

What Kind of Being Is This?

Introduction

At the beginning of Jesus' public ministry as related to us by Mark, God the Father knew who Jesus really was (Mark 1:11), an evil spirit knew who Jesus really was (Mark. 1:24, cf. Mark 3:11), but Jesus' contemporaries didn't know who he was at all.

Then, as Jesus began to speak and to act, the power of his personality forced people not only to notice him but respond to him. Some responded with amazement, not only because Jesus' teaching was innovative, but because they sensed an authority behind his words and witnessed a power coming from them. "What is this?" they asked. "What's going on here?" (Mark 1:21-27; cf. Matt. 7:28, 29).

Others responded negatively. Teachers of the law heard blasphemy coming from Jesus' lips (Mark 2:7) while a coalition of political and religious leaders quickly decided that Jesus was a threat that they had to be rid of (Mark 3:6).

But then a different question poked through the layers of Jesus' words and miracles and approached the matter of Jesus' identity. It was occasioned by a life-threatening storm at sea which Jesus calmed by a simple command: "Quiet! Be still!" The disciples, amazed at Jesus' power and authority over nature's forces asked each other, "Who is this—that even the winds and the waves obey him?" (Mark 4:41).

In his account of this same incident, Matthew records the disciples' question in a different and more provocative way: "What kind of being is this—that even the winds and the waves obey him?" (Ποταπος εστιν ουτος..., Matt. 8:27). "What kind of being is this?" recognizes that there is something different about Jesus and asks not for his name or ethnicity, etc., but wonders about his nature, his very being.

The disciples had finally asked the proper question, but they were not yet able to answer it. In fact, their inability to answer this question, together with a general slowness to comprehend his teaching, seems to have frustrated Jesus (cf. Mark 8:17-21). He finally had to force the issue, and so asked them outright: "Who do you say I am?" Peter, responding for the other disciples, then joined God the Father and the evil spirits in recognizing who Jesus was: "You are the Christ" (Mark 8:29.). That identification was then quickly and strikingly confirmed when Peter, James and John saw Jesus transfigured and heard God the Father say: "This is my Son, whom I love. Listen to him!" (Mark 9:7; cf. Matt. 17:5).

The disciples' slowness in recognizing whom Jesus really was is understandable. He obviously looked like any other Jewish man of his day. People knew that Nazareth was his hometown (John 1:45,46), knew that his father was a carpenter (Matt. 13:55), and knew the names of his mother and his brothers (Matt. 13:55). This knowledge, in fact led some people to think that he wasn't very unique at all (Mark 6:6).

Yet some people are said to have worshipped Jesus. There seem to be two sets of such people, both of whom the King James Version says "worshipped him" (Greek verb *Προσκυνεω*). In the first set are a leper (Matt. 8:2), a synagogue ruler (Matt. 9:18), a Canaanite woman (Matt. 15:25), the servant in the Parable of the Unjust Servant (Matt. 18:26) and the mother of James and John (Matthew 20:20).

In the second set are the Magi (Matt. 2:2,11), a blind man (John 9:38), the disciples on the occasion of seeing Jesus walk on water (Matt. 14:33), the women at Jesus' tomb on Easter Sunday (Matt. 28:9) and again the disciples, also on Easter Sunday (Matt. 28:17).

In the first set, the "worshipping" takes place as the people approach Jesus with a fervent request and so more contemporary versions translate the Greek verb *Προσκυνεω* in these situations as "knelt before him," more a gesture of courtesy or honor than an expression of genuine worship it would appear.

It's not quite that simple though, for in the Greco-Roman world, the "divine and human worlds were not separated by an impenetrable barrier. Ordinary people met the gods in their dreams or as apparitions in their sleep; natural disasters were unexpected visitations of divine power. If someone gave evidence of super-human power, it was natural to assume that he must really be a God in disguise"

(Norman Russell *The Doctrine of Deification in the Greek Patristic Tradition*, 16; Cf. Frances Young, *God's Presence*, 375).

Outside of the stories of the Incarnation of Jesus, there are two records of such supposedly disguised divine appearances in the New Testament.

The first is found in Acts 14:11-13 where Paul, in Lystra, heals a man who had been crippled from birth. *"When the crowds saw what Paul had done they shouted... 'The gods have come down to us in human form!'"* They proceeded to call Paul, Hermes, because he was the primary speaker during the healing, and they called Barnabas, Zeus, supposedly the silent master of the event. A priest at the local temple of Zeus even thought it appropriate to offer a sacrifice to the two divine visitors and proceeded to get the necessary oxen and the garlands together, only to be stopped by a horrified Paul.

The second instance is also recorded in Acts and concerns Paul. When a poisonous snake latched on to Paul's hand, the inhabitants of the island of Malta who saw it, said, *"This man must be a murderer! He's getting what he deserves!"* But when Paul shook the snake off without suffering any harm from it, *"they changed their minds and began to say that he was a god"* (Acts 28:1-6).

Some of those in the first set of "worshippers", having witnessed a previous miracle or two might have thought that Jesus was divine on the model of the above popular religious beliefs.

In the second set, however, "worship" comes after an encounter with Jesus that is experienced as, in some sense, a divine encounter and therefore New Testament versions old and new appropriately translate Προσκυνεω there as "worship." To this second set we must, of course, add Thomas, whose *"My Lord and My God!"* said to Jesus, is one of the most elevated statements of worship recorded in the New Testament even though the Greek verb is not used in it.

It is worth noting that people in this second set (the Magi perhaps excepted) are more closely aligned to a Jewish mentality with its particular expectations than the people in the first set who would be more inclined toward a Hellenistic-Roman world mindset. Especially the worship that was given to the resurrected Jesus by the women and the disciples on Easter Sunday followed by Thomas' declaration a week later carries great weight. For within Judaism, only the one true God is to be worshipped and the fact that devout Jews (both the disciples and the ex-Pharisee Paul) worshipped Jesus—who did not reject their worship—deserves respect and examination.

Finally, this observation by Robert Louis Wilken deserves mention here at the beginning: "In the debate between Christian thinkers and their critics, the central issue was where in the search for God reason is to begin. ... For Christian thinkers, God was the starting point, and Christ the icon that displays the face of God. ... Now one reasoned from Christ to other things, not from other things to Christ. In the early church no text was more beloved than John 1:18: *'No one has ever seen God. It is God the only Son, who is close to the Father's heart who has made him known'*" (Wilken, *Early*, 14-15, 22).

Part I What kind of being is this?

A. What kind of being is God? God in the Old Testament

Introduction:

"Israel does not begin with some generic notion of God, to which Yahweh conforms.... It begins its utterance, rather, in witness to what it has seen and heard and received from Yahweh" (Walter Brueggemann, *Theology of the Old Testament*, 144, as quoted in Goldingay, *Old Testament Theology: Israel's Faith*, 21).

- John Goldingay suggests that "our personhood emerges in response to contexts.... As time goes by and contexts pass, a human person may come to demonstrate characteristics of which one would not have dreamed ten years previously, or this person's characteristics may receive fuller expression that was only hinted earlier..." (Goldingay, *Old Testament Theology: Israel's Faith*, 40)
- "So it is with God. From the beginning, for the world as a whole Yhwh was founder, former and giver. For Israel's ancestors, Yhwh was father, leader and covenanter. At the Exodus, Yhwh was warrior, guide and commander. In the time of the monarchy, Yhwh was king,

shepherd and deliverer. For the preexilic prophets, Yhwh was lover, judge and disciplinarian. In Babylon, God was creator, restorer and mother. In the Second Temple period, Yhwh was Lord of heaven and revealer of mysteries” (Goldingay, *Old Testament Theology: Israel’s Faith*, 21-22).

1. Exalted above all gods: Monotheism or Monolatry?

When a teacher of the law asked Jesus which of all the commandments was the greatest, Jesus answered, “*The greatest one is this: ‘Hear, O Israel, the Lord our God, the Lord is one. Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind and with all your strength. Second to it is this: ‘Love your neighbor as your self.’ There is no greater commandment than this.*” (Mark 12:28-31)

- Deuteronomy 6:4 is known as the *Shema*, a name taken from its opening Hebrew word, *Hear*. What Israel is urged to hear is a phrase consisting of four Hebrew words: *Yahweh our God Yahweh alone (or one or only)*. In Hebrew, this phrase does not come with a verb, and the last word can be translated in three different ways: *alone, one, or only*. It is, therefore, a bit ambiguous and its meaning varies, depending on where one inserts a verb and how one interprets the fourth word.

Hear, O Israel, The LORD our God, the LORD (is) one –NIV.

Hear, O Israel, the LORD (is) our God, the LORD alone –NRSV.

Hear, O Israel, The LORD our God (is) one LORD –RSV.

Listen, Israel, Yahweh our God is the one, the only Yahweh –NJB.

- “The fact that God is one is decisive for talk about God in the Old Testament from beginning to end” (Claus Westerman, *Elements of Old Testament Theology*, quoted by John Goldingay, *Old Testament Theology: Israel’s Faith*, 38). But what precisely does “God is one” mean?
 - It could mean that God is one in the sense of being non-divisible, numerically one, simple (cf. NIV and, for example, *The Belgic Confession*, Article 1 and the Doctrine of Divine Simplicity, more of which later).
 - It could mean that Yahweh, the God of Israel is the only one that Israel is to worship (cf. NRSV).
 - The New Jerusalem Bible translation is curious. Does it mean, “There is only one Yahweh,” leaving open the possibility that there is also one Marduk, one Baal, etc.? Does it mean, “There is one and only one God and Yahweh is God’s name (as in, “We have one and only one daughter and Jane is her name.”)? But to say, “Yahweh our God is the one, the only Yahweh,” would be similar to my saying, “Jane, our daughter, is the one, the only Jane.” The NJB translation makes sense if it is saying that there is no other God who goes by the name “Yahweh” if the second “Yahweh” means “God” (which does not do justice to the Hebrew text).
 - Everett Fox suggests that a secondary meaning of the phrase might be, “YHWH is (but) one’—that is, God has no partner or consort as in the mythology of neighboring cultures” (*The Five Books of Moses*, 880).
- The *Shema* originally appears to have addressed monolatry (Whom will Israel worship—Yahweh or some other god?) rather than monotheism. (Cf. Joshua 24:15: *But if serving Yahweh seems undesirable to you, then choose for yourselves this day whom you will serve, whether the gods your forefathers served beyond the River, or the gods of the Amorites, in whose land you are living. But as for me and my household, we will serve Yahweh.*” Also, Exodus 20:3 *You shall have no other gods before me.*)
 - “(Scholars) rightly note that pre-exilic Israel and Judah were not really monotheistic in dominant belief or worship.... Indeed, condemnation of Israel and Judah for worshipping gods other than Yahweh is a major theme in writings such as Hosea (4:12-19; 8:4-6; 10:5-6) and so-called Deuteronomistic narratives (e.g., 2 Kings 17:23; Larry W. Hurtado, *Dictionary for Theological Interpretation of the Bible: Monotheism*, 520)

- Nor is the Old Testament “preoccupied by the arithmetical question ‘how many beings are there entitled to claim the word *God*: are there one or two or six...?’ It is preoccupied by the question ‘Who is *God*? –is it Baal or Marduk or Yhwh?’ Better, it is preoccupied by the question ‘Whom are you trusting as *God*?’” (Goldingay, *Old Testament Theology: Israel’s Faith*, 40)
 - N. T. Wright argues that even “within the most fiercely monotheistic of Jewish circles throughout our period—from the Maccabean revolt to Bar-Kochba—there is no suggestion that...praying the *Shema* had anything to do with the numerical analysis of the inner being of Israel’s God himself. It had everything to do with the two-pronged fight against paganism and dualism. ... It was only with the rise of Christianity, and arguably under the influence both of polemical constraint and Hellenizing philosophy that Jews in the second and subsequent centuries reinterpreted ‘monotheism’ as ‘the numerical oneness of the divine being’ (N. T. Wright, *The New Testament and the People of God*, 259; Cf. Thomas McCall, *Whose Trinity? Whose Monotheism?*, 60, 63; Richard Bauckman agrees: *The Testimony of the Beloved Disciple*, 250).
 - “James D. G. Dunn puts it bluntly: ‘Monotheism was absolutely fundamental for the Jew of Jesus’ day.’ Richard Bauckham agrees that ‘the monotheism of Second Temple Judaism was indeed ‘strict.’ ... (T)his monotheism is evidenced in (Jewish) insistence on monolatry and articulated forcefully in the *Shema*. ... But it is important to see that this account of monotheism is not centered on the numerical oneness, nor does it obviously dictate that there is at most one divine person” (Quoted in Thomas McCall, *Whose Trinity? Whose Monotheism?*, 59,60; Cf., Robert Louis Wilken, *The Spirit of Early Christian Thought*, 90).
(During the Christological controversies of the 4th cent., Arians will argue numerical oneness, insisting that the *Shema* does not allow one to say that Jesus is God:
“Behold, God is said to be one and only and the first. How then can you say that the Son is God? For if he were God, (God) would not have said, ‘I alone’ or ‘God is one’”
[Jaroslav Pelikan, *The Emergence of the Catholic Tradition (100-600)*, 195).
 - It is clear, however, that “the stance advocated in the OT texts in their ‘final form’ as we know them is fiercely monotheistic. This is presupposed and implicit in the Gen. 1 creation account, for example, and is reflected more explicitly in texts such as Deut. 6:4.... But probably the most sustained and emphatic declaration of monotheism in the OT are passages in Isa. 40-66 (Larry W. Hurtado, *Dictionary for Theological Interpretation of the Bible: Monotheism*, 520)
 - “The Septuagint uses *ego eimi* in Deuteronomy 39:39 and on several occasions in Isaiah 40-55 (41:4; 43:10; 46:4—here the phrase is repeated: *ego eimi ego eimi*) to translate the Hebrew phrase, *ani hu*, which is usually translated in English as ‘I am he.’ This phrase ‘I am he’ is an extraordinarily significant one. It is a divine self-declaration, encapsulating YHWH’s emphatically monotheistic assertion: ‘Behold, I, even I am he; there is no god besides me’” (Deut. 32:39; Bauckman, *The Testimony of the Beloved Disciple*, 246).
2. Unique: (Cf. Goldingay, *Faith*, 36; Wright, *NTPG*, 248f)
- a. Deut. 4:35 *You were shown these things so that you might know that Yahweh is God; beside him there is no other.* (Cf. Deut. 4:39; 32:39; Joel 2:27; et al.)
 - b. Psalm 96:4,5 *For great is Yahweh and most worthy of praise; for he is to be feared above all gods. For the gods of the nations are idols, but Yahweh made the heavens.*
 - c. Isaiah 44:6 *I am the first and the last; apart from me there is no God.* (Cf. Is. 43:11; Hos 13:4)
3. The identity of God— (Cf. Bauckham, *Jesus*, 8f)
- a. In relationship to Israel
 - God revealed himself to Israel, told her his personal name (Yahweh) Ex. 3:14,15
 - God revealed his character to Israel (a gracious and compassionate God, etc.) –Exod. 34:6
 - Involved in Israel’s history (*I am your God who brought you out of Egypt*).

- Made a covenant with her (*I will be your God, you will be my people* Gen. 17:1-9; Ex. 19:5, 6)
- Israel is Yahweh's possession (Deut. 32:8-9); therefore she has no right to worship other gods (Goldingay, *Faith* 45)
- b. In relation to the universe: (Cf. Bauckham, *Jesus*, 9)
 - Creator of all things:
 - Is. 40:18-31 *Lift your eyes and look to the heavens: Who created all these? Yahweh is the everlasting God, the Creator of the ends of the earth* (vs. 28; cf. Ps. 148:5,6; Is 42:5; 44:24; 45:12, 18; Neh. 9:6; Hos. 13:4 LXX; 2 Macc. 1:24; *et al.*)
 - God delegated no one nor needed any one to help him create the universe:
 - Is. 44:24 *I am Yahweh, who has made all things, who alone stretched out the heavens, who spread out the earth by myself.*
 - *My own hand laid the foundations of the earth; and my right hand spread out the heavens...* Is. 48:13; cf. 51:16; 65:17
 - Ruler over all things: “King is one of the few nouns that are used to describe God” (Goldingay, *Faith* 60).
 - Zechariah 14:9 *And the LORD (Yahweh) will become king over all the earth; on that day the LORD (Yahweh) will be one and his name one.* (NIV, NRSV. Yahweh will be the one and only and his name the one name—NJB); Heb: *Yahweh echad-x2*; LXX: *heis, hen*)
 - (Is. 40: 22ff. *He sits enthroned above the circle of the earth, and its people are like grasshoppers. ... He brings princes to naught and reduces the rulers of this world to nothing.* (Cf. Ps. 2; 33:10, 11; Is 43:12,13; Dan. 2:21; *et al.*)
 - In his governing work, God does employ intermediaries: (Cf. Goldingay, *Faith* 44ff, *Gospel* 46ff; Bauckham, *Jesus...*, 13—Second Temple Judaism, Jaroslav Pelikan, Kelly, *Early* 18; *et als.*)
 - Heavenly beings: Although Yahweh is perfectly capable of governing the universe by himself (cf. Is 40:13-14) he has a large court that worships him (cf. Is. 6; Dan. 7:9f) and works administratively in the governance of his world (cf. 1 K 22:19-22; Job 1: 6; 15:8; 38:7; Ps 103:20-21; etc.)
 - Individual heavenly beings: Joshua 5: 14 (*I am the commander of Yahweh's army*), Zech. 3 (speaker seems to be president of Yahweh's council)
 - Anonymous angels: *An angel of Yahweh found Hagar...Gen. 16:7; I am sending an angel ahead of you...Ex. 23:20.* Cf. Judg. 2:1; Ps. 34; Mt. 2:13, et al.
 - These intermediaries are never said to play a part in creation nor to have any sovereign power in themselves. They are only and always servants of Yahweh, the Creator and Ruler of the universe, seen standing before him awaiting his instructions (cf. Ps 103: 20-21). Further, they reject worship (Cf. Goldingay, *Faith...* 45; Bauckham, *Jesus...*,15—but see 3.1.B below).
 - Human beings: *Let them rule over the fish of the sea and the birds of the air...and over all the creatures that move along the ground* –Gen. 1:26; cf. Ps. 8.
 - Personal characteristics: While there is only one being described as God in the OT, aspects of his character are distinguished *almost* to the extent that they seem to exist by themselves (*hypostases*).
 - Wisdom: Proverbs 8:22-31
*The LORD brought me forth as the first of his works, before his deeds of old;
I was appointed from eternity, from the beginning, before the world began.
When there were no oceans, I was given birth....
I was there when he set the heavens in place....
Then I was the craftsman at his side....*

that (This is only a—but still a strong—personification of God’s wisdom, saying
that behind the words God spoke in creating the world was a divine wisdom

guided the entire project –cf. Goldingay, *Gospel* 46. This text will play a prominent role in the later Arian/Nicene controversy)

▪ Word:

- Psalm 119:89 *Your word (LXX=logos), Yahweh, is eternal* (cf. Is. 40: 8 *rhema*)
- Psalm 33:6 *By the word (LXX=logos) of Yahweh were the heavens made...*
- Psalm 147:15f *He sends his command (LXX= logion) to the earth; his word (LXX=logos) runs swiftly. He spreads the snow like wool.... He sends his word (LXX=logos) and melts them...*
- Philo will equate the *logos* of Platonism with the *logos* of the Psalms.

▪ Wisdom and Word: Wisdom 9:1,2

*O God of my ancestors and Lord of mercy, who have made all things by your word,
And by your wisdom have formed humankind...*

4. Divine prerogatives: (Cf. M. Thompson, *God of John*, 47, 52)

- Sovereignty over life and death:
Behold, I even I am he; there is no god beside me. I kill and I make alive. (Deut. 32:39)
- Judge over all creation

5. Worship is the only proper response to this God.

- *And now, O Israel, what does Yahweh, your God ask of you but to fear Yahweh your God, to walk in all his ways, to love him, to serve Yahweh your God with all your heart and with all your soul, and to observe Yahweh’s commands and decrees....* Deuteronomy 10:12, 13; cf. 6:3, 5
 - Note emphasis on obedient living, motivation, etc., rather than on an eternal contemplation of the Good/Beauty
- In the Jewish tradition, worship is intimately connected with monotheism. The only true God must be worshipped and he is the only one who may be worshipped” (Bauckham, *Testimony...*, 243).

B. God in Second Temple Judaism (530 B.C.—A.D. 70)

1. Hellenic life under Alexander, the Seleucids, and the Romans:

- a. Paganism: Devotees of the old Grecian gods, nature gods, fertility gods, local goddess, emperors, sacred prostitution, animal sacrifices. The average town would have been full of temples, shrines, altars, sacred pillars.... (Cf. Frend, *History*, 16-18)
- b. Syncretism: Vast Roman Empire with commercial, cultural exchanges, intermingling religions—Isis identified with Aphrodite, Zeus with Serapis. “Every cult competed with the others, not to be the strictest, but to be the broadest, to include the most diverse doctrines” (Gonzalez, *History I*, 60).
 - Celsus claimed that there was one God, named Zeus, Adonai (Yahweh) or Zen, then territorial gods and others below them that deserve our prayers and offerings. (Frend 178)
- c. Social and political pressure
 - In 167 B.C. Antiochus IV Epiphanes attacked Jerusalem and desecrated the Temple, determined to erase Judaism’s unique identity. His goal was that “all should be one people, and that all should give up their particular customs” –1 Maccabees 1:41. He erected an altar to Zeus in the Temple court, outlawed circumcision, ordered everyone to sacrifice to idols, eat unclean food. He had copies of the Torah burned. Worship of

Yahweh as the only true God and obedient faithfulness to the covenant were beliefs and practices under siege.

- In 63 B.C. Pompey conquered Jerusalem, entered the Temple, went into the Holy of Holies.

2. Monotheism and a hierarchy of beings:

1) Strict monotheism.

- We have noted that the Old Testament text “in their ‘final form’ as we know them is fiercely monotheistic (Cf. Larry Hurtado, *Dict...*, 520; N. T. Wright, *NTPG*, 248, 259; Thomas McCall, *Whose...?*, 90, etc.). The reason for Israel’s defeat in war and subsequent exile was clearly stated in 2 Kings 17:1-23:

⁷All this took place because the Israelites had sinned against Yahweh their God.... They worshiped other gods and ⁸followed the practices of the nations.... ¹²They worshiped idols, though Yahweh had said, ‘You shall not do this.’ ¹⁵They imitated the nations...¹⁶and made idols. ¹⁷They bowed down and worshiped Baal. ²⁰Therefore Yahweh rejected all the people of Israel.

- The refusal to sacrifice to pagan gods and the successful revolt of the Maccabees seemed to prove that Yahweh had again accepted his people.

2) At the same time, there is an increased interest in angels as intermediary beings: Yahweh’s transcendence did not mean that he was a distant, absent god. His involvement in world affairs is constant but it most often occurs through intermediaries. Danger: to worship them—cf. later clash with Roman emperors. (Cf. R. Bauckham, *Jesus and the God of Israel*, 13ff; Frances Young, *God’s Presence*, 374ff.; Kelly, *Early Christian Doctrines*, 18).

- Before Daniel, angels were anonymous, now they begin to be named (Gabriel 8:16; Michael, 10:13, 21; 12:1; cf. Kelly, *Early*, 18).
 - Tobit 12:15 “I am Raphael, one of seven angels who stand ready and enter before the glory of the Lord” (written 225-175 B.C.).
 - 1 Enoch 20: 1-5 “And these are the names of the holy angels who watch: Uriel, Raphael, Raguel, Michael, Saraquel, Gabriel, Remiel” (a=300; b=100 B.C. ; cf. Jude 1:14-15).

3) There is also a growing tendency to personify aspects (*hypostases*?) of God—His glory, his presence (Shekinah) and especially his Wisdom (Prov. 8:22ff; Job 28:12ff), his Word (*Logos*-Greek) and his Spirit.

- Sirach (or *Ecclesiasticus*, written in Hebrew c. 180 B.C. LXX—cf. Augustine *OCD* 41) personifies Wisdom and, in chapter 24, identifies Wisdom with the Torah. [Later Jewish commentators will argue that the Torah was one of seven things created before the creation of the world. Cf. Babylonian Talmud, completed in A. D. 5th cent. Identifies “me” as Torah in Prov. 8:22: “The Lord made me (Wisdom=Torah) the beginning of his way.”]
- God’s Wisdom and God’s Word *express* God, his mind and his will in relation to the world. They are not created beings, nor semi-divine entities situated somewhere between God and the rest of reality; they belong to the unique identity of God (Bauckham, *Jesus* 17).

4) Sharing the throne (and therefore sovereignty?) of God: Some texts note that agents, through whom Yahweh acts in history, are exalted and given a throne next to Yahweh’s throne or actually sit on Yahweh’s throne with him (See also Bauckham, *Jesus...*, 161ff; Wright, *JVG*, 624):

- The two books of Chronicles were written c. 4th cent. B.C. and include some curious changes from the two books of Kings:
 - So Solomon sat on the *throne of his father David*.... -1 Ki 2:10, 12
 - So Solomon sat on the *throne of Yahweh* as king in place of David. -1 Ch. 29:23

- Queen of Sheba: Praise be to Yahweh your God, who...placed you on the throne of Israel.
 - 1 Ki 10:9
 - Praise be to Yahweh your God, who has...placed you on *his* throne.... 2 Ch. 9:8
- In Ezekiel's vision he sees on a throne, "a figure like that of a man" (Ex. 1:26). (Cf. 8:2, "I saw a figure like that of a man.") Is God this figure described in human form (NT Wright, *JVG* 625)?
- In Daniel's vision there is more than one throne (7:9); on one is seated the Ancient of Days (7:9); implied is that on the other is/will be seated "one like a son of man" who "came to" the Ancient of Days and was given authority, glory and sovereign power... (7:14).
 - The LXX translates "he came *to* the Ancient of Days" as "he came *as* the Ancient of Days," implying that the two are somehow one, or that the son of man is God in another mode.
 - From Josephus we know that Daniel was a favorite book with Jews of 1st C (Wright *NTPG* 266)
- 1Enoch 62:1-5: "The Lord of Spirits sat (the Chosen One) on the throne of his glory, and the spirit of righteousness was poured out on him...."
- 1 Enoch 48:2-6 The Chosen One will be worshipped (vs.5 Cf. Wright, *JVG* 624f)
 - ²And at that hour the Son of Man was named,
in the presence of the Lord of Spirits,
and his name before the Head of Days.
 - ³Yea, before the sun and the signs were created,
before the stars of the heaven were made,
his name was named before the Lord of Spirits.
 - ⁴He shall be a staff to the righteous whereon to stay themselves and not fall,
and he shall be the light of the Gentiles,
and the hope of those who are troubled of heart.
 - ⁵All who dwell on earth shall fall down and worship before him,
and will praise and bless and celebrate with song the Lord of Spirits.
 - ⁶And for this reason hath he been chosen and hidden before Him,
before the creation of the world and for evermore.

5) Evaluation:

- Richard Bauckham acknowledges that the "typical Hellenistic view was that worship is a matter of degree because divinity is a matter of degree. Lesser divinities are worthy of appropriate degrees of worship. ... The notion of a hierarchy or spectrum of divinity stretching from the one God down through the gods of the heavenly bodies, the daemons of the atmosphere and the earth, to those humans who were regarded as divine or deified, was pervasive in all non-Jewish religion and religious thought...." (Bauckham, *Jesus...*, 12, cf. 140).
- Bauckham further agrees that, "traditional monotheism in the Jewish, Christian and Islamic traditions has always accepted the existence of vast numbers of supernatural beings...." (Bauckham, *Jesus...*, 108). The key question, however, is: "(Are these heavenly figures) included within the unique divine identity or not?" (Bauckham, *Jesus...*, 158).
 - Bauckham answers that question by noting two distinct categories of "heavenly beings":
Those personifications or hypostatizations of aspects of God himself, such as his Spirit, his Word or his Wisdom," and those figures—angels, exalted patriarchs, etc.—who are servants of God. Such angels/servants are never said to participate in God's creative or ruling activities (Bauckham, *Jesus...*, 158-59).

- Observant Jews “understood their practice of monolatry to be justified, indeed required, because the unique identity of YHWH was so understood as to place him, not merely at the summit of a hierarchy of divinity, but in an absolutely unique category, beyond comparison with anything else (Bauckham, *Jesus...*, 12).
 - Other scholars, however, deny such a “strict” monotheism during the Second Temple Era, seeing in the Hellenism, Gnosticism, Judaism and Christianity of that time “a hierarchy, with one God at the apex, and a ladder of descending beings, divine, angelic, spiritual, cosmic, and earthly. ... (T)here was a fuzziness about the distinction between God and everything else. Divinity was not clearly distinct from other orders of being. Gods might emerge through the apotheosis of human heroes and divine rulers. ... Souls were eternal, and in their own way, divine.” (Frances Young, *God’s Presence*, 374-5; Origen in Frend, *History*, 377; Dawson, *Early Chr. Lit.*, 231; Louth, *Origins*, 21, 27; cf. N. Russell, *The Doctrine of Deification in the Greek Patristic Tradition*, 16; Allen, *Philosophy...*, 72, 75, 82, 85). A clear and definite line between God and creation will later be drawn.
 - Bauckham might be correct when he writes that, “observant Jews in the late Second Temple period were highly self-conscious monotheists...” (Bauckham, *Jesus...*, 5),
 - but already in the New Testament we read of a Roman soldier, a Canaanite woman, people of Lystra, inhabitants of Malta who worship Jesus and Paul and Barnabas not from a Jewish monotheistic perspective but from a popular, Hellenistic one. The Christian church would soon expanded into a Hellenic-Roman culture that was not strictly monotheistic. In fact, “(t)heologians at the beginning of the fourth century are still grappling with the problem of whether Father and Son are both ‘true God’, with the question of whether it is possible to speak of degrees of divinity” (Lewis Ayres, *Nicaea and Its Legacy*, 43)
 - Justin Martyr (100-165) said “that Christians honor Jesus Christ as the ‘son of the true God himself, and hold him to be in the second rank and the prophetic spirit in the third rank.’ Origen of Alexandria even went so far as to use the term ‘second God’ with reference to the Son” (Wilken, *Remembering...*, 68; McGinn, *Origins*, 183).
 - Arius, in his letter to Eusebius of Nicomedia, could write that the Son was “divine, unique, unchangeable” and yet “neither a part of God nor (formed) out of any substratum” (Hardy, ed. *Christology of the Later Fathers*, 330)
 - Euhemerus (fl. 300 BCE) suggested that, “all the gods of popular worship had once been rulers or heroes” (N. Russell, *The Doctrine of Deification in the Greek Patristic Tradition*, 17) and his suggestion was held to be credible well into the early centuries of the Christian era. Clement of Alexandria knew of it and could write of the deification of Christians based on it. Origen and Athanasius would follow his lead (Russell, *Deification*, 18).
 - A further note: Frances Young suggests that “New Testament Christology is not the Christology of the Chalcedonian Definition...yet, the deep intuition of the doctrinal tradition is that the hierarchical understanding simply is inadequate...” (Young, *God’s Presence*, 378)
 - The issue of there being degrees of divinity will be settled in Christianity when the matter of creation *ex nihilo* is also decided.
3. Alexandrian Judaism: Home of LXX and Platonism. Critics could read LXX and engage Jewish apologists.
- Jewish intellectuals could use the LXX to point out its similarities to Plato’s best ideas.
- Philo (20 B.C.-A.D. 50 cf. Allen, *Philosophy* 72f; Louth, *Origins* 18f; Russell, *Deification*, 58f; Gonzalez, *History I*, 52f; Kelly, *Early* 18f)

- God is utterly transcendent, pure being, impassive, with no direct relationship with world.
- While Platonism interposed a hierarchy of intermediate beings between the Supreme good and the world, Philo conceived of intermediate powers.
- Supreme among these powers was the *Logos* that Philo equated with Plato's Forms, located now in the Supreme Mind.
 - This *Logos* is a creative power: "the Creator produced the universe by a word"
- [Plotinus (204-270): Posits a hierarchical structure of reality (Great Chain of Being)
 - The One (*Ho On*, cf. Ex. 4 LXX)
 - Intelligence (Reason)
 - The Soul (Psyche)]

C. Summary:

- World of culture: Paganism, Syncretism, social and political pressures to conform.
- World of philosophy: one transcendent Being (*Ho On*—the Good, the One, etc.); a hierarchy of foundational beings (three with Plotinus); a variety of intermediary beings (diminution of being and goodness); an emphasis on *Logos* as principle creative and sustain power; a good creator and a (reasonably) good creation; evil is the privation of good.
- World of Old & New Testaments: Strict monotheism; intermediary beings; God's *Logos* and Wisdom –almost separate entities ('room' in God's identity); God's *Logos* active in creation; In the beginning was the *Logos*—became flesh=Jesus.

D. What kind of being is this? New Testament texts and the identity of Jesus: (See T. Oden, *Living God*, 188f for Old Testament "preparation" for Trinity teaching)

- John Goldingay makes helpful distinctions between testimony, preaching and theology. "Let us imagine that God is like a lion, as the Old Testament says (e.g., Lam. 3:10, Hos. 5:14, Amos 3:8). Testimony is then like telling people you have met a lion. Preaching is like inviting people to come to meet a lion. Theology is like reflecting on your meeting with a lion." Goldingay, *Old Testament Theology: Israel's Gospel*, 20). The several New Testament texts that speak to Jesus' identity reflect, in varying degrees, all three of these categories.
 1. From Jesus:
 - The "I am" sayings with predicates, indicating the nature of the salvation Jesus gives in a variety of ways:
 1. *I am the bread of life. Whoever comes to me will never go hungry.* –John 6:35
 2. *I am the light of the world. Whoever follows me will never walk in darkness.* –John 8:12
 3. *I am the gate for the sheep. Whoever enters through me will be saved.* –John 10:9
 4. *I am the good shepherd. The good shepherd lays down his life for his sheep.* –John 10:11
 5. *I am the resurrection and the life. Whoever believes in me will live.* –John 11:25
 6. *I am the way, the truth and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me.* –John 14:6
 7. *I am the vine, you are the branches. If you remain in me and I in you, you will bear much fruit.*
John 15:5
 - The 7 absolute "I am" sayings constituting claims to divine identity, thus provoking charges of blasphemy:
 1. *Jesus said to her, 'I am' (is) the one speaking to you.* –John 4:26 (said to the Samaritan woman)
 2. *(Jesus) said to them, 'I am,' do not be afraid.* –John 6:20 (said to disciples during storm)
 3. *I told you that you will die in your sins if you do not believe that I am....* –John 8:24
 4. *When you have lifted up the Son of Man, then you will know that I am....* –John 8:28

5. *Jesus said to them, truly, truly I tell you, before Abraham was, I am.* –John 8:58
 6. *I am telling you now before it happens, so that when it does happen you will believe that I am.*

–John 13:19

7. *Jesus asked them, ‘Who is it you want?’ ‘Jesus of Nazareth,’ they replied. ‘I am,’ Jesus replied. When Jesus said, ‘I am,’ they drew back and fell to the ground. Again he asked them, ‘Who is it you want?’ And they said, ‘Jesus of Nazareth.’ ‘I told you, that I am,’ Jesus answered.*
 –John 18:4-8 [See Richard Bauckham, *The Testimony of the Beloved Disciple*, 244ff and R. Kendall Soullen, “The Name Above Every Name,” in *Advancing Trinitarian Theology*, 120ff.]

- I and the Father are one. —John 10:30
 - Anyone who has seen me has seen the Father. —John 14:9
 - Don’t you believe that I am in the Father and that the Father is in me? —John 14:10
 - Holy Father, protect them by the power of your name—the name you gave me—so that they may be one as we are one. –John 17:11
 - Do not be afraid. I am the First and the Last. I am the Living One. —Rev. 1:17
 - I am the Alpha and the Omega, the first and the last, the beginning and the end. –Rev. 22:13
2. About Jesus
- [He said to me, ‘You are my Son; today I have begotten you.’ (*gegenneka se*) –Psalm 2:7]
 - We tell you the good news: What God promised our fathers he has fulfilled for us, their children, by raising up Jesus. As it is written in the second Psalm: ‘You are my Son; today I have begotten you.’ –Acts 13:32-33 (Today I have become your Father—NIV)
 - See also Hebrews 1:5 and 5:5
 - As Jesus was coming up out of the water, he saw heaven being torn open and the Spirit descending on him like a dove. And a voice came from heaven: ‘You are my Son, whom I love; with you I am well pleased.’ –Mark 1:10, 11; cf. Matt. 3: 16, 17; Lk. 3:21, 22
 - Then a cloud appeared and enveloped them, and a voice came from the cloud: ‘This is my Son, whom I love. Listen to him.’ –Mark 9:7; cf. Matt. 17:5; Lk. 9:35
 - Then those in the boat (disciples) worshipped him saying, ‘Truly you are the Son of God!’ –Matt. 14:33
 - Suddenly Jesus met them. ‘Greetings,’ he said. They came to him, clasped his feet and worshipped him—Matt. 28:9
 - Then the eleven disciples went to Galilee, to the mountain where Jesus had told them to go. When they saw him, they worshipped him...—Matt. 28:16
 - Then they worshipped him and returned to Jerusalem—Luke 24:52
 - The word became flesh and dwelt among us. We have seen his glory, the glory of the only begotten from the Father (*monogenes para patros*)—John 1:14
 - No one has ever seen God but God the only begotten who is in the bosom of the Father has made him known—John 1:18 (*monogenes theos o en eis ton kolpon tou patros*) (God, the One and Only—NIV)
 - For God so loved the world that he sent his only begotten Son (*ton uion ton monogene*) –John 3:16; cf. 3:18 (his one and only Son)
 - Then the man said, ‘Lord, I believe,’ and he worshipped him—John 9:38
 - Thomas said to (Jesus), “My Lord and my God!” –John 20:28
 - Then the disciple whom Jesus loved said to Peter, “It is the Lord!” –John 21:7
 - If you confess with your mouth, “Jesus is Lord,” and believe in your heart that God raised him from the dead, you will be saved. —Romans 10:9
 - Everyone who calls on the name of the LORD (YHWH) will be saved.—Joel 2:32

- Christ—the power of God and the wisdom of God—1 Cor. 1:24
 - For God, who said, ‘Let light shine out of the darkness,’ made his light shine in our hearts to give us the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Christ. –1 Cor. 4:6
 - For we do not preach ourselves, but Christ Jesus as Lord.... For God, who said ‘Let light shine out of darkness,’ made his light shine in our hearts to give us the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Christ. –2 Cor. 4:6
 - Your mindset should be the same as that of Christ Jesus, who, being in very nature God (*morphe Theou*) did not consider equality with God (*to einai isa Theo*) something to be grasped... therefore God exalted him to the highest place and gave him the name that is above every name, that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow...and every tongue confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father. -Phil. 2:6, 9-11 (Cf. Isaiah 45:21-24 LXX)
 - He is the image of the invisible God, the firstborn over all creation—Col 1:15
 - He is before all things, and in him all things hold together—Col. 1:17
 - God was pleased to have all his fullness dwell in him...—Col. 1:19
 - In Christ all the fullness of the Deity lives in bodily form...—Col. 2:9
 - My purpose is that they...may have the full riches of complete understanding in order that they may know the mystery of God, namely, Christ, in whom are hidden all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge—Col 2:2,3
 - The Son is the exact imprint of (God’s) being (hypostasis). –Hebrews 1:3
 - He (God) says (to Jesus) in another place, ‘You are a priest forever, in the order of Melchizedek’. ... without father or mother, without genealogy, without beginning of days or end of life, like the Son of God he remains a priest forever. –Hebrews 5:5 and 7:3
3. About the Holy Spirit
- See references to the activity of the Holy Spirit throughout the book of Acts
 - The angel answered, ‘The Holy Spirit will come upon you, and the power of the Most High will overshadow you—Luke 1:35
 - I will ask the Father, and he will send you another Counselor to be with you forever—the Spirit of truth—John 14:16, 17
 - When the Counselor comes, whom I will send to you from the Father, the Spirit of truth who proceeds from the Father.... —John 15:26
 - Unless I go away, the Counselor will not come to you; but if I go, I will send him to you—John 16:7
 - But when he, the Spirit of truth comes, he will guide you into all truth—John 16:13
 - All that belongs to the Father is mine. That is why I said the spirit will take from what is mine and make it know to you—John 16:15
 - And hope does not disappoint us, because God has poured out his love into our hearts by the Holy Spirit, whom he has given us. –Rom. 5:5
 - Now the Lord is the Spirit, and where the Spirit of the Lord is there is freedom. And we, who with unveiled faces all reflect the Lord’s glory, are being transformed into his likeness with ever-increasing glory, which comes from the Lord who is the Spirit. —2 Cor. 3:17-18
4. About God
- “In the early church no text was more beloved than John 1:18: ‘No one has ever seen God. It is God the only Son, who is close to the Father’s heart who has made him known’” (Wilken, *Early*, 22)
 - Cf. Righteous Father, though the world does not know you, I know you, and they know that you have sent me. I have made you known to them and will continue to make you known...—John 17:25,26; 7:29, 8:19, 8:55
 - Anyone who has seen me has seen the Father—John 14:9

- See Jesus' prayer to his Father: John 17:1-26
 - Now to the King, eternal, immortal, invisible, the only God, be honor and glory forever and ever. Amen. –1 Tim. 1:17
 - God, the blessed and only Ruler, the King of kings and Lord of lords, who alone is immortal and who lives in unapproachable light, whom no one has seen or can see. To him be honor and might forever. Amen. –1 Tim. 6:16
 - God is love—1 John 4:8
5. About the Trinity
- See Jesus words about the Father, himself and the Holy Spirit in John 14-16
 - Therefore go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit—Matt. 28:19
 - And if the Spirit of him who raised Jesus from the dead is living in you, he who raised Christ from the dead will also give life to your mortal bodies through his Spirit who lives in you. – Rom. 8:11
 - May the grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, the love of God and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit be with you all-2 Cor. 13:14
 - To God's chosen people, living as strangers in the diaspora...who have been chosen according to the foreknowledge of God the Father, through the sanctifying work of the Spirit, for obedience to Jesus Christ...—1 Peter 1:1,2.

E. What kind of being is this? New Testament modifications to Old Testament monotheism

a. Texts:

- 1) **John 1: 1, 3:** *In the beginning was the **Logos**, and the **Logos** was with God and the **Logos** was God. ...*
*Through (the **Logos**) all things were made, and without (the **Logos**) nothing was made....*
 - “When John uses the term ‘Word’ in the opening verses of his prologue, he means simply this: the divine Word that all Jews, on the basis of Genesis, understood to have been active in the creation of all things. Moreover, there was no question of this Word’s being something or someone created. As God’s own word, it was intrinsic to God’s own unique identity” (Bauckham, *Testimony...*, 241).
 - John’s Greek word *logos* ‘carries no particular metaphysical baggage. It refers simply to God’s Word as portrayed in Jewish creation accounts.... In the prologue he uses the term to identify the preexistent Christ *within the Genesis narrative*, and so within the unique identity of God *as already understood by Jewish monotheism* (Bauckham, *Testimony...*, 241, emphasis author’s. Cf. Stoic logos doctrine).
 - ...God’s Word is given *an inalienable personality*: it is with the Father, one with him in will and being, but not simply identical with him. (Martin Hengel, in Bauckham, *Gospel of John...*, 272-3 emphasis author’s)
- 2) The 7 absolute ‘I am’ sayings in John (listed above):
 - “The Septuagint uses *ego eimi* in Deuteronomy 32:39 and on several occasions in Isaiah 40-55 (41:4; 43:10; 46:4) to translate the Hebrew phrase *ani hu*, which is usually translated in English as ‘I am he.’ This phrase ‘I am he’ is an extraordinarily significant one. It is a self-declaration, encapsulating YHWH’s claim to unique and exclusive divinity” (Bauckham, *Testimony...*, 246)
 - “The ‘I am he’ declarations are among the most emphatically monotheistic assertions of the Hebrew Bible, and if Jesus in the Fourth Gospel repeats them, he is unambiguously identifying himself with the one and only God, YHWH” (Bauckham, *Testimony...*, 247; cf. Torrance, *Christian Doctrine...*, 48).
- 3) **John 5:21, 22** *For just as the Father raises the dead and gives them life, even so the Son gives life to whom he is pleased to give it. Moreover, the Father judges no one, but has entrusted all*

judgment to the Son.... Jesus, here, claims the divine prerogatives unique to Yahweh (see above).

- 4) **John 5:23** *That all may honor the Son just as they honor the Father.* Honor/worship was to be given only to God (see above).
- 5) A reformulation of the **Shema**: Dt. 6:4: *Yahweh our God, Yahweh alone/one/only* (Heb).
The Lord, our God, the Lord is one (LXX).
 - **1 Corinthians 8:4, 6** *4We know that an idol is nothing at all in the world and that there is no God but one. 6(Y)et for us there is one God, the Father, [from whom all things come and for whom we live,] and one Lord, Jesus Christ, [through whom all things came and through whom we live].*
 - The *Shema* was, at the time of Jesus, widely in use as the Jewish daily prayer. Paul here places Jesus within that emphatically monotheistic text, expanding it and thereby redefining monotheism (what “one God” means). “Thus in Paul’s quite unprecedented reformulation of the *Shema*, the unique identity of the one God consists of the one God, and Father, and the one Lord, his Messiah” (Bauckham, *Jesus* ...28f, emphasis author’s; cf. 97-104).
 - “Paul has redefined the *Shema* christologically, producing what we can only call a sort of Christological monotheism. [Wright, *Climax of Covenant* 129; cf. T. McCall *Whose...?* 62; C. Blaising (*Creedal*) argues that this text played a pivotal role in shaping the Nicene Creed.]
 - **John 10:30** *I and the Father are one*
 - *Are*=distinction of persons; *one*=identity of essence (cf. Augustine in Bruner, *John*, 644).
 - “Jesus’ claim to oneness with the Father amounts to including himself with his Father in the unique identity of the one God of Jewish monotheism” –Bauckham, *Jesus*... 106; *Testimony*..., 250; cf. Ridderbos, *John*, 371)
- 6) **Revelation (Isaiah 44: 6 I am the first and I am the last; beside me there is no God** –cf. 48:12)

(God says)	<i>I am the Alpha and the Omega</i>	(1:8)
(Jesus says)	<i>I am</i>	<i>the first and the last</i> (1:17; cf. 2:8)
(God says)	<i>I am the Alpha and the Omega, the beginning and the end</i>	(21:6)
(Jesus says)	<i>I am the Alpha and the Omega</i>	<i>the first and the last the beginning and the end</i>

(22:13)

 - “The four declarations...form a deliberately cumulative pattern, in which the first three declarations attribute different, though equivalent, phrases to God and Christ respectively, but in which the fourth declaration claims for Christ all three forms of the title. ... They say something significant about this work’s inclusion of Jesus in the unique divine identity.” (Bauckham, *Jesus*..., 39. See also 141-2))
- 7) **John 20:28**: Thomas to Jesus: **My Lord and my God!**
- 8) **1 John 5: 1** *Everyone who believes that Jesus is the Christ from God begotten and everyone who loves the begetter loves also the begotten from him.* (Everyone who believes that Jesus is the Christ has been born of God, and everyone who loves the parent loves the child—NRSV, NIV)
- 9) **Joel 2:32**: *Everyone who calls on the name of YHWH (the Lord=Greek) will be saved*
Romans 10:9 *If you declare..., ‘Jesus is Lord’...you will be saved.*
- 10) **Hebrews 1:3** *The Son is the exact imprint of God’s hypostasis... (=ousios at that time, cf. Nicene)*

- 11) **Colossians 1:15, 19** *He is the image of the invisible God.... God was pleased to have all his fullness dwell in him...*
- 12) **Philippians 2:5-11**: Christ Jesus, who being in very nature God...
- See a comparison of Phil. 2:6-11 and Isaiah 52-53; 45 in Bauckham, *Jesus...*, 43; D. Yeago Pro Ecc
- 13) **2 Corinthians 4:6**: *For we do not preach ourselves, but Christ Jesus as Lord.... For God, who said, 'Let light shine out of darkness,' made his light shine in our hearts to give us the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Christ. See Oden, *Living God*, 188ff*
- b. Worship of Jesus and Jewish monotheism: An illustrative interpretation of John 20:28
- 1) Hilary of Potiers (c. 300-367. Cf. Wilken, *The Spirit of Early...*, 86ff) Wrote *The Trinity* c. 337.
- During Jesus' lifetime, his disciples did not grasp fully who he was. He made audacious claims about having a unique relationship with God; he performed spectacular miracles; allowed Peter, James and John a glimpse of his heavenly glory on the mount of the Transfiguration. Yet they did not see who he really was.
 - It didn't seem so easy for Jesus to be the leader of these disciples, either! Five times in Matthew's gospel account he says to them, 'You of little faith!' (8:26; 14:31; 16:8, 9; 17:20). Once he even says, 'Are you still so dull?' (15:16)
 - In John's gospel Jesus replies to a question of Philip: 'Don't you know me, Philip, even after I have been among you such a long time?' ...Don't you believe...?' (Jn. 14:9, 10)
 - Peter rebukes Jesus, causing Jesus to say to him, 'Get behind me, Satan! You are a stumbling block to me! (Mt. 16:22-23)
 - It must have been deeply painful for Jesus to tell his disciples that one of them would soon betray him, another would deny him, and all would abandon him (Mt. 26:21, 31, 34)
 - But then we read Thomas' startling confession in John 20:28: 'My Lord and my God!'
 - The first Christians certainly knew and probably recited daily (as did all observant Jews) the *Shema*: "Hear O Israel, the Lord our God, the Lord is one. Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your strength." Jesus affirmed that, indeed, this was the most important commandment—Mark 12:29-13.
 - What, then, are we to make of Thomas' confession? How could Thomas call Jesus, a human being, "Lord" and "God" (the two terms referring to God in the *Shema*) and still pray the *Shema*? (Cf. Wilken, *Spirit of Early...*, 91)
 - Hilary of Poitiers' answer: The resurrection of Jesus changed everything (Wilken, *Spirit of Early...*, 91; *Remembering...*, 79).
 - When Jesus came and stood among the disciples and invited Thomas to put his finger into the wounds he endured while being crucified, Thomas was confronted by a new reality.
 - Because of the resurrection, Thomas recognized that the one he knew, who had lived among them, was not just an extraordinary human being but was the living God. The words "Lord" and "God" occur in the *Shema*, but are used by Thomas to refer, now, not to the creator of the world and king of the universe, but to Jesus.
 - "When confronted by the risen Christ one does not say, 'How interesting,' but 'My Lord and my God!'" (Wilken, *Spirit of Early...*, 91)
 - John's gospel account has three pivotal verses:

- In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God —1:1
 - The Word became flesh and made his dwelling among us—1:14
 - Thomas said to (Jesus), ‘My Lord and my God!’—20:28
 - After he was raised from the dead, his disciples recalled what he had said. Then they believed the Scripture and the words that Jesus had spoken—John 2:22
 - “Even more explicitly than the other Gospel writers, John champions *reading backwards* as an essential strategy for illuminating Jesus’ identity. Only by reading backwards, in light of the resurrection, under the guidance of the Spirit, can we understand both Israel’s Scripture and Jesus’ words.
 - The resurrection revealed something about Jesus to his disciples, namely, that he is God.
 - The acknowledgement of the Deity of Christ was forced upon his followers especially by his resurrection from the dead which invested his crucifixion on the Cross with redemptive and therefore divine significance. That is very evident, for example, in the incident when the risen Jesus is greeted by the disciples on the shore of Lake Galilee with the cry ‘It is the Lord!’ , when they gave the same Name to Jesus as they used of the Father.” (Torrance, *Christian Doctrine...*, 52).
 - “Paul, a servant of Christ Jesus...who through the Spirit of Holiness was declared with power to be the Son of God by his resurrection from the dead...” –Romans 1:1,4
 - Thomas’s confession was not the ‘acknowledgment of a second God, nor the betrayal of the unity of the divine nature’: it was the recognition that God is not a ‘solitary God’ (*in solitudine*) or a ‘lonely God.’—Hilary (Wilken, *Early*, 92)
 - God is one, says Hilary, but not alone.
- 2) “Amid all the varieties of response to the Gnostic systems, Christians were sure that the Redeemer did not belong to some lower order of divine reality, but was God himself.
- The oldest surviving sermon...after the New Testament opened with the words: ‘Brethren, we ought so to think of Jesus Christ as of God, as of the judge of living and dead.’ (1 Clement)
 - The oldest surviving account of the death of a Christian martyr contained the declaration: ‘It will be impossible for us to forsake Christ...or to worship any other. For him, being the Son of God, we adore...’ (Polycarp)
 - The oldest surviving pagan report about the church described Christians as gathering before sunrise and ‘singing a hymn to Christ as though to (a) God. (Pliny)
 - The oldest surviving liturgical prayer of the church was a prayer addressed to Christ: ‘Our Lord, come!’ (1 Cor. 16:22)
 - Clearly it was the message of what the church believed and taught that ‘God’ was an appropriate name for Jesus Christ.” (Pelikan, *Emergence*, 175)
- 3) “The accommodation of Jesus as recipient of cultic worship with God is unparalleled and signals a major development in monotheistic cultic practice and belief. But this variant form of monotheism appeared among circles who insisted that they maintained faithfulness to the monotheistic stance of the Jewish tradition” (Hurtado, quoted in Bauckham, *Jesus*, 141).
- “In other words, Jewish monotheism and the worship of Jesus were mutually conditioning factors in the development of early Christian faith” (Bauckham, *Jesus*, 141, 151; cf. 25; Thompson, *The God of the Gospel of John*, 41).
 - See Bauckham, *Jesus*, “The Worship of Jesus in Early Christianity” for more info (doxologies).

III. What kind of being is this? The road to Nicaea

A. Introduction

1. Review: Worlds of the New Testament:

- **World of culture:** Paganism, syncretism, heresies (Ebionites, Gnostics, Marcionists)
- **World of philosophy:** one transcendent Being; intermediary beings; emphasis on the *Logos*
- **World of Old & New Testaments:** Strict monotheism –The *Shema*; intermediary beings; God's *Logos* active in creation; “In the beginning was the *Logos*”—became flesh=Jesus.

2. Theological principles:

a. It's the economy! (Cf. Sanders, *Advancing*, 24; F. Young, *Presence*, 373, et. als.)

- Christian thinking did not spring from an original idea, and it was not nourished by a seminal spiritual insight. It had its beginnings in the history of Israel and the life of a human being named Jesus of Nazareth, who was born of Mary, lived in Judea, suffered and died in Jerusalem, and was raised by God to new life (Wilken, *Early...*, 24).
- In early Christian theology, the term 'economy' designated God's self-disclosure in and through events: creation, the history of Israel, and preeminently in the life, death, and resurrection of Jesus. (Ignatius, Irenaeus, Tertullian... (cf. Wilken, *Remembering...76*).

○ That self-disclosure was witnessed:

That which was from the beginning, which we have heard, which we have seen with our own eyes, which we have looked at and our hands have touched—this we proclaim concerning the Word of life. The life appeared; we have seen it and testify to it, and we proclaim to you the eternal life, which was with the Father and has appeared to us. –1 John 1:11-3

✚ (Hilary) shows that the Resurrection is the defining event in the economy. – Wilken, 90;

✚ The one God can be known through the things of creation, but it is only through the economy that one knows God as Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. ... Wilken, *Remembering... 76*

✚ After Christ's resurrection, God's unity had to be conceived differently. Though one, God was not a solitary being and in some mysterious way the life of the one God was communal.

✚ The economy, therefore, is the engine that drives Trinitarian thinking. –Wilken, *Rem.*, 77

✚ According to the economy of our redemption there are both Father and Son— Irenaeus (c.130-200), (cf. Wilken, *Rem.* 75).

✚ (The monarchians) do not understand that 'while they must believe in one God only, yet they must believe in him *along with his economy*. —Tertullian (c.160-220)

✚ The human mind can only speak about God as it is instructed by God's works," that is, what is disclosed in the historical revelation of Christ. —Gregory of Nyssa, in Wilken, *Rem.* 77

✚ The doctrine of the Trinity is the end result not the starting point of Christian theology. (Cf. F. Young, *God's Presence*, 373).

✚ The priority of the economy leads to the truth of the saying, 'We believe; help us now to understand.' (Faith seeking understanding -- Saint Anselm of Canterbury: 1033–1109)

c. Standing before a mystery

- The radical otherness of God:
 - The Lord said to Moses: 'You cannot see my face; for no one may see me and live.' ... I will remove my hand and you will see my back, but my face must not be seen.–Ex. 33:20, 23

- ‘My thoughts are not your thoughts, neither are my ways your ways,’ says the Lord. ‘For as the heavens are higher than the earth, so are my ways higher than your ways, and my thoughts higher than your thoughts.’ –Isaiah 55:8-9 (cf. book of Job, Psalms)
 - Now to the King, eternal, immortal, invisible, the only God, be honor and glory forever and ever. Amen. –1 Tim. 1:17
 - God, the blessed and only Ruler, the King of kings and Lord of lords, who alone is immortal and who lives in unapproachable light, whom no one has seen or can see. To him be honor and might forever. Amen. –1 Tim. 6:16
 - Ineffable and inscrutable
 - God must reveal himself to us in order for us to know anything about him.
 - “In the early church no text was more beloved than John 1:18: ‘No one has ever seen God. It is God the only Son, who is close to the Father’s heart who has made him known’” (Wilken, *Early...*, 22 -in the Father’s bosom=therefore speaks from within)
 - He (Jesus) is the image of the invisible God. ... For God was pleased to have all his fullness dwell in him. –Col. 1:15, 19
 - For in Christ all the fullness of the Deity lives in bodily form.... –Col. 2:9
 - Anyone who has seen me has seen the Father—John 14:9
 - “The one God can be known through the things of creation, but it is only through the economy that one knows God as Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. ... (And) the Resurrection is the defining event in the economy” (Wilken, *Early*, 90; cf. T. Torrance, *Christian Doct.*, 52f).
 - Through Jesus revelation of his Father, we become ‘spectators’ of the ‘depth of God’, (Origen, in Wilken, *Early...*, 93)
 - This requires, on our part, an attitude of humility, reticence, awe, devotion
 - God can only be known in devotion. —Hilary of Poitiers, in Wilken, *Early*, 88
 - Only by yielding to God and giving ourselves to the object of our search can we know the God we seek. –Wilken, *Early...* 88
 - d. What language shall I borrow? (Cf. Young, *Presence*, 393; Augustine, in Ayres, *Nicaea*, 370)
 - Theology as exploration vs. theology as explanation
 - Theological language: univocal, equivocal, or analogical (Cf. *Rethinking*, 107, *123, 127)
 - Theological language: kataphatic or apophatic (cf. F. Young, *Presence*, 391—creation *ex nihilo/apo*)
 - Belgic confession: We all believe (in) God,
 - eternal, almighty, completely wise, just, and good (kataphatic language) and
 - incomprehensible, invisible, unchangeable, infinite (apophatic language)
 - Essence vs. energies/actions in the economy.
3. Some important terms and notes:
- a) John 1:1 *In the beginning was the **Logos**, and the **Logos** was with God and the **Logos** was God. It (the **Logos**) was with God in the beginning. Through it (the **Logos**) all things were made, and without it (the **Logos**) nothing was made that had been made.*
 - In Stoic thought, that which forms, organizes and permeates matter is the **Logos** (described as God, Providence, Nature or the soul of the universe (*anima mundi*). The **soul** is the **logos** in human beings, with a distinction made between the **immanent logos**, which is reason considered present within us (thought), and the **expressed logos**, which is that reason expressed in speech (Cf. Kelly, *Early...*, 13,14; Allen, *Philosophy...*,).
 - John’s Greek word *logos* ‘carries no particular metaphysical baggage. It refers simply to God’s Word as portrayed in Jewish creation accounts.... In the prologue he uses the term to identify the preexistent Christ *within the Genesis narrative*, and so within the

unique identity of God *as already understood by Jewish monotheism* (Bauckham, *Testimony...*, 241, emphasis author's).

- b) Prior to the 4th cent. (pre-Nicaea) the title **Almighty** pointed to God's sovereignty & power over the world, while **Father** referred to God's role as creator and author of all things (Kelly, *Early...*, 83). Only later will *Father* acquire the specialized meaning of **Father of the Son**. [See the discussion about whether, in the opening phrase of the Nicene Creed (We believe in one God, the Father almighty), "almighty" is to be understood to modify "God" or "Father" in Zizioulas, *Communion*, 113 and Kelly, *Creeds*, 132-3.]
- c) **Essence** refers to God as he exists in his eternal being (Imminent Trinity). **Economy** refers to God as he reveals himself in creation and redemption. The concept of God's essential oneness, yet including the Son and the Spirit in the work of creation and redemption is referred to as **Economic Trinitarianism**.
 - God is found among the verbs (Economic Trinity, p. e. Heidelberg Cat.)
 - God is found among the adjectives (Imminent Trinity, p. e. Belgic Conf. Article 1)
- d) **Unoriginate** (*ingenerate or increate-agennetos*= God) and **originate** (=creation)
- e) **Ousia** and **hypostasis; substantia** and **prosopon** (See later discussion)
- f) "The doctrine of **one God**, the Father and creator, formed the background and indisputable premise of the Church's faith. Inherited from Judaism, it was her bulwark against **pagan polytheism, Gnostic emanationism, and Marcionite dualism**" (Kelly, *Doctrines...* 87). The theological challenge was to integrate with it the fresh data of the Christian experience. There was yet no consensus on the terms that could articulate this integration adequately. Theories would be offered, honed, rejected, etc.

B. What kind of being is this? Apostolic Fathers:

- Early on, baptism was administered in the name of the Father, Son and Holy Spirit (Mt. 28:19); greetings were exchanged, mentioning the Father and the Son (cf. Rom. 1:6 *Grace and peace...*); doxologies were raised that mentioned together the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit.
- **Ignatius** (martyred 110-117): Jesus is "the mind of the Father" (Eph. 3), "the unerring mouth in whom the Father hath spoken" (Rom. 8), God's "Word proceeding from silence" (Mag. 8). He was "with the Father before the worlds," "ingenerate" (Eph. 7), "came forth from One Father and is with One Father..." (Mag. 6, 7), is "Son of God by the Divine will and power" (Smyrn 1)

C. What kind of being is this? Ebionites (Cf. Gonzalez, *History I*, 122ff):

- Posited the existence of a principle of evil (lord of this age, a feminine principle) and a principle of good (lord of the age to come, a masculine principle). The principle of good has had several incarnations, Adam, Abel, Isaac and Jesus among them. As with those others, Jesus was simply a man whom God chose to proclaim his will and providing at his baptism the power to do so effectively.

D. What kind of being is this? Gnostics (Cf. Gonzalez, *History I*, 126ff)

- "Gnosticism cannot be understood as flowing from a single source, but rather as a mingling of various currents of religious thought" (Gonzalez, *History I*, 127, ft. 16).
- It asserted that from a single eternal principle, other principles or aeons flowed in a declining and diminishing order, until—usually through an error of one of the lower aeons—the material world was produced.
- Gnosticism was a primarily a doctrine of salvation. Our souls are part of the divine substance, currently imprisoned in a material world. Our soul's freedom requires knowledge of the supreme God, of our current situation, of what we once were and of what we can and should become. Our present slavery is such that we are unable to obtain that knowledge on our own; we need someone from the transcendent spiritual world to reveal it to us. In Christian Gnosticism, Christ is that messenger.

- Since the material world was the result from error, not the product of divine will, it was considered to be evil. Therefore the human body, materially evil, cannot be the vehicle for the revelation of the Supreme God. Christ, the messenger come to make God known to us, cannot have come in the flesh. His 'body' could not have been a truly physical body, but an 'apparent' one (the *docetic* heresy). Neither could his suffering and his death have been real, for the divine messenger would not have given itself over to the destructive power of matter.
 - Cerinthus, who answered the question, What type of being is this? in gnostic terms, lived in Ephesus towards the end of the first century. He distinguished between Jesus and Christ. Jesus was a man, son of Joseph and Mary; Christ was the divine being who came upon Jesus at his baptism. When Christ finished his work as a messenger of saving knowledge, he abandoned Jesus who then suffered, died, and was raised from the dead. According to tradition, Cerinthus' opponent in Ephesus was St. John who wrote his first Epistle to counter his gnostic teachings.

E. What kind of being is this? Marcionists

- Marcion (85-160) differed in some respects from other gnostic teachers, but shared with them their radical dualism. He argued for the existence of two gods, one the Creator of this material world of law and justice, the other, the God of love and forgiveness. Like the gnostics, he denied that Christ was truly human, for had he really been born he would have been under the rule of the Creator God.

F. What kind of being is this? The Apologists (2nd c.):

- ◆ Ardent monotheists, they attempted to explain more carefully the relation between Jesus and God
 - the Father. While lacking the technical vocabulary of later Nicaea, they did understand that there
 - were eternal distinctions within the Deity. While focusing on Jesus/Word and God the Father, they
 - were vague about the status and role of the Holy Spirit.
- ◆ Their proposal: As pre-existent, Christ was the Father's thought or mind (as *Logos/Word*), and that, as manifested in creation, he was its expression. (Cf. John 1:1; Stoic *Logos*; Kelly, *Early...*, 95f.)
 1. **Justin Martyr** (100-165)
 - God is everlasting, ineffable, changeless, impassible, unoriginate. (Kelly, *Early...*, 84)
 - The *Logos* is the Father's intelligence or rational thought. But the *Logos* is also numerically distinct from the Father. The *Logos* is God's offspring (*gennema*) (Kelly, *Early...*, 97)
 - God used his *Logos* or Word as his instrument in forming the universe.
 2. **Tatian** (120-180) Before creation, God was alone, the *Logos* being immanent in him as his potentiality for creating all things. At the moment of creation, the *Logos* leaped forth from the
 - Father as his 'primordial work.' Once born, he served as the Father's instrument in creating
 - and governing the universe. (Kelly 98, 99; cf. Theophilus)
 3. **Athenagorus** (2nd half of 2nd C. Converted Athenian philosopher)
 - Dated the generation of the *Logos* and so his eligibility for the title 'Son' not from his origination within the being of the Godhead, but from his emission for the purposes of creation, revelation, and redemption (cf. Stoic *Logos* concept. Kelly, *Early...*, 100)
 4. **Irenaeus** (130-200)
 - Distinguishes God in his essence and in his work of creation & redemption (economy): "God...is one according to the essence of his being and power; but at the same time, as

the administrator of the economy of our redemption, he is both Father and Son (and Spirit?).” *Proof 47* (“Economic Trinitarianism”)

- Emphasizes the coordinated roles of the Word (Son) and Wisdom (Spirit) in creation: “For always with him are his Word and Wisdom, the Son and the Spirit, through whom and in whom he made everything freely.... *AH 20.1* (God’s “hands”)
 - Speaks of the Word’s co-existence with the Father from all eternity: “Therefore the Father is Lord and the Son is Lord, and the Father is God and the Son is God: for he who is born of God is God. *Proof 47*
 - It is the Word of God (the *Logos*—later to become the Son) who speaks to Abraham, Jacob, Moses, etc.
5. Weaknesses of *Logos* Christology:
- It is ambiguous: Are there two Gods? Is the *Logos* subordinate/inferior to God? Cf. Origen)
 - There is little unanimity yet about whether the *Logos* and the Spirit are divine in themselves or are “emitted” only in order to create something. Is God triune because he is Creator? Or is God triune independent of being Creator? (Zizioulas *Lect.* 46f; Williams, *Arius*, 127)

G. What kind of being is this? Early Third Century perspectives:

1. **Tertullian** (Carthage, 160-220) and Hippolytus: Both agree with *Economic Trinitarianism* but assert more clearly the otherness of the persons (cf. Kelly, *Early...* 110-115).
- Prior to the generation of the Son for the purpose of creation, God could not strictly be said to have had a Son. Once generated, the Son is a ‘Person’ (*persona*), a second in addition to the Father.
 - The Spirit is the ‘representative/deputy’ of the Son. He issues from the Father by way of the Son, being third just as fruit derived from the shoot is third from the root.
 - The Spirit, too, is a ‘Person’ so that the Godhead is a *trinity*. Tertullian is the first to use that word in reference to God.
 - The three are numerically distinct, ‘being capable of being counted.’
 - “*Una substantia, tres personae.*” *Substantia*=unity of God; *personae*=plurality in God
 - He rejected the criticism that the difference between the three involved a division or a separation; it was, rather, a distinction not a separation (shoot from root, river from source, light from sun).
 - The Father and the Son are one identical *substance* (*substantia*) which has been, not divided, but *extended*.
 - The Godhead is indivisibly one, and the threeness applies only to the ‘grade,’ or ‘manifestation’ in which the Persons are presented.
2. **Hippolytus:** (Rome, 170-235)
- Challenge in translating Tertullian’s expression into Greek: (cf. Zizioulas. *Lect.* 49f)
 - *substantia*=*hypostasis* or *ousia* (then both were synonyms for what is fundamental, underlying, etc. See Nicene Creed)
 - *persona*=*prosopon* While in Latin *persona*=individual person, it’s equivalent in Greek *prosopon*=aspect of façade or masks that actors wore in different roles. *Prosopon* might mean that Jesus and the Holy Spirit are roles played or fronts for God.
 - Origen and others after him began to substitute *hypostasis* for *prosopon*. To the Latin West, that sounded like God has three underlying, fundamental substances.
 - Finally—via Athanasius and the Cappadocians—*ousia* was reserved for substance/essence, and *hypostasis* was given over to person.

- With the world's salvation in view, God rendered the Word, before invisible, visible at the incarnation. From then on, alongside the Father (the Godhead itself) there was 'another', a second 'person' (*prosopon*), while the Spirit completed the Triad.
- But Hippolytus wants to hold on to an essential unity, stating that there is only one Power, and that "when I speak of 'another,' I do not mean two Gods, but as it were light from light, water from its source, a ray from the sun.

H. What kind of being is this? Reaction to Economic Trinitarianism: Some thought that this development of a *Logos* theology threatened the oneness of God. Two different attempts to safeguard a strict monotheism emerged.

1. What kind of being is this? Modalistic Monarchianism: Noetus and later, Sabellius (fl. c. 195)

- No substantial distinction between the persons of the trinity. The different names only refer to the different manifestations of the one God.
- "Christ himself is the Father, and the Father himself was born, suffered, and died" –Noetus. (A God who suffers is inconceivable for a Platonist!)
- In the O.T. God gave the law as Father; in the N.T. he became incarnate as Son; finally he visited the apostles as the Holy Spirit. The same one is Father, Son and Holy Spirit." The three are **one subsistence (*hypostasis*)** and **one person (*prosopon*)** with **three names** – Sabellius.
 - *Hypostasis* was often understood to be synonymous with *ousia* (cf. the Nicene Creed anathemas). When, in the Trinitarian controversies of the 4th century, western bishops spoke of the Father and the Son having the same *ousia*/hypostasis, eastern bishops heard Sabellius talking.
 - "The Church will insist that the three persons are in personal **relationships**, each of which is different from the others" (Zizioulas *Lect.* 47).

2. What kind of being is this? Dynamic Monarchianism: Theodotus (exc. c. 195), Paul of Samosata (deposed bishop of Antioch 268)

- The Word is **no more** than the unspoken reason of God; it does not subsist as a person (*hypostasis*) next to the Father (who alone is God). Paul tried to preserve the unity of God by saying that the Word was of the same essence (***homoousias***) with the Father.
- Jesus was a human being like all others except he was conceived by the Holy Spirit and born of the virgin Mary. Because of his virtuous living, Jesus received the Spirit at his baptism and became Christ. He received power (*dynamis*) to do miracles, etc. This did not make Jesus divine, *a la* the Modalists (although some followers of Theodotus suggested that he became divine after his resurrection). Jesus was only inspired by the Word as Moses and other prophets were.
- Paul could mask his ideas using "trinitarian" jargon: He gave the name *God* to the Father who created all things, *Son* to the man among us, and *Spirit* to the grace that inspired the Apostles (cf. Kelly, *Early*, 118). He was, in essence, a Unitarian.

I. What kind of being is this? Origen (185-254) (Cf. Williams, *Arius*, 131ff; Allen, *Philosophy*, 93ff; Heine, *Classical*, 57ff; Gonzalez, *History I*, 217f; Ayres *Nicaea*, 22ff; Wilken, *Early*, 11ff)

- a. Origen and the Eternal Existence of the Son. (Origen's contributions to the theme of human deification/participation in God will be discussed later)
- It was commonly accepted that God was without beginning or end. If the Son was now said to be God, the same must be true of him.
 - Origen rejected the suggestion that *Logos* was the key to understanding the nature of Christ (Justin, Tertullian *et. al.*). While an important concept, he argued that it was only one on a list of many descriptive titles: the way, the truth, etc. Rather than *Logos*, the key concept for Origen for understanding the relationship between Jesus and God was that of *Son*, and further, the eternal generation or begetting of the Son (Cf. Heine, *Classical*, 58).

- In doing so, Origen offered arguments from Scripture (Cf. Ayres, *Nicaea*, 21-24)
 - In his commentary on the Gospel of According to John he writes: “At the very beginning of his treatise...John did not say, ‘The *Logos* came to be in the beginning,’ or ‘The *Logos* was made in the beginning,’ but ‘in the beginning was the *Logos*’ (Quoted in Heine, *Classical*, 61).
 - The *Logos* became human at a specific time (John 1:14) but the *Logos* was eternally God.
 - ‘And the *Logos* was with God,’ not ‘the *Logos* came to be with God.’
 - Therefore, “Before all time and eternity ‘the *Logos* was in the beginning,’ and the *Logos* was with God” (Quoted in Heine, *Classical*, 63).
 - Relating Psalm 2:7 (*Today I have begotten you*) with Hebrews 1:5; 5:5-6; 7:3,17, Origen argues that there is no such thing as time with God. The Psalmist’s ‘Today’ is the timeless day in which God exists. Therefore one can neither speak of a time when the Son did not exist.
 - Reflecting on Phil. 2:5-8, Origen writes that Jesus’ “birth was not of the sort that one who did not previously exist began to be.” It reveals rather that, “one who previously existed and ‘was in the form of God’ came in order...to take ‘the form of a slave’” (Quoted in Heine, *Classical*, 64-65).
- and from philosophy.
 - Origen had a philosophical education and as Aristotle’s *Categories* played an important role in philosophy at the time, he would have been familiar with its arguments.
 - In *Categories*, Aristotle offers “the various categories one can apply in defining a term, or the reality to which the term points” (Heine, *Classical*, 59.Cf. Allen, *Philosophy*, 95 for all categ).
 - The category “substance” answers the question, what is it?
 - The category “quality” answers the question, what are its qualities?
 - The category “relation” acknowledges that some terms are defined in relation to other terms. They are relational by definition. Aristotle called these terms “correlatives.”

Such terms support and eliminate one another: For example, a woman is a wife only if she has a husband; when she no longer has a husband, she ceases to be a wife.

 - Such relational terms were also considered to be “simultaneous by nature—that is, they must exist at the same time. Porphyry, a Platonist philosopher who claimed to have met Origen when he was a young man, wrote a commentary on Aristotle’s *Categories*. He uses the ‘father-son’ relationship to illustrate the simultaneous nature of relatives. There can only be a father...when there is a son. Eliminate the concept of son and you simultaneously eliminate that of father” (Heine, *Classical*, 60-61).
 - Origen uses that same illustration: If God has always existed as Father, then he must always have had a Son.
- In describing the relationship between the Father and the Son, Origen balances two perspectives that will later divide his followers (Gonzalez, *History I*, 217):
 - The first underlines the divinity and eternity of the Son, making him equal to the Father:
 - *Father* and *Son* are correlative terms. *Father* implies the existence of a child, so if God is truly called Father, the Son’s generation must be eternal (Cf. earlier understanding of *Father*, Kelly, *Early*, 83; cf. Williams, *Arius*, 140).

- The Son “was born indeed of Him, and derives from Him what He is, but without any beginning...” *FP 1.2.2*
- The second underlines the distinction between the Father and the Son:
 - “We worship the Father of the truth and the Son who is the truth; they are two distinct existences, but one in mental unity, in agreement, and in identity of will.” (*Against Celsus*, quoted in Heine, *Classical*, 64).
 - The Son is the image of the Father as *light from light*, or brightness from the sun. The Son is not temporally *after* the Father, but Origen does consider the Son to be a distinct being *dependent on* the Father for his existence.
 - Denies that the Son can come from the Father’s *ousia*, as this would imply a material conception of the divine generation. He is, rather, the product of the Father’s will.
The generation of the Son, therefore, is not necessary (as in Gnosticism and Platonism) but personal and intentional (Cf. Ayres, *Nicaea*, 24, 27; cf. below, page xxxx).