

PAPER #11

A Response to Some Theological Objections

Further objections of a different sort are likely to be raised against Transcendent Monotheism. These do not involve specific passages—they are not strictly exegetical in nature. They are more broadly theological. They question whether Transcendent Monotheism is compatible with certain theological ideas or concepts that are clearly taught by the Bible. I will deal with two of the most important of these objections in this paper.

Objection #1: As deft as Transcendent Monotheism might be at interpreting the Bible in a way that would tend to support it, it nevertheless remains the case that Transcendent Monotheism does not espouse the full deity of Jesus. In the model presented by Transcendent Monotheism, Jesus is not “very God of very God.” Accordingly, it is a heresy. The Bible clearly teaches that Jesus is fully God!!

For my response to this objection, I submit the following dialogue. Another approach to this same issue can be found in Appendix I.

A DIALOGUE

Jacrates and Antikainos: *On the Deity of Jesus*

ANTIKAINOS: *Alright, I understand what you are saying. I still have a huge problem with it. If what you are saying is true, then Jesus is not God. Isn't that what you are saying—that Jesus is a man and not God?*

JACRATES: I wasn't aware that that I was saying that. I thought that I was asserting quite emphatically that Jesus is God. In fact, from my perspective, I am affirming the deity of Jesus more fully than the orthodox view.

ANTIKAINOS: *How could you possibly think that?*

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JACRATES: Isn't the orthodox view that Jesus is the incarnation of the Logos, the second person of the trinity?

ANTIKAINOS: *Yes, that's right.*

JACRATES: Then Jesus is not the incarnation of the entire triune godhead. He is only the incarnation of one of the persons of the triune godhead.

ANTIKAINOS: *Yes, that's right. That's how I understand it.*

JACRATES: Now consider my view. God is not a triune being from all eternity. Rather, God is that single being who transcends the created order and, being that transcendent person, is the creator, the judge, and ultimate purpose for all that exists.

ANTIKAINOS: *Yes, that's what I understand you to believe.*

JACRATES: What's more, Jesus is the incarnation of God. Jesus is the incarnation of the fullness of all that that ultimate transcendent being is.

ANTIKAINOS: *Yes. That's what I understand you to believe.*

JACRATES: So the orthodox view affirms that Jesus is the incarnation of one and only one of the divine persons of the godhead. My view is that Jesus is the incarnation of the fullness and entirety of all that the transcendent God is. Is Jesus not more God on my view than he is on the orthodox view?

ANTIKAINOS: *I am still not satisfied. My problem with your view is the sense in which Jesus is God, not with the fact that he is God. I acknowledge that you believe in the fact that Jesus is God. My problem is with what you think that means. For you, the fact that Jesus is God does not mean that he has the divine essence within him. You hold that he has a divine identity, but not a divine essence. If I understand you correctly, you say that Jesus was divine with respect to his personal identity, but that he was human with respect to his ontological nature. I understand you to mean that he was not divine with respect to his ontological nature. So, aren't you saying that Jesus' deity is not a matter of what his being actually is; it is only a matter of what God designates him. So even if God himself designates him to be God, God does not do so because that's what Jesus really is. God does it just arbitrarily, just to tell us which human being to count as himself. That's my problem then. It seems to me that the Bible teaches that Jesus is really God, not just counted as God by our creator.*

JACRATES: I fail to understand your distinction between something really being something and just being counted as that by God. If God counts something as X,

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isn't it really X? Does God ever count something to be X and make a mistake? If God counted Jesus of Nazareth to be himself—God—but Jesus was not really God, wouldn't that make God mistaken? That can't be right. God can't be mistaken, can he?

ANTIKAINOS: *No, God can't be mistaken. But...*

JACRATES: If God does not count my sins against me, claiming that he has forgiven them and will not require me to receive what is my due because of them, are my sins really forgiven? Or is God just counting them as forgiven?

ANTIKAINOS: *He is just counting them as forgiven. But, in the case of forgiveness, to be counted by God as forgiven is the same thing as really being forgiven by God.*

JACRATES: Why isn't the same thing true of the incarnation? If God has assigned to a particular man the personal identity of God himself, why isn't that the same thing as really having the personal identity of God? If the transcendent creator God does not have the authority to define what reality is, who does?

ANTIKAINOS: *I don't want to suggest that God cannot define reality. But, I think there is a difference between Jesus really being God and Jesus just being considered as God. If God says that he is considering Jesus as God, then Jesus really is being considered as God. I am not denying that. But that's different, isn't it, from Jesus actually being God, in reality?*

JACRATES: Well, help me understand what that would mean then. What would it mean for Jesus to "actually be God, in reality"? Can Jesus actually be God, in reality, and yet be a distinct person or being from God?

ANTIKAINOS: *I'm not sure what you are asking?*

JACRATES: Perhaps it would be helpful to agree on some vocabulary. There are two senses in which X can be said to be the same as Y. X is numerically the same as Y if they are the very same individual entity. X is qualitatively the same as Y if they belong to the same category of entities. If I take a Hershey's candy bar off the shelf, it is the same as all the other Hershey's candy bars with it on the shelf. It is the same "qualitatively," but not numerically. If I run into my neighbor at the grocery store and then an hour later I run into the same neighbor at the hardware store, he is the same person numerically, not qualitatively. That is, he is not just a person who is identical in kind to the neighbor I met at the grocery store; rather, he is one and the same individual person. Do you understand my distinction between numerical and qualitative sameness, numerical and qualitative identity?

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ANTI-KAINOS: *Yes, I think I understand the distinction. X is numerically identical to Y if it is one and the very same entity. X is qualitatively identical to Y if they are exactly the same kind of thing.*

JACRATES: Yes, exactly. So something can be indistinguishable from another thing because it is qualitatively identical while it is not numerically identical.

ANTI-KAINOS: *Yes, that makes sense.*

JACRATES: So, here is my question. In order for Jesus to "really" be God, does he need to be numerically identical to God? Or can he be qualitatively identical to God? In other words, is the claim that Jesus is "really" identical to God the same kind of claim as saying that the neighbor I met in the grocery store is identical to the neighbor I met in the hardware store? Or, is the claim that Jesus is "really" identical to God the same kind of claim as saying the Hershey bar I left on the store shelf is identical to the Hershey bar I purchased and ate?

ANTI-KAINOS: *Well, I don't know. I'm not sure I have thought about what I believe in that regard. Perhaps I would be content with a view that affirmed Jesus and God's identity in either sense. They could really be numerically identical or they could really be qualitatively identical. Either way, they would really be identical.*

JACRATES: Okay, so if the Logos somehow sort of "cloned" himself and his clone went down and resided in a hypostatic union with the human nature of a person, then that person would be qualitatively identical with the Logos. So far as you are concerned, that would be a case of being "really" identical with the Logos, God.

ANTI-KAINOS: *Yes, I think so.*

JACRATES: How would he be numerically identical with the Logos? I suppose the Logos would have to cease being in his original state of being in the triune godhead and would begin to be in a different state, namely, in hypostatic unity with the human nature of Jesus. So, in that case the Logos who used to be in an original state of transcendence in the divine trinity is numerically the same as the Logos who is now incarnated in Jesus, hypostatically united with the human nature of Jesus. Is that what we would have to say?

ANTI-KAINOS: *Yes, I think so.*

JACRATES: And either option is acceptable to you, right?

ANTI-KAINOS: *Well, when you describe it like that, I am a little uncomfortable with both of them. Maybe I don't understand the orthodox view well enough. It feels a little unorthodox to think of Jesus being the incarnation of a "clone" of the Logos*

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and not the Logos himself. I don't think that's what we are supposed to believe. On the other hand, how can Jesus be numerically identical to the Logos without requiring that the Logos left his original state of transcendence and entered into the human person of Jesus? And if that is how we are to understand it, then the Logos ceases to be transcendent to the extent that he is incarnate in Jesus. That feels a little unorthodox too. Is the orthodox view that God became incarnate without ceasing to be transcendent? I am a little confused. I'm not sure what I am supposed to believe.

JACRATES: Now you have me a little confused. Should we believe what we are supposed to believe, or should we believe what is true? But, never mind that. It seems to me that typical orthodox Christians believe that Jesus is numerically identical to the Logos, not qualitatively identical. I think that they are mostly consistent, so they believe that the Logos did, in fact, cease to be transcendent in order to become incarnate. However, that does not bother them because they can readily say that God did not cease to be transcendent when the Logos incarnated as Jesus, for two persons of the deity continued to be transcendent, even if the Logos did not continue in his transcendence. I guess they think that two persons out of three is good enough to satisfy the need for God to continue to be transcendent.

ANTIKAINOS: *I suppose you are right. I guess that is what I have believed. I just haven't spelled it out to myself very carefully.*

JACRATES: Originally I asked you if Jesus could actually be God in reality and yet be a distinct being from God. I think you are telling me "no." In order to really, actually be God, Jesus must be numerically identical to God. At least, he needs to be numerically identical to one person of the godhead. If he is not numerically identical to a person of the godhead, then—in your mind—he is not really, actually God?

ANTIKAINOS: *Yes, I think that's right. I think you have put your finger on why I am uncomfortable with your view. Even if I could find a way to accept your contention that it is only with respect to his personal identity—and not with respect to his ontological nature—that Jesus is God; I think I would still have a problem. Isn't it true that, on your view, the personal identity of Jesus cannot be numerically identical with the personal identity of God himself? Jesus is one being. God is another. Yet you are saying that these two different beings have the same personal identity. How is that possible? Two different individuals who are qualitatively different cannot be the numerically same individual. That is impossible. I think we have got to the bottom of my difficulty. I just can't make any sense out of your view. Because Jesus is a man and, ontologically, only a man, then he is indisputably different, qualitatively, from the transcendent God. If two individuals are qualitatively different, then they cannot possibly be numerically the*

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same. Since Jesus is not numerically the same as God, then he is not really, truly God. That's the problem I have with your view.

JACRATES: Okay, so let me see if I can restate your problem. First, if I am not affirming the numerical identity of God and Jesus, then I am not affirming the "real" and actual deity of Jesus.

ANTIKAINOS: *Right.*

JACRATES: Secondly, because Jesus is a human being, he cannot possibly be qualitatively identical with God.

ANTIKAINOS: *Right.*

JACRATES: Thirdly, if Jesus is not qualitatively the same as God, then it is impossible for him to be numerically the same as God.

ANTIKAINOS: *Right.*

JACRATES: So finally, since Jesus cannot possibly be numerically the same as God, then he cannot be really and actually God. Have I got it?

ANTIKAINOS: *Yep. That's it.*

JACRATES: What if I could convince you that, in fact, it is possible for something to be numerically identical with something else at the same time that it is qualitatively different?

ANTIKAINOS: *Huh? That's impossible. That makes no sense at all.*

JACRATES: But what if I could convince you? If Jesus could be numerically the same as God at the same time that he is qualitatively distinct from God, would that change your mind? Wouldn't it then be possible for Jesus, the man, to really and actually be God, even though, as a man, he would be qualitatively different from God?

ANTIKAINOS: *Okay? I guess so. I mean that would certainly meet the heart of my objection—if it were possible. But that's my whole point. It isn't possible! If person X is numerically the same as person P, then it will have to be the case that person X is qualitatively the same as person P. How could it be otherwise?*

JACRATES: Certainly that is typically the case. At least, when we are talking about identifying persons according to their body. If person X is numerically the same as person P, then they have one and the same body. So, person X's body is going to look and act just like person P's body, because they are exactly the

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same body. Of course, if you look at it that way, it would seem to be impossible for person X to be numerically the same as person P without being also qualitatively the same. To spell it all out, it would seem that between numerical and qualitative sameness we have four logical possibilities: The first possibility is that entity A is numerically different from entity B and also qualitatively different—like a baseball bat and a kitten. Second, entity A is numerically different from entity B but they are qualitatively the same—like two different boxes of Kellogg's Corn Flakes. Third, entity A is numerically the same as entity B and they are also qualitatively the same—like my baseball cap on my head is qualitatively the same as my baseball cap on the head of the man who stole it from me. Fourth, entity A is numerically the same as entity B, but entity A and entity B are qualitatively different. But this final option seems to us to be impossible, doesn't it. Because if something is the very same thing as another thing, how can they be different in any way at all?

ANTIKAINOS: Yes. Exactly right! That's exactly what I am saying. Since Jesus, as a man, is different from God, then he can't possibly be numerically the same as God. And if he isn't numerically the same as God, then he can't really, actually be God.

JACRATES: Well, I have my work cut out for me then. Antikainos, think with me about something. Suppose we have a bench sitting in the middle of an otherwise empty room. Now suppose we have lined up on the bench a row of objects. A lamp, a blender, a coffee maker, a book, and a computer. Now on one side of the room we have a very bright spotlight shining across the room at the bench full of objects. The spotlight casts shadows on the wall on the other side of the room. Now, would you be able to go to the wall where the shadows are and identify the objects from their shadows? Could you point to a shadow and say, "This is the blender." And then point to another shadow and say, "This is the computer." To another, "This is the book." And so forth?

ANTIKAINOS: Yes. I assume so. Especially if I had enough practice at it.

JACRATES: Now let's talk about just one of those shadows. Take the shadow of the computer. Is it a shadow of some computer that is just like the computer on the bench? Or is it the shadow of that computer in particular?

ANTIKAINOS: Just that computer in particular.

JACRATES: So is the shadow of the computer numerically identical to the computer, or is it numerically different from the computer?

ANTIKAINOS: Well, that's easy. It has to be numerically different. The shadow is a different entity from the computer itself. The computer is the computer. The

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shadow is the shadow. They are not the very same thing. They are different things.

JACRATES: Indeed you are right. It would be most silly of me to mistake the shadow of a computer for the computer itself. But tell me, are they numerically different with respect to the ontological entity that they are, or are they numerically different with respect to the particular identity of which thing they are?

ANTIKAINOS: *I'm not sure I understand your question.*

JACRATES: Well, I think we can agree that they are numerically different with respect to the ontological thing that they are. The shadow of the computer is a completely different thing from the computer that caused the shadow. So the computer is a numerically different thing, ontologically, from the shadow.

ANTIKAINOS: *Yes, of course.*

JACRATES: Now we need a way to be able to describe the identity of our computer. Can we do this? Can we say that the computer is the computer that Socrates bought? And can we use that as a way of indicating which particular computer it is and therefore as a way of indicating the particular identity of the computer?

ANTIKAINOS: *Sure, why not?*

JACRATES: Now then, what is the particular identity of the computer's shadow on the wall? Would I not be right to point to it and say, "This is the computer that Socrates bought"?

ANTIKAINOS: *No. Because you are not pointing to the computer; you are pointing to the shadow. The shadow is not the computer that Socrates bought. The shadow is the shadow of the computer that Socrates bought.*

JACRATES: Indeed it is, Antikainos. But we have already agreed that a shadow is a different thing from an object. That is not in question. We are no longer speaking of the particular entity that the thing is—the shadow rather than the computer. Now we are talking about the identity of the computer and the identity of the shadow. Do they not have the same identity? I mean, it is not as if the computer is the computer that Socrates bought and the shadow is the computer that Hercules bought. That is not possible, is it? If the shadow is cast by the computer that Socrates bought, then the shadow on the wall is the same computer—it is the computer that Socrates bought. What other computer could it be?

ANTIKAINOS: *Okay, I see your point.*

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JACRATES: So, while the computer that Socrates bought is, from the standpoint of their ontological nature, different from its shadow, yet, from the standpoint of the particular identity of each, the computer is numerically the same as the shadow. In other words, the particular identity of the computer is numerically the same as the particular identity of the shadow of that computer.

ANTI-KAINOS: *Okay, I guess I can accept that.*

JACRATES: Do you see then that it is, in fact, possible for two things to be numerically identical while being qualitatively different? The particular identity of a particular shadow is numerically the same as the particular identity of the computer that casts that shadow. At the same time, the ontological nature of the shadow is very different, qualitatively, from the ontological nature of the computer.

ANTI-KAINOS: *Okay, I guess that makes sense.*

JACRATES: What if Jesus is just the shadow of God projected onto the wall of human nature. Or to put it more simply, what if Jesus is the "image" of God represented in the medium of a human being? If so, then wouldn't it be just like the instance of Socrates' computer and its shadow? Wouldn't the particular identity of Jesus be numerically identical to the particular identity of the God of whom he was the image; and, at the same time, the ontological nature of the image (Jesus) would be very different, qualitatively, from the ontological nature of God?

ANTI-KAINOS: *I guess.*

JACRATES: That's exactly what my view is. My view is that Jesus is the "image of the invisible God." Ring any bells? I contend that Jesus is God translated into and represented in the medium of a human being. Ontologically, Jesus is a human being, pure and simple. But, at the same time, in terms of his personal identity, he is God himself. God projected himself into human form such that the particular human being, Jesus, just was the particular person of God himself. That means that Jesus and God are numerically identical, so far as their particular personal identity is concerned.

ANTI-KAINOS: *Maybe.*

JACRATES: That is what you said you objected to in my view. You said that my view did not affirm the numerical identity of God and Jesus and that is why it fell short of affirming that Jesus was really and truly God. Well, I have just shown you that, on my view, Jesus and God are indeed numerically identical. They are

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numerically identical at the same time that they are qualitatively different. Having shown that that makes sense, I have removed your objection to my view.

ANTIKAINOS: Well, maybe you have met that objection. I guess that wasn't my real objection. Let me try again. Maybe this is it. The Bible teaches that the very essence of God dwells in Jesus. On your view, Jesus, in his essence, is just a human being. You claim that he has the personal identity of God, but that is not enough. For your view to be right, he has to have the very essence of God within him.

JACRATES: But Antikainos, now you're just making stuff up. The Bible doesn't say that Jesus has the very essence of God dwelling within him. Where does it say that? The Bible never even talks about "essences" at all. Where are you coming up with that stuff?

ANTIKAINOS: Granted, the Bible doesn't ever talk about essences, but that's what it means. It says explicitly that "Jesus is God" and that "all the fullness of deity dwells in bodily form." That's what I'm talking about.

JACRATES: Let's talk about Socrates' computer for a minute. Could I point to the shadow on the wall and say something like "the complete detail of Socrates' computer can be seen in this shadow"?

ANTIKAINOS: Of course, if it is a clear enough shadow.

JACRATES: Would I mean that the very substance of Socrates' computer is literally dwelling in the shadow, or would I mean something else?

ANTIKAINOS: You would mean something else. You would mean that the detail of the computer is represented very clearly in the image of the shadow.

JACRATES: Okay, so how have you decided that "in him the fullness of deity dwells in bodily form" means that the very essence of God resides in the human body of Jesus? Why would you not understand that to mean that, in the human person of Jesus, the fullness of all that God is becomes fully and truly represented? Is that not equally possible?

ANTIKAINOS: Yes, I suppose it is.

JACRATES: Isn't it fair to say that, in all those passages where you might go to support your contention that Jesus is God... don't all of them simply say, in one way or another, that Jesus is God? They don't explicitly spell out in what sense he is God, do they? Don't they simply assert his identity with God?

ANTIKAINOS: Yes, in truth, you are right.

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JACRATES: So, it isn't right to say that the Bible teaches that the very essence of God dwells in Jesus. That is a possible basis for Jesus being called God, but it isn't the only one. It is also possible that Jesus is God in exactly the way that my view holds: namely, he is the "image of the invisible God." That is, he is God having translated his being into the form of a particular human being, Jesus. Jesus would be declared by the apostles to be identical to God on my view just as much as he would on the orthodox view. It wouldn't mean exactly the same thing, but it would be just as appropriate to say. So we can't decide which view is right—my view or the orthodox view—from the mere fact that the Bible teaches that Jesus is identical to God. Because the Bible would teach explicitly that Jesus is identical to God on both views.

ANTI-KAINOS: *Yes, I must concede that you are right.*

JACRATES: I wonder if there isn't one thing more that has you confused about my view. What did you mean when you maintained just a moment ago that Jesus has the very essence of God dwelling in him? Specifically, what do you mean by the "essence" of God?

ANTI-KAINOS: *You know, the very being of God.*

JACRATES: What do you mean by the very being of God?

ANTI-KAINOS: *You know, the thing that makes God to be God rather than anything else. His essence is His God-ness.*

JACRATES: Is this what you're thinking? Are you saying that Jesus is human to the extent that he has human "stuff" within him and Jesus is God to the extent that he has divine "stuff" within him? Are you saying that in order for Jesus to really and truly be God, he has to have divine "stuff" within him? If he doesn't have any divine stuff within him, then he can't really be said to be God. Is that what you are trying to say?

ANTI-KAINOS: *Yes. I think that's it.*

JACRATES: Tell me, then, would you agree that God is spirit?

ANTI-KAINOS: *Yes, most certainly.*

JACRATES: What do you understand that to mean exactly? What does it mean for God to be spirit?

ANTI-KAINOS: *It means that he is not material, but spiritual.*

JACRATES: Okay, but what is the difference between being spiritual and material?

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ANTI-KAINOS: *Mostly I suppose that he is intangible and invisible. You can't see God. You can't touch God nor lay your hands on him. He doesn't have concrete, tangible existence. He has intangible existence.*

JACRATES: Is oxygen spirit?

ANTI-KAINOS: *No, it's an element, a chemical, a gas.*

JACRATES: It's invisible. It's intangible. It doesn't have concrete, tangible existence. You can't see it. You can't touch it and know that you are touching it. You can't lay your hands on it.

ANTI-KAINOS: *Well, but that's because oxygen is such rarified stuff, but it is still stuff. God is not made of stuff at all.*

JACRATES: So, really then, to be spirit is not to be made of stuff?

ANTI-KAINOS: *Yes, that's right.*

JACRATES: Didn't you just a moment ago tell me that in order for Jesus to truly be God he had to have divine "stuff" within him?

ANTI-KAINOS: *Yes, that's right. Now you are going to say that I contradicted myself because I just said that God was not made of stuff. But I'm not contradicting myself. There is material, physical stuff; and there is spiritual stuff. God is made of spiritual stuff, not material and physical stuff. I was just making the point that spiritual stuff is not just rarified, dispersed physical stuff; it is a different sort of stuff altogether. It's not physical stuff at all; it's spiritual stuff.*

JACRATES: Does something have to be made of one sort of stuff or another in order to be real?

ANTI-KAINOS: *Yes, I think so.*

JACRATES: And there are two kinds of stuff—material stuff and spiritual stuff?

ANTI-KAINOS: *Yes.*

JACRATES: And anything that really exists is either material stuff or spiritual stuff?

ANTI-KAINOS: *Yes.*

JACRATES: Do you think that love is real? Do you think that love really and actually exists? Or do you think it is just a fiction?

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ANTI-KAINOS: *Yes. I think that love is real. It really and actually exists.*

JACRATES: So which sort of stuff is it made of? Is it made of physical, material stuff, or is it made of spiritual stuff?

ANTI-KAINOS: *Well, I don't think love is made of "stuff." I think love is real in a different sort of way. Love is an abstract thing, not a substantive thing.*

JACRATES: So, there are some things that can be really real that are not made of stuff?

ANTI-KAINOS: *Well, I guess that's right.*

JACRATES: Now could it be that that's what it means to be spirit? You were suggesting that there are two kinds of "stuff"—material and spiritual. But if something can be really real without being made of any kind of substance at all—like love—maybe that's what we mean by something being spiritual. I mean, maybe being spiritual is not being made of spiritual stuff; rather, it is being something that is not made of "stuff" at all. That was what you first suggested that God being spirit meant. Don't you think you were right the first time?

ANTI-KAINOS: *Maybe.*

JACRATES: Now because something that is "spirit" is not material and not substantive, it doesn't exist at a particular location in space, does it? Love, for example. It doesn't make any sense to ask, "Where is it?" Love isn't the sort of thing that is in a particular place. It just is. The same is true of justice, truth, and anything else that is "spirit" rather than matter. That's true of God isn't it? It doesn't make any sense to ask, "Where is God?" It's not like he is in one place rather than another place. He just is. He's not in or at some place.

ANTI-KAINOS: *That makes sense.*

JACRATES: But if God is spirit, and if God being spirit means that it makes no sense to locate his being in some place, then how can we make any sense out of the very being of God being in Jesus' body? Are we saying that a spiritual being has one location and not another? Does that make any sense? Would it make any sense to say that the very essence of love resided in Jesus? Or to say that the very essence of justice resided in Jesus? We could make sense out of it if we thought of the essence of love or justice as some kind of invisible, intangible substance. But we have just decided that this is not the right way to understand spiritual things. Spiritual things are not things made of invisible, intangible stuff. Spiritual things aren't made of stuff at all. Spiritual things are not substantive; they are spiritual. The same thing is true of the divine essence. The divine essence is

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not some invisible, intangible stuff out of which God is made. If so, then it could be in some particular place rather than another. The divine essence is a being who, in the nature of his being, is spirit and not substance. Being spirit, it does not—like substance—exist in some particular location. It just is. It affects the world. It manifests itself in the world. In fact, the divine essence is the very source and author of the whole of reality. It does not and cannot exist at some place (rather than another) within reality. That wouldn't make any sense. Since God is spirit, do you see why it makes no sense to me to believe that for Jesus to be God has to mean that he has the very essence of God residing in him? How could that be? The very essence of God cannot reside anywhere in the created order. When the apostles proclaim that Jesus is God, they are not proclaiming that Jesus has God stuff residing in him. They are making a very different proclamation. As you know, that's what my view is attempting to understand. I think that when they proclaim Jesus as God, they are not meaning to say that his substance is divine. They do not mean that his ontological makeup is divine. Rather, they are meaning to say that his identity is numerically identical to the personal identity of the transcendent creator God himself. That's what they mean when they suggest that Jesus is God. My problem with orthodox Trinitarians is that they insist on being materialists. If Jesus is not, in some part, made of divine material, then he cannot be God, they claim. That is the mindset of a materialist. The ultimate nature of anything is a matter of what stuff it is made of, but the Bible says that God is spirit. He isn't made of any stuff at all. So it makes no sense to insist that Jesus can only be God to the extent that he is made of God stuff when there can be no such thing as God stuff.

ANTIKAINOS: Yes, I see your point. I think my reaction against your view has, at least in part, been because I have had the mindset of a materialist. I need to think some more about what you have said. Perhaps my thinking has been in a rut.

JACRATES: Indeed, that would not be surprising. It is a rut that has been over 1600 years in the making. Such a well-trodden path is bound to be a pretty formidable rut.

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Objection #2: In accord with sound biblical theology, Jesus had to be God himself in order to die for our sins and bring about our forgiveness of sins. Accordingly, if Jesus is not in possession of the very ontological being of the divine nature itself, then he would not have been able to bring about our redemption through his death. Therefore, if Jesus is not who Orthodox Trinitarianism says he is, then there is no possibility of the forgiveness of our sin. Trinitarianism must be true in order for the gospel to be true. Therefore, Transcendent Monotheism is wrong in a very fundamental way.

Time does not permit me to complete this portion of the paper. If time had permitted me to write it, here are the points I would have argued:

(i) The objection assumes the validity of the traditional Reformation-era theory of the atonement; but I would contend that there is an entirely different theory of the atonement that is actually more closely aligned with the teaching of the apostles than the traditional theory. Nothing in this more biblical alternative theory of the atonement that I would propose requires Jesus to be of the very ontological nature of God himself in order for his death to serve as the ground of our redemption. [For an account of my proposed alternative theory of the atonement, consult the audio files of my series on the Atonement delivered at Reformation Fellowship in the late winter of 2008.]

(ii) Even the traditional theory of the atonement need not necessarily require Jesus to be of the very ontological nature of God himself in order for his death to serve as the ground of our redemption. Granted, this is a common assumption. It is a notion that derives from Anselm's argument in *Cur Deus Homo?* But Anselm's argument is never explicitly made in the Bible; and biblical teaching does not necessarily require Anselm's conclusions—steeped in Neo-Platonic assumptions as they are.
