

APPENDIX N

The Meaning of the “Son” Metaphor

In Paper #4 we established the meaning of the concept of being a “Son” to Yahweh inductively—determining what David and others understood the concept to entail. In this appendix, we will approach the meaning of the metaphor “Son of God” by understanding it in its cultural context. What I will suggest is that the title “Son of God” **does** imply the deity of Jesus. However, it does *not* imply the deity of Jesus in the same way that Trinitarianism understands that.

The concept of the “Son of God” is not the concept of a person who is divine and—to the extent that he is divine—is not human. Rather, it is the concept of a human being who, as a human being, *is* God.

The subtle distinction between these two concepts, I would argue, constitutes the distinction between the Trinitarian’s conception of the incarnation and the Transcendent Monotheists’ conception of the incarnation. Both Trinitarianism and Transcendent Monotheism confess that Jesus is God. However, Trinitarianism maintains that Jesus is both God and man; he has a divine nature and a human nature. His divine nature is not human; and his human nature is not divine. Accordingly, for Trinitarianism, the “part” of Jesus that is divine is not human. To the extent that and in the sense that Jesus is divine, therefore, he is not human! Transcendent Monotheism, on the other hand, maintains that Jesus is a man who is God. Jesus is both human and divine simultaneously, because neither excludes the other. The reason they do not exclude each other is because they are true in different senses—senses that don’t compete. Jesus is human in the sense that he has the ontological nature of a human being. He is God in the sense that he has the personal identity of God. These do not contradict each other; they do not cancel each other out. Jesus can be ontologically human at the same time that he is divine with respect to his identity.

I believe that the latter—the concept that Transcendent Monotheism is seeking to articulate—is exactly the concept of a “Son of God” that existed in the ancient culture in which the Davidic Covenant was made:

The title “Son” given to the Son of David in the Davidic Covenant parallels the title given to the rulers in Egypt (e.g. “Son of Re”). The Egyptian conception was that the King (Pharaoh) was a human being who just was identical with their God, Re. Accordingly, the Messianic title “Son” is, in some significant sense, a title that implies the deity of the Son, the Messiah. The concept behind being the Son of Yahweh is the

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concept of a human being who just is identical with Yahweh. Hence, a human being who just is God.

The Egyptians had the concept that Pharaoh was the son of the god Re. It would appear that their concept was that this human being (who really was a human being) had the identity of the god himself. This was the concept current in Egypt (if not more widely) at the time that God was making his covenant with David. In the covenant he made with David, God promised, "I will be a Father to him and he will be a Son to me." This was in the context of promising that David's seed would sit on the throne as King over Israel, the people of God. When God used the concept of Son as part of this promise, in all likelihood he was speaking in terms of the concepts current at the time; for example, in Egypt. Namely, God was promising that he was going to make a human being (the Son of David) to have the identity of Yahweh himself. [Evidence for this claim can be found in *The Symbolism of the Biblical World: Ancient Near Eastern Iconography and the Book of Psalms* by Othmar Keel (Eisenbrauns, 1997, Winona Lake, Indiana), especially Chapter V, "The King", pp. 244–306.]

The Davidic Kings of Israel had this title, but they never really realized or actualized the content of this concept in anything but name only. (Just as the Egyptian Pharaoh was never really a human being with the identity of Re in anything but name only; for there is no god Re to have the identity of.) So, the Davidic kings of Israel were men with the identity of Yahweh only with respect to the title that had been granted to them. They were not, in any actual sense, Yahweh. But there was One coming who would, IN ACTUALITY, be a man with the identity of Yahweh. He was such not in name only, but in fact. That is why Jesus is called the *monogenes* Son, the one-of-a-kind Son. He is one of a kind because, unlike all previous sons of God, Jesus really and actually is a man who IS God. Jesus really does make actual what his title "Son of God" describes: he is the embodiment of the authority and reign that innately belongs to God (Yahweh); he is the locus of God's divine power, authority, and character.

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Internet entries that offer evidence of the Egyptian conception of the king as a "son of god":

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Ancient Egyptian Religion; Divine Kingship

<http://www.philae.nu/akhet/Religion1.html>

The King as God

The mediator between humans and gods was the king. At his crowning, a new king was transformed into a living god, a concept which of course went through changes in the more than 3000 year long history of ancient Egypt, but nevertheless remained the basis for the prevailing religious, economic and social structure.

In the earliest Predynastic times the word *ntjr* was used to denote the king directly, at this time he was also called 'son of Re'. Later the word *pr*, meaning 'great house' became used to denote the king (think of the White House and how that word is used) and from there we have *Per A'a* meaning 'Great House' meaning 'Pharaoh'.

The theory which this was based on was that when the king, called the Living Heru, died, he passed over to the Kingdom of Wesir (Osiris) and left the kingship in the hands of his son, just as the myth of Wesir (Osiris), Aset (Isis) and Heru (Horus) describe. The newly ascended king becomes the Living Heru (Horus) at the moment of his coronation, and is thereby transformed into a divine status.

So the Divine Kingship rests on mythical precedence and on two generations - a transmission of status from father to son as laid out by the gods in the beginning of time. One important distinction should be made; it is the office of the king which is sacred, the office is eternal but the person holding it is human and of course he changes through time.

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The ancient Egyptians seemed to have no problems with this transformation. The king was both human and divine at the same time, and as such he was active both on the mundane plane of existence and in the realm of the gods. This 'double' way of perceiving things, was to them complementary rather than contradictory, as is how the modern day person tends to observe it. And as the King was both human and Divine, he was the one best suited to act as a link between the world of the Netjeru and the world of humans. He served both.

"What is the king of Upper Egypt?

what is the king of Lower Egypt?

It is a god by whose guidance you live

the Father and the Mother of all humans

Alone by himself

The one who is unique

(Rekhmire)

Duty of the King

The most important task for the king was to serve the gods and by that making it possible to maintain order and structure in society. He was seen as the son of several gods, not just one; Papyrus Harris mentions Ramses III as the son of Amon, Atum, Ptah, Shu, Thoth, Osiris, Wepwawet, Horus and others. He becomes in fact their incarnation on earth. By observing and obeying the will of the gods he upholds Ma'at, the principle of balance which leads to order, justice and harmony, and which is necessary for existence to continue. Here the daily Temple Cult plays an important part. The King lives by Maat and for Maat. By reciting rituals and bringing forward offerings he is performing his duty; he represents mankind and personifies Egypt. He was the ruler by the grace of the gods and as such he had the task of fighting the disintegrating forces and uphold balance and justice in society.

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**Ancient Egyptian texts: The Loyalist Instruction
from the Sehetepibre Stela**

http://nefertiti.iwebland.com/texts/sehetepibre_stela.htm

The king was dual in nature: divine as the heir of Osiris and Horus, ruler over Egypt, and human as a man and - albeit first - servant of the gods and defender of *Maat*. These two natures can be most clearly seen in a stela depicting the divine son of Horus, represented by the king's ka, the statue "Ramses II, Monthu in both lands", being adored by the human king Ramses II [1].