBORN OF EVERY CREATURE"

In Col.1:15 we read that Jesus is "the image of the invisible God, the FIRSTBORN of every creature." This statement is sometimes regarded as supporting the view that Jesus existed before his birth. Actually, this passage proves too much in relation to Jesus being co-eternal with his Father, for it clearly states that Jesus, being "firstborn," is a creative act of God.

Some groups do not believe that Jesus was co-eternal with God prior to his birth, but still maintain he pre-existed. They believe that the Father created the Son as His first creative act, and feel that this verse in Col.1:15 supports this conclusion. There is however, a Messianic prophecy in Ps.89:27 which indicates this conclusion is incorrect. It says: "Also I (God) WILL MAKE him (Christ) my firstborn, higher than the kings of the earth." This reveals that the Messiah would not be "made" firstborn until many years AFTER the Psalmist penned his words, which means Jesus could not have been "firstborn" prior to creation. (The Messianic character of the Psalm is indicated by comparing the following: v26. 2 Sam.7:14. Heb.1:5 and Ps.89:35-37. Ps.72:1-8).

It should be stressed that Ps.89:27 teaches that Jesus is a creative act of God. God says He will MAKE him His first-BORN. The way in which God did this was through BEGETTAL. "Firstborn" means "only begotten" in Jesus' case, and he did not become this until Mary gave birth to him. The word "make" involves Divine power, and the word "born" demands a mother. If Jesus was "firstborn" in a pre-existent state, then he must have had a pre-existent mother.

Coming back to Col.1:15, it is significant to note that "firstborn of every creature" (or, as the R.S.V. puts it: "all creation") is qualified in verse 18 to be the "first-born FROM THE DEAD." The same applies to Rev.1:18 where Jesus is referred to as "Alpha ... the beginning ..." This also is qualified in verse 5 as "the first begotten OF THE DEAD."

The creation of which Jesus is the firstborn is the "creation" of new men and women, and not the natural creation of Gen.1. "Create" and "Creation" are used of the work of Jesus in this spiritually regenerative sense in many parts of the Bible.

It is in the context of spiritual regeneration that Jesus refers to himself as "the beginning of the creation of God" (Rev.3:14). And, even if the "creation" did refer to that of Gen.1, reference to Jesus as the "beginning" would imply a beginning of existence, which is not

affirmable of the Father, and would therefore make co-eternality impossible.

SPECIAL HONOUR AND PRIVILEGES

Quite a great deal of spiritual food for thought is provided in Scripture on this subject of "firstborn," and quite an interesting theme can be developed in relation to Jesus.

The Greek word for "firstborn" is "prototokos," which is derived from "protos" which means "first" in order of TIME or RANK. As mentioned earlier, protos is translated "chief" 12 times in the New Testament. "Firstborn" could quite justifiably be rendered "chief-born."

In the Bible "firstborn" is a legal term, usually applied to the firstborn son, who, because he was born first; received special honours and privileges which could be listed as follows:

(1) He was consecrated as holy to God (Ex.13:2, 12. Num.3:13).

(2) He inherited the right to priesthood for the family (i.e. prior to the institution of the Levitical priesthood). Num.8:14-19. 3:12.

(3) He inherited a double portion of the father's inheritance. (Deu.21:15-17. 2 Kng.2:9. Gen.48:21-22. Josh.17:14-18. Ezk.47:13. Isa.61:8).

(4) He was held next in honour to his father, being the firstfruits of his strength (Gen.49:3. Deu.21:17).

(5) He succeeded his father as head of the house, in control of the family or kingdom (2 Chr. 21:1-3).

COULD FORFEIT POSITION

However, provision was made in the law of God for the firstborn to forfeit his position as legal firstborn, if guilty of misconduct or through an inability to fulfil the required duties. In the event of such a situation, a younger son could supplant him and assume the position, rank and title of firstborn, although he was not the first in actual order of birth. The title "firstborn" when applied in such situations, is a legal term, describing pre-eminence of position or status, and not order of birth. Consider the following examples:

(1) Isaac was preferred to Ishmael (Gen.17:15-22. Rom. 9:10-13).

(2) Esau forfeited his birthright to Jacob. (Gen.25:23, 31-. Heb.12:16-17).

(3) Reuben's birthright was given to Joseph. (Gen.48:5-6, 21-22.

49:3-4). 1 Chr.5:1 says: "Reuben the firstborn of Israel ... but forasmuch as he defiled his father's bed, his birthright was given to the sons of Joseph, and the genealogy is not reckoned after the birthright." Reuben's sin caused him to forfeit his legal status of firstborn and it was given to his younger brother Joseph.

(4) Ephraim received the blessing of firstborn although younger than Manasseh (Gen.48:8-22). And God endorsed the appointment by describing Ephraim as "His firstborn" (Jer.31:9).

(5) David, although last born in the family, was exalted over his older brothers to position of chief. (1 Sam.16:1-13).

(6) Solomon was elevated to the position of firstborn although tenth in order of birth (1 Chr.3:1-5 1 Kng. ch.1. 2:22).

(7) Simri was appointed to the position even though he was younger in years than his brethren (1 Chr.26:10).

These examples show that it was quite common practise for a younger son to be elevated to the position of legal firstborn in a family. In fact it was so common that the law given through Moses prohibited the elevation of a younger son to this position on the mere whim of his father because of favouritism (Deu.21:17).

Even the nation of Israel itself was God's "firstborn" in spite of the fact that many other nations existed before her (Ex.4:21-23. Deu.26:19).

It is with these thoughts in mind that we turn to Jesus and the title of Firstborn as applied to him. It is true, as we have already seen, that he is Firstborn in the sense of being the "only begotten of the Father," and also in the sense of being the first to be raised from the dead to eternal life. But there is another aspect as well which is encompassed by this title.

TWO SONS OF GOD

The Bible refers to two notable "sons of God" who have lived on the earth. These two sons are Adam, who is referred to as "son of God" in Lk.3:38, and Jesus. The "first Adam" forfeited his position and all its blessings through sin, but God raised up a younger son, the "last Adam" (1 Cor.15:45) whose complete obedience elevated him to the position of "firstborn" in the full LEGAL sense. (It was a case of "the last becoming first"). This I believe is the basic teaching behind the prophecy in Ps.89:27: "I will make him my firstborn, HIGHER than the kings of the earth." The word "HIGHER" suggests that when the Lord speaks of "firstborn" He has RANK in mind - the legal aspect of the title, and not so much the aspect of begettal, i.e. first in order of birth. Thus, as said earlier,

"CHIEFborn" is the basic idea behind the title here. This can be compared with 2 Chr.11:22: "And Rehoboam made Abijah (who was not the oldest) the CHIEF, to be RULER among his brethren; for he thought to make him KING."

Jesus then, is God's firstborn in the very real sense of RANK which we have been considering. In this sense he was "BEFORE" John the Baptist and Abraham. All the honours and privileges of firstborn as outlined in Old Testament times, apply to Jesus in a very real spiritual sense. He is consecrated and holy. He has inherited (from his Father) the right of priesthood for his Father's family. He has "BY INHERITANCE obtained a more excellent name" (Heb.1:4).

(The word "inheritance" means received by legal descent or through allotment or assignment - derived from a progenitor or benefactor. It means something derived and received - something delegated and not something innate or underived. This does not harmonize with the general Trinitarian pre-existence concept).

The "double portion" received by Jesus as God's firstborn is indicated in his own words when he said: "All power is given to me in HEAVEN AND in EARTH." Not just the earth, but heaven also. Indeed, a double portion.

As firstborn, in harmony with the law of the firstborn, Jesus is held next in honour to his Father. In the throne the Father is greater than the Son, and Jesus freely acknowledged that: "My Father is greater than I." To place the Son on an equal footing with his Father not only challenges and contradicts his own teaching, but also violates the basic aspect of the law of the Firstborn as applied to him. The firstborn was never equal with his father, and certainly was not co-eternal.

As firstborn, Jesus is also of course appointed governor of the family and kingdom of his Father (Ps.2. Mic.5:2-4. Plp.2:9-11). He is "heir of all things" (Heb.1:2. Mk.12:7).

And Jesus could have forfeited his position through misconduct or sin, as 2 Sam.7:14 warned: "If he commit iniquity, I will chasten him ..." Plp.2:8-9 also clearly implies that if Jesus had not humbled himself and become obedient to death, he would not have been highly exalted by God.

Sometimes it is thought that Jesus could not have sinned even if he wanted to. This is quite incorrect. If it was impossible for him to sin, where is the merit and virtue in him not sinning? If there was nothing in his flesh nature that could respond to temptation then he could not be tempted, and therefore had nothing to overcome. He then ceases to be a champion among men because any other man could also live a sinless life

if he had the fortune to be made with a nature that could not respond to temptation. The emphasis in Scripture on Jesus not sinning, only becomes meaningful when it is realized that he had the same potential to sin as any man, because he partook of the same flesh nature. Reference to him refusing to do his own will in preference to doing his Father's will, clearly implies he could have yielded to the will of the flesh had he wanted to.

Of course he chose not to and therefore never sinned. He crucified the self-will and was faithful and obedient in all things. He was the first and only man in history to completely de-centralize self and totally crucify the flesh with all its affections. The Father was the focal centre of all his interests and desires. This required total abandonment of the ego - the "I," or "my." Hence, "NOT MY will, but THINE be done."

It was therefore not possible for the grave to hold him or for his body to see corruption, so God raised him from the dead, causing him to become the "firstfruits of them that slept" - "the firstborn among many brethren" - "the head of the body, the Church ... that in all things he might have the pre-eminence" (Col.1:18. 1 Cor.15:20. Rom.8:29).

And in Jesus all believers become the "firstborn" of God. Israel of old was God's firstborn nation and the same title now belongs to the spiritual nation - the body of Christ. Natural Israel forfeited his status as firstborn with all its privileges, through misconduct. Heb.12:23 refers to spiritual Israel as "the general assembly and Church of the firstborn who are enrolled in heaven." Jam.1:18 refers to believers as "a kind of firstfruits of His (God's) creatures." Also compare Rev.14:4.

All the blessings of firstborn as listed before can be directly related in a very real spiritual sense to the body of Christ. And each one of us can forfeit our position through misconduct - through failure or refusal to fulfil our responsibilities (Heb.6:4-6. 12:14-17).

Every way in which the subject of firstborn is viewed in its bearing towards Jesus fails to support the Trinitarian concept, but opposes it. "Firstborn" implies a beginning, which rules out Jesus existing co-eternally with the Father. The firstborn, although elevated to a high position was never equal with his Father. And, if Jesus is the IMAGE of the invisible God" (Col.1:15), then he is clearly a REPLICA and not the original.

CHAPTER SEVENTEEN "THOUGHT IT NOT ROBBERY TO BE EQUAL"

"Let this mind be in you which was also in Christ Jesus: who, being in the form of God, thought it not robbery to be equal with God, but made himself of no reputation, and took upon him the form of a servant, and was made in the likeness of men: and being found in fashion as a man, he humbled himself, and became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross." (Plp.2:6-8 A.V.).

Passing references have already been made to this passage of Scripture in earlier sections of the thesis, but it needs to be examined in more detail now. It is frequently quoted to support the doctrine of the Trinity and pre-existence of Christ. It is generally regarded as teaching that Jesus existed before his birth as God's equal, and that he humbled himself by surrendering his pre-existent nature and status to become flesh and blood.

"Being in the form of God" is usually interpreted to mean that Jesus pre-existed in the very nature of God, co-equal and co-eternal with Him. "Thought it not robbery to be equal with God" is also applied to the same pre-existent state during which it is believed Jesus legitimately claimed equality with God. "Made himself of no reputation and took upon him the form of a servant ..." is interpreted to mean that Jesus divested himself of his pre-existent nature and glory, and came down from heaven to earth where he clothed himself with the body and nature of a man ("servant").

The most effective way to consider this passage is "precept by precept, line upon line," so we will look at it word by word and phrase by phrase. In doing this it is important to not lose sight of the practical character of the message in this section of Scripture. It is easy to get bogged down in a doctrinal analysis and lose sight of the basic practical purpose for which it was originally written - to not be able to see the wood for the trees. The practical purpose for which this section of Scripture was written has a vital bearing on the way it should be interpreted. The apostle Paul's object is to throw into relief Christ's great humility and move his readers to emulate it. "Let this mind be in you which was also in Christ Jesus," expresses the main intention of the passage, but unfortunately certain expressions have brought about a difference of view, and it is because of those differences, that time needs to be spent examining it in more detail.

BEING

Trinitarian theology lays stress on the word "BEING" - "Who BEING in the form of God," and maintains that it means Christ was **ORIGINALLY** in the form of God before he became a man. The phrase "being in the form of God" is taken to mean that Jesus was "Very God" before becoming a man. Thus, Lightfoot (a Trinitarian), paraphrases it like this: "Though existing before the worlds in the eternal Godhead ..." Phillips renders it as: "Who had always been God by nature." And Alfred Plummer, another staunch Trinitarian says in his commentary: "The word "being" points clearly to the pre-existence of Christ."

Unfortunately, Plummer's bold statement finds little support in the New Testament. Actually, the New Testament usage of the Greek verb "huparchon" which is translated "being," refutes his position. The verb is of frequent occurrence, both in Paul's epistles and elsewhere, so that we have ample opportunity to determine its sense.

Huparchon is the imperfect participle of the verb "huparchein." English has no imperfect participle of any verb, so it is impossible to translate this word exactly into any single English word. When translating this word huparchon into English we usually compromise by using the **PRESENT** participle of the verb "to be." But this is inadequate so the word needs to be explained more fully. The imperfect tense of the word shows that it expresses action yet, or still in course of performance. Time signified by an imperfect tense is of a continual, habitual, repeated action, so that "BEING in the form of God" means "being, and continuing to be in the form of God." In other words, whatever "the form of God," means, Jesus never ceased to be in it. "BEING in the form of God" involves **A CONTINUOUS STATE**. Whatever the "form of God" may be, Jesus had it and kept it and continued in it. He did not surrender it or divest himself of it. This idea of Jesus divesting himself of a pre-existent nature has come about as a result of imagining that "form of God" relates to a pre-cosmic existence. This is not the case as we shall see. Jesus never ceased to be "in the form of God." He was so much "in the form of God" **DURING HIS EARTHLY MINISTRY** that he was able to say: "He who sees me sees the Father." We shall see that "form" does not relate so much to **PHYSICAL** form and shape, but **MENTAL**. It relates to "mind" or attitude, as indicated in the very opening statement: "Let this **MIND** be in you which was in Christ Jesus." Although Jesus had the mind of God being full of knowledge, wisdom and understanding; he did not become puffed up with pride, but humbled himself and made himself of no reputation, adopting

the attitude and disposition of a slave.

We will now compare the use of huparchon in other passages of Scripture. As said before, the verb occurs quite frequently so we are provided with good opportunities to determine its sense.

(1) Acts 2:30: "Therefore BEING a prophet" does not mean "being originally before birth a prophet," but rather a prophet and continuing to be such.

(2) Gal. 2:14. "BEING a Jew" does not mean "being originally before his birth a Jew," but rather "from the start and continuing to be a Jew."

(3) Huparchon also appears in Rom.4:19 in the same participial form as in Plp.2:6: "He (Abraham) did not weaken in faith when he considered his own body, which was as good as dead BECAUSE HE WAS about a hundred years old." The Greek corresponding to the words in capitals is huparchon and literally means "BEING." If we now substitute the sense that Lightfoot and Phillips put on the word, we end up with this: "He did not weaken in faith when he, having always been, being originally before he was born, about one hundred years old."

(4) 1 Cor.11:7: "Forasmuch as he (man) IS the image and glory of God" certainly does not mean "being originally before he was born the image and glory of God," but rather - "being the image of God and continuing to be." (The word "IS" comes from the same Greek word huparchon). Huparchon is actually translated "is" a number of times in the New Testament. For instance, in the third chapter of Philippians verse twenty we read: "For our conversation IS in heaven," i.e. "For our conversation BEING in heaven." But surely no one would conclude that we pre-existed in heaven and had conversation there.

When this word is studied in the light of all other occurrences in the New Testament, it becomes evident that the primary sense is "to be," "to exist," and carries with it no implications of pre-existence.

So then, reference in Plp.2:6 to Jesus "BEING in the form of God," does not refer to some state before birth, but to what Jesus was and continued to be when he lived under that name of "Jesus." "BEING in the form of God" was A CONTINUOUS STATE which began at his birth and continued thereafter.

CHRIST JESUS

This conclusion is further suggested by the preceding statement in Plp.2:5: "Let this mind be in you, WHICH WAS ALSO IN CHRIST JESUS, who, being in the form of God ..."

The term "CHRIST JESUS" provides a vital guide to the meaning of what follows. The one who was "in the form of God" was "Christ Jesus."

"Jesus" was the name for the man born of Mary, whose existence commenced around 2,000 years ago. So with the title "Christ." Jesus never became "Christ" until anointed by the Father with the Holy Spirit about 30 years after his birth. In other words, the person referred to as "Christ Jesus" relates to a man, born of Mary, impregnated with her genes as well as the Father's, and anointed with the Holy Spirit 30 years after his birth. It does not refer to a pre-existent God. Thus, the phrase "being in the form of God" specifically relates to the time when Jesus walked the earth as anointed Saviour. There is a vast difference between "being in the form of God" and "pre-existing as God."

Even if huparchon had to be understood as meaning: "being originally" it would still not prove pre-existence. It would simply state that JESUS, who later became CHRIST, was originally (from his birth), and continued to be (all his life), "in the form of God." Otherwise, if huparchon meant that the person to whom it was applied existed before he was born, we would have to conclude that the first Adam pre-existed, because 1 Cor.11:7 speaks of him "BEING (huparchon) the image and glory of God."

THE FORM OF GOD

Great stress is usually placed on the word "FORM" as applied to Jesus in the phrase: "being in the form of God." It is commonly believed that this means Jesus was "Very God of Very God," possessing the Divine nature before birth, and which he had to surrender to become a man.

If this is what it means, then Jesus could not have been "Very God" while on earth. If he surrendered his nature, status, equality etc to become a man, then he could not have been "Very God," equal with the Father during his life as a man upon earth. Yet most Trinitarians argue that he was "Very God" upon earth and equal with the Father.

Now it is very important to notice that Plp.2:6 says Jesus was in "THE FORM of God" and NOT GOD HIMSELF. Or, as it is affirmed elsewhere: "in the image of God" (2 Cor.4:4 etc). Jesus is clearly not the original self-existent God, but a REPLICa or MANIFESTATION. And if it be contended that being in the form of God or the image of God means pre-existence or co-equality with God, then we would have to conclude that the same applies to not only Adam but all other men, because all are

made in the image of God (Gen.1:26-27. 1 Cor.11:7).

In what sense then, was Jesus in God's form? Does it mean he had the same physical shape as God? Hardly, because this is true of all men as well as Jesus, and does not mark him out as being a unique example in any special way. The outward physical shape and appearance of Jesus was no different from other men. He had the same flesh and blood, arms and legs etc.

A helpful way of understanding the basic significance of the phrase "FORM of God" is by reasoning back from the parallel phrase "FORM of a servant." In view of the obvious way in which these two phrases balance one another, it is only reasonable to give the word "form" the same meaning in both instances.

What is the "form" of a SERVANT? (Greek "doulos" - slave). Does the word "form" mean physical bodily shape or nature? No. The physical bodily shape and nature of a slave is no different from a free man. Physically speaking, there is no difference between a master and a slave - a king and a commoner. All are in the image of God. The "form," therefore, must surely refer to something else - something not physical.

When we reflect upon the sense of: "the form of a servant," we can see immediately that something like "profile," "status," "rank" or "standing" is appropriate. The FORM refers to semblance, behaviour, attitude or demeanour of a slave as the distinguishing feature or characteristic. In his relations with his fellow men, Jesus, although of high Divine status, being the only begotten of the Father, full of the Holy Spirit without measure and heir of all things; nevertheless played the part and accepted the role, profile and status of a servant. As he said: "Whoever desires to be great among you, let him be your minister. And whoever desires to be chief among you, let him be your servant. Even as the son of man came not to be served but to serve" (Matt. 20:26-28).

Commenting on Plp. 2:6-8, Eusebius (vol. 1 page 95) says: "Concerning his lowliness and humiliation - he humbled himself and put aside and made little of his divinity and was crucified." In its context, "divinity" relates to the power of God which Jesus did not exploit to raise self esteem.

The word "form" then, is not referring to that which is outward but that which is inward. It is dealing primarily with attitude and mental disposition. As mentioned before, this is the very point that this section of Scripture sets out to emphasize. Verse 5 lays the foundation for all that follows: "Let this MIND be in you which was also in Christ Jesus ..."

The word "form" comes from the Greek word "morphe." Vine says it

"denotes the special or characteristic form or feature of a person or thing ..." It is interesting to note how some of its derivatives are used in Scripture. For instance, "morphosis" is used in connection with "FORM" of knowledge" and "FORM" of godliness" in Rom.2:20. Tim.3:5.

"Morphoo" is translated "formed" in Gal.4:19: "Until Christ be FORMED in you." This also is dealing with attitude and disposition. The same applies to Rom.8:29 where it speaks about us being "conformed to the IMAGE" of Christ. The "image" or "form" is not to be understood in a physical sense, but spiritual.

2 Sam.14:20 speaks about "form of speech;" Rom.6:17 refers to "form of doctrine," and 2 Tim.1:13 mentions "form of sound words." These are some of the many examples of the word "form" not relating to something physical, but something abstract.

The Greek word "morphe" only occurs in Plp.2:6-7 and Mk.16:12. In Mk.16:12 it clearly does not mean physical form. Jesus appeared in "another form," but this could not refer to a change of his essential nature or physical shape, for he had prior to that time, been raised from the dead and glorified. Even most Trinitarians would not be prepared to say that Christ's essential nature was changed after his resurrection and glorification. It is generally accepted that once he was raised from the dead and glorified, he resumed his "pre-existent" nature.

Lk.24:16-31 explains how Jesus appeared to be in another form: it was because their "eyes were holden." Jesus changed his bodily appearance NOT by a change in himself of any sort, but merely by inhibiting the disciples' visual discernment. Their minds were affected so that they thought he looked different. The change was in their mind and not in the actual bodily, physical aspect of Jesus himself. He was no different from what he was when first raised from the dead and glorified. He is "the same yesterday, today and forever."

"THE FORM OF A SERVANT"

Jesus then, was "in the form of God" inasmuch as he was the divinely begotten son of God possessing special characteristics attributes and features of God. His character was the express image of his Father's person (Heb.1:3). He had the semblance and demeanour of his Father mentally, morally and spiritually. He had the mind of God. His mental and moral attributes were a direct reflection and manifestation of God, filling him with "grace and truth." So much so was Jesus "in the form of God"

that he said: "He who sees me sees the Father."

Being in such "form," Jesus could have abused his position and powers and used them for self-glory and self-aggrandizement, but he didn't. Instead, he humbled himself and made himself of no reputation, "and took upon himself the form of a servant." He took it upon himself to take a humble stand before men and God. He took on the profile of a slave, and in so doing, became the greatest example of humility ever revealed in a man. This is the force of the opening statement in Plp.2:5: "Let this mind be in you which was also in Christ Jesus."

If there is pride in a man, there is nothing more effective than power and authority to bring it out. Some of the quietest and humblest men during Nazi rule became arrogant monsters when power and authority was given to them. Very few men can handle power and authority. Sooner or later, the best of men find themselves abusing and misusing it, behaving like a dictator, pulling strings and walking over people to gain their own ends.

The position, power and attributes possessed by Jesus, which were greater than what any other man in history has ever possessed, could have promoted pride and conceit in his heart had he allowed it - had he allowed the flesh to rule his mind and life. Being God's only begotten Son - the promised Messiah and King - heir of all things - the one to whom every knee will ultimately bow; he could have gone around insisting and demanding that all men bow and scrape to him and give him the greatest respect, demanding the very best in life in the way of food, clothes, accommodation etc. But although the flesh seeks and desires these things and has a natural inclination towards them, Jesus crucified such desires with firm resolution saying: "Not my will ..." He refused to adopt the thinking of the flesh and refused to conform his mind to it.

One occasion in particular in which Jesus asserted his superiority is worthy of consideration in connection with our passage in Plp.2. It actually has a direct link with it.

In Jn.13 Christ, Knowing that the end was near, took water and proceeded to wash his disciples feet. When he had finished he drew out the lesson: "You call me Master and Lord: and you say well, FOR SO I AM. If I then, your Lord and Master, have washed your feet, you also ought to wash one another's feet" (v13-14). Christ's action in washing the feet of the disciples (a duty more suitable for a servant) and his comment on his own example, throws a flood of light on the contrast in Plp.2 between the "form of God" and "the form of a servant." Being "Master and Lord" explains how Jesus was "in the form of God," and the action of

washing the disciples' feet explains how he "took upon him the form of a servant." Paul's point in Plp.2 is that one so highly placed showed his amazing humility by assuming the role of a servant. And in Jn.13 we see this actually happening and our lord quietly draws out the very lesson which Paul underlines in Plp.2. But even more instructive are the records of the temptation. Though the events leading up to it are well known, I would like to review them briefly. Jesus insists on submitting to John's baptism. We can see in this act (Matt.3:15) a token of the spirit of obedience which will control him throughout his ministry - a spirit which contrasts forcibly with that of Adam. By this public action Jesus is in effect announcing that he has come to deny himself and do God's will (Heb.10:4-9). God recognizes the nature and significance of the act and as Jesus leaves the water, the heavens open, he is anointed with the Spirit and a voice proclaims: "This is My beloved Son in whom I am well pleased."

The Messianic anointing with the Spirit and the recognition of his Divine Sonship imply a right to the throne of David and the Lordship of mankind (Isa.42.1. Ps.2:8).

This was undoubtedly the Father's programme for His Son, but it represents the consummation: much had to be done in preparation. The Temptation must determine whether the divinely bestowed powers are to be exercised in the interests of self or in the service of God. For this reason Jesus was driven by the Holy Spirit out into the wilderness immediately after his anointing. Before he started his ministry he had to be tested in the area of his newly acquired powers.

This all makes practical sense when we see Jesus as a man specially raised up by God - a man who had no prior existence and therefore never experienced the indwelling power of God before. But it is all spoilt when we regard Jesus as "Very God" Himself who had lived from all eternity with the unlimited power of the Spirit. If he had possessed this power from all eternity, why send him out into the wilderness the moment it is given back to him, to see if he is prepared to exercise it properly!? Could there be any doubt that Very God Himself would exercise His own power in a correct and responsible way?

There are two accounts of the Temptation: in Matthew and Luke (Mark 1:13 is merely a reference to the event). We shall concentrate on Matthew's account as its conclusion brings out the main point more dramatically.

Jesus is assailed by three temptations: (1) To turn stones into bread; (2) To cast himself from the pinnacle of the temple; (3) To assume world

dominion.

Now both Matthew and Luke make the following point very clear: the temptation springs from the fact that Christ is the Son of God: "If thou be the Son of God ... If thou be the Son of God ..."

How did Jesus resolve the situation? "Get thee hence, Satan: for it is written, Thou shalt worship the Lord thy God, and Him only shalt thou SERVE." The Greek verb "latreuo" translated "serve" is designed to express the idea of service to God, but it is within the framework of this service that Jesus becomes the servant of men.

We can see immediately the relevance of the Temptation to Plp. 2 if we bring together the beginning and the end of the Temptation record: "If thou be the SON OF GOD ... Thou shalt worship THE LORD THY GOD, AND HIM ONLY SHALT THOU SERVE." There is at once in this the recognition of Christ's unique status and of the superiority of his Father, whom the Son feels called upon to worship and serve. And it is not difficult to see in Paul's words in Plp.2 almost a commentary on the Temptation.

THREE-FOLD TEMPTATION

The decision of Jesus - his mental attitude regarding the temptation determined the course of his ministry. Jesus was tested in the area of the three basic lusts which dominate the flesh, and which the apostle John enumerates as "the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes and the pride of life" (1 Jn.2:16). He was tested in the area of the "lust of the flesh" when the thought of turning stones into bread was suggested. He was hungry, and this would gratify the desire of his flesh. He was tested in the area of "the lust of the eye" when he looked upon all the kingdoms of the world and the glory of them. He was tested in the area of the "pride of life" when the prospect of leaping off the pinnacle of the temple to be caught by the angels was presented to him. The temple of course, was the focal centre of Jewish life and there were always plenty of people around it. What better way to demonstrate his Sonship by performing a dramatic, spectacular feat such as this? Such a dazzling display of acrobatics however, could not be the outworking of the Spirit of God, but of the pride of life, and so Jesus refused to follow through with it.

Originally, these same three lusts were inflamed in Adam and Eve by the Serpent. The tree was looked at from the Serpent's point of view, resulting in the conclusion that it was good for food, so the lust of the flesh took possession. The tree was also seen as a tree calculated to make

one wise and enable one to become equal with God, and so the "pride of life" was inflamed. The tree "was pleasant to the EYES" and so the "lust of the eye" took possession.

The world today is governed by these three basic lusts. This is the point made by the apostle John in 1 Jn.2:16 where he speaks of them as being "all that is in the world." Every sin is traceable to one of these three areas. Every process of sin finds its beginning in one, if not all three, of these lust departments. The world today is a serpent-entwined fruit tree enticing us to partake of its forbidden fruit, inflaming all the lusts and passions of the flesh, inducing us to centre our lives upon, and serve self.

Jesus, like the first Adam, had his three-fold temptation but with an entirely different outcome. The first Adam, made in the image and form of God, grasped at equality with God and sinned, bringing shame and misery upon himself and his posterity. Instead of humbling himself and making himself of no reputation, he grasped at the opportunity to elevate himself. But the second Adam, also made in the image of God, being "in the form of God" as we read in Plp.2:6, refused to grasp at equality, but humbled himself and made himself of no reputation. He renounced self and accepted the role of a servant.

During the temptation, the mind of Jesus was drawn into areas of pride and vainglory, to see how he would handle it. By using his newly acquired power in a militant aggressive manner, he could take control of the kingdoms of the world and all their glory, thus taking possession of what was promised to him by God without having to suffer the shame and ignominy of the cross. But to do so would be to disobey God, which is sin, and this brings death. To avoid the cross, although appealing to the flesh which never likes to be hurt, would have resulted in depriving himself and his friends of eternal life. But thanks be to the Lord, Jesus "became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross, therefore God has highly exalted him ..."

Jesus refused to take the easy way to glory. This was "forbidden fruit" and he refused to put out his hand and grasp at it. He completely suppressed such suggestions and thoughts and dealt the death blow to them, giving them no place in his mind. He came, not to do his own will, but the will of Him who sent him; and this required humility, self-denial, shame and reproach; before honour and glory. Thus, although tempted in all points as we are, he never sinned but overcame, putting God first in his life and made the seeking of His kingdom his top priority and single objective.

This is what is behind the passage in Plp.2:6-8. The apostle Paul

traces the self-renunciation of Christ from the beginning of his ministry to the conclusion and shows how he, although Son of God, accepted the role, status and disposition of a servant; and thus attained, through obedience, immortality and glory. Because of his unique humility, he was granted a station of incomparable glory at the very right hand of God Himself. It is the historical Christ of the Gospels that Paul has in mind throughout this passage, and not a pre-existent Christ who was "Very God" from eternity.

Instead of reading Plp.2:6-8 to mean that taking upon himself the form of a servant, involved only one single physical act of giving up a pre-existent body in heaven to live in a human body on earth, it speaks instead of a life-time of self-denial.

Although "in the form of God," there was never any vainglory or high-mindedness in Jesus. He never esteemed himself better than others. There was nothing selfish about him which caused him to put himself and his own personal interests first. His mind was such that he looked to the welfare of others first and foremost, finally laying down his own precious life that others might live.

This is the whole point in the introductory verses of Plp.2:1-5: "Let nothing be done through strife and vainglory; in lowliness of mind let each esteem others better than themselves. Look not every man on his own things, but every man on the things of others. LET THIS MIND (i.e. refusing to do things through vainglory etc) BE IN YOU, WHICH WAS ALSO IN CHRIST JESUS, who, being in the form of God ..."

"THOUGHT IT NOT ROBBERY TO BE EQUAL WITH GOD"

The phrase: "... thought it not robbery to be equal with God" in the Authorized Version is, as explained earlier, generally recognized to be a poor translation. It is one of the more glaring examples of the Trinitarian bias of the early translators. The R.S.V. is much more accurate when it says: "He did not count equality with God a thing to be grasped." Other translations use the word "seized." Others use the word "desired." The New English Bible says "He did not think to snatch at equality with God."

The straining of the sense of the original Greek word can be seen in the way various Trinitarian expositors have rendered this. Lightfoot for instance renders it as: "Yet he did not cling with avidity to the prerogatives of his Divine majesty." Phillips says: "... did not cling to his prerogatives as God's equal." This is not a translation at all but a "private

interpretation."

These, and many others like them, are clearly renderings designed to support the idea that Jesus pre-existed as God's equal, and surrendered this equality when he was clothed with human flesh. These renderings try to give the sense that Jesus was equal with God before he was born, and that he did not cling to it - hold it fast - grasp hold of it to retain it, but emptied himself of it and surrendered it in order that he might become a man.

However, even if this was the true sense of the Greek, it still conflicts with, and contradicts the basic doctrine of the Trinity. If JESUS FORFEITED HIS EQUALITY WITH GOD TO BECOME A MAN, THEN HE COULD NOT HAVE BEEN EQUAL WITH GOD WHILE HE WAS A MAN. Yet most Trinitarians quote certain verses in which the Jews accused Jesus of claiming to be God or equal with God to prove that he was equal during his life on earth. The statement in Heb. 2:9 which says: "Jesus was made a little lower than the angels," clearly teaches that he was not equal with God.

Most Trinitarians do not believe that Jesus ever really emptied himself of equality but maintain that he retained it throughout his life as a man. It is generally believed that the statement: "... thought it not robbery to be equal with God," as it stands in the Authorized Version, means Jesus had a right to claim equality with God while he lived on earth as a man. Vine, for instance, an ardent Trinitarian, affirms that Jesus "never ceased to be what he essentially and eternally was." However, the apostle Paul very clearly teaches that Jesus did not regard equality a thing to be grasped or seized, and if our theology cannot accommodate such a statement, we need to make some adjustments.

HARPAGMOS

The Greek word "harpagmos," translated "robbery" in the Authorized Version is unfortunately a rare word and only occurs in Plp.2:6 in the New Testament. Young defines it as "a snatching away." Strong's Concordance says "plunder."

The cognate verb "harpazo" however, occurs 13 times and its meaning is quite clear: "to seize, carry off by force." Two occurrences of the verb might be quoted as typical examples: "The violent TAKE it BY FORCE" (Matt.11:12). "Then cometh the wicked one, and CATCHETH AWAY that which was sown in the heart" (Matt.13:19).

The verb appears three times in Paul's epistles: "I knew a man in Christ ... such an one CAUGHT UP in the third heaven" (2 Cor.12:2).

"And I knew such a man ... how that he was CAUGHT UP into paradise" (v3-4). "Then we who are alive and remain SHALL BE CAUGHT UP together ..." (1 Thes.4:17).

In all uses of the verb in the New Testament there is the meaning of laying hold of something external to oneself. In deciding between the two senses for harpagmos, i.e. "booty to be RETAINED" or "booty to be SNATCHED," J.H. Michael in his commentary makes the following remarks: "This second meaning ("snatched") suits the derivation of the word much better than does the former ("retained"). The cognate verb appears invariably to denote something not yet possessed ... We prefer to think Lipsius correctly gives the meaning of Paul when he says: The sense is: Christ regarded this equality with God (which, though Divine in form, he did not yet possess) not as booty, that is to say not as an object which he might violently and against the will of God snatch for himself - but rather as something attainable only through self-emptying and by the favour of God."

ALWAYS SUBORDINATE - NEVER EQUAL

Jesus said: "I go unto the Father, for my Father is greater than I" (Jn.14:28). If we feel disposed to regard this inferiority of the Son as the result of the loss sustained through incarnation, we must then acknowledge that the loss is permanent, for Jesus not only says here that his Father was greater than himself while on earth, but that the position would remain unchanged when he ascended to be with Him in heaven.

This conclusion is supported elsewhere. When Paul wrote AFTER Jesus had ascended to heaven he taught that "the HEAD of Christ is God" (1 Cor.11:3). He taught that the Father "is above ALL" (including Jesus). And, looking to the consummation of the Divine purpose in Christ, which will take place at the end of the millennium, Paul still sees Jesus as subordinate to the Father: "When all things are subjected to him, then the Son himself will be also subject to Him who put all things under him, that God may be everything to everyone" (1 Cor.15:28).

The word "subject" in this verse comes from the Greek "hupotasso." According to Strong it means "to subordinate - to obey - put under - subdue etc." Vine points out that it is a military term meaning "to rank under." It occurs about 40 times in the New Testament.

For instance, it is applied to the Church which is "SUBJECT to Christ." Demons are referred to as being "SUBJECT" to the Spirit of God (Lk.10:17, 20). And Heb.12:9 refers to us being "in SUBJECTION to the

Father of spirits." Jam.4:7 tells us to "SUBMIT yourselves to God." Angels and authorities are made SUBJECT to Jesus (1 Pet.3:22). In Plp.3:21 we read about the power by which Jesus can SUBDUE all things to himself. God has PUT UNDER the feet of Jesus all things (Eph.1:22).

The words in capitals in all these verses come from "hupotasso." It clearly carries with it the sense of being subordinate - under obedience - inferior in power and rank. In other words -UNEQUAL.

But, because this subordinate position involves yielding to the requests and commands of the superior, the same word hupotasso is used in connection with the brethren of Christ who, although equal, are nevertheless required to yield to one another and be humble before one another. They are exhorted to SUBMIT themselves to one another (Eph.5:21). Or, as Paul says in Plp.2:3 "Let each esteem other better than themselves" - "In honour, preferring one another" (Rom.12:10).

But, just because hupotasso is applied to those in the body of Christ who are equal with each other, it would be a mistake to conclude that in every other case where one is referred to as submitting or being subject to another, that the two are equal in power and authority. Otherwise we would have to conclude that although we are told to submit ourselves to God that we are nevertheless equal with Him.

Remember that Jesus submitted himself to his brethren by washing their feet, yet he was clearly superior to them. In all the passages of Scripture quoted before, involving demons being SUBJECT to the Spirit of God through to all things being PUT UNDER the feet of Christ, it is impossible to apply equality. The very opposite is taught.

It is not good practise or principle when seeking to "rightly divide the word of truth," to turn an exception into a general rule. Sometimes there might be an exception to the way a word is applied, but to make it a general rule can often lead to incorrect conclusions.

Usually, each passage should FIRSTLY be examined in its own particular context and studied on its own merits. A text without a context can easily become a pretext. As far as 1 Cor.15:28 is concerned, the context of the word "subject" (hupotasso) will not allow equality.

In verses 27-28 hupotasso occurs 6 times (3 times in each verse), and each of these 6 occurrences must be interpreted in harmony with each other, for a very specific theme is interwoven between them all.

In verse 27 the 3 occurrences of hupotasso are indicated by the words in capitals in the following: "For He HATH PUT UNDER his feet all things. But when he says all things ARE PUT UNDER him, it is manifest that He is excepted, WHO DID PUT UNDER him all things."

Here we read about the Father putting all things under His Son. The "all things" that are put under him are explained in verses 24-26, namely: "all rule and authority and power" and finally death itself. The sense in which these "enemies" (v25) are going to be "put under" or placed in subjection is clear enough. They will be totally subordinate.

Carrying on in verse 28, hupotasso occurs as follows: "And when all things shall be SUBDUED UNTO HIM, then the Son also himself SHALL BE SUBJECT unto Him who PUT UNDER him all things."

Now the question that must be asked is: "In what way will all things be SUBDUED to Christ?" The answer has already been provided in the preceding verse. Everything will be totally subordinate to him. And it is in the same context that Paul says: "... then shall the Son ALSO HIMSELF be SUBJECT (same Grk. "hupotasso") to Him who put all things under him."

The conclusion that this forces upon us is unavoidable. It clearly teaches that just as every authority and power will be made subordinate to Jesus, SO JESUS WILL BE SUBORDINATE TO HIS FATHER.

Coming back to Plp.2:6 with these thoughts in mind, it is clearly wrong to interpret the phrase: "... thought it not robbery to be equal with God," to mean that Jesus was and is equal with his Father. There is not one other Scripture in the Word of God to support this interpretation. There are however, many statements which affirm Jesus always was, and always will be subordinate to his Father.

"ANOTHER DIFFICULTY"

There is another sense in which it is fundamentally wrong to apply Plp.2 to a pre-existent Christ. We have seen that the exhortation to "Let this mind be in you which was also in Christ Jesus," is given in connection with the statement that occurs before it concerning nothing being done through vainglory, but lowliness of mind. Paul is challenging the Christian to suppress vainglory and be humble like Christ.

How can we relate this to Christ if Plp.2:6-8 relates to a pre-existent state? In what way would he, if he was Very God in heaven, have to suppress vainglory and become humble? Would he have a battle with vainglory and pride and ambition before becoming a man? Would he, as the Eternal omnipotent, sinless perfect God have to suppress sinful propensities of pride and conceit in order to become a man? Would it have been a sin to want to be, and remain God?

Vainglory and pride only pertain to the realm of the flesh - the fallen

nature of man which contains sinful propensities. This is why God cannot be tempted. He is not clothed with "sinful flesh." There are no sinful impulses or desires in His immortal, sinless nature. And if Jesus pre-existed as God, he would be the same. In other words, if he pre-existed and decided to come to earth as a man, his decision could not result in experiencing reactions of pride and vainglory. If Jesus pre-existed as God, he would have been in complete control of his mental faculties and completely beyond the reach of vainglory and pride. So why refer to it as an example for Christians to follow if it wasn't real? To use such an example of a holy, untemptable God surrendering heaven's glory as a guide for all men to follow, when experiencing the fleshly impulses of vainglory and pride; doesn't ring true, and lacks practical and meaningful application.

However, if we apply the passage to the historical Christ - the MAN Christ Jesus, who partook of the same flesh and blood as his brethren, the matter stands very differently. As a partaker of the same flesh, through which he was impregnated with the genes of his mother, he inherited impulses and propensities common to the human race which he came to save. He had the same potential for pride and vainglory as other men, and for this reason was tested in these areas during the temptation in the wilderness. But his mind was fixed on God and he denied the flesh of any response or expression to its desires. He made himself of no reputation, and crucified all impulses of pride. In view of this, Paul says: "Let this mind be in you which was also in Christ."

"MADE HIMSELF OF NO REPUTATION"

Plp.2:7 says Jesus made himself of no reputation. The words: "made of no reputation," come from the Greek word "kenoo" which literally means "to empty." It is translated "made void" and "made of none effect" in other places. The Revised Standard Version renders it as "emptied himself."

Of what did Jesus empty himself? The context provides the answer. He emptied himself of all temptation towards vainglory and pride and ambition to be equal with God. He took up the cross daily and crucified the self desire of the flesh.

Jesus never stood on his rights. He never demanded great honours for himself even though he was worthy of them, being in the form of God. He refused to take the kingdoms of the world without going to the cross first. In the garden of Gethsemane, he subjected his will to the will of his

Father, not arrogating to himself the prerogatives that rightly belonged to his Father (Matt.26:39). He did not grasp at equality. He never arrogated to himself authority which had never been delegated to him by his Father. In this respect there was a sharp contrast between himself and the first Adam. Being in the form of God he could have called down more than 12 legions of angels to deliver himself out of the Romans' hands (Matt.26:53), but he "emptied himself" of such temptation, humbling himself and submitting himself to the cross. He could have allowed himself to be induced by his friends to call fire down upon the inhospitable Samaritans but refused.

The people would gladly, at one stage have made him king (Jn.6:15), but again he refused the temptation, knowing it was his Father's will for him to experience the cross before the crown. In every respect, Jesus, during the days of his flesh, was a supreme example of humility and self renunciation. And it is with such exhibitions in mind that Paul says: "Let this mind be in you."

"TOOK UPON HIM THE FORM OF A SERVANT"

Jesus came "not to be ministered unto but to minister" (serve), and to give his life a ransom for all" (Matt.20:28). Although the "king of kings" he became as one who "doth serve." This was the "form" - profile - status, that he chose for his whole life: "form of a servant."

When there was strife among his disciples as to who was the greatest, he told them that their thinking had descended to the same level as the kings of the Gentiles who exercise lordship and authority over the Gentiles: "But you shall not be so: but he who is the greatest among you, let him become the least, and he who is chief, as he that doth serve. For which is the greatest, the one who sits at the table, or the one who serves. Is it not the one who sits at table? But I am among you as one who serves" (Lk.22:24-27).

Here again, in these words of Jesus, we have a wonderful demonstration of the same principle enunciated in Plp.2 where Paul speaks of him taking on himself the form of a servant. And Jesus virtually says to his disciples: "Let this mind be in you which you see in me."

The extent to which the humility and self abasement of Jesus extended, is revealed in the episode of the washing of his disciples' feet as pointed out before. Such a duty was normally performed by a slave.

The extent to which Jesus made himself of no reputation is well

illustrated in his statement: "Foxes have holes and the birds of the air have nests, but the Son of man has nowhere to lay his head" (Matt.8:20). Although Son of God, having the Spirit without measure, Jesus never made life easy and cosy for himself. He didn't demand a palatial residence, cosy bed and fine delicacies for himself, as most kings do. He condescended to a low estate and took it upon himself to live like a servant. His mental disposition and pattern of behaviour was lowly: "For I am meek and lowly in heart" (Matt.11:29). He wasn't ruthless like the Romans or arrogant like the Pharisees, even though he had far greater power at his disposal than all of them put together. Rather, he was "of a poor and contrite spirit, and trembled at the Word of God." Although king of Israel - king of the world and high priest after the order of Melchisedec, Jesus was prepared to rough it and accept a menial pattern of life.

As in the case of Moses, who was rich by inheritance, Jesus "chose rather to suffer affliction with the people of God, than to enjoy the pleasures of sin for a season." He esteemed reproach greater riches than the treasures of this life, for he looked to the reward - the joy that was set before him. He therefore humbly and submissively accepted the role of a man of sorrows, being despised and rejected by men. "He pleased not himself" (Rom.15:1-3), claimed no rights, but submitted to whatever God had determined wicked men would do to him. He assumed no airs, demanded no honour or pay for his labour, and emptied himself of all temptation to worldly fame and glory. He never exploited his high station to his own personal advantage.

Some might feel that the word "TOOK" in the phrase: "took upon him the form of a servant," suggests that the "FORM of a servant" involved a physical change. However, the Greek word "lambano" which is translated "took" is used in many different ways in Scripture and is given a great variety of applications. It does not, by any means, always involve a physical act or operation. It is frequently used in abstract senses. In Acts 19:13 the words: "took upon" are used in the sense of UNDERTOOK and are used in the sense of mental resolve. Even today it is not uncommon to use the expression: "He took it upon himself to do ..." When referring to someone who resolves to follow a particular course of action or accept a particular responsibility.

In Matt.27:1, 7 we read about those who "TOOK counsel." Acts 28:15: "TOOK courage." Matt.6:1: "TAKE heed;" v25: "TAKE no thought;" v28: "Why TAKE ye thought." (v34).

The same word is used of TAKING office in Acts 1:20, 25. Reference is made in 2 Cor.12:10 to "TAKE pleasure in infirmities."

So, reference in Plp.2:7 to Jesus who "TOOK upon him the form of a servant," can be understood in the sense of UNDERTOOK to conduct himself in humility as a servant. This suggests mental resolve and determination on his part to display this kind of life. Certainly, the idea of mental resolve is emphasized in the exhortation: "Let this MIND be in you which also was in Christ Jesus."

"MADE IN THE LIKENESS OF MEN"

The word "made" in this statement does not necessarily mean "being born." The Greek word is "ginomai" and while it is true that it is used of the birth of Christ in Gal.4:4, it is also true that it is employed in Scripture in other senses as well.

Ginomai basically means "to cause to be," "to become." In fact, it is translated "become" and "became" over 40 times in the New Testament. It is a word used with great latitude in Scripture and certainly cannot be restricted or confined to making something in a purely physical sense. Once again, it is the context of each particular passage that must determine the application. Examples of ginomai being translated "became" are in 1 Cor.9:20: "Unto the Jews I BECAME as a Jew." 1 Cor.13:11: "When I BECAME a man." The basic significance of the word in these and other references is mental attitude and disposition.

It is rather curious that Trinitarian commentators in discussing the sense of ginomai in Plp.2:7 often overlook the fact that precisely the same word is used in the next verse: "He humbled himself, and BECAME (ginomai) obedient unto death." In other words, he showed himself obedient even to the cross. Are we not then justified in giving the word very much the same meaning in the previous verse: "... becoming in the likeness of men," i.e. "a voluntary making himself like other men?" This meaning is given by some modern translations. The Jerusalem Bible reads: "And became as men are." The Interlinear Greek-English New Testament reads: "In the likeness of men becoming."

So Jesus "became like men." This explains the result of making himself of no reputation - of "emptying and divesting himself" - of accepting the form of a servant. The result was that he was content to be the same as other men. As Heb.2:17 puts it: "In all things it behoved him to be made like his brethren."

"TOOK PART OF THE SAME"

While we are in Heb.2:17, it should be pointed out that as far as Jesus' own personal experience of becoming a man is concerned, v14 teaches that it was no different from our own, which, in itself, excludes pre-existence. The verse starts off by saying that we all are "partakers of flesh and blood." Then, referring to Jesus, it says "he ALSO himself LIKEWISE 'TOOK PART' of the same." The way in which we "took part" of flesh and blood, Jesus also "took part" of the same. We took part through conception and birth, and not through entering our mother's womb from a pre-existent state. And according to Heb.2:14, Jesus became flesh and blood the same way: "He ALSO himself LIKEWISE ("in the same manner") took part of THE SAME." It is evident from the writer's choice of words here, that he is at pains to emphasize that Jesus' own personal experience of coming into existence and becoming a man - flesh and blood, was identical with every other man, in spite of the Divine conception.

Heb.2:16 in the Authorized Version is not a good translation and savours very much of Trinitarian bias. It reads: "For verily he took not on him the nature of angels; but he took on him the seed of Abraham." The Revised Standard Version is a better translation being closer to the original Greek: "For surely it is not angels that he is concerned but with the descendants of Abraham."

The words: "... him the nature of," which are in italics in the Authorized Version do not appear in the original manuscript. They represent another Trinitarian interpolation designed to support a doctrinal prejudice.

The same applies to the word "took" which the Authorized Version translators have badly translated from the Greek word "epilambanomai." This word in Greek basically means to "help" by taking hold of. It has nothing to do with a pre-existent Jesus coming down from heaven to Mary's womb to take hold of a human body as the Authorized Version translators have tried to convey in Heb.2:16. This verse is not referring to the actual birth of Jesus at all. In its context, it refers to his work of rescue and redemption. It should be viewed in connection with "deliver" (v15) and "succour" (v18).

The verse simply teaches that Jesus didn't reach out to help angels, but the offspring of Abraham. This is why he had to take part of flesh and blood as mentioned in v14. He had to share the same nature.

In Jer.31:32 in the L.X.X. the same Greek word is used to describe a

gracious "laying hold" in order to take out of a state of bondage. The same word is thus used in Mk.8:23 where we read that Jesus "TOOK the blind man by the hand and led him out of the town ..." The word basically means to "help," "seize," "rescue" etc, and has nothing to do with a pre-existent Christ descending to earth to physically take hold of a human body by planting himself in a woman's womb.

"AND BEING FOUND IN FASHION AS A MAN"

In Plp.2:8 we read: "And being found in fashion as a man ..." The word "FOUND" is interesting. It comes from the Greek word "heurisko" and means to find, perceive, see, learn, discover, recognize. It is very difficult to relate this to the pre-existent concept. If Jesus pre-existed in heaven and voluntarily arranged to manifest himself as a man on earth, such a planned manifestation could hardly be expressed in terms of "discovering" or "learning" or "finding" that he was fashioned as a man. If he arranged it and put it into operation, there would be nothing to "find" or "discover." He would be aware of the fact, thus eliminating all element of surprise.

However, it makes good practical sense if applied to the situation of a Son of God who did not pre-exist and who therefore had no previous knowledge of his real identity and mission. As he grew up from childhood, he would learn from his mother and the Spirit of God, the true nature of his origin, conception, identity and mission. He would learn or "discover" ("find") that he was both "Son of God" and "Son of man," and would realize that although being in the form of God, he must humble himself and empty himself of all desire and temptation to vainglory, and assume the form of a servant.

The phrase: "And being found in fashion as a man," is rendered "And being as all men are," by the Jerusalem Bible. The Emphatic Diaglott renders it: "being in condition as a man." The phrase therefore, does not necessarily refer to the actual birth of Jesus, but simply states that he bore the same condition as man - was the same flesh and blood as other men. The fashion - condition - appearance of Jesus, although Son of God, was very much "man" or human. To the people who watched him and listened to him, he was in all respects a man. He hungered, thirsted, slept and wept, just like other human beings. So much so, that they failed to perceive his Divine origin and character. Strong says the Greek word "skeema" translated "fashion" in the A.V. means mode, circumstance, external condition. It only occurs in Plp. 2:8 and 1 Cor. 7:31 which reads: "For the fashion of this world passes away."

"BECAME OBEDIENT"

Plp.2:8 goes on to say that Jesus "humbled himself, and became obedient." The word "became," as already pointed out, is "ginomai" in the Greek and literally means "becoming" or "coming to be." This phrase: "... humbled himself and BECAME obedient," therefore suggests a process of obedience which resulted from humbling himself. Heb.5:8 refers to this process as "learning obedience." Jesus' whole life was a continual process of learning obedience.

It would be quite inappropriate to say that Jesus "became" obedient or "learned" obedience if he were Very God. God cannot "learn" for He is omniscient and is THE SOURCE of all learning. Neither can He be tempted or sin, so it is inconceivable that He could learn obedience. If Jesus was Very God, the omnipotent and omniscient Creator, the scene presented in these Scriptures of him learning obedience and becoming obedient becomes a farce. If this is who Jesus really was, his sinlessness could never possibly be in doubt, and disobedience would be utterly impossible. Hence, any reference which suggests it was possible for him to commit iniquity and be disobedient becomes a pretence and makes a mockery of the Word of God.

"HIGHLY EXALTED"

Plp.2:29 introduces us to the grand climax: "Therefore, God also has highly exalted him and given him a name which is above every name."

The key word is "THEREFORE." It is very significant and a great deal is meant by it. It means: "For this reason." In other words, what it is really saying is this: "BECAUSE Jesus humbled himself and was obedient unto the death of the cross, God, exalted him." From this it is reasonable and natural to conclude that it was possible for Jesus to be disobedient. And, had he been disobedient (which is sin), by refusing to assume a humble role in life and by refusing to submit to the cross, God would not have highly exalted him.

JESUS' EXALTATION WAS GAINED ENTIRELY ON THE BASIS OF HUMILITY AND OBEDIENCE, and it is for this reason that Paul says: "Let this mind be in you which was also in Christ Jesus."

But if Jesus was Very God from all eternity, high and exalted as an equal with the Father, nothing in heaven or earth could have prevented his exaltation. It would be utterly incongruous to even think that the eternal

God could lose His throne or glory. No one could take it from Him - certainly not a co-equal partner with whom he is supposed to be inseparably linked with ties indivisible. Had such a God turned Himself into a man, His exaltation would be inevitable - a forgone conclusion. Being "Very God" and not being able to sin, obedience would take place as a natural course and would be expected by everyone in heaven and earth.

So, if it was impossible for Jesus to be disobedient, and if his exaltation was unavoidable and inevitable, why the emphasis in Plp.2:8-9 on him being exalted because of his obedience? This view robs Christ's obedience of all its meaning, virtue and merit, and makes a non-issue of his exaltation. After all, if Jesus existed in heaven in exalted glory with the Father from all eternity, then what is so special about him going back there again? One would have expected it anyway! And, if he is now exalted on the basis of obedience, on what basis was he exalted before?

If Jesus was highly exalted as God's equal prior to becoming a man, then the words: "God has highly exalted him," become totally meaningless and a farce. If Jesus pre-existed as God's equal, he could never be more exalted than that. If he was, he would be elevated above the Father Himself. Hence, if Jesus has returned to his pre-existent status as God's equal, the phrase: "God has highly exalted him," can only mean that he has been restored to his original pre-cosmic position. In relation to his pre-existent state, Jesus would not be exalted at all. He would be no higher than he ever was.

It is so vital to Paul's message that Jesus' exaltation depended on his conduct, which was determined by the disposition of his mind. Although Son of God, Jesus was very much a real man, born of a woman and experienced the same weaknesses and temptations common to all men. These weaknesses and temptations are a natural heritage of the flesh, and have led to sin in all men except Jesus. Because the enemy of man is in the flesh, Jesus had to partake of the flesh. He thus met sin on its own battle-ground and crucified it by the Word and Spirit of God by refusing to yield to its impulses and by denying it expression in his life. He took up the cross and died to self daily. Finally, once and for all, in one great ceremonial act, he put it to death in his body of flesh on the cross, having gained total victory over it. On the cross, Jesus put the flesh where it belongs, and in doing so represented us. We deserve what he suffered, but he did it for us because God's grace is such that He allows us to share Christ's victory, if we identify with him in the way He has appointed.

"CONSIDERABLE DIFFICULTIES"

The pre-existent concept detracts a great deal from many basic factors relating to Jesus, and creates numerous difficulties and inconsistencies. E.H. Gifford, a convinced believer in pre-existence, clearly saw that the idea of the "incarnation" of Christ created considerable difficulties ("The Incarnation" p.12). It is really not surprising in the view of all the facts when they are put together, to find that an uneasiness about the idea of pre-existence is sometimes expressed by those who hold to it. Thus J.H. Michael observes: "The conception of a personal pre-existence teems with difficulties; but into these we cannot now attempt to enter" (The Epistle of Paul to the Philippians p.84).

Some of these difficulties have been presented in this thesis, and it is with no desire to ridicule beliefs sincerely held that this has been done. A polemical approach can debase the greatest truths and every Christian should want to avoid this tragic error. However, if traditional teaching has the effect of robbing our Lord Jesus of his moral glory and virtue as an overcomer of sin, and makes a farce of his exaltation, then it is natural and reasonable to want to point this out to fellow Christians and direct attention to what is believed to be a better way of interpretation. "I have believed and therefore I have spoken" is the underlying cause and motive behind this thesis.

Scripture is completely silent on the pre-existence of Christ. Only the prejudiced reader, influenced by traditional interpretation, can read this concept into the Word of God. And once influenced, it is very difficult to have an open mind to consider another view.

The narratives of Christ's birth are beautifully presented by Matthew and Luke. Their agreement on the main facts is complete: the babe to be born of Mary will be conceived through the power of God. Why is it that in these records there is nothing even remotely resembling a suggestion that the child to be born was already in existence? If this were really true, why is the information withheld, and with what motive? In Romans we have Paul's most complete statement of the Christian faith. Why is there no mention of the pre-existence of Christ in this great epistle?

In view of all this, we cannot be surprised to find J.N.D. Kelly commenting on the early Christian creeds in these terms: "The perplexing thing about these creeds is their combination of striking resemblances with a number of significant differences. The resemblances leap to the eye at once, even in translation. They consist not only in the general pattern of the creeds, their agreement in stressing Christ's birth from the Holy Spirit

and the Blessed Virgin RATHER THAN HIS PRE-COSMIC BEGETTING and their use of such characteristically Roman terms as Christ Jesus" (Early Christian Creeds p.114-115).

One well wonders how the notion of Christ's pre-existence was acquired in view of the absence of any such idea from the early Christian creeds. Edwin Hatch is of assistance here, for in his book, "The Influence of Greek Ideas and Usages upon the Christian Church" p.268-269, he traces the development of the doctrine of the Logos. He ascribes to Origen (A.D. 185-254) the responsibility for first affirming that Christ was of the same essence as the Father: "The Saviour is God, not by partaking, but by essence. He is begotten of the very essence of the Father. The generation is an outflow of light from light. But the controversies did not so much end with Origen as begin with him. From that time they were mostly internal to Christianity. But their elements were Greek in origin. The conceptions which were introduced into the sphere of Christian thought were the current ones of philosophy. In Christian theology that philosophy has survived."

But surely there is no need for the interpretation of Plp.2:5-11 to be beset with metaphysical problems. Paul's exhortation calls on us to emulate the example of Christ Jesus. "Christ Jesus" is the name of an historical being whose birth is recorded for us: "And behold, thou shalt conceive in thy womb, and bring forth a son, and SHALT CALL HIS NAME JESUS. He shall be great, AND SHALL BE CALLED the Son of the highest." He was Christ because he was the Messiah, the anointed prince, son and heir of David. This noble person, despite his high lineage, made himself poor in the interests of mankind: "For you know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, that though he was rich, yet for your sakes he became poor, that through his poverty you might be made rich" (2 Cor.8:9). Our indebtedness to our Lord Jesus Christ is incalculable. "Let this mind be in you, which was also in Christ Jesus."

"RICH YET POOR FOR YOUR SAKES"

This statement of Paul's in 2 Cor.8:9 runs parallel with Plp.2:6-8. "Though he was rich" corresponds with "being in the form of God," and "became poor" corresponds with "made himself of no reputation and took upon himself the form of a servant."

What has been said earlier about the word "BEING" - "BEING in the form of God," occurring in the imperfect tense which expresses repeated action, also applies to the word "WAS" in the phrase: "WAS rich." The

verb "was" is in the present "being." A more correct rendering of the verse would read like this: "You know the loving kindness of Jesus Christ our Lord, that on your account he impoverished himself, being rich, in order that you, through his poverty, might become rich."

The sense in which the Corinthians were rich can be seen in 2 Cor.6:10 where the apostle Paul refers to himself becoming "poor," "making many rich." He became "poor" in the sense of exposing himself to persecution, suffering, deprivation and dishonour (v8-9). He suffered this to preach the Gospel of Jesus Christ - a Gospel which made the receivers "rich" spiritually. In actual fact, Paul himself was "rich" too, in the same sense as those who received the Gospel, for he had received it himself. In this sense, it could be said that Paul, although rich, became poor for the sake of the Gospel. There are a number of similar paradoxical statements in Paul's writings. For instance, in 1 Cor.7:22 he says: "He who is called in the Lord, being a servant, is the Lord's freeman: likewise also he who is called, being free, is Christ's servant." Paul refers here to a man being a servant and a freeman at the same time, but he is not referring to two different periods of existence.

Consider also the language of Rev.2:9: "I know your works ... and poverty, but you are rich." Here is a case of people being rich and poor at the same time. The Christians at Ephesus to whom these words are addressed, were poor materially but rich spiritually. As Paul says in Rom.10:12: "The same Lord over all IS RICH unto all who call upon Him." Again: "Has not God chosen the POOR of this world, RICH in faith, and heirs of the kingdom" (Jam.2:5). "There is that maketh himself rich, yet has nothing: there is that maketh himself poor, yet has great riches" (Pr.13:7) The Laodiceans were rich in a material sense but poor in a spiritual sense (Rev.3:17).

Jesus was rich in that he was the only begotten of the Father, heir of all things. He was "greater than Solomon" (Matt.12:42) who had unprecedented glory, power and wealth. Jesus was far richer by inheritance and possessed the power of God without measure. Yet although he was so rich, he became poor. Although of such high rank, he took a low station - the status of a servant, and looked for nothing more in life than the bare essentials. He did not aspire or clamour for worldly acclaim. He was not ambitious for material wealth and the honour of men. Like Moses, he turned his back on life's transitory treasures and refused the fleeting pleasures of sin, choosing rather to suffer with the people of God. Although Jerusalem was "the city of the great king," he was crucified outside its walls while being accused as a deceiver and traitor.

The situation could not be better summarized than in Paul's words: "Though rich, he became poor for our sakes."

The "poverty" of Jesus is particularly exemplified in his own statement about foxes having holes and birds of the air having nests, but he had nowhere to lay his head. So poor was he, in a material sense, that he had to send Peter to fish up a coin in a fish's mouth to pay the temple tax. When he wanted to demonstrate on another occasion, a lesson through a coin, he had to ask someone for a coin. He didn't have one himself! His "poverty" reached its climax when he submitted to the shame and ignominy of a criminal's death on the cross. His body stripped of its robe was exhibited like a poor wretched outcast. He hung on the cross as the richest man on earth, but poor for our sakes.

It is important to note that nothing is said in the statement: "... rich, yet poor for our sakes" to suggest that "rich" refers to a pre-existent state in heaven. Not a word or hint is suggested to this effect. This conclusion has been read into it and assumed.

ANOTHER THOUGHT

There is another way of looking at 2 Cor.8:9, and although it might be a little radical, it is not altogether impractical. Prior to his ministry, Jesus worked until the age of 30 as a carpenter. Carpentry was no mean trade in those days and good carpenters were in the higher income bracket - especially highly skilled carpenters as Jesus unquestionably was. His work would have been of professional standard and impeccable quality. He no doubt had the reputation for being the best qualified worker with wood at the time. Not being a spendthrift or a waster, and having no wife or family to support, it is POSSIBLE (no dogmatism here) that by the time he reached the age of 30 when he started his ministry, he had a reasonably substantial "nest egg" saved up. He could have been quite "rich" in a material sense.

If so, he clearly gave it all away and became poor for our sakes in order that his ministry might find its sufficiency in God and not in human resources. If so, 2 Cor.8:9 would have a very real and literal application. This would mean that when he called his disciples away from their various places of employment and commissioned them to embark upon their ministry without money or purse, he was not asking them to do any more than what he had done himself. The same applies to the rich young ruler who was told by Jesus to sell all that he had, give it to the poor and follow him.

Jesus practised what he preached and could never be accused of telling people to "do as I say but don't do as I do." He was a supreme example in everything that he demanded of his friends. "In all things it behoved him to be made like his brethren," and this statement I believe, has a much wider application than what many are prepared to accept.

Jesus could have established quite a lucrative business and made quite a successful career and name for himself out of carpentry had he so desired. He could have embarked upon a solid, comfortable way of life, remaining an honoured and respected citizen in society, not accepting his call to the ministry. With his wisdom and ability he could have become the mayor of Nazareth.

But as always, his delight was to do his Father's will, and this was his whole meat and drink. So when the time came for him to embark upon his ministry, he "became poor for our sakes," possibly selling all that he had and giving it to the poor. In so doing he is the supreme example of humility and obedience. It was for this reason that God "highly exalted him."

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CHAPTER EIGHTEEN ONE FATHER CREATED US

There are a number of statements made in the New Testament which many regard as teaching that Jesus made all things - that he is the Creator. If this is true, it naturally follows that he must have existed before his birth. There are only two or three verses in the New Testament which appear to teach this, and none of them openly and plainly declare that Jesus made or created all things, but rather that **THE FATHER** created all things **THROUGH** His Son. The Father is referred to as Creator, and He created all things **THROUGH** His Son. The interpretation therefore, of these passages, hinges on the significance we place on the word "through," translated "by" in the Authorized Version. (The Greek word is "dia" and should be rendered "through" as most new translations do).

Before looking at these few verses in the New Testament, attention should firstly be directed to the fact that literally dozens of Scriptures affirm that the Father is Creator and attribute creation wholly and solely to Him. These references are not few or isolated, or vague or confined to the New Testament, and they must be taken into account before reaching a conclusion. It would be unreasonable and unrealistic to ignore them and form a conclusion solely on the basis of a few isolated statements confined to one or two parts of the New Testament.

We shall also discover that there are a number of statements in both Old and New Testaments which refer to the Father, Son and the work of creation together, but attribute the creation to the Father and not the Son. The Son is excluded from taking any **PHYSICAL** active part in it. We will come to these shortly. In the meantime we will firstly look at some Scriptures which attribute creation to Father-God alone.

Isa.45:18: "For thus says Yahweh that created the heavens; God **HIMSELF** (singular) that formed the earth and made it; **HE** (singular) has established it, **HE** created it not in vain, **HE** formed it to be inhabited: I am Yahweh, **AND THERE IS NONE ELSE.**"

This passage refers to **ORIGINAL** creation when the Creator alone brought the material universe into existence. He originally created the earth "not in vain." The words "in vain" come from the Hebrew "tohu" which is rendered "without form" in Gen.1:2. God did not originally create the earth in a chaotic state. It was plunged into the chaotic state referred to in Gen.1:2 at a later date. When the time came for God to create order out of that chaos, and make the earth a fit habitation for the living creatures, He performed this refashioning work through the angels.

Consider also Hezekiah's prayer: "O Lord of hosts, God of Israel who dwells between the cherubim; thou art the God, even THOU ALONE, of all the kingdoms of the earth; thou hast made heaven and earth."

"Thou, even thou, art LORD ALONE; Thou hast made heaven, the heaven of heavens, with all their hosts, the earth, and all things that are therein, the seas, and all that is therein, and thou preservest them all; and the host of heaven worships thee" (Isa.37:16. Neh.9:6).

"Thus says the lord, thy redeemer, and HE that formed thee from the womb, I am the Lord that makes all things; that stretcheth forth the heavens ALONE; that spreadeth abroad the earth BY MYSELF" (Isa.44:24).

In these passages, reference is made to original creation when the material universe was brought into being. God alone - by Himself, sent forth His energy-power and focused it in every place of His choice to become the basis of every material object in His universe.

The prophet Malachi adds his testimony saying: "Have we not ONE FATHER? Has not ONE GOD CREATED US?" (Mal.2:10). This is a particularly unequivocal statement, and should, with the others, be seriously taken into account in any study which seeks to ascertain the Creator's identity.

One thing is certain: the faithful servants of God in Old Testament times, being strict monotheists, interpreted these passages in one specific way. They attributed creation wholly and solely to the Father, who to them was the One and only true God who had no equal. After all: if the Father was not Creator, what part does He play in the Divine scheme of things? If the Son created everything and if the Holy Spirit is the power used in Divine activity, what does the Father do? The doctrine of the Trinity seems to make Him redundant. The opposite however, is the case. He alone is Creator and Sustainer of the universe - THE NUMBER ONE POWER.

I am not aware of Jesus ever teaching that he himself was the creator. Quite the opposite in fact. He attributed creation to his Father. For instance, in Mk.13:19 he referred to "creation which GOD created," and this was very different from saying "creation which I created." Yet, if he really was the creator and if it was important for people to know and recognize this, why didn't he say so? It was an ideal opportunity to make the point seeing he was dealing with the subject.

Again in Matt.19:3-6 Jesus referred to: "He (God) who made them (Adam and Eve) at the beginning ... What therefore GOD has joined together ..." Here again Jesus plainly confesses that His Father was

responsible for creating Adam and Eve. On this occasion Jesus was talking to the Pharisees and they would have picked him up immediately with their sharp legalistic minds if the slightest hint was contained in his words to the effect that he was the Creator himself. The fact that they didn't is strong evidence that there was no sign of Jesus teaching that, and that his teaching about creation was consistent with the monotheistic faith of Israel.

In his parable of the wicked husbandmen, Jesus refers to his Father who planted the vineyard (i.e. formed the nation of Israel) as a "certain householder." Jesus clearly attributes Israel's existence to this householder, and teaches that it was this householder who was responsible for sending the "servants" (i.e. prophets) to collect the fruits from the husbandmen. "But last of all He sent unto them his Son." The "Son" of course, refers to Jesus himself. It is clearly taught in this passage that Jesus was not the creator of Israel, but was rather sent by the Creator of Israel, as were the prophets before him.

In Eph.3:9 we read that "God created all things by Jesus Christ." The words: "by Jesus Christ" on this particular occasion do not appear in the original Greek manuscripts and have been omitted by most modern translations. It should simply read: "God created all things." That "God" refers to the FATHER and not the Son is indicated in v11 where this same God is referred to as having an eternal purpose in Christ.

Both 1 Cor.8:6 and Rom.11:36 stress that all things came out of the Father. His energy formed the basis of the material universe.

2 Cor.4:6 tells us that it was God who commanded the light to shine out of darkness, which is a reference back to the creation account in Gen.1:1-3. And the way in which Paul goes on to say that this same God has now shone in our hearts by reflecting His glory in His Son Jesus, clearly reveals that it was the Father who performed the work recorded in Gen.1, and not the Son.

2 Cor.5:18 is very similar: "All things are out of God (the Father), who has reconciled us to Himself by Jesus Christ."

It is significant to note that nowhere in Scripture does it say that Jesus came to reconcile the world to himself. It is always the other way around. God THE FATHER sent him to reconcile the world to HIMSELF. Had Jesus pre-existed and been equal with the Father, the world would have been equally as estranged and alienated from him as from his Father, and his work would surely have been expressed in terms of reconciling the world to both himself and his Father. Such a concept of course, violates in the most fundamental way possible, Jesus' office as mediator between

God and man. The function of a mediator is never to reconcile himself to an alienated party. In fact, he could not be a successful mediator if he was alienated from one of the parties he was trying to reconcile to the other.

OTHER EXAMPLES

Now, as mentioned before, there are a number of Scriptures in which reference is made to both Father and Son along with the work of creation, and the creation is attributed to the Father and not the Son.

The first one is in Rev.4:8-11. Here we read of the Lord God Almighty sitting on the throne and these words are addressed to Him: "For thou hast created all things and for thy pleasure they are and were created." Then, in 5:1-4 reference is made to a sealed book in His right hand which no man was worthy to open and read, causing the apostle John to weep much. Then, in v5 he is told to stop weeping because Jesus has prevailed to open the book. John then saw Jesus come and take "the book out of the right hand of Him who sat upon the throne" (v8).

The one who sat upon the throne is clearly Father-God. And He is clearly referred to as the Creator of all things. Jesus is presented as a separate and subordinate person in relation to his Father here.

Another example is in Acts 4:23-30. Here we read about the whole Church praying to God: "They lifted up their voice to GOD with one accord and said, Lord, thou art God, who made heaven and earth and the sea and all things that are therein." Who then, was this "God" to whom they were praying who created all things? His identity is revealed in verses 26-27 and 30 where Jesus is referred to as His "holy child" and His "Christ" (anointed). The Church was clearly addressing Father God and attributed creation to Him and not to His holy child Jesus.

Acts 17:24-31 is very similar. The apostle Paul, speaking to the Athenians said: "GOD who made the world and all things therein, being Lord of heaven and earth ... gives to all life and breath, and all things; and made from one (Adam) all nations of men ... hath appointed a day in the which He will judge the world in righteousness by a MAN (Jesus) whom He has ordained ..." Here we are clearly taught that the God who has appointed Jesus to rule, is the God who made the world and all things therein. The Father is thus referred to as Creator and not the Son.

Consider also Isa.42:1-9: In this section Father-God refers to Jesus as "My servant whom I uphold; Mine elect, in whom My soul delighteth; I have put My Spirit upon him." After talking about His Son and the mission He will accomplish through him, Father-God then addresses His

Son prophetically in these words: "Thus says God the Lord, He who created the heavens, and stretched them out; He who spread forth the earth, and that which comes out of it; He who gives breath to the people upon it, and spirit to them that walk therein: I the Lord have called you (Jesus) in righteousness ..."

Here again we see how the One who called and anointed Jesus is the Creator. And it is clearly implied in this passage that the Father created the heavens and earth BEFORE calling His Son.

Finally, another Old Testament passage in Jer.33. Verses 2-3 say: "Thus says the Lord the maker of the earth, the Lord who formed it and set it firm. Call unto Me and I will answer thee, and shew thee great and mighty things, which thou knowest not." Then, in verses 14-15, this same "Lord" who created all things, speaks of the time coming when He will cause "the Branch of righteousness (Jesus) to grow up to David."

Once again creation is attributed to the Father and not the Son. He who causes the Messiah to spring forth from David's family tree is the One who is maker of heaven and earth. Messiah is thus excluded from taking part in creation, and for that reason none of the faithful Old Testament saints believed or taught that Messiah was creator.

It is also clearly implied in this passage, as in Isa.42:1-9, that creation took place BEFORE Messiah existed.

THE WORLD WAS MADE THROUGH CHRIST

As mentioned earlier, there are several references in the New Testament which are often interpreted to mean that Jesus was creator. For instance, Jn.1:10 says "the world was made by him," and several other verses affirm the same point. What then, are we to make of these statements in the light of the many unequivocal statements elsewhere that Father-God was creator and not His Son?

The answer to this is found in the "Logos" passage which was considered in an earlier chapter. As pointed out, "Logos," translated "Word" basically means "something spoken" (including the THOUGHT). It carries with it the idea of intention, purpose, promise etc. And, as far as Jn.1:1-3 is concerned, the purpose or promise that was with the Father from the beginning was a very special and specific one - His only begotten Son, in whom an eternal purpose centred. When Jesus was born, this purpose and promise which had been in the mind of God from the beginning, materialized - "The Word was made flesh."

Jn.1:3 teaches us that the Logos was the motivating factor behind

creation. It was "by" i.e. "through" the Logos that God made all things. In other words, God's motive and reason for creation was His eternal purpose in His Son. It was with this object in mind that God created all things. Everything came into being "through him" - through God's thoughts and purposes in him. It is "because of" - "on account of" the Son, that the Father created. Everything was made "in" him and "for" him. But, as the combined testimony of many Scriptures reveal, the Father Himself, and not the Son, did the actual creating by His own power. The Son had no physical active part to play in that work, but was the motivating and impelling force in the Father's mind that drove Him to do it. According to Strong, the word "by" in the phrase: "... all things were made by Him," in the A.V. has been translated from the Greek preposition "dia" and means: "the channel of an act, in very wide applications." It is translated many different ways, principally "by" and "through." It is used of one who is the author, cause and instrument of action. For example, Father God was the author, cause and instrument of creation. It was done "by" Him. The word "by" is the more appropriate word to convey this, and signifies: "by means of."

However, as we shall see, other verses in modern versions say God created all things "through" Jesus. God was clearly the first cause - the Creator; His power did the creating, but through Jesus. Jesus was not the first cause and is clearly distinguished from it. Neither was it his power that was used to create.

What then does the word "through" mean? It means one of two things:

(1) Jesus was the instrument used by God to accomplish the work of creation - the channel by means of which, or through which the Father's power performed the work of creation. If so, he must have pre-existed.

(2) Jesus was the reason for God creating i.e. God did it "because of" and "on account of" His son. If so, he did not have to pre-exist as a person, only as a purpose (Logos).

Significantly enough, in the A.V. "dia" is translated "by reason of" 5 times and is given as an alternative rendering in the margin in Rom. 8:11. It is also translated "because of" 56 times; "cause" 13 times; "by occasion of" once; "for" 58 times; "for the sake of" 47 times.

Jn.1:9-10 should be read in this light where it says Jesus "was the true light, which lights every man that comes into the world. He was in the world, AND THE WORLD WAS MADE THROUGH HIM, and the world knew him not. He came to his own and his own received him not."

Primarily, in these verses, the "world" refers to the Jewish nation. It

"knew him not" - refused to recognize him as the promised Messiah. He came to minister to it - "to his own" fellow Jews, "and his own received him not."

The Jewish world, we are told here, was "made through him." But this does not mean Jesus created it. We have already seen in the parable of the wicked husbandmen that the formation of the nation of Israel (the "vineyard") is attributed entirely to the Father, and not the Son (Matt.21:33). Yet, even in this parable we can catch that special sense in which it was through the Son that the Father made the vineyard. In v38 the Son is referred to as "the heir" and the vineyard "his inheritance." This indicates that the Son was the Father's reason and motive for making the vineyard. It was to be his inheritance, made especially for him. Had it not been for the Father's purpose in His Son, the vineyard (Israel) would never have been made. Thus, "the world (Jewish) was made through him" (Jesus) in this very real sense.

The Greek word for "made" is "ginomai" which, as pointed out earlier, occurs upwards of 700 times in the New Testament and basically signifies: "to be," "to come," "to become," "to come to pass," "to be done," "to be transacted." It occurs 53 times in John's Gospel alone. For instance, it is translated "become" in Jn.1:12: "... power to BECOME the sons of God." Ginomai is not the word for "create" and does not basically mean create. The Greek word for create is "ktizo," and is quite distinct from ginomai.

With these thoughts in mind we come back to the phrase in Jn.1:10 about the world being "made through" Jesus. Literally translated it reads: "...the world came into being through him." It was through Jesus - through the Father's eternal purpose (Logos) in him, that the world came to be. The Interlinear Greek New Testament renders it: "... the world through him became." Jerusalem Bible says: "had its being through him." Moffatt: "... existed through him." Berkley: "... came into being through him." Rotherham: "... through him came into existence." New English Bible: "... owed its being to him" (Col. 1:16).

This all makes perfect sense in the light of the Logos passage in Jn.1:1-3. God's eternal purpose in Jesus was his motive and objective in creation. We all owe our existence to the Logos that was with God at the beginning. Jesus was foreordained before the foundation of the world. He existed from the very beginning in the foreknowledge of God. He "lived unto Him" and everything came to be through him. Take Jesus out of the Divine purpose and the very purpose for which everything was created is removed. Jesus is the basis - the foundation - the focal centre - the pivotal

point of creation. It all revolves around him. It is all for him (Col. 1:16).

"THROUGH HIM ALL AGES HAVE BEEN CONSTITUTED"

The Jewish world or order of things particularly owed its existence to the Divine purpose in Christ. The nation's whole national, spiritual and political life was constituted and regulated on the basis of God's ultimate purpose in His Son.

One of the main reasons for the preservation and continuance of the nation of Israel was because it constituted Abraham's seed, and God had promised to produce the Messiah out of that seed. In this very real sense, they owed their existence to Jesus, who was coming forth down the specially prepared holy line.

Israel's deliverance from Egypt and all the miracles during their wilderness wanderings, were a type and foreshadow of Jesus and his ministry (1 Cor. 10). The whole law in fact, with all its sacrifices and feasts etc had only one object in mind - Jesus Christ. He was the ultimate point and reality of it all - the Divine motive and objective. Through him and only him, all these things in the Jewish "world" or "order of things" came into being. All the Jewish institutions and ordinances were "figures of the true" - a schoolmaster pointing the way to Christ who was the "body" as we read in Col.2:17, or as the New English Bible puts it: "solid reality."

In every age and dispensation of Jewish history, God, through the prophets and the experiences of Israel, gradually unfolded more and more of His purpose in His Son, causing the plan to get brighter and clearer until the day when he was finally manifested. Thus, writing to the Jewish Christians, the inspired writer penned these words: "God, who at various times and in different ways spoke in time past to the (Jewish) fathers by the prophets, has in these last days spoken to us by His Son, whom He has appointed heir of all things, **BY WHOM ALSO HE MADE THE WORLDS**" (Heb.1:1-2).

This passage is often cited to prove the pre-existence of Christ since it says God made the worlds by him. It is thought that if the worlds were made by him, he must be an eternal person within the Godhead. But there is actually no case in this verse to be made for the view that the Son was an "eternal person" within the Godhead. It says in v2 that he is "APPOINTED heir" which means his position of power and authority is delegated and not innate. It is by "inheritance" (v4) that he has obtained a more excellent name, and not by virtue of being a coequal person within

the Godhead.

Regarding the phrase: "... by whom also He made the worlds;" it should be pointed out that the word "by" comes from the Greek "dia" and means "through." The word "made" comes from the Greek "poieo" which means to "make," "do," "cause," "bring about," "appoint," "ordain," "purpose" etc, and is translated in all these different ways in the New Testament.

The Greek word translated "worlds" is not the usual word for world (i.e. "kosmos") but "aions" which means "ages," "periods," "dispensations." It does not refer to our planet or other planets but the ages of history, that have taken place on our planet.

The interlinear Greek English New Testament gives this translation: "... through whom indeed he made the ages." Rotherham: "... through whom also he made the ages." The Emphatic Diaglott: "... on account of whom also he constituted the ages."

That the basic idea behind "aion" is "age," is indicated in the following verses where it has been translated "world:" Heb.6:5, 9:26, 11:3. In each of these cases, the real sense is conveyed by reading the word "age" instead of "world." In actual fact, the Authorized Version has correctly translated aion as "ages" in Eph.2:7 and Col.1:26.

With these thoughts in mind we come back to Heb.1:2. It could be literally read like this: "... through whom also He made - brought about - appointed - ordained - constituted the ages."

The "ages" in v2 have a direct link with the periods of the Jewish "fathers" to whom God spoke "in time past" "by the prophets" in v1. This covers all the dispensations back to Adam, which embraces the antediluvian, Patriarchal and Mosaic ages. Throughout these ages "God spoke," and the subject of His message constituted the basis on which each age was "made." And that "subject" was of course JESUS CHRIST. As we read in Rom.1:1-3: "... THE GOSPEL of God which He had PROMISED BEFORE by His prophets in the holy Scriptures, CONCERNING HIS SON Jesus Christ our Lord ..."

During the Antediluvian period, Noah preached this Gospel (2 Pet.2:5. 1 Pet.4:6). It was preached to Abraham during the Patriarchal age (Gal.3:8), and it was preached to the Israelites during the Mosaic age (Heb. 3:17 4:2).

The eternal purpose of God in His Son has been the motive and objective of every Divine activity in every age. Every age has been constituted - regulated - framed on the basis of the purposed redemption in the Son of God. It is in him that every age has had its true meaning,

purpose and ultimate realization. Every period in earth's history has been Divinely ordered and supervised with a specific bearing and relation to salvation in Christ. He is indeed, the Alpha and Omega; the beginning and ending; the foundation-stone and head-stone. In him dwells the fullness of the Godhead bodily.

Like a red thread, the eternal Divine purpose of redemption in Christ has weaved its way throughout every age from the beginning; weaving them together, giving them a common unity and purpose. Without Christ, there would be no purpose in any age. Life would be without meaning, hope and purpose. But Jesus has been in every age, promised and proclaimed in the everlasting Gospel. "Through him (Jesus) He (God) made the ages." Or, as Heb.11:3 puts it: "... the ages were framed (fitted together) by the Word of God."

It is clear then, that the Father has fitted the ages together with His Son as the motive and objective. He has "determined the allotted periods" of every age, and has "appointed a day in which He will judge the earth in righteousness" through His Son (Acts 17:26,30).

COLOSSIANS 1:16-17

"For BY (Greek "en" i.e. "IN") him (Jesus) were all things created, that are in heaven, and that are in earth, visible and invisible, whether they be thrones, or dominions, or principalities, or powers: all things were created BY ("dia" i.e. "through") him and for him. And he IS (N.B. present tense; doesn't say "was") before all things, and BY ("en" - "IN") him all things consist (i.e. hold together)."

This passage of Scripture fits into the same category as Jn.1:10 and Heb.1:2. What has been said about those passages equally applies here. Jesus is the focal centre of all creation. All things were created "in" him - with him in mind. Everything owes its existence to him, because everything only exists through the Divine purpose in him. He is before everything, having been "foreordained before the foundation of the world." Even the angels in heaven owe their existence to Jesus. God originally made them to minister to the heirs of salvation. This "salvation" of course, is in the Lord Jesus Christ, and were it not for this salvation, the angels would never have been made. Thus, all things in heaven and earth have been created by God "in," "through" and "for" Jesus.

In relation to the angels, this is rather dramatically revealed in Jacob's vision of the ladder (stairway) which had its base upon the earth and its top reached into heaven. It linked heaven and earth. It was a bridge

between man and God and represented Jesus, who is our mediator and high priest. (In Latin "priest" means "bridge-builder"). It was while Jacob rested his head upon the rock that he received the vision, "and that rock was Christ." In the vision, angels of God were ascending and descending upon the stairway, teaching the fundamental lesson that it is only on the basis of Christ - of God's salvation in him, that they could minister. In reality, angels don't need a ladder to travel between heaven and earth, but they do need a purpose. The ladder was symbolic of that purpose - Jesus Christ - the one who bridged the gap between heaven and earth, reconciling man to God.

The words of Jesus quoted in Jn.1:51 are clearly an echo of what we read concerning the ladder and angels in Gen.28:12: " ... the angels of God ascending and descending upon the Son of man." Reference is made here to the angels ascending and descending upon Jesus, whereas in Gen.28 they ascend and descend upon a ladder. From this it seems reasonable to conclude that the ladder represented Jesus. He is the basis upon which angels minister. Angels owe their existence to God's salvation in him.

Now that Jesus has received all power in heaven and earth, he is in complete control of the angels and all earthly thrones and dominions. He sets up and pulls down, for he is King of kings and Lord of Lords. The Father has exalted him to this position and vested him with this authority. All things "consist" or hold together in Christ, as we read in Col.1:17. It is important to note that it is speaking in the present tense, and is not referring to a pre-existent state or function. Col.1:17 was written AFTER Jesus had ascended to the right hand of his Father. It does not say he "EXISTED" before all things" but that he "IS (now) before all things." It does not say that he HELD all things together, but that "all things HOLD together (present tense) in him." Not that it would really make a great deal of difference if it was expressed in the past tense, because as far as the eternal purpose of God is concerned, Jesus was before all things and everything was brought together through the eternal purpose that centres in him.

"IN HIM DWELLS THE FULLNESS OF THE GODHEAD"

While we are in Colossians, a few comments should be passed concerning 2:9 which says the fullness of the Godhead dwells in Jesus bodily. (N.B. It is very emphatically in the present tense: "dwells," and not "dwelt") Col.1:19 runs parallel with this statement and reads like

this: "For it pleased the Father that in him should all fullness dwell." From this it can be seen that "Godhead" and "Father" are synonymous terms.

The reference to the fullness of the Godhead dwelling in Jesus is sometimes regarded as proof that Jesus is equal with his Father. But, if this is what it means, we would have to conclude that God intends the body of Christ to be equal also, because Paul's prayer was that we "might be filled with all the fullness of God" (Eph.3:19). And Eph.4:13 speaks of a time when the Church will come to "the measure of the stature of the FULLNESS of Christ." In fact, John wrote: "And of his fullness have all received" (Jn.1:16). Eph.1:23 teaches that the Church is "the fullness" of Christ. Yet most Christians would not be prepared to read these statements to mean that they are equal with the Father or Son. So why conclude that the Son is equal with the Father because he is referred to as having the fullness of God?

"Fullness" comes from the Greek "pleeroma" and means "filled full," "completion." The nature of this fullness is revealed in the latter half of Jn.1:16: "And of his FULLNESS have we all received, EVEN GRACE UPON GRACE. For ... GRACE AND TRUTH came through Jesus Christ."

So then, to be filled with the fullness of Christ is to be filled full and made complete by his grace and truth, which of course, sets us free from the bondage of sin and death, and results in "being filled with the Spirit" (Eph.5:19).

The same is equally true of Jesus in relation to his Father. This is what Jn.1:14 says: "And the Word was made flesh and tabernacled among us, and we beheld his glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father, FULL OF GRACE AND TRUTH". Here, the "fullness" of the Father with which Jesus was filled is defined as "grace and truth." Jesus was the Divine tabernacle or dwelling-place of God by His Spirit which dwelt in him without measure.

This is basically what is meant in Col.1:19 and 2:9 where it speaks about the fullness of the Father (Godhead) dwelling in Jesus.

The Greek word "Theotes" which is translated "Godhead," only occurs in Col.2:9. This word is as strong as possible for the Father - the self existent and eternal Uncreate. Some modern versions of the Bible translate it as "Deity," which is of Latin origin and is the Latin equivalent of the Greek "Theos." (By changing "th" into "d," and "o" into "u," the Romans borrowed the word "Theos" from the Greeks and called it "Deus," from which we derive the word "Deity"). In Greek, "Theotes," translated "Godhead" in Col.2:9. indicates particularly the attributes of the

Father, i.e. His Divine qualities and characteristics.

The most outstanding attribute of God is His love which manifests itself in grace and mercy. This is what was emphasized to Moses when he asked the Lord to show him His glory and when, in response to that request, the Lord proclaimed His name to him (Ex.33:34).

Jesus was filled full and made complete by being filled with these attributes. He was a full reflection and perfect manifestation of the Father's character, "the express image of His person" (Heb.1:3).

Col.2:9 says this fullness "DWELLETH in him bodily." The Greek word for "dwelleth" is "katoikeo" and it means to "abide permanently," "fixed residence." In times past God's glory dwelt in the tabernacle and temple, but did not abide there permanently. God was not pleased to remain there because of apostasy, and finally withdrew His Spirit and glory. But Jesus is the "true" (antitypical) tabernacle and temple. He is the permanent dwelling place - the fixed residence of God's glory. And so is each Christian if he remains rooted and grounded in him (2 Cor.6:16).

The fullness of God dwells in Jesus "BODILY." This word comes from the Greek "somatikos" and means "corporeally," "physically." It is derived from "soma" which is the Greek word used in connection with the physical body or being. The New English Bible uses the word "embodied" which is quite good. The fullness of the Father resides in the body and being of His Son. The man Christ Jesus - the being begotten by God - the physical personage, gives complete tangible expression to all the Divine attributes, especially since raised from the dead and clothed with immortality. His body is the tabernacle - the temple of the Father's glory.

In times past the glory of God resided in a tent and later in a temple made with human hands. This was, as Col. 2:17 points out, "a shadow of things to come; but the BODY ("soma") is of Christ," or, as the New English Bible puts it: "The solid reality is Christ's." The fullness of God found physical and solid reality in Christ - visible expression. God's fullness has been manifested "bodily-wise." "Without controversy (i.e. no one can deny it), great is the mystery (revealed secret) of godliness: GOD WAS MANIFEST IN THE FLESH" (1 Tim.3:16). The invisible Father-God, whom no man has seen nor can see, manifested Himself through the flesh and blood body of His only begotten Son.

After stating that the fullness of the Godhead dwells bodily in Jesus, Paul goes on to say: "And you are complete in him" (v10). The word "complete" comes from the Greek "pleeroo" which also means "filled full." It is directly related to "pleroma" which is translated "fullness" in relation to Jesus being filled with the "fullness" of the Father (v9). It

reveals once again that it has nothing to do with equality. If it did, we would have to conclude that we are equal with the Father and Son because in Christ we are filled full with his fullness as he is with his Father's fullness. This "fullness" particularly relates to the Divine attributes of love, grace, mercy, longsuffering etc, elsewhere styled "the fruit of the Spirit." Our being filled with the fullness of the Father and Son; and Jesus being filled with the fullness of his Father, ties in with Jn.17:21-23: "That they all may be one; as Thou Father art in me, and I in Thee, that they also may be one in us ... I in them and Thou in me, that they may be perfect in one ... "

This was the earnest desire and prayer of Jesus and it should be the desire and prayer of every Christian. "Behold, how good and how pleasant it is for brethren to dwell in unity." The apostle Paul looked to the day when all Christians would "come to the unity of the faith and the knowledge of the Son of God ... no longer being children tossed to and fro by every wind of doctrine" (Eph.4:13). But we are not likely to come to that unity of faith and knowledge unless we can freely share our differences without fear and with meekness and humility. It is foolish to bury our head in the sand and pretend that differences don't exist. Worse still is the practise of some who blacklist those who differ with them without ever taking the time or trouble to properly investigate their point of view. It is both foolish and dangerous to go on hearsay. "He who answers a matter before he hears it out, it is shame and folly to him" (Pr.18:13).

This thesis has been written because the writer believes he has a contribution to make to the body of Christ. True, the views expressed are radical and controversial, but so was the teaching of Jesus and the Reformers, and the Church on the whole branded them as "possessed" - "deceivers" - "heretics." But, as Jesus said: "Wisdom is justified of her children" and wisdom's children will recognize the truth and will be set free by it from all the vain traditions of men. During the past few centuries, God has been restoring the years that the cankerworm has eaten, causing knowledge to be increased as predicted in Dan.12:4. In certain respects, He "has kept the good wine until last," but as always unfortunately, there are many who are convinced that the old wine is better.

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CONTENTS

CHAPTER ONE: WHAT THINK YE OF CHRIST?

CHAPTER TWO: “ONE LORD”

STRICT MONOTHEISTS

SINGULAR PRONOUNS

HEBREWS MISGUIDED?

GOD’S ONENESS IN THE OLD TESTAMENT

GOD’S ONENESS IN THE THE NEW TESTAMENT

A MEDIATOR IS A THIRD PARTY

“ONE” MEANS “ONE”

“MONO-THEOS”

“I AND MY FATHER ARE ONE”

“THESE THREE ARE ONE”

“FATHER,” “SON” AND “HOLY SPIRIT” OCCUR TOGETHER

THRICE REPEATED PHRASES

NO BIBLICAL AUTHORITY

USE THE WORDS WHICH THE HOLY SPIRIT USES

CONTRADICTION AND CONFUSION

NO MYSTERY

A REVEALED SECRET

CHAPTER THREE: NO MAN AT ANY TIME HAS SEEN GOD

GOD MANIFESTATION

THE DIVINE NAME

TITLES OF DEITY

“EL”

“THE ONLY POTENTATE”

GOD’S POWER THE BASIS OF ALL MATTER

TOTALLY DEPENDANT ON GOD

JESUS RECEIVED AND DERIVED ALL THINGS FROM
THE FATHER

NOT A TEMPORARY PHASE

GOD RAISED HIM FROM THE DEAD

IMPORTANT CHRISTIAN CONFESSION

“EL” IN OTHER NAMES

GOD MANIFEST IN HUMAN FLESH

CHAPTER FOUR:

ELOHIM - GOD - ANGELS

THE ANGELS

CHARIOTS OF GOD

MICHAEL AND GABRIEL

ANGELS CALLED “GOD”

“ELOHIM” IS GOD IN FAMILY RELATIONSHIP

MORE EVIDENCE OF ANGELS BEING CALLED “GOD”

YAHWEH ELOHIM

PLURALITY IN UNITY

ILLUSTRATED IN SCIENCE OF ARITHMETIC

MANY gODS IN HEAVEN

ELOHIM TRANSLATED “gODS” AND “GODS”

PLURAL PRONOUNS

CHAPTER FIVE:

“MY NAME IS IN HIM”

ANGELS DIFFER IN RANK

ANGEL OF HIGH RANK INVESTED WITH YAHWEH NAME

THE ANGEL WAS NOT JESUS

“THAT ROCK WAS CHRIST”

LAW THROUGH MOSES BUT GRACE THROUGH CHRIST

ANGELS ARE “MADE” BUT JESUS WAS “BEGOTTEN”

THE MESSENGER OF THE COVENANT

CHAPTER SIX:

ABRAHAM’S THREE VISITORS

NOT THE TRINITY

WAS IT GABRIEL?

ABRAHAM SAW CHRIST’S DAY

ANGELS SPEAK ON BEHALF OF GOD

NEW TESTAMENT CONFIRMATION

CHAPTER SEVEN: THE HOLY SPIRIT

CHAPTER EIGHT:

“I SAID YOU ARE GODS”

JEWISH JUDGES ARE CALLED “GOD”

“THOU, BEING A MAN, MAKE YOURSELF GOD”

“THY THRONE O GOD”
“MY LORD AND MY GOD”
“HE SHALL BE CALLED THE MIGHTY GOD”
“TO WHOM WILL YOU MAKE ME EQUAL?”
JESUS NEVER CLAIMED EQUALITY
TOTALLY SUBORDINATE
JESUS DENIED OMNISCIENCE
HIGHLY EXALTED BUT NOT EQUAL
“THOUGHT IT NOT ROBBERY TO BE EQUAL”

**CHAPTER NINE:
THE EVERLASTING FATHER**

“SHALL BE”
ONLY ONE FATHER
VARIOUS SECONDARY APPLICATIONS OF “FATHER”
“HE WHO SEES ME SEES THE FATHER”
JESUS CAME IN HIS FATHER’S NAME
HIS GLORY - FULL OF GRACE AND TRUTH
YAHOWSHUA
OTHER NAMES CONSIST OF “YAH”
JOSEPH A TYPE
NO MERE MAN
EMPHASIS ON JESUS BEING “MAN”
“THE LORD SAID UNTO MY LORD”
MANY MEN CALLED “LORD”
“WHAT THINK YE OF CHRIST?”
A DISTINCT LOSS - NAMES AND TITLES OF DEITY CAN
ONLY BE TRULY EXPRESSED IN HEBREW
RULE IN THE STRENGTH OF YAHWEH
SIMILAR PRINCIPLE OF GOD-MANIFESTATION OPERATES
BETWEEN CHRIST AND HIS CHURCH
“ME WHOM THEY HAVE PIERCED”
THE BRIGHTNESS OF HIS GLORY - THE EXPRESS IMAGE

**CHAPTER TEN:
THE HISTORY OF THE TRINITY**
HOW DID JESUS DEAL WITH SIN?
THE CAUSE OF SIN
JESUS HAD “THE SAME” FLESH
ANTICHRIST

DEPARTURE FROM THE FAITH PREDICTED
THE CROSS OF CHRIST - A STUMBLING BLOCK
PLATO'S PHILOSOPHY
THE PLATONIC "LOGOS"
THE GNOSTICS
THE BEGINNING OF THE TRINITY
JUSTIN MARTYR
THEOPHILUS - FIRST TO USE THE WORD "TRINITY"
IRENÆUS
TERTULLIAN
CLEMENT AND ORIGEN
HIPPLYTUS
THE ARIAN-ANTHANASIAN CONTROVERSY
THE COUNCIL OF NICAËA
THE EMPEROR THEODOSIUS AND THE COUNCIL
AT CONSTANTINOPLE
GREEK AND LATIN CHURCHES SEPARATED OVER THE
DISPUTE CONCERNING HOLY SPIRIT
ACKNOWLEDGED BY VARIOUS THEOLOGIAN
THE BIGGEST WEAKNESS
ACCUSED OF POLYTHEISM
GREEK AND ROMAN METAPHYSICS
"BEWARE LEST ANY MAN LEAD YOU AWAY
THROUGH PHILOSOPHY"
INFLUENCE OF PLATONIC PHILOSOPHY HARD TO DENY
KEEP TO THE LANGUAGE OF SCRIPTURE

PART TWO

THE PRE-EXISTENCE OF CHRIST

CHAPTER ELEVEN:
THE PRE-EXISTENCE OF CHRIST
DEFINING OUR TERMS
DOES IT REALLY MATTER?
NULLIFIES MARY'S CONCEPTION
NULLIFIES SONSHIP
NOT "MADE" BUT "BEGOTTEN"
NEGATES ALL HEREDITARY CONNECTIONS
IMPREGNATED WITH GENES
"SEED" (SPERMA) OF DAVID AND ABRAHAM

DENIES THAT JESUS WAS “THE SAME” AS US
MAKES CHRIST’S DEATH ARTIFICIAL
MAKES CHRIST’S RESURRECTION SUPERFLUOUS
MAKES A FARCE OF CHRIST’S EXALTATION
LIST OF CONTRASTS BETWEEN BIBLE AND TRADITION

**CHAPTER TWELVE:
SENT FROM GOD**

BIOLOGICAL FACTS

“COME UPON” - “OVERSHADOW”

“NEITHER CAME I OF MYSELF”

“THEREFORE (THROUGH DIVINE BEGETTAL)
SON OF GOD”

ALL, INCLUDING JESUS, HAVE THE SAME ORIGIN

THE TITLES “FATHER” AND “SON”

HAVE DEFINITE MEANINGS

SENT BY GOD

JOHN WAS “SENT FROM GOD”

ISAAC AND JOHN’S BIRTH A TYPE

COMMISSIONED BY GOD

CAME DOWN FROM HEAVEN

BREAD OF GOD FROM HEAVEN

ASCEND UP WHERE HE WAS BEFORE

“SON OF MAN”

LEVI WAS “WITH” ABRAHAM BEFORE HIS BIRTH

ALL MEN WERE “IN” ADAM

THE SPIRIT QUICKENS - THE FLESH PROFITS NOTHING

THY WORDS WERE FOUND AND I DID EAT THEM

A PRE-EXISTED CHRIST WOULD BE A DIFFERENT

CHARACTER AND PERSONALITY

COMETH FROM ABOVE

WHAT HE HAS SEEN AND HEARD

LOST ALL FORMER KNOWLEDGE

WHAT HE SEES THE FATHER DO

HE HATH SEEN THE FATHER

THE JOY SET BEFORE HIM

SAVED BY HOPE

EXALTATION DUE TO OBEDIENCE

JESUS HAS BEEN PROMOTED TO A POSITION

NEVER OCCUPIED BEFORE

ELEVATED FROM “NOWHERE TO LAY HIS HEAD”
TO THRONE OF GOD
CHRIST’S POSITION IS DELEGATED
AND DERIVED - “INHERITED”

CHAPTER THIRTEEN:

“WHOSE GOINGS FORTH HAVE BEEN FROM OLD”

THREE ALTERNATIVES TO REMEDY MAN’S FALL.
GOD’S PROMISE OF A “SEED” TO EVE IN GEN. 3:15
NO SUGGESTION OF PRE-EXISTENCE
CHRIST’S BLOODLINE AND GENEALOGY A FARCE
IF HE PRE-EXISTED
ABRAHAM’S SEED
“IT IS EVIDENT THAT OUR LORD SPRANG
OUT OF JUDAH
PROPHET LIKE UNTO MOSES
DAVID’S SEED
THE PROMISE TO MARY
CONFIRMED BY THE APOSTLES
THE ROOT OF DAVID
“IF HE COMMIT INIQUITY”
GOINGS FORTH FROM OLD

CHAPTER FOURTEEN:

“IN THE BEGINNING WAS THE WORD”

NO AFTER-THOUGHT!
LOGOS
THE WORD BECAME FLESH
HIS NAME IS CALLED THE WORD OF GOD
“WORD OF GOD,” NOT “GOD THE WORD”
EXAMPLES OF GOD’S WORD BEING MATERIALIZED
“WAS WITH GOD AND WAS GOD”
PROVERBS CHAPTER 8
SPIRIT OF CHRIST IN THE PROPHETS
“HE WAS BEFORE ME”
FOREORDAINED
ALPHA AND OMEGA
NEITHER BEGINNING OF DAYS
BEFORE ABRAHAM WAS I AM
“I AM THAT I AM”

CHRONOLOGICAL ERROR

CHAPTER FIFTEEN:

PREDESTINATION

DIVINE FOREKNOWLEDGE

JEREMIAH FOREORDAINED

DIFFERENCE BETWEEN PRE-EXISTENCE
AND PREDESTINATION

CYRUS

CP JESUS HAVING GLORY BEFORE BIRTH

“ALL LIVE UNTO HIM”

SPEAKING OF NON-EXISTENTS

AS THOUGH THEY EXISTED

“THOU LOVEST ME BEFORE THE FOUNDATION
OF THE WORLD”

VESSELS OF MERCY PREPARED BEFOREHAND

JESUS HAD GLORY “WITH” THE FATHER

SUFFERING THEN GLORY

MADE PERFECT THROUGH SUFFERING

ISAIAH SAW HIS GLORY

CHAPTER SIXTEEN:

THE FIRSTBORN OF EVERY CREATURE

THE SPECIAL PRIVILEGES OF FIRSTBORN

COULD FORFEIT POSITION

TWO SONS OF GOD

THE CHURCH OF THE FIRSTBORN

CHAPTER SEVENTEEN:

“THOUGHT IT NOT ROBBERY TO BE EQUAL”

TRADITIONAL VIEW OF “BEING IN THE FORM OF GOD”

“BEING”

“CHRIST JESUS”

“THE FORM OF GOD”

“THE FORM OF A SERVANT”

THOUGHT IT NOT ROBBERY

ALWAYS SUBORDINATE AND NEVER EQUAL

“LET THIS MIND BE IN YOU”

NO REPUTATION

“TOOK UPON HIM THE FORM OF A SERVANT”

MADE IN THE LIKENESS OF MEN
TOOK PART OF THE SAME
HE TOOK NOT ON HIM THE NATURE OF ANGELS
AND BEING FOUND IN FASHION AS A MAN
HIGHLY EXALTED
DIFFICULTIES ADMITTED BY BELIEVERS IN PRE-EXISTENCE
NO REFERENCE TO PRE-EXISTENCE IN NARRATIVES
OF CHRIST'S BIRTH
DEVELOPMENT OF THE DOCTRINE TRACED TO ORIGIN
"RICH, YET POOR FOR YOUR SAKES"
NEST EGG THROUGH CARPENTRY?

CHAPTER EIGHTEEN:
ONE FATHER CREATED US
THE FATHER CREATED ALL THINGS
JESUS ACKNOWLEDGED THE FATHER AS CREATOR
THE EPISTLES AGREE
MORE TESTIMONIES
THE WORLD WAS MADE THROUGH CHRIST
THROUGH HIM ALL AGES WERE CONSTITUTED
COL. 1:16-17
ANGELS ASCENDING AND DESCENDING
IN HIM DWELLS THE FULLNESS OF THE GODHEAD

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