

The Mystery of Deity
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Editor's Note: The following essay was John's answer to a brother's question about the eternal nature of God. Jan Antonsson

Hi Doug (not his real name),

I received this question or one like it a while back and responded to it rather exhaustively, but this time around I'll keep it short and try to deal with the most essential issues involved. The problem with the kind of approach this brother takes toward the mystery of Deity and its relationship to humanity is that, without knowing it, he starts with presuppositions that don't hold water and then proceeds to support them with what I call a proof-text mentality. You can "prove" nearly anything with that sort of mindset.

One of his erroneous premises is that "the beginning" in scripture is to be understood on a timeline as something or someone that God has created out of nothing. If one is drawn by the Spirit into the kind of depths of contemplation necessary to get even a peephole glimpse of Deity and true humanness, that kind of perspective becomes terribly shaken. "The beginning" in scripture is not a point in time, but it is the Being of God, which is eternal, "in whom we live and move and have our being"

(Acts 17:28), so that nothing can proceed from that beginning without having an eternal origin, or as Karl Barth would say, "Primal Origin."

St. John speaks of Christ, in I Jn. 1:1 as "That which was FROM the beginning..." What is the beginning from which the Son of God proceeded?

It was, is and always will be, the Father, and certainly the Father has no point of origin on a time line.

So much of this sort of controversy is based upon trying to affirm or deny the doctrine of "the trinity," which was a valiant effort on the part of early church fathers to affirm the essential unity/plurality of Deity, while avoiding the many gods of paganism. I'm thoroughly convinced that the doctrine of the trinity fell short of that goal, and am very much

of the same opinion as J. Preston Eby that it is much more accurate to think of Deity as Family. If Deity is Family, then every member of the Family is essentially eternal in nature.

If I were to choose a proof-text for that assertion, it would be where Paul speaks of "the Father, from whom every family on earth is named (natured)" (Eph. 3:15).

One must distinguish between Being and existence. God is pure eternal relational Being by which divine Fatherhood/Motherhood proceeds eternally out of "I AM," and from our Father Mother God, the Son is eternally begotten (eternally, being the very operative word).

Existence has to do with the space-time continuum and Deity's presence from out of eternity into the age(s), thus, again John speaks first of "our" experience with "life" and then with that life as "aionian life."

The eternal has taken up abode in time, which is the essential meaning of the Greek which is erroneously translated "eternal" or "everlasting" in most translations of scripture, as I know you are very aware of.

Those who conceive of the Son of God as the exalted first creation of God, do not adequately take sonship seriously. God births sons, he doesn't create them. The eternal Father can only beget an eternal Son.

Begotten ones take on existence as part of and the head of creation, but their essential being is the result of a love union within God and initiated by His Seed. Christ is that unique Seed and the only begotten Son, in whom we enjoy our sonship.

I am amazed that some can read the statement of Paul concerning Christ, that "In Him dwelleth the fulness of the Godhead bodily" (Col. 2:9), and not realize that for this to be so, God Himself would have to reproduce Himself and be a Son to His own Fatherhood. This is "the mystery of godliness (Godlikeness), God manifest in the flesh" (I Tim. 3:16). When something is manifested or revealed does that imply that in manifesting it becomes less than what it is?

Is the manifestation generically lesser than what is manifested? For me, my testimony of Jesus is that of Thomas, "My Lord and my God" (John 20:28). Of course we could go on and on into the wonder of our essential divinity and eternal sonship in Christ, and how we have been given participation in Deity itself by our Father's grace, but that requires more time than this response allows for.

You might want to access our web site for the many articles on the truth about the Son(s) of God and also our 5 part series on "The Coming of the Lord" (See End Note), which deals with the family nature of God.

Love ya' brother,