

# Toward Trinities Transparency

by Rob Bjerk

<http://scripturalscrutiny.com/2017/07/11/toward-trinities-transparency>

“Towards Trinities Transparency” has been created to “test drive” the concept of a *scripted visualization* of common trinitarian and non-trinitarian conceptions of God. Since some of these conceptions stretch – or even transcend – natural, innate categories of human language, it is easy to talk past one another when discussing these ideas.<sup>1</sup> It is hoped this approach will add clarity and transparency to the study, discussion, and instruction about the relationship between Father, Son, and Holy Spirit.

The title of this presentation owes its origin to the interesting and probing podcast and blog hosted by Dale Tuggy found at [www.trinities.org](http://www.trinities.org). Dr. Tuggy examines “Theories About the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit,” and we are asked, “Do you love God enough. . . to think about him?” Dr. Tuggy has a Ph.D. in Philosophy from Brown University and teaches philosophy and religious studies at the State University of New York at Fredonia. His personal reflections and frequent interviews with those holding varying viewpoints are characterized by fairness, clarity, and respect.

## Language, Logic, and Limitations

Christians believe that beyond the general revelation of God in creation, further propositional truths about God, Christ, man, creation, and redemption have been revealed to man in the Bible. These truths, though sufficient for humanity’s needs, may not be exhaustive, since God is beyond man both in the transcendence of his being and the perfection of his character. But God is able to convey real truth to man through the medium of human language and, ultimately, in Jesus Christ. One might say man’s ability to understand and communicate substantial reality about God is a vital aspect of his creation in the image of God.

The fact that God can communicate truths about himself in human language does not require that these truths be exhaustive, or that our limited minds comprehend them fully. But what we are able to know is dependent on the capacity of our creaturely conceptual, reasoning, and logical categories. Our understanding is guided in various ways by biblical types, shadows, analogies, poetry, wisdom literature, prophecy, symbolism, visions, parables, historical accounts, letters, and teaching – culminating in the life, teaching, death, resurrection, and ascension of Jesus and the gift of God’s Spirit to guide the people of God into all truth. But our transmission of this knowledge is still limited by our God-given human categories and capacities of language and thought.

Since man’s understanding of God is attained through the natural space, time, and matter categories of human language, these natural categories and limitations of human language and logic will be considered the norm for our scripting conventions, and various supra-natural theories involving omnipresence, atemporality, and immateriality – *though not necessarily false or illogical*<sup>2</sup> – will frequently be visually scripted as modifications or extensions of this norm.

Trinitarian<sup>3</sup> theories are sometimes critiqued as being vague, ambiguous, or equivocal.<sup>4</sup> This may be attributed in part to the supra-natural concepts under consideration, which challenge human comprehension. However, another factor in the difficulty of teaching or evaluating trinitarian theories is the attribution of multiple meanings to the same word. For example, “YHWH” (Yaweh or Jehovah) may be said to refer to the Father, the Word, the Spirit, to Jesus, or to the Trinity – depending on context. “God” can be a reference to the “person,” “hypothesis,” or “mode” of the Father, the Word, Jesus, the Spirit; or, it can refer to the “essence,” “nature,” or “being” of God. Uncapitalized, “god” may encompass angels, demonic spirits (even Satan), or human authorities. Singular pronouns<sup>5</sup> and verbs are said to refer to the Father, Son, or Spirit individually – or to the triad<sup>6</sup> as one multi-personal, supra-natural being.<sup>7</sup>

Unless a theory is totally beyond any human comprehension, bringing transparency and precision to the use of important words should be a significant advantage for the purposes of comprehension, education, and evaluation. Any degree of clarification or definition that enhances the personalization of one’s faith is preferable to unexamined allegiance to a creedal formula, denominational standard, or favorite teacher.

Many students of the Bible contend that *taking the totality of what scripture reveals*<sup>8</sup> in human language about God compels them to recognize supra-human relationships, such as between *being* and *persons*, *person* and *hypostases*, *person* and *modes*, *essence* and *persons*, or *society* and *persons*. These conceptualizations may transcend full human understanding, but are not necessarily illogical. But even if the concept is beyond full human understanding, it must of necessity be spoken about in human language categories in a way that transparently distinguishes it from other concepts. Otherwise, how could God communicate it to us, and how could it even be a matter of discussion?

A thorough comprehension of the infinite being of God is beyond us, but if the concepts are clearly defined as far as our language concepts will allow, they should be able to be evaluated by sound logic. Beyond its value for logical evaluation, the harmonious, non-contradictory nature of a particular explanatory theory, as judged by its contextual fitness in the biblical narrative, is vital for those seeking a truly biblical theology of God.

God → only Creator, all-wise, infinite, above time, spirit (immaterial)

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man → creature, mortal, space, time, body (matter)

Supra-natural realities are revealed by God to man truly, but not exhaustively

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Man receives and communicates truth about God in natural language categories

# Toward Trinities Transparency Scripting Conventions

## F, W, S, J

F=Father, W=Word (pre-human), S=Spirit, J=Jesus (human)

F, W, S, or J can refer to “person”, "hypostasis", or "mode" to accommodate various views.

## Font Style Meanings

**BOLD CAP: Eternal, Only Creator of Everything (F, W, S)**

*ITALIC CAP: Supra-human, but created, derived, or subordinate (W, S)*

STANDARD CAP: A man – one person (body, soul, spirit), one being, one nature (J)<sup>9</sup>

Note: Select a font that has easily distinguishable styles.

## Language and Lowercase

If F, W, S, or J is written in lowercase (f, w, s, j), it indicates a departure from our defined norm of natural human logic, language, and communication. This departure is a modification, adaptation, or extension of the concepts, natural to human experience and thought, that one person is one being, of one essence or nature, able to exist in only one place at one time. Subsequent to the original creation of the first human pair, a human being begins at conception, including body, soul, and spirit.

For example, the concept of *anhypostasis*<sup>10</sup>, that Jesus is *one person* with *two natures*, can be transcribed as **:wj**. (The significance of the colon : and underline \_ will be explained in a section below.) The pre-human Word, **:w**, who shares the multi-person being of God, has also assumed human nature j. A frequent summary of this concept is "Jesus was *man*, not *a man*." That is, Jesus had a true human nature, but a new person did not begin with his conception because his person, or “self”, was the eternal, pre-human Word who became flesh in Jesus. In this instance **:w** is lowercase because, unlike the natural human conception that one person is one being, **:w** shares the one nature, essence, or being of God with two other distinct persons, **:f** and **:s**. The Word become flesh is also believed by many to be 100% God and 100% man, existing simultaneously in two separate natures, which is beyond natural human conception.

Furthermore, j is lowercase because the person, or “self” (mind, soul, and/or spirit?) of j did not begin at conception (as uppercase J would indicate). Also, j is standard font style to indicate the human nature, essence, or being rather than that of the eternal Creator, which would be **bold** font style. The person or “self” of **:wj** existed before the incarnation as **:w** (**eternal, only Creator of all**). An entirely new human person, or “self,” did not come into existence in **:wj**. Rather, human nature j without a new “self” was assumed by

the eternal person :w.

In contrast, a unitarian who believes Jesus to be solely a man, the second Adam, would use the uppercase J to indicate Jesus as having no prior existence, other than in the foreknowledge of the Father. His entire person/being – body, soul, and spirit – resulted from his miraculous conception by the Holy Spirit and birth as the man, Messiah Jesus. His conception was miraculous, but so was the creation of the first man, Adam. There is neither prior existence of the person, nor a full sharing of natures, which would modify the natural human understanding of a single person and being.

These scripting conventions do not indicate that any conception is intrinsically illogical or erroneous. They are intended to more transparently define even supra-natural concepts in a manner that avoids ambiguity – even if full understanding lies beyond the reach of the mind and language of man.

## Clarifying Prefixes for F, W, S, J

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:f, :w, or :s indicate that each of these *persons* share the single *being, essence, or nature*<sup>11</sup> of God, **f:w:s**. Here, the *persons* are the *triad* and the *being* is the *monad* aspect of God. **This approach simultaneously confesses the one being of God (“compound unity”) and the three persons of God.** The *persons* are analagous to, but not limited by, the human concept of *person*<sup>12</sup> or self. God is not fully comprehensible to the human mind or fully describable in human language.<sup>13</sup> The concept is sometimes termed “three Who’s in one What”, or, with more focus on personality, “*three persons in one being.*”<sup>14</sup>

**Memory hint:** Lower dot = similar to, but transcending, the *lower level* human concept of persons. Upper dot = *upper level* supra-human concept of *one being* shared by *three persons*. **Both (lower and upper) are true simultaneously even if beyond full human comprehension.**

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/f, /w, or /s indicate that each of the *hypostases*<sup>15</sup>, /f, /w, and /s, share the **one person/being, f/w/s, God, without existing as separate persons.** **This approach focuses on the one person of God and then draws out the three hypostases of God from within his one person/being.** Notice that *person* was the *triad* in the previous approach, and *being* was the *monad*. Here, *person/being* is the *monad* and *hypostases* are the *triad*. God is *one person*, with some similarity to the human concept of *one person* existing as *one being*, but the *three hypostases* are something like “personal centers of consciousness,” (each addressable as “he”) within the “compound unity” of God’s supra-natural *one person*, (also addressable as “he”).

**Memory Hint:** To accommodate human conceptual limitations, a **division sign “/”** is used to indicate that the *one person, God, is shared among three hypostases*. However, in the supra-human conception, each *hypostasis* is *distinct*, but shares the *entire spiritual person* of God. This view believes scripture reveals a supra-natural spiritual reality of *three distinct hypostases* sharing the *one person* of God *without division*.

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=f, =w, or =s indicate that the *one person, =f=w=s*, is the same single *person/being*, God, who is manifested at one time or various times in *three* different *modes*. Because God is not limited by time and space, all *modes* may appear simultaneously, but there is only one *person*, or self, in God. Here, the *modes* are the *triad* and the sole *person/being* is the *monad*. Oneness Pentecostals are a major group holding this view. Although this mode of thought conceives of *one person* as *one being*, similar to the natural human view, lowercase letters are used for =f=w=s because a human *person* cannot naturally manifest *three modes* of identity in different places at the same time.

**Memory Hint:** Take “=” in the sense of identity, “**equals the same single person.**” =F, =W, and =S refer to the same single *person/being*, God. *Three* different *names* are given to the same *single person*, God, as he appears in different *modes*.

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|F, |W, or |S indicate that each of the *three persons* |F, |W, and |S, share the *one society* (family, nature, or essence<sup>16</sup>), |F |W |S, of God. **Here, three separate person/beings, share one family, society, nature, or essence.** The *three persons* of the *triad* are *not* considered to be united in a composite *single being*, so the charge of tritheism is deflected by considering their *one family, society, nature, or essence* as their *monadic* aspect. This is analogous to three humans existing as separate *persons*, who are also separate *beings*, but share one human *nature, or essence*. Due to the correspondence of this conception to the human conception of *person, being, essence, and nature*, |F, |W, and |S are *not in lower case*.

**Memory Hint:** The “|” could be viewed as a wall separating each of the three persons/beings from each other. Although they share one *family, society, nature, or essence*, each is a separate *person/being*.

## Spaces

The **spaces** between |F |W |S, when scripted without separating commas to represent the three as one, serve to visualize the separation of each *person* (and *being*) from the others. *Notice that in the other conceptions of God the relation between triad and monad have no spaces when the three are scripted as one, indicating that the triad*

*also is a monad in some manner.*

A binitarian conception of God could be indicated using the same clarifiers (prefixes) and conventions applied appropriately to express the unity and binity of God.

## Underline

An underlined letter indicates that a specific person, hypostasis, or mode is being referenced when more than one are included in a scripted representation. Either a full or an abbreviated representation can be used, depending on what is most suitable for the purpose at hand.

For example, some possible representations of the Father are **:f** or **:f:w:s**, depending on whether one wanted to quickly indicate the Father as one eternal person in a three-person eternal being, or wanted instead to indicate all the persons involved and underline the specific person who is acting or being referenced. To emphasize the difference between some unitarian and Trinitarian conceptions of the Father, one could compare **F** (unitarian) with **:f:w:s** (Trinitarian). The shorter Trinitarian representation of the Father, **:f**, is quicker and gives correct information, but does not visualize details and distinctions as transparently as the longer form.

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An *action, attribute, aspect, or alternate designation* of F, W, S, or J is indicated by >. Only one entity is involved, but that one is looked at from the perspective of a particular *action, attribute, aspect, or alternate designation*. The concept of agent is not included here. That can just be stated, and it involves two separate entities, not just one.

For example, a unitarian might conceive of the holy Spirit/spirit as one aspect of the Father's person, his spirit (1 Cor. 2:11). This could be scripted as **F>S**. The Spirit/spirit is an aspect of the Father's person, not another distinct person. Or it could indicate that the Spirit is the Father himself in action (Luke 1:35). Both are personal, involving an aspect, attribute, or action of the Father, but refer to no one but the Father himself. **S** could in some cases be considered alternate designation for the Father, thus **F**. To avoid overcomplication in scripting conventions, many finer distinctions of intended meaning are best left to the user's words of definition in a particular situation.

## The Goal

The goal is always accessible clarity and transparency – not rote conformity to a set of conventions that would not be useful if they tried to approach the complexity of contextual language. But the hope is that a scripted visualization can be simple enough to be useable, and still transparent and standard enough to be useful for this important discussion about the nature of God. These scripting conventions may be modified as needed if the result is a clearer definition and communication of the concepts involved.

<i>Scripting Samples for Various Views</i>						
	Unitarian (Socian)	Trinitarian (Persons)	Trinitarian (Hypostases)	Trinitarian (Social) <sup>1</sup>	Oneness (Modes)	Arian, Derived, or Subordinate
Father	<b>F</b> <sup>2</sup>	<b>:f</b> <b>:f:w:s</b> <sup>3</sup> <b>:f:wj:s</b>	<b>/f</b> <b>/f/w/s</b> <b>/f/wj/s</b>	<b> F</b> <b> F  W  S</b> <b> F  Wj  S</b>	<b>=f</b> <b>=f=w=s</b> <b>=f=wj=s</b>	<b>F</b>
Word	<b>F</b> <sup>4</sup> <b>F&gt;W</b>	<b>:w</b> <b>:f:w:s</b> <b>:f:wj:s</b> <sup>5</sup>	<b>/w</b> <b>/f/w/s</b> <b>/f/wj/s</b>	<b> W</b> <b> F  W  S</b> <b> F  Wj  S</b>	<b>=w</b> <b>=f=w=s</b> <b>=f=wj=s</b>	<b>W</b> <b>FWS</b> <sup>6</sup> <b>F Wj S</b>
Spirit	<b>F</b> <b>F&gt;S</b> <sup>7</sup>	<b>:s</b> <b>:f:w:s</b> <b>:f:wj:s</b>	<b>/s</b> <b>/f/w/s</b> <b>/f/wj/s</b>	<b> S</b> <b> F  W  S</b> <b> F  Wj  S</b>	<b>=s</b> <b>=f=w=s</b> <b>=f=wj=s</b>	<b>S</b> <b>FWs</b> <b>F Wj s</b>
Jesus	<b>J</b> <sup>8</sup>	<b>:wj</b> <b>:f:wj:s</b>	<b>/wj</b> <b>/f/wj/s</b>	<b> Wj</b> <b> F  Wj  S</b>	<b>=wj</b> <b>=f=wj=s</b>	<b>Wj</b> <b>F Wj s</b>
Son	<b>J</b>	<b>:w</b> <b>:f:w:s</b> <b>:f:wj:s</b>	<b>/wj</b> <b>/f/wj/s</b>	<b> Wj</b> <b> F  Wj  S</b>	<b>=wj</b> <b>=f=wj=s</b>	<b>Wj</b> <b>F Wj s</b>
triad, trinity or Trinity	<b>F, J, F&gt;S</b>	<b>:f:w:s</b> <sup>9</sup> <b>:f:wj:s</b> <b>:f, :wj, :s</b>	<b>/f/w/s</b> <b>/f/wj/s</b> <b>/f, /wj, /s</b>	<b> F  W  S</b> <b> F  Wj  S</b> <b> F,  W,  S</b>	<b>=f=w=s</b> <b>=f=wj=s</b> <b>=f, =w, =s</b>	<b>FWS</b> <b>F Wj S</b> <b>F, W, S</b>
YHWH	<b>F</b> <sup>10</sup>	<b>All the above</b>	<b>All the above</b>	<b>All the above</b>	<b>All the above</b>	

1 “Divine Deception and Monotheism” by Dale Tuggy includes a closer look at Social Trinitarians as well as the subordinate/derivative view of Samuel Clarke (see footnote 6 below). Also valuable are discussions of self, person, being, God, and god. Access online at

<http://journalofanalytictheology.com/jat/index.php/jat/article/viewFile/jat.2014-1.030004192024a/232> .

2 The Father alone is the eternal, only Creator of everything. He is one God, one being, one person, of one nature, and therefore **F**.

3 FWS, regardless of font style, clarifiers, or letter case, refers to the triad prior to the conception of Jesus; FWjS is after conception.

4 **W** could be **F**, indicating the one speaking it. Or Word could be **F>W**, indicating an action, attribute or aspect of **F**.

5 Note the possible uses of the underline    in the wj combination of various views. wj could indicate that only w is the “self” of wj, with j indicating not a new person, but just the human nature. One could use wj to indicate that only the human nature is in view. Or, one could use wj to indicate that both natures are united in one person, the hypostatic union (<http://www.theopedia.com/hypostatic-union> ). For the sake of transparency, define your usage in any particular circumstance.

6 Whether **FWS** or **F W S** should be scripted is up to individual interpretation. Are **W** and/or **S** created (Arian) or derived/originated, but subordinate in eternity (Samuel Clarke)? Are they in some sense one substance or being, with only the Father existing *a se*? Or are they separate in person and essence, but above all other creatures? Should they be called triad, trinity, or Trinity? Hopefully, carefully defined use of these scripting conventions by those holding these views can help to clarify, communicate, and discuss with others. See footnote 1 above for access to a discussion of Samuel Clarke’s view.

7 One aspect of the Father’s person, his spirit (1 Cor. 2:11), the Father himself in action (Luke 1:35), or another name for the Father.

8 Sinless, conceived by a virgin, Spirit-filled, second Adam, Jesus is one man, one person, one being, one nature, foreknown by God.

9 Notice that no single entity of the triad, trinity, or Trinity is underlined since the focus here is on the monad, or unity of the three.

10 Only the Father is YHWH, as **F>W** or **F>S** are actions, aspects, attributes, or alternate designations of the Father.

or God	F>W F>S	in this column	in this column	in this column	in this column	F
<p><b>BOLD CAP: Eternal, Only Creator of Everything (F, W, S)</b>  <i>ITALIC CAP: Supra-human, but created, derived, or subordinate (W, S)</i>  <b>STANDARD CAP: A man – one person (body, soul, spirit), one being, one nature (J)</b></p> <p><b>Suggestion:</b> Rather than typing, one might use <i>select</i>, <i>copy</i>, and <i>paste</i> from this chart</p>						

1 “The single greatest reason people struggle with the doctrine of the Trinity is miscommunication. It is very rare that anyone actually argues or debates about the *real* doctrine of the Trinity. Most arguments that take place at the door, or over coffee, or at the workplace involve two or more people fighting vigorously over two or more *misrepresentations* of the doctrine itself. It is no wonder so many encounters create far more heat than they do light.

It is basic to human communication to define terms. Yet so many people have so much emotional energy invested in the Trinity that they often skip right past the “definitions” stage and charge right into the “tooth and claw” stage.”

- White, James R. *The forgotten Trinity*. Minneapolis, MN: Bethany House Publishers, 1998. Print, p. 27.

For a detailed academic examination of the Trinity, see: Tuggy, Dale, "Trinity", *The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy* (Winter 2016 Edition), Edward N. Zalta (ed.), URL = <<https://plato.stanford.edu/archives/win2016/entries/trinity/>>.

2 Rob Bowman: A multi-person being cannot be ruled out.

“The uniqueness of God should prepare us for the possibility that the one divine Being exists uniquely as a plurality of persons”

- <http://irr.org/biblical-basis-of-doctrine-of-trinity-part-ii-one-god-jehovah-lord>

3 “Toward Trinities Transparency” will generally use “triad” as an open reference to Father, Son, and Holy Spirit without specifying the relationship of one to another. The reader can judge whether “triad,” “trinity,” or “Trinity” best applies to any particular scripted representation.

“When it comes to Christian sources in the first three centuries, we should translate terms like trias and trinitas as “trinity” or “triad.” These English words are naturally read as plural referring terms, picking out Father, Son, and Spirit –whatever precisely those are, and however exactly they’re related to one another. We can then reserve “Trinity” for the one God in three “Persons” which catholic Christianity made mandatory in the last two decades of the fourth century. If all Christians distinguished between “trinity” (or “triad”) and “Trinity” much confusion would be eliminated.”

-Tuggy, D. (2017). *What is the Trinity?: Thinking about the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit* [Kindle Android version], Location 307. Retrieved from Amazon.com. See <https://www.what-is-the-trinity.com/>

4 See [http://www.academia.edu/8617621/The\\_Problem\\_of\\_the\\_Trinity](http://www.academia.edu/8617621/The_Problem_of_the_Trinity) for a representative critique of perceived ambiguity in trinitarian terminology.

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5 Rob Bowman:

“Non-Trinitarians typically argue, for example, that it is obvious from the pervasive use of singular pronouns for God (I, he, him, his, you [sing.]) throughout the Bible that God is only one person. This argument would be sound if by “person” we meant an individual being. However, in Trinitarian theology, a divine “person” is not an individual being, because God is one being, not three. The doctrine of the Trinity cannot be refuted by assuming that it is false; and this is what non-Trinitarians do when they assume that a person can only be an individual being.”

- <https://credohouse.org/blog/the-great-trinity-debate-part-1-rob-bowman-on-god-and-scripture>

The entire debate can be found here: <https://credohouse.org/blog/category/the-great-trinity-debate>

6 “Toward Trinities Transparency” will generally use “triad” and “monad” to refer to the “three” and “one” aspects involved in various theories in order to avoid prejudging the relationship between them.

7 See Rob Bowman’s comment to Dave Burke in “The Great Trinity Debate”:

“If we find other texts identifying three distinct persons as God (referring to the same Deity who made the world and is the proper object of worship), it is reasonable to understand that the Deity to whom these texts refer includes those three distinct persons. It is also possible that in some contexts the singular pronouns and the nouns or names referring to God have as their referent specifically just one of these distinct persons. This would clearly be the case where the text refers to God or Jehovah as distinct from the Messiah (under whatever description). Likewise, I see nothing amiss with understanding “God” in some contexts to refer to the triune Deity and in some contexts to refer to one person specifically of the three. (In some contexts, we may not be able to make such a distinction.) It could even happen in the same context, though that would be unusual.”

-Rob Bowman April 16, 2010 at 4:46 pm. THE PROBLEM WITH PRONOUNS in <https://credohouse.org/blog/the-great-trinity-debate-part-1-david-burke-on-god-and-scripture#comment-39999>

8 “Christians believe in the Trinity not because the term itself is given in some creedlike form in the text of Scripture. Instead, they believe in the Trinity because the Bible, taken in its completeness, accepted as a self-consistent revelation of God, *teaches* that there is one Being of God (Foundation One) that is shared fully (Foundation Three), by three divine persons (Foundation Two), the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit. There is, therefore, no contradiction between being a “Bible believer” and holding to the Trinity. The one leads, naturally, and inevitably, to the other.”

- White, James R. *The forgotten Trinity*. Minneapolis, MN: Bethany House Publishers, 1998. Print, p. 27.

9 J is listed in only the human category to facilitate the distinction between the pre-human Word, W, and the human Jesus, J. The concept of the full Deity of Jesus is expressed by W assuming human nature, without creating a second self, by combining

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eternally existent W with assumed human nature j. The lowercase j indicates J is not a new self, but rather the assumption of the human nature without a new self coming into existence. Therefore, Wj is used with the appropriate font style, case, and prefix for each respective view of God in order to represent the particular conception of the relationship of God and man in Jesus.

10 See “Anhypostasis: What Kind of Flesh Did Jesus Take?” Article by David Mathis, Executive Editor, [desiringGod.org](http://www.desiringgod.org), Dec. 24, 2010.  
- <http://www.desiringgod.org/articles/anhypostasis-what-kind-of-flesh-did-jesus-take>  
also: <http://www.desiringgod.org/articles/enhypostasis-what-kind-of-flesh-did-the-word-become>

11 The terms *being*, *essence*, and *nature* may need more precise definition depending on context. At times *being* seems to refer to the “stuff” (*essence* or *nature*) of which something is composed. At other times *being* seems to be used to refer not just to the “stuff” but to an entity, or self, in its entirety. The same “stuff” can be shared by different entities, but it is not as easy to conceive of different entities sharing the same self.

12 Rob Bowman: “Trinitarianism does offer qualifications of these predicates: God is one God, one divine being, but three persons (with the term *person* stipulated to be used with a somewhat different connotation as compared to its use for human beings). Given this qualification, the doctrine may be metaphysically difficult or problematic, but it is not a simple logical contradiction.”  
- <https://credohouse.org/blog/the-great-trinity-debate-part-1-rob-bowman-on-god-and-scripture>

13 Rob Bowman: “Of course, if God is three persons, these “three” cannot be three parts (as cells are parts of an organism). Since God is an infinite being, He cannot be composed of parts in any case. Yet it may be that He exists as a kind of differentiated infinite unity that is “triune” (three in one) though not “triplex” (three in parts). Since this is the infinite God we are talking about, there will be no corresponding or analogous instance of “triunity” or trinity in nature. We must be careful, then, not to beg the question by assuming that the unity of the Deity will be the same sort of unity as we find in the finite world.”  
- <http://www.gospeloutreach.net/optrin.html> “Oneness Pentecostalism and the Trinity”

14 James White gives us this “short, succinct, accurate definition” of the Trinity: “Within the one Being that is God, there exists eternally three coequal and coeternal persons, namely, the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit.” (*The Forgotten Trinity*, p. 26) Agreeing with Hank Hanegraaf, president of the Christian Research Institute, White further says: “. . . when speaking of the Trinity, we need to realize we are talking about one *what* and three *who*’s. The one *what* is the Being or essence of God; the

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three *who's* are the Father, Son, and Spirit. We dare not mix up the *what's* and *who's* regarding the Trinity.”

- White, James R. *The forgotten Trinity*. Minneapolis, MN: Bethany House Publishers, 1998. Print, p. 27.

15 Hypostasis is understood here as is generally accepted today. Historical variations in its understanding can be noted by individual users of these scripting conventions whenever necessary for the purposes at hand. The goal is clarity and transparency, not conformity to these proposed scripting conventions. Here one brief summary of the historical changes in the understanding of hypostasis:

“*Hypostasis*: In the first century, the Greek word *hypostasis* essentially meant "being" and was generally regarded as a synonym for *ousia*. It did not mean "person" as the KJV translates. In fact, the Nicene Creed anathematized anyone who denied the Father and the Son were the same *hypostasis*. Today, Trinitarians do in fact deny that the Father and the Son are the same *hypostasis*. In the late fourth century, the Cappadocians redefined the word *hypostasis* due to confusion concerning the word's definition and to suit Trinitarian doctrine. At Nicea in the early fourth century, the Father and Son were the same *hypostasis* but by the end of the fourth century, the Father and Son were not the same *hypostasis* because the word had been redefined. For this reason, the word *hypostasis* in later Trinitarian doctrine does not mean the same thing as it did at Hebrews 1:3. For that reason, most modern translations use the English word "being," or something similar, to translate *hypostasis*.”

- [http://www.angelfire.com/space/thegospeltruth/TTD/verses/hebrews1\\_3.html](http://www.angelfire.com/space/thegospeltruth/TTD/verses/hebrews1_3.html),  
“Notes”

Here is another example of wrestling with the concept of hypostasis:

[http://www.academia.edu/3816426/Basil\\_and\\_the\\_Three-Hypostases-Tradition\\_Reconsidering\\_the\\_origins\\_of\\_Cappadocian\\_Theology](http://www.academia.edu/3816426/Basil_and_the_Three-Hypostases-Tradition_Reconsidering_the_origins_of_Cappadocian_Theology).

16 Notice that *being*, *essence*, and *nature* are not necessarily synonymous. If *being* is taken to mean a separate entity, being could not be shared by the three. Only if *being* is taken to mean the *essence* or *nature* (“stuff”) of an entity could it be shared among three *separate* persons.