

The Two *Jehovahs* of the Pentateuch

*The Scriptural Evidence of the
Duality of God*

By

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Introduction

As demonstrated in the preceding paper, **The Two *Jehovahs* of the Psalms**, both God the Father and God the Son were known in Old Testament times as *Jehovah*. The Hebrew text also refers to the two *Jehovahs* individually as *El* and together as *Elohim*. Thus *Jehovah Elohim* is a plural name that refers to both divine Beings. The Old Testament prophets proclaimed that one of the two *Jehovah Elohim* would become flesh and would dwell among men. In the New Testament, this *Jehovah* or *El* Who became the Son was announced by Gabriel as Immanuel, or "**God** with us."

In this study paper, we will delve much deeper into the Scriptural evidence of the two *Jehovahs*. We will examine a number of controversial and much disputed passages in the Pentateuch, including the time-honored "Shema" of Deuteronomy 6:4. We will analyze the structure of the Hebrew text through the eyes of the most respected authorities on Hebrew grammar and syntax. When we conclude our study, the weight of evidence will fully confirm the Scriptural truth which has long been suppressed and denied--that two *Jehovahs* have eternally existed as God.

Due to the technical nature of this paper, readers may find some of the material difficult to understand. Those who experience such difficulty are encouraged to read carefully, using a dictionary to check the meaning of unfamiliar words. Some paragraphs may require a second or third reading in order to grasp the material that is presented. If you find this necessary, you are in good company! A college professor who holds a doctor's degree in English recently confided to me that he finds some material difficult to understand without reading it several times. May you be willing to make the effort, and may you come to a full understanding of the truth of Scripture.

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The Two *Jehovahs* of the Pentateuch

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The Scriptures reveal that from the beginning, the Creator was known to mankind as both "God" and "LORD." In the Hebrew text, these two divine names are *Elohim* and *Jehovah* respectively. They are frequently used in combination in the books of the Old Testament and are accordingly translated "the LORD God."

The divine names *Elohim* and *Jehovah* are used countless times in the first five books of the Bible, which are known as the Pentateuch. The name *Elohim*, which identifies God as Creator, is used exclusively in the first chapter of Genesis and is the predominant name throughout this book. The name *Jehovah*, which identifies God as Covenant Maker, first appears in the second chapter of Genesis in combination with *Elohim*. The first use of *Jehovah* as a single name is found in Genesis 3:1. Although the name *Jehovah* is found in some passages in the book of Genesis, it is primarily used in the following four books, which relate to the Exodus, the giving of the Law, and the journeys of Israel before entering the promised land.

There is great significance in the fact that God was revealed from the beginning not only as *Jehovah* but as *Jehovah Elohim*. The Hebrew name *Elohim* is a **plural noun** which inherently means *more than one*. Despite this fact of Hebrew grammar, few are willing to acknowledge that the divine name *Elohim* is actually referring to **more than one divine Being**. So deeply rooted is the influence of monotheism in our Christian-professing world that most scholars and theologians deny any possibility of there being a plurality of divine Beings. They claim that the Hebrew text cannot be taken literally in those passages which use plural nouns and pronouns in reference to God.

The book of Genesis contains three passages that clearly refer to a plural number of divine Beings. These passages are Genesis 1:26-27, Genesis 3:22-23, and Genesis 11:6-7. In each of these passages, we find the plural pronoun "Us" used in reference to God. The names of God that appear in these passages are translated from either *Jehovah* or *Elohim*, or a combination of these two Hebrew names.

Scholars and theologians have devised a number of explanations to circumvent the literal meaning of the plural pronoun "Us" in these passages. Some claim that this plural pronoun is only a figure of speech--i.e., a metaphor or other literary device. One writer explains the use of the plural pronoun "Us" in Genesis 11:7 in this manner:

"The plural pronoun 'us'...is a good example of a widespread mistake in assessing a **literary feature** of the text....When God said 'Let Us go down and there confuse their language' (Genesis 11:7), he [sic] did not mean that two or three gods (beings, or individual deities) would leave heaven and travel to earth. Such an interpretation must be dismissed as impossible in light of the doctrine of monotheism. Rather, **the context shows important parallels** being drawn. The inhabitants of Babel were saying, 'Come, let us build...whose top is in the heavens' (verse 4), and God was echoing their thought in, 'Come, let Us go down' (verse 7). In other words, while the men of Babel were preparing to ascend to God's habitation, God was preparing to descend to theirs. The **poetic element** is in the contrast between their going up and his [sic] coming down. Likewise, as men were planning to ascend together and in strength, ready to make a name for themselves, God was planning to descend with his [sic] host and in strength, ready to confuse their plans. This **literary device** is called *anthropopatheia*--the special effect resulting from ascribing human experiences (*pathos*) to God" (Stavriniades, *Understanding the Nature of God: The Modern Trinitarian Problem*, p. 28).

Is the Use of "Us" in Genesis 11:7 Only a Literary Device?

In the above explanation of Genesis 11:7, Stavriniades denounces a literal interpretation of "let Us" and claims that this expression is only "a literary feature of the text." In denying the literal meaning of the words "let Us go down," Stavriniades is violating the most fundamental rule of Biblical

Christian Biblical Church of God

interpretation. Notice: "The basic principle of biblical interpretation is to take words always in their **literal sense** unless there is an **unmistakable contextual indication** to the contrary" (Hasel, *A Symposium on Biblical Hermeneutics, Principles of Biblical Interpretation*, p. 176).

What does the context of Genesis 11:7 reveal? Is there any contextual evidence that "Us" should not be taken in a literal sense?

The context of Genesis 11:7 gives no indication whatsoever that this plural pronoun should not be taken literally. Even Stavrinides admits the literal meaning of the pronoun in its occurrence a few verses earlier in the passage. While he denies the literal meaning of "Us" in reference to God in Verse 7, Stavrinides acknowledges that "us" is literal when it refers to the men of Babel in Verse 4. His "*literary*" interpretation of the pronoun "Us" in Verse 7 is inconsistent with his **literal** interpretation of "us" in Verse 4. Thus he is violating a second rule of Biblical hermeneutics: that a word used more than once in the same context be interpreted in a parallel and consistent manner.

Stavrinides admits that "the context shows **important parallels**" between "let Us" in Verse 7 of Genesis 11 and "let us" in Verse 4, but his interpretation of these two expressions is not parallel at all. Notice his inconsistency in the following statements:

"The inhabitants of Babel were saying, 'Come, **let us** [a **literal** plurality of men] build...whose top is in the heavens' (verse 4), and God was echoing their thought in, 'Come, **let Us** [a **nonliteral** reference to God, Stavrinides says] go down' (verse 7). In other words, while the men of Babel were preparing to ascend to God's habitation, God was preparing to descend to theirs. The poetic element is in the contrast between **their** [a **literal** plurality of men] going up and **his** [sic--a **non-literal** interpretation of "Us"] coming down. Likewise, as men were planning to ascend together and in strength, ready to make a name for **themselves** [a **literal** plurality of men], **God was planning to descend with his** [sic] **host** [a **nonliteral** interpretation of "Us"] and in strength, ready to confuse their plans" (*Understanding the Nature of God: The Modern Trinitarian Problem*, p. 28).

When we take a close look at Stavrinides' statements, we find that his nonliteral interpretation of Genesis 11:7 subtly shifts the plural meaning of the pronoun "Us." According to Stavrinides, the words "let Us" do not show

Christian Biblical Church of God

two divine Beings speaking together but indicate that God was speaking to His angels. This interpretation of Genesis 11:7 is based solely on the doctrine of monotheism, which--contrary to popular belief--is **not** a Scriptural teaching. The universal concept of monotheism was originally taught by the ancient Egyptians and Babylonians, and has been passed down to our day by pagan philosophers and misguided theologians.

Having adopted this monotheistic view, Stavrinides rejects the literal meaning of "Us" in reference to God and claims that the plural pronoun "Us" is referring to a single God and His angelic host. This so-called "literary" interpretation is actually a private interpretation of men--one of many human theories that have been devised to circumvent the literal meaning of Scripture. As one authority on Biblical hermeneutics states, "The **literal-figurative principle** also warns against the...methodology of the Bultmann school. **This method of interpretation robs the Bible of its original meaning and substitutes philosophical abstractions [such as the theory that "Us" includes an angelic host].** The minister who follows this course is replacing God's revelation with human theories" (Pease, *A Symposium on Biblical Hermeneutics, Principles of Biblical Interpretation*, p. 259).

Stavrinides' assertion that "Us" includes an angelic host is aptly described as a human theory which "robs the Bible of its original meaning." This damaging theory stands condemned by all the rules of Biblical hermeneutics. According to the basic rules of hermeneutics, if Stavrinides interprets "let us" in Verse 4 as literally referring to the men of Babel, then he **must** interpret "let Us" in Verse 7 as literally referring to "the LORD," or *Jehovah*. As the antecedent of "us" in Verse 4 is the **men** of Babel, so the antecedent of "Us" in Verse 7 is ***Jehovah!*** And as the words "let us" in Verse 4 literally refer to more than one man, so the words "let Us" in Verse 7 literally refer to **more than one *Jehovah!*** **This is the true meaning of the Hebrew text, as verified by the strict rules of Biblical interpretation.**

Stavrinides errs greatly when he denies the literal meaning of "Us" in Genesis 11:7. He has rejected the revealed truth of Scripture and embraced a human theory that is rooted in Babylonian monotheism. Regrettably, others are promoting this same error. John Kossey also supports the theory that the plural pronoun "Us" in Genesis 11:7 includes the angels of God. According to Kossey, the pronoun "Us" is expressing a plurality that includes angels as part of "the divine realm." He writes, "To understand the purpose of divine first-person plural pronouns, we need to recognize the

Christian Biblical Church of God

distinction in the Old Testament between the earthly realm of humanity and the divine realm of God, which includes one God and numerous angels" ("Myths and Metaphors," *Pastor General's Report*, May 10, 1994, p. 8).

In their explanations of Genesis 11:7, both Kossey and Stavrinides claim that the plural pronoun "Us" is not referring to a plurality of divine Beings but to a plurality of angels. Their monotheistic view of God has so blinded their eyes that they do not even consider a literal interpretation of "Us." While they accuse others of lack of discernment in interpreting the Scriptures, they themselves have neglected to follow the basic rules for determining the true meaning of the Hebrew text.

Remember the words of Hasel as quoted earlier: "The basic principle of biblical interpretation is to **take words always in their LITERAL SENSE unless there is an unmistakable contextual indication to the contrary**" (*A Symposium on Biblical Hermeneutics, Principles of Biblical Interpretation*, p. 176).

Kossey ignores this basic principle when he interprets "Let Us" as a reference to a single divine Being Who is speaking to a number of inferior spirit beings. The flaws in Kossey's symbolic interpretation of "Let Us" become obvious when we apply the same logic to his own material. He writes, "**Let's** look at the Old Testament data concerning divine first-person plural pronouns and the word 'elohim..." ("Myths and Metaphors," *Pastor General's Report*, May 10, 1994, p. 6). According to his symbolic interpretation of "Let us," or "Let's," we must assume that Kossey is speaking to a number of inferior beings, rather than to individuals who are equally human. Perhaps Kossey actually views himself as a superior human being, but that is not the meaning that the words "Let us" are intended to convey. This principle is as true of the Hebrew text as it is of our English language today.

In addition to his theory of an angelic host, Kossey offers other symbolic interpretations to choose from, including the following interpretation of the plural pronoun "Us" in Isaiah 6:8: "In this passage, God may be self-deliberating (as in the English expression, 'let's see')" (*Ibid.*, p. 8).

Applying Kossey's theory of self-deliberation to his own use of "us," we would have to conclude that he was addressing only himself when he wrote, "Let's look at the Old Testament data..." (*Ibid.*, p. 6). Perhaps he was speaking to his *altar ego*. Using the same logic that he applies to Scripture,

Christian Biblical Church of God

he was not really speaking to us! His words were only a figurative expression.

In viewing the Scriptural use of divine plural pronouns as only figurative, both Stavriniades and Kossey are guilty of ignoring the basic rules of Biblical interpretation. Limiting themselves to a nonliteral view has led them to accept and promote private interpretations of the Scriptures.

The claim that the “Us” passages are somehow a broad reference to the angelic host can easily be refuted. Job 38:4-7 shows that the angels were indeed present when God created the heavens and the earth—thus they were undoubtedly present at the creation of man. But does that mean the angels were *participants* in creation—part of the “Us” of Genesis 1:26? One of the keys to understanding the Bible is to realize that the Old Testament cannot be fully understood apart from the New Testament. In this particular case, certain New Testament passages are critical. The apostle Paul made it clear that—as one of the Jehovahs of the Old Testament—Jesus Christ *alone* created *all things*. “[By] Him were all things created, the things in heaven and the things on earth, the visible and the invisible, whether *they be* thrones, or lordships, or principalities, or powers; all things were created by Him and for Him” (Col. 1:16). In creating, Christ was acting on behalf of the Jehovah Who would ultimately become God the Father. Thus, the two of them—the two Jehovahs of the Old Testament, both *Elohim*—were the creative “Us” of Genesis 1:26. This clearly *excludes* the entire angelic host, which had no part in the actual work of creation. Rather, the angels were themselves created *by* the “Us” of Genesis 1:26.

In the book of Hebrews, Paul demonstrates that angels and humans have entirely different purposes in God’s plan. He writes: “[Christ] Who, being *the* brightness of *His* glory and *the* exact image of His person, and upholding all things by the word of His own power, when He had by Himself purged our sins, sat down at *the* right hand of the Majesty on high; having been made so much greater than *any of* the angels, inasmuch as He has inherited a name exceedingly superior to them” (Heb. 1:3-4). Having established Jesus’ superior position relative to the angels, Paul then asks in verse five: “For to which of the angels did He ever say, ‘You are My Son; this day I have begotten You’? And again, ‘I will be a Father to Him, and He will be a Son to Me’?” As this passage brings out, God has *never* offered angels an opportunity to become *begotten* “sons of God” with a genuine Father/son relationship. Yet this is *exactly* what God has offered to man—the potential

Christian Biblical Church of God

to enter into the very Family of God as spirit-born sons and daughters of God. Paul goes on to explain the intended purpose of the angels: “Are they not all ministering spirits, being sent forth to **minister to those who are about to inherit salvation?**” (verse 14). Angels were created to *serve* those who are to “inherit salvation”—who are to become members of *Elohim*.

Jesus Himself adds a critical point in John 17, where He uses the word “Us” in a special manner. Here, Christ is praying His final prayer before His death, asking for the Father’s blessing on His chosen ones: “I do not pray for these [present disciples] only, but also for those [future disciples] who shall believe in Me through their word; that they all may be one, even as You, Father, *are* in Me, and I in You; that **they also may be one in Us**... (verses 20-21). At present, the *one* God Family is composed only of the Father and the Son. Through God’s awesome plan, however, Christians are begotten through the indwelling of the Holy Spirit, and will ultimately be “born again” in the first resurrection as very sons and daughters of God—thus fulfilling Jesus’ prayer that all of those called by the Father would become “one in Us.”

True followers of Christ are destined to become members of *Elohim*—members of the divine “Us.” But no such possibility exists for angels. They never have been—and never will be—part of *Elohim*, the “Us” of Genesis 1:26.

Understanding the Difference Between Figurative and Literal Meaning

To support his nonliteral interpretation of “Us,” Kossey asserts that many Bible readers do not understand that figures of speech are used in Scripture. He claims that some who read Scripture have unknowingly invented “myths,” or doctrinal fables, by viewing figures of speech as literal in meaning. Notice: “In biblical matters, a myth may occur when zealous people in all sincerity misunderstand the metaphors used in Scripture” (Ibid., p. 5).

Are we, as Kossey claims, deceiving ourselves by mistaking figurative expressions as literal? How can we discern between literal and figurative meaning? Must we rely on the opinions of scholars?

Christian Biblical Church of God

It is true that the Scriptures use figures of speech. Not all words or expressions that are found in Scripture are meant to be taken in a literal sense. Many words in Scripture have figurative meanings--i.e., they have "... meanings assigned to them that are very different from a primary literal one" (Hasel, *A Symposium on Biblical Hermeneutics, Principles of Biblical Interpretation*, p. 176). Hasel lists some of the figurative expressions that are commonly found in Scripture:

"Idiomatic expressions or **idioms**, which are a semantic unit of their own, have a meaning that is more than the sum of their individual parts. For example, the idiom, 'horn of salvation' (see 2 Sa 22:3; Ps 18:2; Lk 1:69) means 'great Saviour.'

"**Metaphors** [see I Cor. 11:24-26] and **similes** [see Psa. 1:3-4] are figures of speech that express with their words figurative or nonliteral meanings. The same is true of the figure of speech of **personification** [see Gen. 4:11], which is used both in the OT and in the NT. The Bible also knows **hyperbole** (see Dt 1:28; Jn 1:25).

"Without attempting to be exhaustive in our delineation of nonliteral meanings, we also may refer to **symbols**....The symbol of the pillar of cloud was indicative of divine guidance (see Ex 13:21) and glory (see Ex 16:10). Examples of other objective symbols could be multiplied" (Ibid., pp. 176-177).

In recognizing that figures of speech are used in Scripture, it is important to remember that figurative meaning can be applied to *things that literally exist*. In Scripture, an object may have **both figurative and literal meaning**. For example, the fact that the pillar of cloud was a symbol of divine guidance does not mean that the cloud was not real. **The figurative meaning of an object does not negate its literal existence**. This principle also applies to the plural pronoun "Us" in Genesis 11:7. The fact that this pronoun is used in *anthropotheia* does not negate the existence of two *Jehovahs*!

When interpreting symbols or other figures of speech that are used in Scripture, we must give due consideration to both literal meaning and figurative meaning. Hasel warns, "In interpreting symbols the guiding principle is to **let the Holy Spirit, who [which] provided the symbol, be also the guide in identifying the symbol [through other inspired scriptures]**. With regard to symbols the interpreter must exercise care **so as**

not to fall into the trap of allegorical interpretation [*mythologizing Scripture by focusing on figurative meaning and rejecting the literal meaning*], where the Holy Spirit does not explicitly provide guidance [referring to *private interpretations of men*]. A sound principle for the interpretation of words with figurative or nonliteral meanings is to **avoid interpreting figures of speech beyond the meaning they seek to communicate** [*do not insert private interpretations, as Stavrinides does in explaining anthropopatheia*] (Ibid., p. 176).

When questions arise as to whether a word or expression in a Scriptural passage should be interpreted literally, it is necessary to *examine the context* in which this word or expression is used. Hasel writes, "A basic principle of interpretation with regard to words is to **investigate the same word or term in its usage in the same book** [for example, comparing the use of "Us" in Genesis 11:7 with "us" in Verse 4], by the same author, and then beyond in the remaining writers of the Bible. As this is done the interpreter takes into account the various **immediate contexts of the word** and its sentence combination. He is constantly aware of the purposes and developments of thought in a particular writer and among the various inspired Bible writers" (Ibid., p. 177).

Sincere seekers of the truth of Scripture will base their interpretation of a word or expression on the immediate context and on other passages that use the same wording. This principle will safeguard them from falling prey to the private interpretations of men. Only by following this principle is it possible to understand the true meaning of the plural pronouns that are used in reference to God.

Is the Pronoun "Us" in Genesis 1:26 Referring to the "Divine Realm"?

In the first chapter of the book of Genesis, we find three plural pronouns used in reference to God as Creator:

"And God [*Elohim*] said, 'Let **Us** make man in **Our** image, after **Our** likeness: and let them have dominion over the fish of the sea, and over the fowl of the air, and over the cattle, and over all the earth, and over every creeping thing that creeps upon the earth" (Gen. 1:26).

Christian Biblical Church of God

In explaining this use of the plural pronouns "Us" and "Our," Kossey does not follow the rules of Biblical hermeneutics by analyzing the context. He does not even consider the possibility that these pronouns are literal in meaning. Instead, he waxes eloquent in his private interpretation of "Us" and "Our" as symbolic of the "divine realm." To Kossey, these plural pronouns are used in the Creation account to emphasize man's potential to enter the "divine realm," which God and the angels inhabit. Kossey writes, "The first instance of the divine first-person plural pronoun (Genesis 1:26) thus highlights the positive potential for humanity in God's plan--a participation in the divine realm more wonderful than even the angelic hosts (Psalm 8:4-5)" ("Myths and Metaphors," *Pastor General's Report*, May 10, 1994, pp. 8-9).

This nonliteral interpretation of the plural pronouns in Genesis 1:26 has been adopted by the Worldwide Church of God and published for the general public. A writer for *The Plain Truth* magazine states in the May/June 1994 issue, "The first point that many readers notice is the use of the plurals 'us' and 'our.' These words are a reference to God and the angelic host in God's heavenly court. However, it is important to remember that Genesis reveals God as creator. Angels did not create humans. The host of heaven is included in the 'us' and 'our' of verse 26, not because the angels actually created, but because they witnessed the creation of Adam and Eve, and rejoiced (see Job 38:7). It is like when a king says, 'We decree....' He speaks in his office as head of state. He uses the plural even though only one individual is issuing the decree" (Steep, "In the Image of GOD," p. 8).

In this article, Steep not only promotes Kossey's view of the "divine realm" but adds a new dimension to the argument. He compares the Scriptural use of the pronouns "Us" and "Our" to the practice of a human potentate who speaks of himself in the plural because he holds power and dominion over his realm. Because Steep has accepted the theory that the language of human monarchs is being employed in Scripture, he completely overlooks the literal meaning of the pronouns "Us" and "Our."

This erroneous theory has long been promoted by a number of Biblical commentators and writers. They interpret the divine plural pronouns strictly as "honorific" references to one Absolute God. But while plurals of majesty are a traditional practice among human cultures, **they cannot be applied to the Hebrew text.**

Christian Biblical Church of God

The Hebrew grammarian Green, a respected authority on the Hebrew text, has this to say about the pronouns "Us" and "Our" in Genesis 1:26: "[the usage of the] 1[st] pers[on] plural...is **not to be explained as a royal style of speech**, nor as associating the angels with God, for they took no part in man's creation, **nor a plural of majesty which HAS NO APPLICATION TO [THE HEBREW] VERBS**, but as one of those indications of the plurality...in the Divine Being which are repeatedly met with in the Old Testament" (Green, *Hebrew Chrestomathy*, p. 84).

As an expert in Hebrew grammar, Green tells us that the divine plural pronouns that are found in the Hebrew text **cannot be referring to an angelic host**. In Genesis 1:26, these pronouns are used in a manner that emphasizes the **equality** of the Beings Who are referred to as "Us." The Hebrew word translated "Let Us make" in Genesis 1:26 is built upon a common Qal verb stem used in the cohortative form. The **cohortative form** is used to express the will or strong desire of the speaker. If the speaker has the ability to carry out a desire, the cohortative is an expression of resolve ("I will"). The linguist Waltke, author of *An Introduction to Biblical Hebrew Syntax*, explains that when a Hebrew verb is, "in [the] first-person [cohortative] plural [as in Genesis 1:26], **the speakers usually seek to instigate or encourage EACH OTHER to some action ('Let us')**" (p. 573).

As Waltke shows, the use of the cohortative form in Genesis 1:26--and in Genesis 11:7 as well--limits the meaning of "Us" to divine Beings Who are **speaking to EACH OTHER as equals**. The structure of the Hebrew text clearly reveals **two divine Beings Who are both God--not a superior Being speaking to inferior beings**.

If the Hebrew text supports a **duality** of divine Beings in Genesis 1:26 and Genesis 11:7, from whence came the teachings of a *singular* divine Being and a plurality of angels? These teachings are Jewish fables. They are fraudulent teachings that stem from the monotheistic paganism of Babylon. They have no validity whatsoever!

Notice the testimony of the Anglican scholar Oxlee:

"To prevent us from taking the words ['let Us make...'] literally, and from imbibing the notion, that the Godhead exists in a plurality of persons;

Christian Biblical Church of God

the modern Jews have instituted **two general modes of interpretation**; the first of which is, *That it is the regal form of speaking* [the honorific plural], in which the plural is used for the singular; the other, *That it is the deity conferring with his angels in council*.

"The former opinion [the regal form of speaking] has been maintained chiefly by R. Saadiah Gaon [a rabbinic grammarian of eighth-century Babylon]; who alleges in support of it a number of scriptural texts, all which R. Abraham is pleased to call, '**false allegations**'; and has not only shewn their irrelevancy, but demonstrated, that **the opinion itself, has no manner of foundation.**' Indeed, **THERE IS NOT THE SMALLEST AUTHORITY FOR IT IN THE COMPOSITIONS OF THE OLD TESTAMENT...**" (*The Christian Doctrines of the Trinity and Incarnation*, p. 96).

These false Jewish interpretations are not based on the Hebrew text. They were introduced by certain rabbis whose opinions were shaped by the monotheistic worship of Babylon. Under the influence of pagan monotheism, they rejected the knowledge that God had originally revealed in the Old Testament. Denying the plurality of the Godhead that is proclaimed in the Hebrew name *Elohim*, they claimed that the plural form is used only to show honor to God.

To show the illogic of this claim, Oxlee quotes Rabbi Isaac Abarbinel: "For on the supposition, that plurality of form gives lustre to an appellation, **ALL the appellations [names] of God**, together with their suffixes, **ought to have been used in the plural number: WHEREAS THE CONTRARY IS THE FACT**" (Ibid., p. 85).

Concerning this false interpretation of the plural name *Elohim* as an "honorific" title, Rabbi Abarbinel wrote, "But truly this statement...that the term, *Elohim*, is used in the plural form by way of honour [plurals of majesty], is, in my opinion, **without the least colour of truth or probability: as we find it in the plural number predicated of [referring to] things, which God expressly forbids to be honoured [such as idols]**. Thus, Thou shalt have no other *Elohim* before me; Let him, who sacrifices to *Elohim*, be accursed. Now the scripture is not wont to honour idols or sculptured images" (Ibid., p. 83).

The Scriptural use of *Elohim* in reference to pagan gods exposes the error

in claiming that the purpose of this plural noun is to show honor. Those who promote this faulty interpretation are not rightly dividing the Word of God. It is a Scriptural fact that when *Elohim* is referring to pagan gods, it designates a **literal plurality**.

Some who acknowledge the plural meaning of *Elohim* in reference to false gods still insist that *Elohim* is singular when it refers to the true God. One rabbi has claimed that the plural *Elohim* is used of the true God only because those who worshipped other gods were accustomed to using the plural form of the name. Oxlee exposes the folly in this teaching:

"R[abbi] Judah Levita alleges, that the reason why the term is so generally used in the plural number, is because the idolaters were accustomed to make themselves images, in each of which they supposed a particular divinity to reside; and consequently, were led to denominate them in the aggregate [plural], *Elohim*, Gods; by whom they swore always, as exercising dominion over them from their power in the spheres. **But if this be the true reason, then it follows of necessity, that the language of the scriptures is the language of idolatry**, and that the worship of images was the primaeval religion" (Ibid., pp. 85-86).

God did not inspire the Scriptures to be written in the language of idol worshippers. Before mankind turned to idolatry--before any idol even existed--the Creator God was revealed as a **plurality** of divine Beings. This truth is clearly proclaimed by the use of the divine plural pronouns "Us" and "Our" with the plural name *Elohim* in the Creation account in the book of Genesis.

Is the Use of "Us" in Genesis 3:22 Only a Figure of Speech?

In Genesis 3:22, the Creator is referred to as the "LORD God." The Old Testament contains nine hundred and fifteen occurrences of this name of God, which is translated from a combination of the Hebrew names *Jehovah* and *Elohim*. In this verse, as in other passages in the book of Genesis, the Creator God speaks as a **plurality** of Beings.

"And the LORD God [*Jehovah Elohim*] said, 'Behold, the man is become **as one of Us**, to know good and evil: and now, lest he put forth his hand and take also of the tree of life, and eat, and live forever...' " (Gen.

3:22).

As he does in every plural reference to God, Kossey views the use of "Us" in this verse only as a symbolic expression. He states, " 'One of us' in Genesis 3:22 is a terse but effective expression to contrast God's divine realm with the human world that God had created for Adam and Eve. (Angels can also discern good and evil, 2 Samuel 14:17). The explicit language of Genesis 3:22 also makes less attractive some commentators' explanations of Genesis 1:26, including self-deliberation, self-summons and the plural of majesty. **(There is no sure example of a pronoun plural of majesty in the Hebrew bible** [D.J.A. Clines, "The Image of God in Man," Tyndale Bulletin, 19 (1968), p. 65].)" ("Myths and Metaphors," *Pastor General's Report*, May 10, 1994, p. 9).

In stating his views, Kossey admits that there is no evidence in the Hebrew text to support the theory that the plural pronouns used in reference to God are plurals of majesty. This admission contradicts the view that Steep expresses in the article "In the Image of God," which appears in *The Plain Truth*, a magazine published by Kossey's own organization.

Although Kossey acknowledges the lack of Scriptural support for plurals of majesty, he overlooks the true meaning of the plural pronouns that are used in Genesis 3:22 and other passages. He assumes that these plural pronouns cannot refer exclusively to God and therefore interprets them as symbolic expressions that include an angelic host. Although he states his opinion as a matter of fact, it is not based on the contextual evidence, as the rules of Biblical hermeneutics demand.

What does the context reveal about the meaning of the plural pronoun "Us" in Genesis 3:22?

When we examine the context in which this plural pronoun is used, we find that "Us" is part of the phrase "of Us." This prepositional phrase links the plural pronoun "Us" directly to the noun "one." Because it is modifying the noun "one," the phrase "of Us" is known as a genitive modifier. A noun that has a genitive modifier is referred to in Hebrew syntax as being "in construct." Waltke uses Genesis 3:22 as an example in his explanation of the construct-genitive relationship (*An Introduction to Biblical Hebrew Syntax*, pp. 138-139).

Christian Biblical Church of God

Oxlee compares the phrase "**as one of Us**" in Genesis 3:22 with the same construction in another verse in the book of Genesis: "Dan shall judge his people, **as one of the tribes of Israel**" (Gen. 49:16). This construction of the Hebrew text was known in Oxlee's day as "in regimen." (See *The Christian Doctrines of the Trinity and Incarnation*, p. 102.) In explaining the structure of the Hebrew text, Oxlee makes it clear that both of these phrases are referring to **a plurality of similar entities**. (See *Defining the Oneness of God*, p. 25.)

Oxlee quotes the highly respected rabbi Aben Ezra to show that the pronoun "Us" in Genesis 3:22 is *not figurative* but is denoting a **literal** plurality: " 'The **true exposition**, however, of the pronoun [in Genesis 3:22] is, **of us, in the plural number**; just as it occurs in the expression, A man of us [Num. 31:49].' Such is the language of Aben Ezra, with regard to the propriety of affixing to the words any other meaning, than that which allows the speaker to be in the first person plural" (*The Christian Doctrines of the Trinity and Incarnation*, p. 102).

The contextual evidence leaves no room for a figurative interpretation of the divine plural pronouns that appear in Genesis 3:22 and other passages in the book of Genesis. In each passage, the Hebrew text shows that these plural pronouns are meant to be interpreted in a **literal sense**. The literal meaning of "Us" in Genesis 11:7 is clearly demonstrated by the parallel use of "us" in a preceding verse in the same passage. In Genesis 1:26, and in Genesis 11:7 as well, the use of the divine plural pronouns with the cohortative form of the Hebrew verb clearly reveals a **plurality of equal divine Beings**. In Genesis 3:22, this plurality of like entities is demonstrated by the use of "Us" as a genitive modifier.

It is contrary to the structure of the Hebrew text to claim that the plurality expressed by the divine pronouns "Us" and "Our" is only "honorific" or includes an inferior host of angels. These teachings, invented by rabbis of the Pharisaic school, are not based on Scripture. They are false interpretations that have led to confusion and misunderstanding of the true nature of the God of the Old Testament.

Elohim--Singular or Plural?

Ignoring the textual evidence of the plurality of the Godhead, some

Christian Biblical Church of God

scholars and writers still argue that the plural name *Elohim* is a broad reference to the angels of God. Stavrinides writes: "The word *elohim* is a generic reference to God. It does not denote the Deity. Rather, it makes reference to the divine realm in general--somewhat like saying, 'the divine powers' " (*Understanding the Nature of God: The Modern Trinitarian Problem*, p. 7).

As Oxlee points out, this definition of *Elohim* is contradicted by the fact that **the plural name *Elohim* is found in Genesis 1:1**, which records the beginning of God's creation, **when there were no angels** (*The Christian Doctrine of the Trinity and Incarnation*, p. 85).

Since *Elohim* in Genesis 1:1 cannot possibly include angels, Stavrinides **redefines** the plural name *Elohim* in this verse as a *singular* name. He writes, "The Hebrew word *elohim* of Genesis 1:1, which has the form of a plural word (since it ends in *-im*), is singular when it refers to the true God" (*Understanding the Nature of God: The Modern Trinitarian Problem*, p. 6).

To support his assertion, Stavrinides argues that the plural name *Elohim* is used in Genesis 1:1 with a singular verb. He dismisses the plurality of *Elohim* as follows: "The deciding element, in this case, is not its plural form, but its construction in the sentence. In the Hebrew text, the word *elohim* is preceded by the singular verb *bara*....With this point in mind, it is a mistake to seek a construction that would make reference to more than one divine being..." (Ibid., p. 6).

Stavrinides is correct when he states that *Elohim* is used with a singular verb in Genesis 1:1. But he errs greatly when he interprets this singular verb as proof that the plural name *Elohim* is denoting a single divine Being. He is ignoring the fact that the Hebrew name *Elohim* is a **plural noun**. Concerning the plurality of *Elohim*, Oxlee writes: "Neither is the assertion of R[abbi] Solomon and others, That the plural noun [*Elohim*], by being associated with verbs and adjuncts in the singular number, is divested of its plural import [loses its plural meaning]; entitled to any higher regard. **In Greek, a noun of the neuter plural is usually associated with a verb singular; and yet, no scholar would contend, that, because the verb is of the singular number, the noun does not actually express a plurality of subsistences.** But it is by no means the fact, that the plural term, *Elohim*, when used for the true God; is accompanied with verbs and other adjuncts always, in the singular number" (*The Christian Doctrines of the Trinity and*

Incarnation, pp. 86-87).

The plural name *Elohim* is formed from *El* by adding the noun extender *oh* and the plural ending *im*. Although it is a plural noun, *Elohim* is found with **both singular and plural verbs** in the Hebrew text. When the plural noun *Elohim* is used as a name of the true God, it is usually found with a singular verb, but it is also found with plural agreement. This use of both singular and plural verbs with the plural noun *Elohim* may be compared to the verb agreement of collective nouns in our English language. Collective nouns are used to name a plural number of objects or persons but are generally used with singular verbs. The *New Webster's Dictionary* defines collective nouns as "expressing under the *singular form* a **plurality** of individual objects or persons, as *herd, jury, clergy*, which as subjects **may take their verbs in either the singular or the plural**, according to whether they are used to express more prominently the idea of unity or of plurality."

While collective nouns are *most often* used with singular verbs, they *sometimes* require plural verbs. A **plural verb** is required when the members of the collective group are acting *not as a unit but as a plurality*. For example, we use the singular verb "is" in the sentence, "The team (a *unit*) is scheduled to play next week." However, we must use the plural verb "are" in the sentence, "The team (a *plurality* of individual members) are in their positions." This difference in verb agreement *does not change the meaning* of the collective noun "team." The team has the **same number** of members, regardless of whether a singular or plural verb is used.

This principle holds true for every noun that expresses a plurality of individuals or objects, not only in English but in other languages as well. The meaning of the plural noun *Elohim* remains the same, whether it is used with a singular verb or a plural verb.

The argument that the Godhead is singular in number because *Elohim* takes a singular verb when referring to the true God is utterly false. In Hebrew, as in English and Greek, nouns that express plurality do not become singular in meaning when they are used with singular verbs. It is contrary to the rules of language to claim that the use of a singular verb changes the meaning of the plural noun *Elohim*.

The Use of *Jehovah Elohim* in Genesis 3:22

The combined name *Jehovah Elohim*, found in Genesis 3:22 with the plural pronoun "Us," presents a special problem to trinitarians and other monotheists. They cannot explain why the name *Jehovah* (which they believe to be strictly singular in number) is joined with the plural name *Elohim*.

"And the LORD God [*Jehovah Elohim*] said, 'Behold, the man is become as one of Us....' "

Some writers have theorized that the plural name *Elohim* is used with *Jehovah* to show that God was speaking to an angelic host. In their view, the name *Jehovah Elohim* means "the LORD of Angelic Hosts." But when we understand the grammatical rules that govern the name *Jehovah Elohim*; it is clear that this definition is totally incorrect.

The name *Jehovah Elohim* is a compound term that is composed of **two nouns**. In Hebrew, as in English, all nouns are divided into two categories: **common** nouns and **proper** nouns. **Common nouns** refer to a *general* group or class, but **proper nouns** refer to a *particular* person or thing. For example, the word "king" is used as a common noun in the phrase "king of Israel" but becomes a proper noun in the name "King David." It is a proper noun because it identifies a particular person. Similarly, the name *Jehovah* is used as a proper noun throughout the Old Testament to identify the true God. In Genesis 3:22, the proper noun *Jehovah* is combined with a second noun, *Elohim*.

The fact that *Jehovah* is used as a **proper noun** in Genesis 3:22 establishes definite guidelines for interpreting the meaning of the name *Elohim*. In Hebrew, all proper nouns are subject to grammatical rules that place specific limitations on their usage. One major restriction of Hebrew grammar is that proper nouns cannot be followed by nouns or noun phrases in the genitive case, which shows possession. (Such nouns are known as genitive modifiers). Accordingly, when *Jehovah* is used as a **proper noun**, it **cannot be used** with a modifier such as "our *Jehovah*" or "*Jehovah* of Angelic Hosts." (See Oxlee, p. 69; and Obermann, "The Divine Name Yhwh in the Light of Recent Discoveries," *Journal of Biblical Literature*,

LXVIII (1949), p. 305.)

Since *Elohim* is used with the proper noun *Jehovah* in Genesis 3:22, it is contrary to the rules of Hebrew grammar to interpret *Elohim* as a genitive modifier. In other words, **the meaning of *Elohim* in Genesis 3:22 CANNOT be "of the Angelic Hosts."** **This interpretation is prohibited by the rules of Hebrew grammar.**

According to the rules of Hebrew grammar and syntax, as a proper noun, *Jehovah* can only be followed by a noun or noun phrase that either qualifies *Jehovah* or is in apposition to it (i.e., **a noun or noun phrase that refers exclusively to *Jehovah***). Therefore, when the proper noun *Jehovah* is used with *Elohim*, as in *Jehovah Elohim*, **both nouns must be interpreted as referring to the Godhead.** It is contrary to the Hebrew text to interpret *Elohim* as referring to an angelic host. In Genesis 3:22 and every passage that uses the combined name *Jehovah Elohim*, both *Jehovah* and *Elohim* must be grammatically interpreted as names that identify the Godhead!

***Elohim*--A Subordinate God?**

One writer who acknowledges that the name *Elohim* is referring to God views *Elohim* as a lesser God--subordinate to a Supreme Being. Notice the following comments: "Thus the title *Jehovah* or *YHWH* is applied in a hierarchical structure from *YHWH* of Hosts, God Most High...to the *Elohim* of Israel who is a subordinate God...The *Angel of YHWH* was termed *elohim*, *Jehovah*, and *The Angel of Jehovah*....This subordinate Being was not omniscient" (Cox, *The Elect As Elohim*, p. 4).

Cox asserts that this view of the Godhead was taught by the Jews of old: "Judaism acknowledged a duality of the Godhead, namely one supreme God and a subordinate God down to the Middle Ages..." (*Comments on K.J. Stavrinides The Modern Trinitarian Problem*, p. 4).

According to Cox, a mighty angel known as *Elohim* was adopted as a son by *YHWH* of Hosts, or *Eloah*. Cox views this "*Elohim*" as the head of a great hierarchy of angels that will ultimately include human beings. He states, "The Biblical understanding from the paper *The Elect as Elohim* was that the elect were to become *elohim* or *theoi* which was understood as a participation in the divine nature by **adoption** and grace by and through

Christian Biblical Church of God

Christ [the adopted *Elohim*] as the vehicle" (Ibid., p. 1).

Cox's claim that Christ is the adopted Son of God is in direct opposition to Scripture. Both Old and new Testament passages reveal that Christ was the **begotten** Son of God (Ps. 2:7, John 1:14, Acts 13:33). The apostle Paul tells us that Christ was **originally God** and was **never an angel** (Heb. 1:5-6, 13-14). The Scriptures also make it clear that true Christians are not adopted but are the **begotten** children of God, to be reborn in His glorified image at the resurrection (I Pet. 1:3, Phil. 3:21).

Cox's belief that Christ is an adopted angel who heads a hierarchy of "Elohim" is based on a faulty understanding of the term *Jehovah Sabaoth*, which Cox interprets as "YHWH of [Angelic] Hosts." He views this name as denoting one Supreme Being Who rules a celestial hierarchy of angels, all of whom bear the name of His adopted Son. Cox writes, "*YHWH Sabaoth* or *YHWH of Hosts* is the name of God...This Being [YHWH or Eloah] has a Son...Thus the Son of Eloah appears to be the Elohi of Israel...This Elohim, anointed by His God, having a throne of the *elohim* (Ps. 45:6-7) then stands in the *Assembly of the El* and judges in the midst of the *Elohim* (Ps. 82:1)" (*The Elect as Elohim*, p. 7).

In Cox's view, the names "*YHWH Sabaoth*" and *Elohim* are **personal** names for the two divine Beings Who compose the Godhead. Cox does not recognize these names as **common** names shared by both members of the Godhead, and overlooks the fact that these names are used interchangeably throughout the Old Testament to denote the God of Israel. It is a fact of Scripture that the Hebrew term *Sabaoth*, which Cox views as denoting a superior Being, is found in combination with *Elohim* as well as with *YHWH* (*Jehovah*). If he believes that *Sabaoth* denotes the supremacy of *YHWH*, then he must also acknowledge the supremacy of *Elohim*.

Numerous passages in the Old Testament refer to the *Elohim* of Israel as "the LORD [*YHWH*] of hosts," showing that these names identify **the same God**. (See II Sam. 7:26-27, I Chron. 17:24, Isa. 21:10; 37:16; 48:2, Jer. 7:3, 21; 9:15; 16:9; 19:3, 15; 25:27; 27:4, 21; 28:2, 14; 29:4, 8, 21, 25; 31:23; 32:14-15; 35:13, 18, 19; 39:16; 42:15, 18; 43:10; 44:2, 11, 25; 46:25; 48:1; 50:18; 51:33, Zeph. 2:9, Mal. 2:16.)

Other verses identify "the LORD of hosts," or *Jehovah Sabaoth*, as the Holy One of Israel (Isa. 5:24; 47:4; 54:5, Jer. 51:5) and Israel's Redeemer

Christian Biblical Church of God

(Isa. 44:6; 54:5, Jer. 50:34), and as King (Isa. 6:5; 44:6, Jer. 46:18; 48:15; 51:57, Zech. 14:16-17, Mal. 1:14) and the Mighty God (Isa. 1:24, Jer. 32:18). Isaiah's prophecy of the **reign of "the LORD of hosts"** in Jerusalem is clearly referring to **the millennial rule of Jesus Christ**, the *Jehovah* of the Old Testament Who was also the *Elohim* of Israel (Isa. 24:23).

In addition to "the LORD [*Jehovah*] of hosts," the Old Testament often makes reference to "the LORD God [*Jehovah Elohim*] of hosts," showing that ***Sabaoth* applies equally to both names of God** (II Sam. 5:10, I Kings 19:10, 14, Ps. 59:5; 80:4, 19; 84:8; 89:8, Jer. 5:14; 15:16; 35:17, Hos. 12:5, Amos 4:13; 5:14, 15, 16; 6:8, 14). The name *Elohim* is also used **singly**--without *Jehovah*--in combination with *Sabaoth* (Ps. 80:7, 14). The prophecies of Jeremiah and Amos also reveal that "the LORD," or ***Jehovah*, IS the *Elohim* of hosts** (Jer. 38:17; 44:7, Amos 3:13; 4:13; 5:14, 15, 16, 27; 6:8, 14).

Notice that in all the Scriptural references given above, ***not one verse*** has been taken from the Pentateuch. **You may search the entire Pentateuch, but you will not find A SINGLE REFERENCE to "the LORD of hosts."** The Hebrew word *sabaoth*, translated "hosts," occurs many times in the Pentateuch, but not once is it linked with the name *Jehovah*. It sometimes refers to "the host of heaven"--the sun, moon and stars (Gen. 2:1, Deut. 4:19; 17:3)--but most often refers to the *armies of men* (Gen. 21:22, Ex. 14:4, 24, 28, Num. 2:4; 4:3; 10:14-19; 31:14, 48, Deut. 2:14-15; 23:9).

If *Jehovah Sabaoth* was meant to denote one Supreme God ruling over an angelic host, why do we not find this name in the first chapter of Genesis, which records the creation of the angels? Why do we not find *Jehovah Sabaoth* anywhere in the book of Genesis? Why does this name of God not appear in ***any*** of the first five books of the Bible?

The truth is that the name *Sabaoth* does not identify God as the all-powerful Ruler of an angelic host, but as Supreme Leader of the armies of Israel. The term *sabaoth* is first linked with *Jehovah* in the book of Joshua, when the armies of Israel were preparing to enter the promised land at the command of God. In this reference, *sabaoth* is used to designate the "host," or army, of *Jehovah*: "And He said, 'Nay, but **as Captain [Prince] of the host [*sabaoth*] of the LORD [*Jehovah*]** am I now come.' And Joshua fell on his face to the earth, and did worship, and said unto Him, 'What saith my

Christian Biblical Church of God

Lord unto his servant?" (Josh. 5:14.) The fact that Joshua worshipped Him shows that the Prince of the host of the LORD was not an angel, as the following verse confirms: "And the Captain of the LORD's host said unto Joshua, **'Loose thy shoe from off thy foot; for the place whereon thou standest is holy.'** And Joshua did so" (verse 15).

Joshua was given the same command that Moses received when the LORD (*Jehovah*) appeared to him at the burning bush. Joshua's record of this event reveals that the Captain of the LORD's host was the God of Israel Himself. It was the LORD Himself Who issued the commands for the armies of Israel. David called him **"the LORD of hosts [*Jehovah Sabaoth*], the God [*Elohim*] of the armies of Israel"** (I Sam. 17:45).

In *The Hebrew/Greek Key Study Bible*, Zodhiates states that the Hebrew term *Sabaoth* "depicts God as the mightiest Warrior or all-powerful King of Israel" (p. 1652). This definition is supported by David's reference to the LORD of hosts as "the God of the armies of Israel" and by Isaiah's prophecy, "...the LORD of hosts [*Jehovah Sabaoth*] musters the host of the battle" (Isa. 13:4), and by other references to the LORD of hosts as the King of Israel (Isa. 6:5; 44:6, Jer. 46:18; 48:15; 51:57).

The Scriptural evidence makes it clear that *Jehovah Sabaoth*, or "the LORD of hosts," is not referring to the God of an angelic host but to the God of the armies of Israel. A proper translation of *Jehovah Sabaoth* would be *Jehovah*, "Sustainer [or Maintainer] of the Armies [of Israel]" (Obermann, "The Divine Name Yhwh in the Light of Recent Discoveries," *Journal of Biblical Literature*, LXVIII (1949), p. 310). This translation interprets *Sabaoth* in a manner that is consistent with the rules of Hebrew grammar.

Obermann attests that it is contrary to the rules of Hebrew syntax to interpret *Jehovah Sabaoth* as "YHWH of Hosts." To translate *Sabaoth* as the prepositional phrase "of Hosts" makes *Sabaoth* a genitive modifier. As stated previously, since *Jehovah* is used as a proper noun, the rules of Hebrew grammar prohibit its being followed by a genitive modifier. Notice: "What is the exact grammatical connection between the two components of the epithet [*YHWH Sabaoth*, or as it is commonly translated, "Lord of hosts"]?...'**Yahweh' [*Jehovah*] is never subjected to external determination, hence is nowhere followed by a genitive, and there is no thinkable reason why an exception should have been allowed in this case and in this alone.**" (Ibid.)

There is no evidence in the Hebrew text to support the interpretation of *Jehovah Sabaoth* as a single Supreme Being Who rules a celestial host of Elohim. When *sabaoth* is used in reference to a celestial host, whether of angels, or of the stars and other heavenly bodies, it appears in the text as "the host of heaven" (Deut. 4:19, I Kings 22:19, II Chron. 33:3, Isa. 34:4, Jer. 8:2, Dan. 8:10, Zeph. 1:5) or simply as "host" (Gen. 2:1) or "hosts" (Ps. 148:2). In most occurrences in the Old Testament, the term *sabaoth*, or "host," refers to the armies of men. When we examine all the references in the Hebrew text, it is clear that *sabaoth*, when used in combination with *Jehovah* or *Elohim*, does not refer to a celestial host but to the armies of Israel--"the LORD's host" (Josh. 5:15).

What Is the True Meaning of Deuteronomy 6:4?

The following words in the book of Deuteronomy are often quoted by those who promote a monotheistic view of God:

"Hear, O Israel: The LORD [*Jehovah*] our God [*Elohim*] is one LORD [*Jehovah*]" (Deut. 6:4, KJV).

This translation of Moses' words in Deuteronomy 6:4 is similar to the Jewish translation, which is known as the "Shema." **The Shema** has long been used as a rallying cry for monotheistic Judaism, and is now being used as a key scripture in arguing for the singularity of the Godhead. Stavrinides writes, "The Book of Deuteronomy, in particular, is emphatic about the oneness of the true God: 'Hear, O Israel: The Lord our God, the Lord is *one*' (6:4). **This is the definitive statement on the Hebrew [rabbinical] concept of monotheism...**The significance of this strict form of monotheism cannot be overemphasized; **it is the key that helps explain the Jews' rejection of Christian theology**" (*Understanding the Nature of God: The Modern Trinitarian Problem*, p. 5).

Although scholars confess that this monotheistic interpretation of Deuteronomy 6:4 is questionable, Stavrinides accepts it as absolute fact. In his view, those who reject the singularity of the Godhead are ignorant of the Scriptures. He states, "The Jews of Christ's day would have reasoned that the singular reference to God was so clearly embedded in their Hebrew,

Christian Biblical Church of God

Aramaic, and Greek texts, the synagogue, and their culture, in general, that it **dismissed outright all theological language that might seem to suggest more than one divine being.**

"Despite the conclusive evidence, some commentators have continued to entertain the thought that the one God was, in some sense (that is, in a Christian sense) *more than one*" (Ibid., p. 6).

Stavrinides would have us believe that the Old Testament supports the Jewish view of a monotheistic God. But the truth of Scripture is that Moses' words in Deuteronomy 6:4 do not limit the Godhead to a single divine Being! Moses was not the originator of the strict monotheism of Judaism. Tobias quotes W. F. Albright, one of the foremost Biblical scholars of the twentieth century, concerning Moses' lack of strict monotheistic belief:

"If by "**monotheist**" is meant a thinker with views specifically like those of Philo Judaeus or of Rabbi Aqiba, or...St. Augustine...or St. Thomas or Calvin...**Moses was NOT one**" (Tobias, *Monotheism In Isaiah 40-55: A Dissertation Submitted to The Faculty of New Orleans Baptist Theological Seminary In Candidacy for the Degree of Doctor of Theology Division of Biblical Studies*, p. 33).

Tobias exposes the weakness in the monotheistic Jewish interpretation of Deuteronomy 6:4: "It must also be noted that the familiar passage in Deut. 6:4, the Shema, is ***weak support for a monotheistic argument since the sentence is open to varying interpretations*** (see the Revised Standard Version's marginal readings). **There is no verb in the verse in Hebrew...**" (Ibid., p. 34).

As Tobias points out, **the verb "is"** in the English translation of Deuteronomy 6:4 ***does not appear in the Hebrew text***. The Hebrew wording in this verse is known as a **verbless clause**. Verbless clauses require a complex grammatical analysis in order to properly interpret their meaning.

There are different types of verbless clauses in the Hebrew text. Although these clauses vary in grammatical structure, they are all composed of a subject and a predicate. The **subject** may be either a noun or a pronoun. If the subject is a noun, it may have modifiers such as adjectives ("first," "our," "their," etc.) or articles ("the" or "a") accompanying it. All other words ¹ in the clause that do not form part of the subject are known as

the **predicate**. The predicate expresses something about the subject.

The interpretation of a verbless clause is based on several factors. A major factor in the interpretation of verbless clauses is the *relationship of the predicate and the subject*. This relationship may be either definite or indefinite. As Waltke explains, "If the predicate is **definite**, it *identifies* a definite subject...; if it is **indefinite**, it *classifies* a definite subject..." (*An Introduction to Biblical Hebrew Syntax*, p. 130).

The order of the subject and the predicate in identifying clauses usually differs from the order in classifying clauses. Waltke writes the following concerning this difference: "The order of subject (S) and predicate (Pred) in verbless clauses varies...Roughly speaking, an *identifying clause* has the order S-Pred [**subject before predicate**] and a *classifying clause* the reverse [**subject following predicate**], although if the predicate is a noun with a suffix, the order is less predictable." (Ibid.) In some verbless clauses, the words that form the subject and/or predicate are *discontinuous*; that is, split by intervening words into two parts (Ibid., note).

Waltke relates additional factors that affect the word order in verbless clauses. A clause that is *independent* will follow a different pattern than a clause that is *subordinate* to another clause. The **purpose** of the clause also affects the word order. A clause may be *declarative* (making a statement), *interrogative* (asking a question), or *precative* (making a wish). Declarative and interrogative clauses generally follow the same patterns, but precative clauses are not as predictable. (Ibid.)

Waltke's explanation of these complex grammatical factors shows the extensive analysis that is required in order to determine the meaning of a verbless clause. In applying these grammatical factors to Deuteronomy 6:4, scholars have arrived at a number of different interpretations. These varying interpretations are the result of conflicting views as to which words in the verbless clause belong to the **subject** and which words belong to the **predicate**, and whether the predicate is *identifying* or *classifying* the subject. In addition, some scholars view the disputed words in Deuteronomy

¹ Some verbless clauses contain a *third* part such as a redundant pronoun (pleo) or a nominative absolute (Foc).

6:4 as *two* clauses rather than one. These differences of opinion have led to much debate over the meaning of the Hebrew text. Since there is no other verse in the Old Testament that resembles Deuteronomy 6:4, scholars are unable to verify that any interpretation of this verse is completely accurate. Waltke aptly describes these problems:

"The problems posed by the Shema (Deut 6:4) are numerous. After the initial imperative and vocative, *l adsi oms* 'Hear, O Israel,' there follow four words. However they are construed, it is agreed that **no closely comparable passage occurs.** The *simplest* solution is to recognize *two* juxtaposed verbless clauses: (a) *wnihl a hwhi* 'YHWH is our God' (identifying clause, S-Pred); (b) *dHa hwhi* 'YHWH is one' (classifying clause, S-Pred, with a numeral; cf. #23). **Few scholars favor such a parsing.** Andersen takes ... *hwhi hwhi* as a discontinuous [split] predicate, with the other two words as a discontinuous [split] subject, 'Our one God [*Elohim*] is YHWH, YHWH.' Other proposed parsings take the first two words as subject (viz., 'YHWH our God is one YHWH') or the first three words (viz., 'YHWH, our God, YHWH is one') or even the first word alone. It is hard to say if *dHa* can serve as an adjective modifying *hwhi*. It is even less clear what the predicate *dHa hwhi wnihl a* would mean, though some scholars take it adverbially ('YHWH is our God, YHWH alone'). As Gerald Janzen observes, **'the Shema does not conform exactly to any standard nominal sentence pattern...'** " (Ibid., p. 135).

Note that in the above presentation of proposed interpretations of Deuteronomy 6:4, Waltke includes that of Andersen. Francis I. Andersen, a noted scholar, is the leading authority in interpreting Hebrew verbless clauses. In his detailed analysis of the verbless clause in Deuteronomy 6:4, Andersen shows the flaws in the translations that scholars have offered by pointing out the grammatical rules that contradict these interpretations. Here is his analysis:

"Another clause of celebrated difficulty is Deut. 6:4--*yahwe 'elohenu yahwe 'ehad*. **The many proposed translations face objections of various kinds.** 'The Lord our God is one Lord' (RSV) analyzes <(Np <A> Ns)--(Np <A> Num)>, and implies that Np can be a count noun. This is avoided in **'The Lord our God, the Lord is one [the Shema]'** (RSVMg), which analyzes <(Np <A> Ns) Sus,NpRes-Num>. But **BOTH these**

interpretations collide with Rule 3,2 extended to numerals, as clauses in ##150, 157 suggest; resumptive *hu'* at the end would be more natural (Rule 4). 'The Lord is our God, the Lord is one' (RSVMg makes *two distinct clauses*, in each of which Yahweh is S. **Objections to the second of these have already been given. But the first is not satisfactory either;** for the concern is not the identity of Yahweh. Finally 'The Lord is our God, the Lord alone' (RSVMg, JPS), **besides the objection already given to the first clause, involves a strange use of 'ehad ["one"]** with the meaning of *lebaddo*" (Andersen, *The Hebrew Verbless Clause in the Pentateuch: Journal of Biblical Literature Monograph Series XIV*, p. 47).

After showing that **the Shema** and similar translations *violate the rules* for interpreting verbless clauses, Andersen explains how a correct application of the rules leads to an acceptable interpretation of the disputed words in Deuteronomy 6:4. Notice the following analysis by this expert in verbless clauses:

"A combination of Rule 3² and Rule 6³ points to another solution. **The confession goes with the first commandment, 'You shall not have other gods besides me'** (Exod. 20:3), where *'al* has the same meaning as in Gen. 11:28; 28:9; 31:50; etc. Yahweh is the sole object of Israelite worship. *Yahwe...ehad* is the (discontinuous) predicate; *'elohenu...ehad* is the (discontinuous) subject: **'Our one God [Elohim] is Yahweh, Yahweh.'** As a statement of the identity of 'our only god,' the sequence would be abnormal; but it is **a grammatically acceptable answer to the implied question, 'Who is our god?'** The same construction is found in the cry of allegiance in Isaiah 33:22--'Our judge is Yahweh, our legislator is Yahweh, our king is Yahweh!' " (Ibid.)

² "Rule 3: **The sequence is P-S in a clause of classification**, in which P [**the Predicate**] is **indefinite** relative to S [the Subject]" (Andersen, *The Hebrew Verbless Clause in the Pentateuch: Journal of Biblical Literature Monograph Series XIV*, p. 42).

³ "Rule 6: When **a suffixed noun** is predicate, the sequence S-P (Rule 1) is used for a clause of identification in which the suffixed noun is definite: the sequence P-S (Rule 3) is used for a clause of classification in which the suffixed noun is indefinite" (*Ibid.*, p. 46).

Christian Biblical Church of God

As the foremost authority in the interpretation of verbless clauses, Francis Andersen comes to the conclusion that there exists an implied question in Deuteronomy 6:4, based on the first commandment: **"You shall not have other gods [*elohim*] besides Me"** (Ex. 20:3). The implied question is: **If we shall have no other gods (*elohim*) besides You, Who then is our God (*Elohim*)?** Deuteronomy 6:4 answers this implied question with the proper construction: **"Our one God (*Elohim*) is Yhwh Yhwh (*Jehovah Jehovah*)."** The meaning of Deuteronomy 6:4 is then completed with the only conclusion we can properly draw: **He (*Jehovah*) is our only God (*Elohim*). Thus we have come full circle back to the original commandment, "You shall not have other gods [*elohim*] besides Me."**

In other words, the Hebrew text is emphatically stating that Israel's **only** God is *Yhwh (Jehovah)*. This emphasis is clearly expressed in Andersen's interpretation of Deuteronomy 6:4, which places the two occurrences of *Yhwh (Jehovah)* together in *repetitive apposition*. Repetitive apposition serves to *emphasize* the name (Waltke, *An Introduction to Biblical Hebrew Syntax*, p. 233).

It was *Yhwh (Jehovah)* Who had delivered the children of Israel from their bondage in Egypt and had covenanted with them at Sinai. It was *Yhwh (Jehovah)* Who had led Israel through the wilderness and had brought them to the land of Canaan. Now, as the children of Israel were preparing to enter the promised land, Moses was proclaiming the name of the God Who had led their fathers out of Egypt. They were to worship *Yhwh (Jehovah)*, and Him only: "Hear, O Israel: Our one God [*Elohim*] is YHWH YHWH [*Jehovah Jehovah*]" (Deut. 6:4).

This double use of the name *Yhwh* is not unique in the Pentateuch. *Yhwh (Jehovah)* is also used in repetitive apposition in a significant passage in the book of Exodus. This passage describes the appearance of the God of Israel to Moses on Mt. Sinai when the words of the covenant were being delivered. Notice the name by which Israel's God revealed Himself: "And the LORD [*Yhwh*] passed by before him [Moses], and proclaimed, 'The LORD, The LORD [*Yhwh Yhwh*] God [*Elohim*] merciful and gracious, longsuffering, and abundant in goodness and truth' " (Ex. 34:6).

Forty years later, Moses proclaimed this name to the children of Israel, as recorded in Deuteronomy 6:4 and translated by Andersen. Since Moses was recounting the events that had taken place at Mt. Sinai, it is fitting that he

Christian Biblical Church of God

would use the name by which God had revealed Himself when He appeared on the mount.

The name by which the God of Israel revealed Himself to Moses is stated more literally in *The Schocken Bible*: "And YHWH passed before his face and called out: YHWH YHWH God [*Elohim*], showing-mercy, showing-favor, long-suffering in anger, abundant in loyalty and faithfulness" (Ex. 34:6).

The double use of *Yhwh* (*Jehovah*) emphatically identifies the Being Who spoke to Moses as **the God of Israel**. It was *not an angel* but God Himself Who appeared to Moses on the mount. Moses called Him the Rock of Israel (Deut. 32:4). The New Testament reveals that this Rock was the *Jehovah* Who became Jesus Christ (I Cor. 10:4). He was the *Jehovah* Who showed Himself to Moses on Mt. Sinai (Ex. 33:18-23).

Speaking of the Father, Jesus said, "No man hath seen God at any time..." (John 1:18). The words "hath seen" are translated from the Greek verb *horao*, which specifically refers to bodily sight with the eyes (*The Companion Bible*, Ap. 133.8). As Moses saw *Jehovah* with his own eyes on Mt. Sinai, the *Jehovah* Who appeared to Moses was not the *Jehovah* Who became the Father. The *Jehovah* Who showed Moses His glory and proclaimed His name as *Jehovah Jehovah*, the *Elohim* of Israel, was the future Christ! This *Jehovah* was with the Father from the beginning (John 1:1, Heb. 1:2, 10). Thus the New Testament confirms the existence of **two Jehovahs** in Old Testament times!

Judaism rejects the truth that is revealed in the New Testament and insists that the Scriptures reveal only one *Jehovah* (YHWH). Basing their belief on a faulty monotheistic interpretation of Deuteronomy 6:4, the followers of Judaism refuse to acknowledge the existence of the two *Jehovahs* of the Old Testament. The apostle Peter, in quoting a prophecy of Isaiah, shows that **Jesus Christ, Who became "a stone of stumbling, and a rock of offense"** to the Jews, **WAS "the LORD [*Yhwh*] of hosts"** of the Old Testament! (I Pet. 2:8, Isa. 8:13-15.) Isaiah warned that those who refused to acknowledge Him as their God would "stumble, and fall, and be broken, and be snared, and be taken" (verse 15). That is the end result of following monotheistic Judaism!

It is a mistake to base our understanding of the Godhead on a

monotheistic interpretation of Deuteronomy 6:4 that opposes the clear truth of Scripture. Both the Old Testament and the New reveal that the two *Jehovahs* Who became the Father and the Son have always existed. Jesus said, "The Scripture cannot be broken" (John 10:35). Those who reject the revealed truth of Scripture will themselves be broken. In these times of great deception, Christians need to take heed to Isaiah's warning and guard themselves from the snare of monotheistic Judaism!

The History of the Monotheistic Jewish Interpretation of Deuteronomy 6:4

The monotheistic Jewish interpretation of Deuteronomy 6:4, known as **the Shema**, is the foundation upon which Judaism was built. As Rabbi Kohler attests, "The most prominent and most characteristic feature of the entire Synagogal literature, the one which centralized and consolidated it for all time, is the solemn Scriptural verse which became the creed and the rallying cry of the Jew all over the world: 'Hear, O Israel, the Lord our God, **the Lord is One.**' This Deuteronomic verse, forming as it were **the keynote of the entire teaching of Judaism**, embodies both the fundamental belief and the historic mission of Israel" (*The Origins of the Synagogue and the Church*, p. 53).

The most fundamental belief and teaching of Judaism, as expressed in the Shema, is the absolute and indivisible unity of the One God. Rabbi Kohler writes, "The first of the three cardinal principles, as fixed by the Synagogue, is **the absolute Unity of God [strict monotheism]**. Throughout the entire history and literature of [Hasidic] Judaism there runs but one leading thought: **God is One [in number]...nor does any being share in His divine nature [denying the divinity of Jesus Christ]**. **There is no multiplicity nor division in Him, whether as of powers and persons or attributes** [the very words of Stavrinides]. He is *above* the world which is His creation [i.e., He is transcendent]...**This pure monotheism**, proclaimed by the Law and the Prophets, the Psalmists and the sages, the Talmud, the liturgy, and the philosophers of the various generations, **constitutes the unique faith of the Jew voiced by him in the Synagogue every morning and evening**, from the cradle to the grave, **as his creed...**" (Ibid., pp. 138-139).

Contrary to popular belief, the Jews have not always held this

Christian Biblical Church of God

monotheistic view of God. The children of Judah and other Israelites down to the time of King David understood that the Godhead, or *Elohim*, was composed of two divine Beings Who were both named *Jehovah*. This truth was revealed to them in the Pentateuch and was preserved in the Psalms of David and other psalmists. Later, the influence of pagan religions in the nations around them drew the people of Israel and Judah away from the Scriptural revelation of the duality of God. Eventually, the original teaching of Scripture was replaced by a strict monotheistic belief in a singular God.

How did this shift in Jewish thought take place?

Rabbi Kohler reveals the answer in his book *The Origins of the Synagogue and the Church*. Rabbi Kohler, who succeeded Rabbi Einhorn as chief rabbi of Temple Beth-El in New York in 1879, was a founder of the *Jewish Encyclopedia*. Before the encyclopedia was completed in 1903, Dr. Kohler was elected to the presidency of Hebrew Union College. He was one of the most prominent rabbis of his day. In his book, this renowned rabbi shows how the Shema--the monotheistic Jewish interpretation of Deuteronomy 6:4--became the creed of modern Judaism. He states the following concerning the origin of the Shema:

"...when and where was this solemn declaration of Israel's unique belief in the only One God [the monotheistic interpretation of Deuteronomy 6:4], implying the pledge to live, and if needs be, to die for it, rendered the central idea and leitmotif of the Synagogue? It is inaccurate to ascribe its introduction, in common with the Eighteen Benedictions and other prayers, to the Men of the Great Synagogue [founded by Ezra and Nehemiah]...It needs, however, no special argument to prove that although the Soferim connected the recital of the Shema with the Scriptural passage, just as they connected the putting on of the Tefillin and the fixing of the Mezuzah with the following verses, the REAL ORIGIN as well as the purpose of the Shema recital must be sought elsewhere. Evidently the name given it by the ancient teachers [the Hasidim], *Kabbalat Ol Malkut Shamayim*, 'the Acceptance of the yoke of God's sovereignty,' clearly states that its object was to be the declaration of Israel's fundamental belief in God's unity [strict monotheism] in opposition to the polytheism of the pagan world. But then we must ask ourselves, At what period in Jewish history was such a declaration deemed particularly necessary?" (*The Origins of the Synagogue and the Church*, pp. 53-55.)

Christian Biblical Church of God

Rabbi Kohler traces the history of the Shema to the time of the Babylonian and Persian empires. At that time in history, the people of Judah had been expelled from their land as punishment for breaking their covenant with God by worshipping the sun god and other gods of the heathen (Ezek. 8). As exiles in Babylon and Persia, the Jews could no longer offer sacrifices at the temple or participate in the yearly Passover service. Under these circumstances, they fell even deeper into pagan worship. Foremost of these pagan religions was the worship of Mithras, the sun god who became the Messiah of the Persian Magi. The Jewish exiles of that time were especially vulnerable to this new religion because they viewed King Cyrus of Persia as a type of the Messiah. Rabbi Kohler states the following:

"The great change that took place in Judaism during and after the Babylonian Exile, owing to its contact with Babylonia and Persia, was one that **has affected the entire religious thinking of the world...**The rapturous *glorification of Cyrus* by Deutero-Isaiah, who hailed his advent as that of *God's anointed, destined to bring the DEEP MYSTERIES OF THE WORLD to the light of day*, is the best indication of the realization that *a new era of religious life was dawning...*" (*The Origins of the Synagogue and the Church*, p. 43).

With the rise of King Cyrus to power and his decree to rebuild Jerusalem, the Jews were anticipating the advent of their Messiah. At the same time, the worship of the Persian messiah Mithras was spreading throughout the empire. Rabbi Kohler describes how the Jewish leaders began to blend the worship of Mithras with the teachings of Scripture: "So was **the heavenly throne-chariot of Ezekiel's vision** (referred to also in I Chron. 28:18 and Ben Sira 49, 8), as soon as it was **brought into connection with the chariot of the Persian Mithra**, Ahura-Mazda's charioteer, made a *subject of secret lore* under the name of Maaseh Merkaba. Similarly, the Creation chapters in Genesis, Proverbs c.3; c.8, and Job cc.37-38 were, in connection with Persian and Babylonian, and later on also Greek, concepts, turned into cosmogonic secrets, *Masseh Bereshit*, to be **taught only in esoteric circles** consisting of but two or three" (Ibid., pp. 45-46).

Only those Jews who were initiated into this secret religion knew that Mithras was the new Messiah of Judaism. Other Jews were led to believe that the new teachings were Scriptural and were part of the worship of the true God. In reality, the new worship being taught by their leaders was intended to honor the "God of heaven" of the Persians. Rabbi Kohler writes,

Christian Biblical Church of God

"The grossly sensual and brutal gods of heathendom...had to give way to a more spiritual deity **adored as the good 'God of heaven,' of light and truth,** to **Ahura Mazda, the supreme,** if not the only god of the Persians, whose counterpart Angrimainyus, the principle of evil and darkness, was after a long combat finally to be subdued and annihilated by him" (Ibid., pp. 43-44).

Ahura Mazda, the supreme "God of heaven," was represented in bodily form as Mithras, the blond, blue-eyed god who drove the chariots of the sun across the sky, typifying the rule of the light over darkness. He was known as Mithra the Invincible--the World-Savior who would triumph over all evil. It was the Hasidim, as the leaders of Jewish thought, who introduced the worship of Mithras into Judaism. Rabbi Kohler writes, "**This Persian system was adopted by the Jewish leaders of thought, the Hasidim, and the *Messiah* [secretly known as the sun-god Mithras] became for them the World-Savior** who would combat and finally annihilate Satan '**the wicked one.**' Thus **the entire Messianic hope of Judaism underwent a change,** while at the same time the Jewish philosophy of angelology and demonology was **formed under Perso-Babylonian influence**" (Ibid., pp. 44-45).

The Hasidim began to invent a new body of literature to promote their secret worship of Mithras: "**These new ideas were introduced by the Hasidim as *divine mysteries* [the Kabbalah] handed down to the initiated** from the hoary past by such men as Enoch, Noah and Shem, the men of vision singled out in the Apocalyptic writings..." (Ibid., p. 45). In reality, these "new ideas" were invented in the hoary past by Nimrod, Semiramis and Horus, and were handed down to the Hasidic sages of Judaism by the Magi of Persia!

After the Great Synagogue of Ezra and Nehemiah was disbanded, the secret worship begun by the Hasidim in Babylon and Persia began to come to the fore. The fall of the Jerusalem temple to the Syrians in 167 B.C. and the resulting decline of Levitical influence left the Hasidim as the controlling religious and political force in Judah. The Hasidim (later known as the Pharisees) began to spread their Mithraic practices among the Jews under the label of *Judaism*. The common people were told that these Mithraic practices were Scriptural in origin and were an essential part of the worship of the God of Israel!

Christian Biblical Church of God

One of the most obvious of these Mithraic practices was the offering of **prayers to the sun**. In describing the worship of the Essenes, Rabbi Kohler reveals that this Jewish sect followed the Mithraic practice of praying to the rising sun, and *ended their prayers by reciting the Shema*. Here is Rabbi Kohler's startling admission:

"We have first of all Josephus' description of the Essene practice: **'Before the rising of the sun they speak of no profane matters, but send up towards it certain prayers that have come down to them from their forefathers, as if they were praying for its rising.'** This was identified already by Rappaport in his biography of Kalir with the practice of the Watikim, 'the Strongminded,' *the preservers of ancient traditions*, of whom we are told that **they started their prayers at dawn and managed to conclude them with THE RECITAL OF THE SHEMA at the time of the Radiation of the Sun"** (Ibid., p. 56).

Rabbi Kohler goes on to show that the Essenes who lived in Egypt also recited the Shema in praying to the sun at both its rising and its setting: "Similarly are the Therapeutes, an Egyptian branch of the Essenes, described by Philo as **'praying twice a day, at dawn and in the evening,'** 'standing up with their faces and their whole bodies turned towards the dawn' and **'lifting their hands towards heaven when they see the sun rise,** praying for a happy day and for the light of truth and penetrating wisdom.' **Here we have a direct allusion even to the two Benedictions preceding the Shema,** the one thanking for the light of day, the other for the light of the Torah. According to R. Zera, the Watikim followed the Psalmist's injunction in **Ps. 72:5, which they interpreted: 'They worship Thee with the sun** and before the gleam of the moon throughout all generations'....Other references to the same practice we have in the Wisdom of Solomon 16:28, where, speaking of the Manna which 'melted as the sun grew hot,' it says: 'This is to teach us that we should anticipate the sun in offering thanksgiving to Thee and pray unto Thee at the rising of the light of day.' Likewise, in the third Book of the Sibyllines 591f. we read: 'They lift up to heaven their purified hands, rising early from their bed in the morning, having their hands cleansed in water.' Evidently *the class of Hasidim* spoken of under various names, assembled in the open field where they could watch the sun rise from daybreak on and, **beginning with their benedictions, they greeted the sun,** as it appeared in full radiance over the hills, **with uplifted hands, WHILE SOLEMNLY RECITING THE SHEMA"** (Ibid., pp. 56-57).

Christian Biblical Church of God

Here is clear evidence that the Hasidim were using **misinterpretations of the Scriptures** to justify their sun worship and make it appear that they were worshipping the true God of heaven. The most significant of these Scriptural misinterpretations was the Shema--the monotheistic translation of Deuteronomy 6:4. Rabbi Kohler links the Jewish recital of the Shema at sunrise and sunset directly to the worship of Mithras. Notice his admission:

"It is easy to see that [the Shema], being meant to be a demonstrative proclamation of the Unity [strict monotheism] and the Uniqueness of Israel's God, in opposition to the Zoroastrian dualism [the rabbinical justification for the recital of the Shema], **THE PRACTICE ORIGINATED NEITHER IN THE TEMPLE NOR IN THE SYNAGOGUE, but in the open under the free heaven [at sunrise]** and before the very eyes of the surrounding Mazdean priests [priests of Ahura Mazda]. **In all likelihood THE MAZDEAN WORSHIPERS THEMSELVES gave the impulse to the Jewish practice**, as we learn from the Avesta that every morning **they HAILED THE RISING SUN, THE GOD MITHRAS, with the sacred prayer, Asheu Vohu, AND LIKEWISE THE SETTING SUN with the same prayer.** What a strong incentive that must have been for the pious Jews [as the Hasidim were known] to **adopt the same impressive ceremony in honor of their One and holy God** [their secret "God of heaven"], the Maker of the sun, and at the same time to find in the Deuteronomic words [as they taught uninitiated Jews]: 'And thou shalt speak of them...when thou liest down and when thou risest up,' **THE VERY SHEMA RECITAL PRESCRIBED TWICE A DAY!"** (Ibid., pp. 56-57.)

Only those Jews who had been initiated into the "**deep mysteries of the world**" knew that Mithras was the object of this worship. In these mysteries, Mithras is *not separate* from Ahura Mazda: "The supreme god Ahura Mazda also has one Eye [the sun]...The theory that **Mithra was originally a title of the supreme heavens god**--putting the sun out of [his] court--is the only one that answers all requirements" (O'Neill, *The Night of the Gods*, quoted by Hall, *The Secret Teachings of All Ages*, XXIV).

As O'Neill shows, the worship of Mithras was **monotheistic** in nature. Mithras was viewed as *the image of the "One God."* Cumont writes, "...in the Chaldean speculation propagated by the Mithraists...the growing tendency was to see in the brilliant star [the sun] that illuminated the universe **the only God**, or at least *the sensible [visible] image of the only God*, and to establish in the heavens a **MONOTHEISM in imitation of**

the monarchy that ruled on earth" (*The Mysteries of Mithra*, p. 187).

In this pagan monotheism, the **"One God"** was worshipped not only under the name of Mithras, but under many other names that represented his *different aspects*. Cumont writes, "...the gods were ultimately reducible to a **single Being** considered under different aspects, and that the multiple names by which they were worshipped were the **equivalent of that of Helios (the Sun)**." (Ibid.)

While professing to worship the true God, the Hasidim were reciting the Shema in honor of the "One" sun-god! **The recital of the Shema as the creed of Judaism did not originate with Moses!** Nor did it begin with Ezra and Nehemiah, nor with the Great Synagogue. The recital of the Shema arose from monotheistic sun worship! That is how the Shema became the creed of modern Judaism!

The monotheistic interpretation of Deuteronomy 6:4 that is known as the Shema ***cannot be reconciled with Scripture***. As Rabbi Kohler admits, this strict rabbinic monotheistic creed of Judaism is diametrically opposed to the Christian belief in the divinity of Jesus Christ. He writes, "**The absolute Unity of God [strict monotheism], the fundamental and central belief of Judaism, became the question of life or death for the Synagogue from the time when the Christian Church placed Jesus, her Messiah, upon the throne of God [Ps. 110], either as His son or His equal...**" (Ibid., p. 140).

The truth that God has revealed in both the Old and New Testaments concerning His Son, the true Messiah, shows the utter falseness of the monotheistic Jewish interpretation of Deuteronomy 6:4. This faulty interpretation of Scripture, which has long blinded the minds of Jews, must not be allowed to destroy the faith of Christians today.

The "One Lord" of Jewish Monotheism

At the same time that the Hasidim were bringing their secret worship of Mithras into Judaism, the priests at the temple in Jerusalem were beginning to introduce the name *Adonai*, or "Lord," as a substitute for the name *Yhwh* (*Jehovah*). Until this time, the priests had followed the Scriptural command to bless the people in the name of *Jehovah*. At this time, the priests were the only ones who were allowed to pronounce the "sacred name" of God. Rabbi

Christian Biblical Church of God

Kohler writes, "Only the priests in the Temple were allowed to pronounce the sacred Name and were enjoined to do so when blessing the people, in accordance with Num. 6:27: 'And they shall put My Name [*Jehovah*] upon the children of Israel, and I will bless them' " (Ibid., p. 50).

This Scriptural command shows that God intended His name to be used publicly in Israel. From the beginning of Israel's history as a nation, the common people used the "sacred name" freely, as recorded in a number of passages in the Old Testament. The following verses demonstrate this public use of the name *Jehovah* in the days of King David:

"Wherefore David blessed the LORD [*Jehovah*] **before all the congregation:** and **David said, 'Blessed be Thou, LORD [*Jehovah*]** God of Israel our father, forever and ever'....**And David said to all the congregation, 'Now bless the LORD [*Jehovah*]** your God.' And **all the congregation blessed the LORD [*Jehovah*]** God of their fathers..." (I Chron. 29:10, 20).

We read of this same practice in the days of King Jehoshaphat of Judah: "And on the fourth day they assembled themselves in the valley of Berachah; for **there they blessed the LORD [*Jehovah*]:** therefore the name of the same place was called, the valley of Berachah [Blessing], unto this day" (II Chron. 20:26).

This public use of the "sacred name" continued down to the days of Ezra and Nehemiah, as we read, "And **Ezra blessed the LORD [*Jehovah*],** the great God. And **all the People answered, 'Amen, Amen'** [showing that **they heard the name**]..." (Neh. 8:6). In the years that followed, the religious leaders of the Jews began to restrict the use of the name *Yhwh* (*Jehovah*). Their excuse was that the name was too sacred to be used--or even heard--by the common people. Rabbi Kohler describes the substitution of the name *Adonai* by the priests:

"In post-exilic time, the use of the name YHVH [*Jehovah*] was more and more restricted and finally altogether withdrawn from common use....The priests, when pronouncing the Name in their blessing, did it in a whisper--'swallowed it up.' For the people at large **the name *Adonai* [or *Adonay*], 'the Lord,' was introduced as a substitute both in the reading and the translation of the Scripture,** as is shown by the Septuagint [the Greek translation] and the Targum [the Aramaic translation]. And while this

Christian Biblical Church of God

substitution guarded the Name from profane [common] use, it formed at the same time the highest triumph of Jewish monotheism, inasmuch as it proved the most powerful means of rendering the Biblical God for all readers of the bible *the* God and Lord of the world. For as long as Yahweh--or ***Jehovah***, **as the name was** erroneously [in rabbi Kohler's view] **read [by the priests]**-was viewed as the proper Name of Israel's God, there adhered to Him a more or less tribal character, but as soon as He is spoken of as the Lord (*Adonai*), He has ceased to be merely the God of one nation and has become the universal God" (Ibid., pp. 50-51).

Rabbi Kohler justifies the substitution of *Adonai* by claiming that the name *Yhwh* (*Jehovah*) identified God only as the national God of Israel. While it is true that *Jehovah* was the covenant name by which God revealed Himself to Israel, and the name by which He commanded Israel to worship Him, this divine name did not limit God to a "tribal" or "national" Deity!

The Old Testament clearly reveals ***Jehovah*** as the **God of the whole earth**. Moses declared this truth to Pharaoh in Egypt (Ex. 9:29). Joshua spoke of it to the children of Israel as they prepared to enter the promised land (Josh. 3:9, 11). David and other psalmists wrote of this truth (Ps. 58:11; 97:1, 5, 9). That *Jehovah* was worshipped as God over all is emphatically proclaimed in a psalm of Asaph: "That men may know that Thou, **Whose name alone is JEHOVAH, art the MOST HIGH over all the earth**" (Ps. 83:18). Isaiah spoke of a time when all nations would acknowledge *Jehovah* as their Savior (Isa. 45:21-23).

There is ***no Scriptural support*** for the rabbinical argument that the name *Jehovah* limited God to a "tribal character"! This false assertion merely serves to cover up the real reason for substituting the name *Adonai* for *Jehovah*. To find the real origin of this substitution we must look to the records of Scripture and history.

The Scriptures show a change in the manner by which God was identified at the same time that Cyrus rose to power in Persia. Notice how King Cyrus refers to *Jehovah*: "Now in the first year of Cyrus king of Persia...the LORD [*Jehovah*] stirred up the spirit of Cyrus king of Persia, that he made a proclamation throughout all his kingdom, and put it also in writing, saying, 'Thus saith Cyrus king of Persia, all the kingdoms of the earth hath **the LORD [*Jehovah*] God of heaven** given me...' " (II Chron. 36:23).

Christian Biblical Church of God

This is the first occurrence in Scripture of the name "God of heaven" in reference to *Jehovah* (*The Companion Bible*, p. 615). Beginning with the reign of Cyrus, the name "God of heaven" is used of *Jehovah* in a number of passages. It was used by the returned exiles of Judah in relating King Cyrus's decree to rebuild the temple in Jerusalem (Ezra 5:11-12). It was used by King Darius and by King Artaxerxes in their decrees concerning the building of the temple (Ezra 6:8-10; 7:12, 21, 23). It was used by Nehemiah (Neh. 1:4-5; 2:4, 20) and by the prophet Daniel in the days of the Babylonian empire (Dan. 2:18-19, 37, 44).

The name "God of heaven" was commonly used in the Babylonian and Persian empires to refer to the supreme God. Remember that this name was given by the Persians to their one supreme god Ahura Mazda, whose worship was dominant in the days of Cyrus and the kings who followed him. As Rabbi Kohler has shown, the Hasidim--the religious leaders of the Jewish exiles at that time--adopted the worship of Ahura Mazda, who was embodied in the false messiah Mithras. In this new Judaism, Scripture was combined with the worship of the heavens, and the sun, the "image of the only God," became the sole object of worship.

The worship of the sun as the god Mithras spread from Persia throughout the Mediterranean region. In the Babylonian Empire, Mithras was worshipped by the name Tammuz and was called *Adon* or *Adonis*, meaning "Lord." This name was in keeping with the role of Mithras as false messiah and mediator with God. Hislop states, "As Christ, in the Hebrew of the Old Testament, was called Adonai, The Lord, so Tammuz was called ***Adon*** [Lord] or Adonis. **Under the name of Mithras**, he was worshipped as the 'Mediator.' As Mediator and head of the covenant of grace, he was styled Baal-berith, **Lord of the Covenant**" (*The Two Babylons*, p. 70).

This connection of Mithraic worship with the name *Adon*, or "Lord," is most significant in considering the substitution of the name *Adonai* for *Yhwh* (*Jehovah*) in the Hebrew text. **This change in the text took place at the very time that Judaism was being formed under Perso-Babylonian influence.** (See Wurthwein, *The Text of the Old Testament*, p. 146.)

The historical context of this change to *Adonai* strongly indicates that it was a result of the adoption of Mithraic worship by the early founders of Judaism. Their powerful leadership over Jewish worship cannot be ignored in considering the changes in the Hebrew text at this time. Remember that

Christian Biblical Church of God

the Jewish exiles in Babylonia and Persia were no longer under the Old Covenant. For them, *Jehovah* was no longer the Lord of the Covenant. Under these circumstances, it should not surprise us that the name *Jehovah* would fall into disuse. And since the Jewish leaders, the Hasidim, had begun to worship a new "Lord," is it any wonder that they preferred to use the name *Adonai*?

Although the name *Yhwh* (*Jehovah*) was not removed from the Hebrew text in Deuteronomy 6:4, the common people were required to pronounce it as *Adonai* when they recited the Shema. To this day, the Jews in the Synagogue substitute the name *Adonai* for *Yhwh* (*Jehovah*) each time they recite the Shema.

It is a fact of Jewish history that the recital of the Shema in the Synagogue originated with the Hasidim, who used this monotheistic interpretation of Scripture to support their secret worship of the sun-god Mithras as their "Lord" and "Messiah." These early founders of Judaism taught the common people to use the Shema in their prayers at sunrise and sunset each day. The Shema, which is now the acknowledged creed of Judaism, was a prayer to the monotheistic sun-god of the Hasidim! In view of the historical facts, it is evident that the "one Lord" of Hasidic Jewish monotheism is not *Jehovah*!

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