

The One God who became visible

Identity, echad, and revelation as the biblical center of knowing God

– Mekabel¹, 2026

Introduction: why this is not an optional question

Christian faith is ultimately not about a system, but about *knowing a Person*. In Scripture that knowing is not defined abstractly, but relationally:

“THIS IS ETERNAL LIFE: THAT THEY KNOW YOU, THE ONLY TRUE GOD, AND JESUS CHRIST WHOM YOU HAVE SENT” (JOHN 17:3).

The question this essay therefore addresses can be stated explicitly as follows:

***Where and how, according to Scripture, is the one God truly known,
and what does this imply for the way Jesus is understood and confessed?***

This question is not optional, because it touches the very center of faith and worship. If Jesus is not known as Scripture itself presents him, the resulting understanding of God is inevitably displaced. The issue at stake is therefore not a secondary dogmatic refinement, but the question of where God himself is to be found and recognized according to the biblical witness.

It is precisely Jesus’ statement in John 17:3 that exposes a fundamental tension. Jesus speaks of “the only true God” and distinguishes himself from him, while elsewhere he says that whoever has seen him has seen the Father, and that in him God is definitively known. This tension runs like a red thread through Scripture and has compelled the church, throughout the centuries, to theological reflection.

The outcome of that reflection, articulated most notably in the councils of the fourth century, is the doctrine of the Trinity. This doctrine has profoundly shaped Christian faith and continues to function as a normative confessional framework.

Yet it is justified, and necessary, to ask whether this formulation preserves the biblical testimony or reframes it. For the Bible itself did not arise in a Greek-philosophical vacuum, but within Israel’s Hebrew worldview. Whoever wants to know Jesus *as He truly is* must therefore approach Him not only dogmatically, but also hermeneutically: from within the framework in which He Himself lived, spoke, and was understood.

This essay argues that **Identity-Based Echad Monotheism**, defined as “*the belief that God is one indivisible identity who reveals Himself freely and multidimensionally*”, is not merely an alternative to Trinitarianism, but the most scripturally faithful framework for understanding Jesus. It will be shown that the classical Trinity, however well-intended, risks representing a conceptually different Jesus than the Scriptures themselves do.²

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Prologue: have you not known Me?

When Jesus says to Philip in the upper room:

“HAVE I BEEN WITH YOU SO LONG, AND YOU HAVE NOT KNOWN ME, PHILIP? HE WHO HAS SEEN ME HAS SEEN THE FATHER” (JOHN 14:9),

He is not speaking in riddles, nor correcting an awkward phrasing. He exposes a fundamental misunderstanding, not only in Philip, but in everyone who seeks to know God through abstract distinctions rather than through revelation. This statement functions as a hermeneutical hinge: here we see how Jesus wants to be understood and why this so often goes wrong.

The context is decisive. Philip does not ask for more explanation, but for God Himself:

“LORD, SHOW US THE FATHER, AND IT IS ENOUGH FOR US” (JOHN 14:8).

This is not unbelief, but a deeply rooted Jewish longing: the desire to truly know the invisible God. Jesus' answer is therefore not a rejection of that longing, but a correction of its direction. He does not point beyond Himself; He turns Philip's gaze back to Himself. God does not need to be shown again, because He has already become visible.

What is often overlooked is the precision of Jesus' wording. He does not say,

“Do you not yet know HIM?”, referring to the Father, but emphatically:

“Do you not yet know ME?”

This is no stylistic accident, but theologically decisive. The unknownness Jesus confronts Philip with is not about a third party, “Him”, but about Jesus Himself. The problem is not that Philip knows too little about the Father, but that he follows and hears Jesus and yet does not recognize who He is.

This shift from Him to Me unmasks a widespread misunderstanding. Philip seeks God behind Jesus: somewhere above Him, beyond Him, alongside Him. Jesus breaks this by making clear that God is not to be sought elsewhere, but **encountered precisely in Him**.

Therefore He does not say that the Father is unknown, but that He Himself is unknown, and precisely therein the Father remains unknown.

“Whoever has seen Me has seen the Father” is in this context not a representative statement (“I show what the Father is like”), but an identity statement. Jesus does not say: I point to the Father, but: I am the One in whom you meet Him. The text leaves no room for an ontological layer in between or a hidden ‘other’ behind Jesus. He presents Himself not as a means, but as revelation by presence.

Within the Hebrew worldview this is entirely consistent. God is not known by analysis of His inner structure, but by His actions, His words, and His nearness. When God appears, He does not appear partially or derivatively, but as Himself. Jesus claims that in His words, deeds, mercy, and presence the One God Himself is known.

This makes the saying more than a pastoral admonition. It is a decisive criterion for every God-concept. Where Jesus is distinguished from God as another identity, people will inevitably keep asking for “more”: a Father behind the Son, a deeper reality beyond Jesus. But where Jesus is known as the visible revelation of the One, that question falls away. Then the answer has already been given, not as a concept, but as a Person.

“Have I been with you so long, and you have not known Me?” is therefore not a semantic detail, but an existential question of faith that confronts the reader. For whoever truly knows Jesus knows God. And whoever keeps seeking God elsewhere than in Him has not yet known Jesus as He wants to be known.

1. The Hebrew point of departure: God as identity

1.1 The Shema as hermeneutical foundation

Every serious theology of God must begin where Scripture itself begins: with Israel's confession.

"HEAR, ISRAEL: YHWH OUR GOD, YHWH IS ECHAD." (DEUT. 6:4)

This confession is not an abstract statement about God's "essence," but an identity declaration. Echad does not mean "one in number" (that would be yachid), but one in indivisible faithfulness and identity. God is not divided, not internally pluralistic, not composed of distinct subjects.

This is not a marginal remark, but the heart of Israel's knowledge of God. Everything that follows (prophecy, law, redemption, worship) is subordinate to it. Any later interpretation that undermines this core inevitably comes into tension with Scripture.

1.2 Name-theology: THE LORD is His name

In Exodus 3 Moses does not ask for God's "essence," but for His Name, because in Hebrew thought a name signifies identity and presence.

"EHYEH ASHER EHYEH, I AM WHO I AM" (EX. 3:14)

God gives no description but a self-designation. Ehyeh (I am / I will be) is then rendered as YHWH (He is / He will be). This is not a philosophical distinction but a relational one: God will be present as He is present.

Therefore Scripture can say:

- that God's Name dwells in the temple (1 Kings 8:29),
- that His Name is placed upon people (Num. 6:27),
- and that His Name can even be "in" an angel (Ex. 23:21).

All of this is conceivable only if God's identity is not locked into one location or form, but *free to manifest* without becoming divided.

2. God seen, without being divided

2.1 The tension of seeing and not seeing

The Hebrew Bible sustains a tension that is not incidental, but theologically deliberate. On the one hand it states:

“YOU CANNOT SEE MY FACE, FOR NO MAN SHALL SEE ME AND LIVE” (EX. 33:20)

God is wholly Holy, beyond human control and perception. He is not available, not to be fixed, not reducible to what can be seen. And yet the same Scripture contains passages that do not soften this, but seem to stand directly opposite:

“THEY SAW THE GOD OF ISRAEL” (EX. 24:10)

The text offers no mitigation. It does not say they saw “something,” nor only a reflection. The Bible dares to say that people saw God, and it leaves that statement standing alongside the prohibition and impossibility of seeing God. The tension is not resolved by explanation or correction; it is borne.

This is telling. The Hebrew Scriptures do not reason from abstract consistency, but from revelation in history. God is truly invisible in His majesty and truly visible in His appearing. The tension lies not in God, but in the human desire to define God unambiguously.

Decisive is what Scripture does not do. It does not introduce a distinction between “God Himself” and “another divine figure” who could be seen. What is seen is explicitly the God of Israel. God’s appearing is not explained by division, but by His freedom to make Himself known without losing His identity.

2.2 Appearance without division of identity

This pattern recurs throughout the Old Testament. Jacob can say:

“I HAVE SEEN GOD FACE TO FACE” (GEN. 32:30)

without that requiring a redefinition of who God is. Likewise Scripture speaks of God’s glory appearing, of God’s Name dwelling, and of God’s angel speaking as YHWH Himself. In none of these cases is a second god or derivative identity introduced.

The underlying principle is clear: God’s appearing is not an ontological split. When God appears, He comes not partially or indirectly, but as Himself, in a way fitting to the relationship and the moment. God’s unity (echad) is not threatened but confirmed.

This Hebrew way of thinking differs essentially from later Greek ontological reasoning, where visibility and invisibility are quickly tied to distinct substances or persons. For Scripture, visibility is not a problem to solve, but a given of God’s free self-revelation.

2.3 The incarnation as continuation of this pattern

Against this background the prologue of John's Gospel takes on its full weight:

"THE WORD WAS GOD ... AND THE WORD BECAME FLESH" (JOHN 1:1,14)

John does not introduce a second divine identity alongside God, but speaks of God's own self-communication, His speaking and acting, and dares to say this Word is God Himself. When this Word becomes flesh, it is not a break with the Old Testament, but its radical consequence.

What Scripture earlier displayed in moments and appearances now becomes enduring and personal. The incarnation is therefore not a philosophical problem that requires an internal division of God, but the ultimate confirmation of God's freedom to show Himself.

That is why Jesus can later say:

"HE WHO HAS SEEN ME HAS SEEN THE FATHER" (JOHN 14:9)

This does not contradict Exodus 33:20; it clarifies it. God cannot be seen as He is outside creation, but He can reveal Himself so that He is truly known and seen, not by sending another, but by Himself drawing near.

Scripture therefore asks not: *how many persons are in God?*
but: *do we recognize God when He lets Himself be seen?*

Scripture chooses not *solution*, but *revelation*.

3. Jesus and the identity of YHWH

What is present as tension in the Old Testament becomes concrete and unavoidable in Jesus.

3.1 “I Am” as identity language, not metaphor

When Jesus says:

“BEFORE ABRAHAM WAS, I AM” (JOHN 8:58),

the reaction from his audience is immediate and violent: they pick up stones to kill Him. This is intelligible only against Jewish identity language. Jesus is not accused of exaggerated self-confidence or of claiming mere age, but of blasphemy.

This must be seen sharply: pre-existence as such was neither unique nor forbidden. Judaism had ideas of pre-existent wisdom (Prov. 8), a pre-existent Torah, and even a pre-existent Messiah. That does not explain the intensity of the reaction. What makes the statement explosive is not that Jesus existed before Abraham, but how He says it: “I am.”

With this phrasing Jesus reaches directly back to God’s self-revelation in Exodus 3:14. There God reveals Himself not with a descriptive title, but with an identity formula: “I am who I am.” In the prophets this self-identification is repeated in shortened form: ani hu, “I am He” (Isa. 43:10; 46:4). This is not metaphor, but Name-language: language in which God designates Himself as the One who acts and is present.

That Jesus applies this language to Himself does not mean He claims an attribute of God, but that He draws God’s **identity** to Himself. The hearers understand. Therefore their conclusion is not: “You are saying something about God,” but: “You, being a man, make yourself God” (John 10:33).

3.2 “I and the Father are one”

This identity claim is explicitly confirmed when Jesus says:

“I AND THE FATHER ARE ONE.” (JOHN 10:30)

Again, there is no mere misunderstanding but a direct accusation. The context shows that “one” here is not functional or moral (“in agreement”), but **identity**. The reaction of the audience makes that unavoidably clear. They do not hear Him as someone closely connected to God, but as someone claiming God’s unique identity.

Again, what Jesus does not do is crucial. He does not correct the accusation. He does not say, “You misunderstand; I am only a representative.” Instead He argues from Scripture and remains within the framework of divine identity. The tension remains, and it is not dismantled.

This pattern is consistent in the New Testament. Jesus speaks with authority, forgives sins, speaks as Lawgiver, and acts in ways the Scriptures reserve exclusively for YHWH. The Gospels present this not as a problem to solve, but as revelation demanding recognition.

3.3 The Name in Jesus' actions

This identity claim is not limited to statements; it becomes visible in Jesus' actions. When He forgives sins (Mark 2:5–7), the immediate response is: *"Who can forgive sins but God alone?"* The text does not correct the reasoning; it shows that Jesus does exactly what only God can do.

When Jesus speaks of Himself as Lord of the Sabbath (Mark 2:28), or rebukes the storm (cf. Ps. 107:29), YHWH-language is applied to Jesus' deeds. The Gospels pile up these motifs not to build a theory, but to make one point: the God of Israel is acting here.

3.4 Jude 1:5 and the continuity of identity

This identity reading is not carried only by the Gospels, but also by the apostolic writings. One of the strongest and most overlooked indications is Jude 1:5. In the earliest and text-critically best manuscripts the text reads:³

"JESUS, WHO SAVED A PEOPLE OUT OF THE LAND OF EGYPT ..."

Later copyists changed this to "the Lord," presumably to soften the theological implication. But precisely the original reading is so significant. The exodus is in the Hebrew Scriptures the definitive, identity-defining act of YHWH. That Jude attributes this act, without explanation, to Jesus, shows how deep the identification runs.

This is not a change of persons, nor a mere typological pointing. Jude does not say Jesus acted on behalf of YHWH, but that He was the One who acted. This is not later dogmatic reflection, but early Christian conviction, recorded before conciliar debates.

3.5 Identity continuity, not a shift of persons

Taken together, these texts show not a change in God's being, but a consistent pattern of recognition: the New Testament speaks of Jesus in terms of continuity of identity with YHWH, not internal divine differentiation.⁴

The same God who spoke to Moses, redeemed Israel, and spoke through the prophets is now recognized in Jesus.

This does not mean Jesus is equated with an abstract idea of God, but that God Himself is recognized in Jesus' concrete presence. The question these texts raise is therefore not: *how do Father and Son relate ontologically?*

but: *do we dare to acknowledge who is acting here?*

The New Testament does not correct the accusation *"You make yourself God"*, because in its core it is **correct**, provided one understands that it is not about a man becoming God, but about God making Himself known as man.

This chapter therefore forms a load-bearing pillar of **Identity-Based Echad Monotheism**, which is explicitly substantiated in chapter 7: Jesus is not a second alongside YHWH, but YHWH made visible. This is not a later construction, but the **heart** of the apostolic witness.

4. God dwells in the human: the Holy Spirit

If Jesus truly is the revelation of God's identity, the question inevitably arises how God remains present thereafter. The New Testament answers not by introducing a new divine instance, but with language that consistently speaks of God's own presence in and among people.

The Holy Spirit is nowhere introduced as an independent subject alongside God, but as the way God Himself is near, active, and indwelling. This manner of speaking is not systematically developed, but narrative and relational, closely aligned with the Hebrew sense that God is present where He acts.

A key text is Paul's statement:

"THE LORD IS THE SPIRIT" (2 COR. 3:17)

This sentence is strikingly simple and theologically charged. Paul does not say the Spirit is *from* the Lord, or belongs *to* the Lord; he identifies **the Lord Himself** with the Spirit. Within Greek ontological categories this requires qualification; within biblical thinking it is consistent: God is present where His Spirit works.

4.1 The Spirit as God's identity-presence

This consistency becomes clear when Paul's language across his letters is compared. Without hesitation he uses different designations for the same inner reality:

- "The Spirit of God dwells in you" (Rom. 8:9)
- "Christ in you, the hope of glory" (Col. 1:27)
- "God is the One who works in you" (Phil. 2:13)

Paul seems unaware of a problem needing solution. He does not change subjects, but perspectives. What is called "the Spirit of God" in one place is "Christ in you" elsewhere, and elsewhere simply "God who works in you." This is not sloppiness but **identity unity** in biblical language.

Within a Trinitarian system this language must be split: one must specify **who** exactly is acting. Paul does not. For him the decisive issue is not *which person* dwells in the believer, but **that God Himself** dwells and works.

Notably, the Spirit is never presented as a separate identity detached from God or Christ. The Spirit does not speak about Himself, does not seek worship for Himself, and does not appear as a distinct "who" alongside God. His work is transparent: He unites, renews, and gives life. This does not fit a doctrine of persons, but it fits the Hebrew sense that God shares His presence without dividing Himself.

4.2 Indwelling and obedience: God working in the human

The letters show that the Spirit does not introduce a new divine reality, but continues God's nearness after Christ's resurrection and exaltation. What God did bodily in Jesus, He now does inwardly and communally through the Spirit.

This appears in Romans 8, where Paul speaks without distinction of:

- "the Spirit of God,"
- "the Spirit of Christ,"
- and Christ Himself being in the believer (Rom. 8:9–11).

The text does not describe multiple indwelling subjects, but one divine presence that gives life, leads, and renews. The Spirit does not come *on behalf of* God; He *is* God's own presence in the believer.

This is explicit when Paul writes:

"GOD IS THE ONE WHO WORKS IN YOU, BOTH TO WILL AND TO WORK FOR HIS GOOD PLEASURE." (PHIL. 2:13)

The believer's inner movement is not ascribed to a mediating figure, but directly to God Himself. And yet Paul knows this work occurs "by the Spirit" (cf. Gal. 5:16–25). For him that is no contradiction: the Spirit is the way God Himself works in human will and deed.

God therefore does not remain distant; He truly binds Himself to human beings. The Spirit is not a replacement for God, but His immediate nearness.

4.3 Community: Temple theology fulfilled

Even when Paul speaks of the community, this identity line remains intact. The community of believers is not a community *alongside* God, but a community *in* which God dwells:

"WE ARE A TEMPLE OF THE LIVING GOD." (2 COR. 6:16)

This language reaches back to tabernacle and temple theology. What was spatial and temporal becomes inward and relational. God no longer dwells in a building, but in people. The Spirit is the way God Himself relocates His dwelling from stone to flesh.

The church is therefore not a community around God, but a community in which God dwells.

4.4 Conclusion: God dwells where He works

Early Christian faith did not begin with an elaborated doctrine of the Spirit, but with lived experience of God's indwelling. That experience was expressed in language fully consistent with biblical monotheism: God is one, and where He works, there He is.

Therefore Paul can say without tension:

- the Lord is the Spirit,
- Christ dwells in you,
- and God works in you.

Not because God is divided, but because God has truly drawn near.

The question these texts raise is not: *which person dwells in the believer?*
but: *do we dare believe that God Himself dwells and works in us?*

This is not dogmatic finesse but an existential appeal, exactly as Scripture intends.

5. When faith learns to speak Greek

5.1 A Greek problem requires a Greek solution

As the Christian faith spreads increasingly in the second and third centuries into the Greco-Roman world, it inevitably enters an alien frame of thought. The core questions of that world differ from Israel's. Where Scripture asks *who* God is and how He acts, Greek thought asks primarily *what* God is.

In classical Greek philosophy, divinity is conceived in terms of essence (ousia), substance, immutability, and being unmoved. What is truly divine cannot suffer, cannot change, cannot learn, and cannot die. Time, matter, and vulnerability are signs of lower reality. Against this background the incarnation is not a mystery to worship, but a logical problem to solve:

How can the eternal, immutable God truly become human without ceasing to be God?

The church's early answer, ultimately formalized at Nicaea (325), was brilliant and understandable. By speaking of one being (ousia) and three persons (hypostaseis), one could hold to Jesus' full divinity while avoiding the conclusion that God Himself is changeable or suffering. Not the Father becomes human, but the Son; not God as such suffers, but a distinct person within God.

But therein lies its limitation. The Trinity, however careful and coherent, is ultimately a Greek answer to a Greek problem, not an explicit formulation found as such in Scripture.⁵

It operates in a framework driven by the need for logical consistency and ontological clarity, while Scripture poses a different question. The question the Trinity "solves" is therefore not primarily the question of biblical witness, but that of a philosophical framework that wants to understand God before knowing Him.

5.2 Logical, chronological, analytical thinking (Greek)

Classical Greek thinking is analytical and chronological. It seeks to understand reality by breaking it into parts, ordering these parts logically, and systematically resolving tensions.

Characteristic are:

- contradictions must not remain,
- time is conceived linearly (first this, then that),
- identity is derived from essence,
- and change is problematic for truth.

Applied to the Bible this produces questions such as:

- How can Jesus be both God and man?
- How can God suffer?
- How can Jesus pray to God if He Himself is God?

Within Greek thinking these questions demand distinction: distinction in nature, in knowledge, in persons. Without such distinction, the whole appears logically untenable. The Trinity then arises not from exegetical necessity but from **philosophical pressure for coherence**.

5.3 Relational, narrative, existential thinking (Hebrew)

Hebrew thinking follows a radically different track. It is relational, narrative, and existential. It asks not how God is put together, but who God is in His covenant with people.

In Scripture God is known by:

- His deeds (“I am the LORD who brought you out of Egypt”),
- His nearness (“I will be with you”),
- His faithfulness (“I remain who I am”).

Time is not primarily chronological but relational. God can speak from eternity and act in the moment. What matters is not sequence but meaning.

Therefore Scripture can say without difficulty:

- that God cannot be seen (Ex. 33:20),
- and that God was seen (Ex. 24:10);
- that God does not change (Mal. 3:6),
- and that God “relents” (Gen. 6:6);
- that God is exalted,
- and that God walks among His people.

These tensions are not solved but borne. They invite not analysis but worship.

5.4 Jesus within the Hebrew framework

When Jesus prays, learns, obeys, and suffers, Greek thinking immediately raises questions about His ontological status. Within Hebrew thinking these actions do something else: they **reveal who God is**.

Scripture does not say Jesus prays because He is “less God,” but because God has truly bound Himself in Him to human existence. That God can suffer is not a problem, but a disclosure of God’s character (cf. Hos. 11:8–9).

Therefore Scripture can say:

- “God was in Christ reconciling the world to Himself” (2 Cor. 5:19),
- “He who has seen Me has seen the Father” (John 14:9),
- and yet depict Jesus speaking to God as Source.

Not because God is divided, but because God is relationally present on multiple levels.

5.5 Understanding versus knowing

Here lies the deepest difference between the two ways of thinking, and therefore the decisive point of tension.

Greek thought seeks to **understand** God:
by definition, by demarcation, by closed systems.

Hebrew thought awakens the desire to **know** God:
by encounter, by obedience, by trust.

This difference is expressed in Scripture itself:

- “Let us know the LORD” (Hos. 6:3),
- “This is eternal life: that they know You” (John 17:3),
- “The fear of the LORD is the beginning of wisdom” (Prov. 9:10).

God is not known by dissecting Him, but by meeting Him. Not by a closed model, but by relationship.

This is why a shift in thought-world is not neutral. Whoever wants primarily to understand God will inevitably structure Him. Whoever wants to know God will recognize Him where He lets Himself be seen. Here it becomes clear why different God-models are not merely different emphases, but can lead to **different ways of encountering God**, and ultimately to different “Jesuses.”

5.6 Conclusion of this tension

The doctrine of the Trinity arose from a legitimate historical need, but it is not the natural product of the biblical worldview. It translates Scripture into a Greek framework that demands logical clarity, while Scripture speaks in Hebrew language of narrative, tension, and nearness.

Identity-Based Echad Monotheism does not refuse the depth of mystery; it refuses to relocate it. It lets God be God without splitting Him to make Him comprehensible.

Not because understanding is wrong,
but because knowing ultimately goes deeper than understanding.

That this shift was not confined to interpretive frameworks alone, but in some cases also affected the textual transmission itself, will be briefly noted in the following chapter.

6. The risk of another Jesus

Where Scripture's identity line is released, not only new models arise but new Jesuses.

Here lies the core critique developed in this essay. When God is internally divided into distinct persons, a conceptual distinction inevitably emerges between:

- the God of Israel (designated as the Father),
- and Jesus as "God the Son."

Although one formally confesses that they are "one in being," they function theologically as distinct identities. In practice Jesus is approached as mediator to God,⁵ rather than as the visible revelation of God Himself. This clashes with the biblical witness that Jesus does not stand alongside God, but makes God visible.⁶

This difference seems subtle, but has far-reaching consequences. Where Jesus does not fully coincide with the One God of Israel, faith practice tends to seek God behind Jesus, and Jesus functions as gateway to a deeper, higher, or hidden divine reality. Precisely this is what Jesus corrects when He says:

"HE WHO HAS SEEN ME HAS SEEN THE FATHER" (JOHN 14:9).

6.1 Not an academic but an existential risk

The risk of "another Jesus" is therefore not primarily academic or polemical, but existential and relational. It touches *where* believers seek and meet God. When Jesus is theologically detached from God's identity, the center of worship shifts: God remains elsewhere, and Jesus becomes means rather than revelation.

The New Testament does not recognize this shift. It knows only one center of knowing God: Jesus Himself. Paul warns not chiefly against "wrong theology" in abstraction, but against "another Jesus" (2 Cor. 11:4). That is not a semantic detail, but a serious spiritual reality: a Jesus who is not who He truly is inevitably leads to another image of God.

That this risk is not merely theoretical but historically real is also evident from the textual transmission of the New Testament itself. In several instances, demonstrable later textual adjustments have occurred, in which formulations carrying far-reaching christological implications were softened or rephrased.

A well-known example is Jude 1:5, where the earliest and text-critically strongest manuscripts explicitly speak of Jesus as the one who delivered the people out of Egypt, while later manuscripts replace this reading with "the Lord". Likewise, the explicitly Trinitarian formulation in 1 John 5:7–8 (the so-called Comma Johanneum) does not belong to the original Greek text but appears only at a late stage in the transmission history.

These examples do not suggest that Scripture is unreliable, but they do demonstrate that theological tension was real and, in some cases, exerted influence on the textual tradition. For this reason, returning to the earliest attainable text forms is not an academic luxury, but a necessary condition for hearing the biblical witness without the filter of later-developed frameworks.

6.2 Revelation: the throne and the Lamb

Revelation is often read as the climax of heavenly differentiation: God on the throne and the Lamb beside Him. On closer reading it shows the opposite. Revelation consistently preserves the unity of God's identity while displaying the fullness of Jesus' revelation.

In Revelation 4 John sees:

"ONE WHO SAT ON THE THRONE" (REV. 4:2)

No description is given of multiple divine persons. The throne is occupied by One. Then in Revelation 5 appears:

"THE LAMB, STANDING AS SLAIN, IN THE MIDST OF THE THRONE" (REV. 5:6)

This is no second throne and no parallel divine seat. The Lamb stands in the middle of the throne. The place that belongs exclusively to God in the Hebrew Scriptures is here occupied by the Lamb. The text suggests no divided rule, but identity through revelation.

This is also evident in worship. In Revelation 5:13 one joint doxology sounds:

"TO HIM WHO SITS ON THE THRONE, AND TO THE LAMB, BE BLESSING AND HONOR ..."

This is not twofold worship of two divine subjects, but one worship that knows God in the Lamb. Scripture carefully avoids the idea of two centers. There is one throne, one glory, one worship.

6.3 The Name and the throne

The unity becomes even clearer in Revelation 22:3–4:

**"THE THRONE OF GOD AND OF THE LAMB SHALL BE THERE ...
AND HIS NAME SHALL BE ON THEIR FOREHEADS."**

Not "their names," but His Name, singular. Scripture speaks here not of shared power, but of shared identity. The Lamb bears not a derivative or secondary name, but the Name of God Himself.

This connects directly to the biblical pattern where God's Name is His identity. That the Lamb bears this Name and rules from this throne does not mean God has divided His identity, but that He has fully revealed Himself in Jesus.

6.4 Preview: revelation and worship

The Lamb does not stand beside the throne but in its midst. That center is the place of revelation, authority, and encounter. God is not known apart from the Lamb, but in the Lamb. Whoever wants to see God sees the Lamb; whoever sees the Lamb sees God.

This eschatological image is systematically interpreted in chapter 7. For now, the pastoral consequence is decisive. Revelation's question is not:

How many persons sit on the throne?

but:

Who is the One we worship?

Where Jesus is seen as less than the One God, *distance* arises. Where He is known as the One who has come, **nearness** arises. The risk of "another Jesus" therefore lies not in wrong terminology, but in a shifted center of worship.

Scripture consistently testifies that God does not remain hidden behind Jesus, but appears in Jesus. Whoever knows Him thus knows God. And whoever tries to understand Him otherwise, however sincere, risks continuing to seek God elsewhere.

Therefore this is no dogmatic nuance, but spiritual seriousness. For ultimately, knowing Jesus as He truly is is knowing God Himself.

7. Identity-Based Echad Monotheism as the Biblical center of gravity

The term **Identity-Based Echad Monotheism** is not a modern invention and introduces no new dogma. It is a **descriptive designation of the biblical premise of God's indivisible identity**, precisely where existing terminology no longer naturally carries that premise.⁷

The term is chosen carefully, because each component expresses an essential aspect of biblical knowledge of God that otherwise easily fades or is misunderstood.

The previous chapter ended with the question of **whom we worship**. Revelation shows no divided divine center, but one throne, one Name, one worship, in which God makes Himself known *in* the Lamb. That image does not call for further ontological refinement, but for recognition of **identity**.

This chapter articulates that line systematically, not to introduce a new dogma, but to put into words what Scripture itself consistently shows and what existing terminology often leaves unspoken or obscured. **Identity-Based Echad Monotheism** is therefore no construct, but a descriptive summary of Scripture's center of gravity.

7.1 Echad and identity: how Scripture defines God

The starting point lies in Israel's core confession:

"THE LORD IS OUR GOD, THE LORD IS ECHAD" (DEUT. 6:4).

As set out earlier, **echad** does not primarily mean numerical singularity, but indivisible unity of identity, faithfulness, and action. God is not composed of parts, aspects, or internal subjects. He is one in who He is.

In Scripture this unity is not guarded by abstract definitions, but by recognition in revelation. God is who He shows Himself to be. Scripture therefore speaks of God not in terms of inner structure, but in terms of identity revealed in action.

Hence it is fully biblical that:

- the God who redeemed Israel from Egypt,
- the God who spoke through the prophets,
- the God who appears in Jesus,
- and the God who dwells in believers,

are not presented as different divine instances, but as **the same One God** in different modes of nearness. Identity is not prior to revelation as an abstract schema; it is **expressed in revelation**.

Identity-Based Echad Monotheism therefore does not say: *God has multiple identities*, but: **God is one identity who can fully show Himself without dividing Himself.**

The unity is not behind God, but in God Himself. God is not one because multiple persons share something, but one because He is one.

7.3 Multidimensional revelation without sequence

This biblical premise makes it possible to describe God's revelation as multidimensional without fragmenting it:

- beyond time as Father, source and origin of all;
- in time bodily as Jesus, truly human, truly near;
- in the human as Spirit, indwelling and renewing power.

This description is not chronological, as though God was first Father, then became Son, and is now Spirit. Therefore it is not modalism.⁸

God is not bound to time and does not need to distribute His nearness sequentially. He can be simultaneously above, in, and under His creation.

Nor is this adoptionism.⁹

Jesus is not a man later adopted or empowered by God, but God Himself who truly takes on humanity. Jesus' human development is not evidence of a lesser divine status, but of the seriousness of the incarnation.

7.4 The core claim of Christianity and the Jewish objection

From this framework the Jewish objection to Jesus becomes clearer. That objection was not directed at a multiplication of God, but at the opposite: Jesus identified Himself with **the only God of Israel**.

The charge is consistently not that He introduces another god, but that He, a man, makes Himself God. That is not metaphysical analysis but an identity accusation. Within Israel's echad monotheism such a claim can have only one meaning: **Jesus takes to Himself the identity of YHWH**.

Thus the core claim of Christianity from the beginning was not that multiple persons must be distinguished within God, but that **the One God Himself has become present and recognizable in Jesus**. Jesus is rejected not because He would be too little God, but because He claims too much.

The offense of the gospel therefore lies not in a complex divine structure, but in the simple, shocking confession that YHWH Himself has come to us as a humble Servant.

7.5 Why this is radical Biblical monotheism

Identity-Based Echad Monotheism is radically monotheistic because it refuses to "save" God's oneness by dividing Him. It lets the tension stand that Scripture itself bears:

- God is exalted and near,
- invisible and visible,
- eternal and present in time.

This model preserves:

- the simplicity of the Shema, because God remains one in identity;
- the radicality of the incarnation, because God Himself truly becomes human, not a derivative or second;
- the intimacy of indwelling, because God Himself dwells in the believer, not merely through a mediating instance.

It therefore requires no ontological refinement, but recognition.

7.6 Why this term is needed

The term Identity-Based Echad Monotheism is needed because existing terms are insufficiently precise. “Monotheism” alone is too general and says nothing about how God’s unity is understood. “Oneness” remains vague. Non-Trinitarian defines only what it is not.

This term therefore names positively what Scripture consistently shows:

- *identity* rather than *internal structure*,
- *echad* rather than *a composite or derivative unity*,
- *revelation* rather than *ontology*.

Thus it provides language that Scripture itself speaks and makes it possible to confess Jesus without detaching Him from the One God of Israel.

7.7 Relation to existing movements: continuity and distinction

It is fair to ask whether what is called here Identity-Based Echad Monotheism does not coincide with existing non-Trinitarian streams in church history. In substance there is indeed affinity, especially with historical modalistic monarchianism and with modern oneness movements that stress that God is one and that Jesus is not a second divine identity alongside YHWH. This affinity is not a deficiency; it confirms that this is not a new idea, but a recurring attempt to remain faithful to biblical monotheism in light of Jesus’ self-revelation.

Yet Identity-Based Echad Monotheism is not identical to those streams. The distinction lies not primarily in an alternative doctrine of persons, but in the chosen hermeneutical starting point. The departure is not the question how God can be internally distinguished, but how God’s indivisible identity is recognized in Scripture. Echad functions here not numerically but as an identity category: God is not defined by internal structure, but known in His Name, His actions, and His nearness.

Accordingly, it explicitly distances itself from any sequential or reductionistic understanding of God’s revelation. God does not appear successively as Father, Son, and Spirit, but reveals Himself freely and multidimensionally, without dividing or multiplying Himself. This approach does not seek to solve biblical tensions, but to bear them as Scripture does.

At the same time this terminology does not aim at ecclesial boundary-making or soteriological exclusivism. It does not deny that believers within a Trinitarian framework can truly know and serve God. The intent is not polemical but clarifying: to make explicit what framework is normative in reading Scripture and confessing Jesus.

Identity-Based Echad Monotheism therefore marks no new religious direction, but a conscious return to Scripture’s center of gravity, in which Jesus is known as the visible revelation of the One God of Israel, without conceptual division of His identity.¹⁰

7.8 Closing: recognition as criterion

Identity-Based Echad Monotheism is not a new system, but a return to the biblical center of gravity: knowing God as He has given Himself.

In Scripture, that knowing is ultimately not a matter of correct terminology, but of recognition. Whoever sees Jesus as He truly is does not see *something of God*, but **God Himself who has drawn near**.

Thus this chapter returns to the question with which the previous ended: not *how* God is put together, but **who** the One is whom we worship.

8. The revelation of Jesus: who He is

It is no accident that this argument culminates in the last book of the Bible. Its opening reads:

“THE REVELATION OF JESUS CHRIST, WHICH GOD GAVE HIM TO SHOW HIS SERVANTS WHAT MUST SOON TAKE PLACE” (REV. 1:1)

This line is often read as a revelation *about* Jesus Christ or as a revelation coming *from* Him. Both readings are plausible, but they miss the deepest force. The Greek apokalypsis Iēsou Christou is not primarily possessive, but **identity-oriented**: it is about the unveiling of who Jesus Christ *is*.

This is confirmed by the sentence itself. The revelation is “which God gave Him.” That does not mean God transfers information to another, lower divine person, but that God reveals Himself in and through Jesus, and that this revelation is truly received, understood, and conveyed within Jesus’ human consciousness. The incarnation is not theater; it is real enfleshment. Therefore Jesus learns, understands, and lives through what God does and what is to come.

We already know this structure from the Gospels. Repeatedly Jesus announces His suffering, death, and resurrection (e.g., Matt. 16:21; 17:22–23; 20:18–19). These announcements are not presented as automatically possessed information, but as something shown to Him and then shared with His disciples. He “learned obedience through what He suffered” (Heb. 5:8). Again: God reveals, Jesus receives, and Jesus shows.

Revelation 1:1 follows the same pattern. It concerns God’s actions in history, made visible, intelligible, and transmissible in Jesus. The chain is not of multiple divine persons exchanging information, but of one God unfolding Himself within the human reality of the Son and through Him to His servants.

Therefore “the revelation of Jesus Christ” is not distant apocalyptic, but the capstone of the same identity witness running through the entire New Testament. What becomes visible in the Gospels in words and deeds becomes visible here in glory. What was concealed there under suffering is unveiled here in majesty. It is the same Jesus, and therefore the same God, who makes Himself known.

This reinforces the essay’s central point. Scripture does not invite us to look *behind* Jesus, but **into Him**. It does not invite speculation about *internal divine structures*, but **recognition of God’s identity** as He has shown Himself.

Revelation is not the unveiling of a schema, but of a Person, and that Person is the Revelation.

Conclusion: Knowing Jesus as He Truly Is

The New Testament does not invite speculation, but *knowledge*. That knowledge is relational, existential, and life-transforming. To know Jesus as He truly is, as the One God who has come to us, is not a dogmatic nuance but the heart of the gospel.

When the church shapes its formulations so that this simplicity is lost, it risks protecting the mystery by replacing it.

Identity-Based Echad Monotheism is therefore not an attack on faith, but a call to return: to Scripture, to Israel, and above all to knowing Jesus Himself.

**THE LORD IS GOD.
AND HE HAS COME TO US.**

“I AM – WITH YOU FOR SO LONG” — YHWH IMMANUEL

Footnotes

¹ About the pseudonym. This essay is published under the Hebrew pseudonym Mekabel (מקבל). The word literally means “receiving” or “one who receives.”

The pseudonym was chosen to keep the focus on the text rather than the author. It expresses no claim of title, authority, or spiritual status, but a posture: receiving what is encountered in Scripture, listening carefully to the text, and articulating this as faithfully as possible.

The essay therefore does not seek to present a new doctrine or esoteric insight, but aims to describe what is received when the biblical texts are read within their own language, context, and frame of thought.

² This essay does not argue for soteriological exclusivity and explicitly does not claim that those who confess the doctrine of the Trinity, or remain in it, therefore cannot have a real relationship with the Lord. Scripture makes clear that the heart of faith is not located in perfectly comprehending God’s being, but in knowing God relationally (John 17:3).

Whoever, within a Trinitarian framework, lives in prayer, obedience, love, and trust in God, lives more essentially in truth than someone who can formulate Identity-Based Echad Monotheism correctly but approaches it only theologically or intellectually without lived relationship. God is not known by models, but by nearness.

This essay therefore does not aim to deny faith, but to distinguish: it argues that some theological frameworks are more or less scripturally faithful and coherent; it does not claim they automatically guarantee more or less relationship with God. Where the Spirit works, there is life, even when the conceptual framework is incomplete or different.

The purpose of this argument is not polemical, but pastoral and hermeneutical: to help people know Jesus as Scripture reveals Him, trusting that true knowledge leads to deeper relationship, not merely correct formulation.

³ In the Epistle of Jude 1:5, the reading in the earliest and text-critically strongest Greek manuscripts is not “the Lord” (κύριος), but “Jesus” (Ἰησοῦς). This reading is supported, among others, by Codex Alexandrinus (A), Codex Vaticanus (B), Codex Ephraemi Rescriptus (C), as well as early versions and patristic testimony.

The alternative reading “the Lord” appears mainly in later Byzantine manuscripts and is considered by most textual critics to be a theologically softening correction, prompted by difficulty with the implication that Jesus is explicitly identified with the God who redeemed Israel from Egypt.

Critical editions of the Greek New Testament (Nestle–Aland 28; UBS5) therefore print Ἰησοῦς in the main text and assign it the highest probability. Bruce M. Metzger notes in his Textual Commentary on the Greek New Testament that the replacement of “Jesus” with “the Lord” is explainable from scribal caution toward a theologically demanding formulation, whereas the reverse is scarcely plausible.

This original reading is theologically significant because it identifies Jesus with the acting YHWH of the exodus and thus points to identity continuity within biblical monotheism, not to a later or secondary divine person.

⁴ Also see Richard Bauckham, *God Crucified: Monotheism and Christology in the New Testament* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1998), also available in the collection *Jesus and the God of Israel* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2008).

Bauckham argues that early Christian confession of Jesus arises not from a break with Jewish monotheism but from including Jesus within the unique identity of the God of Israel. In that sense there is clear agreement with the essay’s premise that the New Testament does not place Jesus alongside YHWH but identifies Him with God’s own self-revelation.

The difference in approach lies in the hermeneutical frame: where Bauckham reconstructs this inclusion historically and textually within academic Christology, this essay makes biblical identity language itself normative and explicitly distances itself from later Greek-ontological structures that internally differentiate God’s identity.

⁵ The phrase “in heaven: the Father, the Word, and the Holy Spirit, and these three are one” in 1 John 5:7 does not belong to the original Greek text of the New Testament. This clause, known as the Comma Johanneum, is absent from all early and text-critically authoritative Greek manuscripts, including Codex Sinaiticus, Codex Vaticanus, and Codex Alexandrinus, and from all known Greek manuscripts prior to the fourteenth century.

The Comma appears late in some Latin manuscripts, likely as a marginal theological gloss arising in an anti-Arian context and later incorporated into the running text. Modern critical editions of the Greek New Testament (NA28; UBS5) do not include this clause in the main text.

The original reading of 1 John 5:7–8 speaks of “the Spirit, the water, and the blood” as witnesses, contextually coherent and Christologically oriented, without asserting a heavenly triune structure. That even strongly Trinitarian textual critics regard the Comma as secondary and non-authentic underscores that this verse is not reliable biblical evidence for an explicit Trinitarian dogma.

⁶ The New Testament explicitly speaks of Jesus as “mediator” (μεσίτης; cf. 1 Tim. 2:5; Heb. 8:6; 9:15; 12:24). This designation does not imply an ontological intermediate level between God and humanity, as if Christ were a separate instance between both. Biblically, mediation is a relational and salvation-historical function: Christ is Mediator precisely because in Him God and humanity truly come together. His mediatorship therefore presupposes not distance from God, but God’s own nearness in the incarnation. Because Christ truly became human (Heb. 2:14–17; 4:15) and at the same time fully shares in God’s identity, He can accomplish reconciliation without fragmenting God’s unity. Thus Christ mediates not “to” God as though God were elsewhere, but as God who became human, consistent with biblical witness and in continuity with the classic confession of His true Godhead and true humanity.

⁷ The objection that this approach “can already be thought within the Trinity” sounds understandable, but misses the decisive point. The question is not whether within a Trinitarian framework one can emphasize unity or even use Name-language, but which framework remains normative. As long as the Trinity remains the starting point, God’s identity remains filtered through Greek-ontological categories, however carefully nuanced. That affects how Scripture is read, how Jesus is proclaimed, and how Christian faith relates to Israel.

Identity-Based Echad Monotheism therefore does not seek radicality for its own sake, but clarity. Not to sow division, but to name what implicitly does not suffice. Subtlety may soften, but it does not correct a framework. Precisely because the Trinity is so deeply embedded, it is not enough to reinterpret its language; what is needed is an explicit return to Scripture’s premise itself. Not to reject the past, but to prevent familiar formulations from continuing to determine what we hear when Scripture speaks.

This term therefore marks not a rupture, but a boundary: here we no longer speak from a received system, but from Scripture itself. That requires courage, but not division, because what truly unites is not cautiousness, but truth clearly spoken.

⁸ Modalism is typically a sequential model in which God reveals Himself alternately as Father, Son, and Spirit without enduring distinction. The multidimensional revelation described here is not temporal or successive, but presupposes God’s simultaneous presence outside, within, and inside creation.

⁹ Adoptionism understands Jesus as a man who at some point is adopted or empowered by God. This essay instead begins from the incarnation as God’s own self-communication: not a man elevated to God, but God who truly takes on humanity.

¹⁰ This terminology is descriptive and hermeneutical, not church-political or soteriologically normative. Substantively it aligns with earlier attempts in church history to preserve God’s unity radically in light of Jesus’ revelation, including modalistic-monotheistic approaches, without adopting them uncritically.

The distinction lies primarily in the chosen starting point: not an alternative doctrine of persons, but a reading of Scripture in which echad functions as an identity category and in which God’s revelation is understood without sequential or ontological division.

That this approach differs from the classic Trinitarian formulation does not mean it claims to determine spiritual authenticity, relationship of faith, or salvation exclusively; Scripture links knowing God primarily to relationship, obedience, and trust (John 17:3), not to full mastery of dogmatic categories.
