

# Is Christianity the Only World Religion Which Begins by Discarding Its Own Founder's Creed?

Anthony Buzzard

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“To wrench Jesus out of his Jewish world destroys Jesus and destroys Christianity, the religion which grew out of his teachings. Even Jesus' most familiar role as Christ is a Jewish role. If Christians leave the concrete realities of Jesus' life and teaching and the history of Israel in favor of a mythic, universal, spiritual Jesus and an otherworldly Kingdom of God, they deny their origins in Israel, their history and the God who has loved and protected Israel and the church. They cease to interpret the actual Jesus sent by God and remake him in their own image and likeness. The dangers are obvious.” (Anthony Saldarini, Internet).

“The evolution of the Trinity: No responsible NT scholar would claim that the doctrine of the Trinity was taught by Jesus or preached by the earliest Christians or consciously held by any writer of the NT. It was in fact slowly worked out in the course of the first few centuries in an attempt to give an intelligible doctrine of God” (*The Image of the Invisible God*, SCM Press, 1982, p. 87, Dr. A. T Hanson, Professor of Theology University of Hull)

## Does It Matter What God We Worship?

“The God of the OT is not a force, not even a personified force. He is a full-orbed *Personality*, interacting in depth with persons.”<sup>1</sup>

So much for Dr. James White's understanding that God is one Essence, “one WHAT IN THREE WHO'S.”

“Offer yourselves to God as a consecrated, living sacrifice which will delight God's heart, for this is the worship which is your Gospel (*logikos*) service” (Rom. 12:1).

A prominent spokesman for the traditional view that God is Three Persons in One writes: “Our Lord Jesus Christ is God manifest in the flesh. God tabernacling in human form. When I say that I believe in the full Deity of Christ, that is what I affirm. At his birth our Lord Jesus Christ **did not begin to exist**” (Rev. Iain Paisley). So much for Matthew and Luke and John!

The Moody Bible College official statement of faith declares that “God is three Persons and one Person.” The same authority believes that the Gospel of the Kingdom is not for us, but only for Jews.

**“We must remember that Christian theology does not believe God to be a person. It believes Him to be such that in Him a Trinity of Persons is consistent with a Unity in Divinity”** (C. S. Lewis, in *Quotable Lewis*).

**“Interpreters of Christian persuasion have ordinarily not been especially interested in what Jesus intended and did in his own lifetime”** (Dr. Richard Hiers, *Jesus and the Future*).

**“Therefore it cannot be the best expression of the unity of God to declare that God is a single person.”** (Dr. Oliver Quick, D. D. (Oxon.) *Doctrines of the Creed*, 1938, p. 139). [the Bible canceled!]

“Christendom has **done away** with Christianity without being quite aware of it” (Soren Kierkegaard, cited in *Time Magazine*, Dec. 16, 1946, p. 64).

**“Jesus' affirmation of the Shema is neither remarkable nor specifically Christian”** (Craig Evans, *Word Biblical Commentary on Mark, 34b*, p. 261).

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<sup>1</sup>Oswalt, *New International Commentary on the OT*, p. 346. Note that God is always a single Divine “soul” or “self.” Thousands of singular personal pronouns describe Him.

The world is divided into many religions, but the three who claim to be monotheistic cannot agree at all about what monotheism means! This calls for urgent evangelism, to do something to relieve this gigantic ecclesiastical muddle and the poisonous effects it has on the millions trying to find the true God, the God of Jesus, and the true Gospel. We live in a toxic, theologically contaminated world. Jesus in Mark 12:29 could unravel the mess, if anyone really believed it and preached it.

Let us unpack the process by which people must be moved from confusion to clarity, darkness to light. In evangelicalism, well-known for its claim to get people “saved” by “accepting Jesus into their heart,” people are led by a Trinitarian system which is on record as saying that one *cannot* be saved outside of the Trinity. But as Kermit Zarley says: “The Church doctrine of the Trinity is contradictory and nonsensical, and lacks biblical support” (*Restitution of Jesus Christ*, p. 124).

Scot McKnight dedicates a whole website to **the Jesus Creed**, telling us how fundamentally essential the Shema of Deuteronomy 6:4 and Mark 12:29 was to Jesus. But just when we expect him to urge us to follow the unitarian creed of Jesus, he falls strangely silent and makes no attempt to explain how it is that evangelicals do *not* affirm the Shema as Jesus did. Apparently he does not want us to be aware of the difference between one and three.

“Mark’s mention of the Shema (12:29) is neither remarkable nor particularly Christian” (see above). So the teaching of Jesus is not Christianity! But it ought to be. It *must* be if we are to be saved.

### **A Hybrid Jesus**

The Jesus of orthodox Trinitarianism is such a bizarre and improbable person that it is a wonder that church members everywhere do not march out on him. The trouble is that they do not know nor apparently care to know what “their Church” actually believes. But is woolly or sloppy thinking pleasing to God and Jesus on this vital topic?

A recent visitor to our garden tour, in a brief conversation, stated that his Jesus was schizophrenic. That was the best description of Jesus he knew, given the creed he was supposed to believe in the Baptist church. We can understand his perplexity. What are we, all of us, going to do to help him out of it? The Jesus of official orthodoxy looks like this:

“Now the Christian doctrine of the Incarnation is that in Christ the place of a human personality is **replaced** by the divine personality of God the Son, the second person of the Most Holy Trinity. Christ possesses a complete human nature **without a human personality**. Uncreated and eternal Divine Personality **replaces a created human personality in him**. The Incarnation, if it is a reality, if it really means the Word-made-flesh, cannot mean anything else. The eternal Word of God has **joined to Himself** a human body and a human soul and is henceforth both God and man” (Simmons, *What Think Ye of Christ?* p. 45).

I want to rub this point in:

“Jesus was ‘the only son of God,’ man’s true representative, perfect God and perfect man, with ‘two natures in One Person, without confusion, change division or severance.’ Jesus was man **but NOT a man**. His ego, personality, was divine, preexistent, clothing itself and operating in a human body; he came into history and **not out of it**. He was God working in and through man, not a man raised to the divine level...even if subject to the limitations of a Jew of his age and place” (Bevan, *Steps to Christian Understanding*, p. 140).

The time was, even *after* the New Testament when things were still on track, not off-base, when “word” (logos) in John 1:1 had not yet become “Word,” a God the Son preexisting his own birth. I Clement seems to give us a purely unitarian God and human Jesus.

But by Irenaeus and Justin Martyr, 2<sup>nd</sup> century AD, things are drifting into belief in a strange “other Jesus.” Irenaeus says, “Christ was the word **who** existed with God from the beginning” (*Against Heresies* 3, 18. 1). From there it is all downhill. Clement of Alexandria wrote, “Our instructor is the holy **God Jesus**. The word was the guide for humanity” (*Instructor*, 1. 7). Origen wrote, “he whom we regard and believe to have been **God** from the beginning and the **Son of God**, the very word and the very wisdom and the very truth” (*Celsus*, 3. 41).

Yes, but from what beginning? Matthew, Mark and Luke are gradually being dismissed and discarded by “the church fathers,” and John is later twisted in chapter 1, when word becomes Word. And so it is to this day. John 1:13 is *originally* almost certainly a beautiful description of the virginal begetting of the Son. Did you ever wonder why John would leave out any reference to the virgin birth? Almost certainly he did not, and it is there in John 1:13 as the oldest records of that verse show.<sup>2</sup>

Once the birth of Jesus was **antedated**, the following contradictions were inevitable: If Jesus was the human prophet King, he could not be the preexisting, divine Son of the Father. If he was a descendant of David he could not be the preexistent Son who existed in heaven from the beginning of time, or before. If he was the Son of Man who will help God set up his Kingdom on a rejuvenated earth, he could not also be fully GOD without beginning. The reconciling of the Incarnation with virgin birth was logically impossible, but some enterprising church fathers tackled it as early as the second century. The apology of Aristides: “Jesus the Messiah is called the Son of God Most High, and it is said that God **came down from heaven** and from a Hebrew virgin assumed and clothed himself with flesh, and the Son of God lived in a daughter of man.”

This imaginative and tabloid Jesus was given space in the apocryphal NT writings. The amazing portrait arose of a Jesus who engineered his own conception in Mary. He came **through** the womb of Mary, not from it. (It was Gnostic heretics, Tertullian said, who taught that “the Son came **through** the womb of Mary like water through a tube.”)

**Epistola Apostolorum:** “On that day when I the Lord Jesus Christ took the form of the Angel Gabriel, I appeared to Mary and spoke with her. Her heart received me and she believed; I formed myself **and entered into** her womb and I became flesh.”<sup>3</sup>

**But we find the same thing in the so-called “orthodox fathers”!** Irenaeus, Bishop of Lyons: “The Word, in the beginning with God, by whom all things were made who was always present with mankind, as in these last days, according to the time appointed by the Father, united to his own workmanship, inasmuch as he became a man liable to suffering. It follows that every objection is set aside by those who say, ‘if our Lord was born at that time, Christ had therefore no previous existence.’ For I have shown that **the Son of God did not then begin to exist**, being with the Father from the beginning; but when he became incarnate, and was made man, commenced afresh the long line of human beings, and furnished us with salvation.”

The different Christologies, i.e., different “Jesuses” created an interesting but incompatible variety of journeys of the Christ. Son of David (good!): earth to heaven to earth. Son of Man (good): earth to heaven to earth. God the Son (*not* good): heaven to earth to heaven to earth.

In the *Psalms of Solomon* (50 BC), which are Jewish and not Christian,<sup>4</sup> we are still on solid ground as to a genuinely human Messiah. These make excellent reading as Jewish background to the NT.

### **The Real Messiah**

The son of David would have the spirit of the Lord resting upon him according to Isaiah 11. Jesus is the prophet of Deuteronomy 18:15-18 who is coming into the world, i.e. to be born, John 6:14. The LORD promises Moses, “I will raise up a prophet like you from among their countrymen, and I will put my words in his mouth to speak to them all that I command him, and whoever will not give heed to my words which he will speak in my name I myself will require it of him.” (Peter says that the one who

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<sup>2</sup>See Metzger, Textual Commentary, Latin MS Itb, Irenaeus, Tertullian, Origen, Ambrose. Athanasius read the singular “he [the Son] was begotten not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, not of the will of a man, but of God.” Curetonian Syriac and 6 MSS of the Peshitta Syriac read the plural “those” and the singular verb “was born” [suggests some fiddling]. A number of modern scholars (inc. the Jerusalem Bible), Zahn, Resch, Blaas, Loisy, Seeburg, Burney, Buchsel, Boismard, Dupont, Braun have argued for the originality of the singular”— **a ref. to the virginal begetting of the Son**. The aorist for the Messiah’s birth is found too in Isa. 9:6, Matt. 1:20, Luke 1:35 and 1John 5:18, cp v. 1, where God is the “generator.” All based on Ps. 2:7, cp. Ps.110:3, LXX.

<sup>3</sup>Cited in Teeple, *How Did Christianity Really Begin?* 1994, p. 195.

<sup>4</sup>Though the connection is obvious between these Psalms and Luke, showing how Jewish Luke is in his Messianism. These Psalms of Solomon are excellent for showing us the Jewish background to the NT.

**refuses this Messiah** will be cut off from the people.) The Samaritans believed that the Messiah would be a prophet like Moses promised in the Deuteronomy 18 passage. The Samaritans considered this to be so important that they included it in their 10 Commandments.

A portion of the Moses prophecy is quoted again in Stephen's speech in Acts 7:37. That God will "raise him up" means that God will cause him to be born. Psalm 2:7 and 110:3 in the LXX, and some Hebrew MSS too, spoke of the "today" on which God would **beget, bring into existence** His Son. The church fathers had to turn "today" into a timeless today, i.e. reduce "today" to nonsense. And dissolve the real Jesus into a pre-human, non-human person.<sup>5</sup>

### **From Light to Darkness**

That is how the real Son of God, you explain to your friends, became a supernatural preexistent being who has existed in the heavens from the beginning of time, or before. In the *Shepherd of Hermas* Jesus is supernatural and pre-existing, and is called the Son of God. "The Son of God is much older than all his creation so that he was the Father's counselor in his creation. The name of the son of God is great and incomprehensible and sustains the whole world."<sup>6</sup>

From this time onwards Genesis 1:26 is being summoned as a proof of the Trinity. "Let us make man..." Happily scholarship and even the NIV Study Bible now recognize that the 4 "us texts" have **nothing to do with a Trinity**. The *Word Biblical Commentary* on Genesis 1:26 admits, "It is now universally admitted that the plural does not refer to Christ" (p. 27).

Ignatius, Bishop of Antioch (early 2<sup>nd</sup> century, although some of his letters are forgeries), also regarded Jesus as **God's preexistent Son**. In the greeting to his letter to the Romans Ignatius refers to Jesus as Son of the Father. These facts are significant and are evidence of a process that was well under way at the end of the first century and beginning of the second — namely a **reinterpretation of Jesus in terms of Hellenistic mysticism**. Philo the Alexandrian Jew had reinterpreted Judaism in those terms, and apparently some Alexandrian Gentiles created some philosophy and the Hermetic cult along similar lines (see *How Did Christianity Really Begin?* Teeple, p. 186).

This rewriting of the Jesus story in terms of paganism and mysticism is the Devil's major trick. Here is a parallel: Today you can buy the lectures of Thomas Merton, famous Christian mystic. The advertisement for his lectures sounds alluring. The appeal goes like this:

**"Just as the Church Fathers used Greek philosophical wisdom and tools to develop Christian theology, Thomas Merton, one of Christianity's great mystics, explored the contemplative wisdom of Sufism (mystical Islam) to enhance our Christian understanding of mysticism and of spiritual practice.** In one of his lectures to the novices at Gethsemane he said, "Those who are seeking to know God, they should be closer to the Sufis."

The result of antedating Jesus' **origin** (Matt. 1:18; I John 5:18) to a time before Genesis and with Origen to an "eternal generation" was beautifully summed up by Professor Loofs, a pupil of Harnack who lectured at Oberlin College, Ohio in 1922<sup>7</sup>: This statement can be an eye-opener for people searching out the true Jesus:

"While Hellenistic Gnosticism generated **an acute** Hellenizing [turning into Greek ways of thinking] of Christianity in those circles which were excluded from the 'catholic church,' the decisive beginnings of the **gradual** [and thus much more subtle and harder to detect] Hellenizing of the ecclesiastical Christianity are to be found in the Greek apologists of the second century. By this we mean the Christianized philosophers, Aristides (*Apology*, not long before 150 AD), Justin Martyr (d. about 165 AD, 1st and 2<sup>nd</sup> Apologies, c. 150 AD, *Dialogue with the Jew Trypho*, 155-160, *On the Resurrection*), Tatian (*To the Greeks*, 150 AD), Athenagoras (133-190 AD), Theophilus of Antioch (181 AD). These men, whose apologetic literature we have available, represent indeed only a part of the apologetic literature of the second century. Yet the character of the apologetic conception of Christianity in these apologetic works is

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<sup>5</sup>It is easy to repoint YeLiDeTiCHa, "I have begotten you" to read the odd "YaLDuTeCHa," your youth."

<sup>6</sup>*Sim.* 9.12.2; 9.14.5.

<sup>7</sup>Those lectures translated into English as *The Truth about Jesus Christ* are a must for anyone researching this topic.

extensively recognizable. Doubtless this conception of Christianity is conditioned by the apologetic aims of this literature. It is probable that the personal Christianity of the Apologists is richer and deeper than their apologetics. And they theologized only as apologists and only their *theology*, not their personal Christianity, influenced the historical development of dogma.

“**Their theology however** receives its character from the fact that **their Christianity stepped into the place occupied earlier by their pre-conversion philosophy**. So their Christianity was **dragged down** to the level of **that philosophy** and grew into a whole, influenced by fragments of their minor speculative viewpoint. What the religious, moralistic **popular philosophy** of the time strove for, that is what the Apologists found in Christianity: the assurance of **immortality** and a strongly moral world-view. In that sense Christianity seemed to them as the ‘only sure and healthy **philosophy**, as the dogma of truth.’”

Professor Loofs further described the process of the early **corruption** of biblical Christianity, brilliantly. This is the corrupted form inherited by churches:

“The Apologists [‘church fathers’ like Justin Martyr, mid-2<sup>nd</sup> century] laid the foundation for the **perversion/corruption** (*Verkehrung*) of Christianity into a revealed [philosophical] teaching. Specifically, their Christology affected the later development **disastrously**. By taking for granted the transfer of the concept of **Son of God onto the preexisting Christ**, they were the cause of the Christological **problem**<sup>8</sup> of the fourth century. They caused a **shift** in the point of departure of Christological thinking — *away from the historical Christ* and onto the issue of preexistence [Christ was given a brand new non-historical birth certificate]. **They thus shifted attention away from the historical life of Jesus, putting it into the shadow and promoting instead the Incarnation [i.e., of a preexistent Son]**. They tied Christology to cosmology [pushed the Son back into Genesis] and could not tie it to soteriology [salvation]. The Logos [John’s capitalized Word, which ought to be word] teaching is not a ‘higher’<sup>9</sup> Christology than the customary one. It lags in fact far behind the genuine appreciation of Christ. According to their teaching it is no longer God who reveals Himself in Christ, but the Logos, the inferior God, a God who as God is subordinated to the Highest God (inferiorism or subordinationism).

“In addition, the suppression of economic-trinitarian ideas by **metaphysical**-pluralistic concepts of the divine triad (*trias*) can be traced to the Apologists.”<sup>10</sup>

### **The Results Have Led to Denominational Confusion**

Paul had urged us all: “I want you, brothers and sisters, *above all things* to say the same thing, that there be no divisions [no denominations!] among you, that you be perfectly united in one mind and one judgment” (1 Cor. 1:10, 11). Jesus had likewise spoken of the unity of the true followers. He prayed for this unity in John 17. There are now thousands of disagreeing divisions and denominations.

The resulting disaster, once the creed of Jesus (Mark 12:29) was discarded and replaced by a philosophical crypto-gnostic one, despite **Jesus’ emphasis on Psalm 110:1**, where the second lord (*adoni*) is not GOD, and his constant claim to be the **man**, i.e. the Son of Man — this disaster was rightly lamented by Canon Goudge. Canon H. L. Goudge was Regius Professor of Divinity, Christ Church, Oxford:

“The people of God, the Jews, were soon the least adequately represented in God’s Church. That was a **disaster** to the Church itself. It meant that the Church as a whole failed to understand the Old Testament and the Greek mind and Roman mind [pagan minds] in turn, instead of the Hebrew mind, came to dominate its outlook [the church became paganized]: from that **disaster the Church has never recovered**, either in doctrine or in practice. If today we are again coming rightly to understand the Old

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<sup>8</sup>We should not forget that this “problem” led to ultimate confusion and even the death of noble souls who refused to accept philosophy in place of Jesus (cp. the murder of Servetus by Calvin on the issue of unitarianism)

<sup>9</sup>False systems advertised themselves by using the term “higher” or “deeper.” It all sounds impressive.

<sup>10</sup>Friedrich Loofs, *Leitfaden zum Studium des Dogmengeschichte* (*Manual for the Study of the History of Dogma*), 1890, part 1 ch. 2, section 18: “Christianity as a Revealed Philosophy. The Greek Apologists,” Niemeyer Verlag, 1951, p. 97, translation mine.

Testament, and thus far better than before the New Testament, it is to our modern Hebrew scholars and in part to Jewish scholars themselves that we owe it” (“The Calling of the Jews,” 1939).

And by Dr. Martin Werner of the University of Bern:

“The Church found itself in a dilemma as soon as it tried to harmonize the doctrine of the Deity of Jesus and the Deity of the Father with **monotheism**. For according to the NT witnesses, in the teaching of Jesus relative to the monotheism of the OT and Judaism, there had been no element of change whatsoever. Mark 12:29ff recorded the confirmation by Jesus himself, without any reservation, of the supreme monotheistic confession of faith of Israelite religion in its complete form...The means by which the Church sought to demonstrate the agreement of its dogma of the Deity of both Father and Son with monotheism, remained seriously **uncertain and contradictory**” (*Formation of Christian Dogma*, 1957, p. 241).

And it was not long before (in 2 Clem. 5:9) the original system was being suppressed by the philosophical notion that Jesus was “**first spirit** and then flesh.” That **shift**, documented by 2 Clement 5:9, meant that the historical Jesus was being swallowed up by a different Jesus. As Martin Werner lamented, “the historical Jesus completely disappeared” behind a Gnostic counterfeit figure (*Formation of Dogma*, p. 298).

*Paul taught the opposite of 2 Clement 5:9. Paul said that the physical Adam, Son of God came first and the Son of God, Jesus came later. 2 Clement 5:9 reversed the order given by Paul in 1 Corinthians 15:45ff. Christianity was beginning to lose its footing in the Bible.*

The same decline into darkness is described by the celebrated Jurgen Moltmann in his *Spirit of Life*:

“The Gnostic misunderstanding of the apocalyptic conflict [i.e. future Messianic Kingdom on earth to be introduced at the Second Coming]. In the degree to which Christianity cut itself off from its Hebrew roots [including the Shema which church fathers denounced as “Jewish”!] and acquired Hellenistic and Roman form, it lost its eschatological hope [Sean Finnegan’s point recently] and surrendered its apocalyptic alternative [Kingdom of God to come] to this world of violence and death. It merged into late antiquity’s **Gnostic religion of redemption**. From Justin Martyr onwards, most of the church fathers revered Plato as a ‘Christian before Christ’ and extolled his feeling for the divine transcendence and for the values of the spiritual world. God’s eternity now took the place of God’s future. **Heaven replaced the coming kingdom**. The spirit which redeems the soul from the body supplanted the spirit as the well of life. The **immortality of the soul** displaced the resurrection of the body, and the yearning for another world became a substitute for changing this one. As redemption was spiritualized, the realm of the flesh was correspondingly reduced to the body and its earthly drives and needs. People ceased to hope for ‘the redemption of the body’ (Rom. 8:23) in the resurrection of the flesh (the down-to-earth phrase used in the German version of the Apostles Creed). They now hoped instead for the **soul’s final deliverance** from the body with what [Gnostic] Marcion described as its ‘toilsome nourishment,’ its ‘painful’ reproduction system and its ‘miserable death.’ It was now no longer the raising of life that was celebrated as the festival of redemption. It was death.

“In the world of late antiquity Christianity encountered the **Platonic dualism of soul and body** [the beautiful teaching about ‘the sleep of the dead,’ Ps. 13:3; Ecc. 5:9-10 got lost] in the form of the Gnostic contempt for the body, and its otherworldly longing for redemption [‘**going to heaven**’]. The soul, condemned to lifelong incarceration in the body, yearns to be free from this prison. It does not long for the present to be changed into a home in which it likes to live. In this **Gnostic form, the Christian hope** no longer gazes forward to a future when everything will be created a new. It looks upwards, to the soul’s **escape from the body** and from this earth into the heaven of blessed spirits.

“All the Greek and Latin fathers had to fight against this contemporary **Gnostic religiosity, and most of them succumbed to it**, developing a Christian spirituality which went halfway to meet these religious requirements. Right down to our own time, the Platonic time-eternity dualism has pushed out the apocalyptic conflict between past and future and put it out of commission. As a result, the **dualism of body and soul** has continually repressed and abolished the conflict between the death-drive and the drive for life. This is so even today. The consequence is that a spirituality more or less mildly hostile to the body spirituality, non-sensuous, unworldly and nonpolitical — a **Gnostic** spirituality in fact, replaces the

original Jewish and Christian vitality of life reborn out of the creative God...It is in **Augustine** that we find the theological and anthropological basis of Western spirituality. The concentration of his theology on God and **the soul** led to a devaluation of the body and nature, to a preference for **inward**, direct self-experience as a way to God and to a neglect of sensuous experiences of sociality and nature. Knowledge of the self is a more certain affair than knowledge of the world [and God's plan]. Close the gateways of your senses and seek God **deep within**, wrote Gerhard Tersteegen...The **medieval mysticism** which followed Augustine's and anthropological theology drew on his psychology in delineating the soul's ways of meditation on the path to God...Western mysticism of the soul takes its stamp from **Augustine** and has in its turn put its own impress on the Western psyche and Western psychology...This generated Western individualism for which the values of the human person take precedence over the values of human sociality. If in tracing the theological premises for Western mysticism and spirituality we go back to their biblical roots and that means their roots in Old Testament in Hebrew thinking, what difference would this make to spirituality how will it change?" (p. 89).

### **Jesus was a unitarian. Could he sign the faith statement of a Trinitarian church?**

Jesus made a plain and easy unitarian statement, his confession of faith, when he said in prayer: "You, Father, are the only one, and no one else, who is the true God" (John 17:3). J.A.T. Robinson: "John's Jesus is as an undeviating a witness to the **unitary** monotheism of Judaism as any NT writer."

The word *monos* in John 17:3, from which we get monotheism, means "the only one and no one else." Churches have forgotten the creed of Jesus and substituted for it a strange Triune creed constructed from Greek philosophical terminology — "One essence and three hypostases." Popularly "Three Who's in one What." This is **alien to the mind of Jesus**, and so obstructs a good relationship with the True God and His human Messiah.

1 Timothy 2:5 is perfectly simple and adequate: One God and one man Messiah Jesus. "You Father are the only (*monos*) one who is true God (*theos*)." This is brilliantly clear and brings light and health to the total personality.

There it is in all its beautiful simplicity. This is exactly the difference between YHVH and *adoni* ("my lord") in the indispensable prophetic utterance of Psalm 110:1: "The LORD said to my lord (*adoni*)." This amounts to God and Man reconciled in Christ. Not God and God. God does not need to be reconciled to God. It is not about God and God, but God and Man: that is the whole point of the universe as we know it, and certainly the whole point of Scripture and the plan of salvation and immortality (2 Tim. 1:10). The whole point of the Bible is lost if it ceases to be the story of the restoration of **man's** original destiny to rule for God (Kingdom of God). The story of **MAN's** reconciliation to God. Not God to God!

Now compare the burdensome, brain-breaking complications of the creed which has replaced the creed of Jesus. Christianity is the only world religion, I think, which begins by discarding its own founder's creed. Little do churchgoers know that they are assembling under a creed which requires of them to say, "He are three" and "They is one." This is the frank admission of Professor Millard Erickson in his book on the Trinity.<sup>11</sup> They must present to God a square circle, a married bachelor and a hot ice cube. And when all else fails, they are forced to resort to and to retreat into "mystery," by which they really mean "mystification."

It is often what you *don't* say that proves you are not speaking the truth. Or failing silence, Truth becomes hidden under a thick, verbal fog of "church-speak," and this is true also of evangelical tracts presenting "salvation" mostly from John, leaving out Matthew, Mark and Luke, epitomized by the startling and shocking dictum of C.S. Lewis: "the Gospel is not in the Gospels."

Well did Dr. Colin Brown at Fuller say that churchgoers, in their muddle, "practice tritheism in all but name."<sup>12</sup> And Dr. Hey: "Let us always be conscientious to admit that our doctrine of the Trinity is wholly unintelligible." And Bishop Newman: "It is a contradiction, indeed, and not merely a verbal contradiction,

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<sup>11</sup>*God in Three Persons*, p. 270.

<sup>12</sup>Brown, "Trinity and Incarnation," *Ex Auditu*, 7, p. 83

but an incompatibility in the human ideas conveyed. We can scarcely make a nearer approach to an exact enunciation of it, than of saying **that one thing is two things**" (Sadler's *Gloria Patri*, p. 39).

Little do churchgoers know that they assemble under the proposition that "Jesus is *man* but not *a* man." Dave Hunt is convinced that Mary provided only a body for Jesus but no personality. Dr Swindoll, while approving the belief that "Mary changed God's diapers," boldly says of Isaiah 9:6: "The Son was *not* born," but "the Son was given."

In fact John 3:16 is the NT comment on the marvelous Isaiah 9:6: the Son/child will be begotten by God and given by God. Hence John 3:16: "God loved the world in this way: He gave His uniquely generated Son," combining Isaiah 9:5-6, where we have the divine passive, i.e. "to us, Israel, a child will be **begotten** by God and a Son will be given by God."

This takes us, of course, to Luke 1:35, where no less an authority than Gabriel says in answer to Mary's matchless question: "How can this be since I am not married"? "Holy spirit will come upon you, and the power of the Most High will overshadow you, *and for that reason precisely* the one to be **begotten** [or possibly 'being begotten'] will be called the Son of God." So in Matthew 1:20 Joseph is reassured with the words "what is **begotten, fathered** IN her, is from the action of holy spirit" (somewhat foggily translated as "conceived in her," to disconnect the **Father's activity** from the miracle).

This takes us naturally to John 1:13 where almost certainly the reading should be a reference to the virginal begetting. Is it credible to think that John failed to mention the Virgin Birth in the Gospel? Tertullian, Irenaeus and others attest to an earlier reading: "of him, who **was begotten** not of the will of the flesh, nor of male desire but by God." This takes us naturally to 1 John 5:18 (not the KJV which uses a corrupted manuscript in this verse) where "the one begotten by God [i.e. the Son] guards the Christian believer and the Devil cannot touch him." In 1 John 4:2 belief in the human Son is the criterion for biblical orthodoxy. In verse 3 "he who does not confess *that* Jesus is not from God." It is a question of confessing the right, and real Jesus. Not just "confessing Jesus."

And in 1 John 5:1 God the Father is called the Generator, the one who begets and who begat the Son some 2000 years ago. Shake that foundation and you shake the universe!

### **The Jesus Creed on the End of the Age**

While we are on the subject of what Jesus believed, his creed, this is what Jesus believed about the final end-times. In answer to the question about his Parousia (Second Coming) and the end of the present evil age (Matt. 24:3), he gave a concise sermon on Daniel, from the infamous (unnecessarily so) prophecy of Daniel 9:24-27, plus Daniel 8:13 and 11:31, 12:11. I borrow from a nice book by a former missionary in China.

"'On the wing of abominations he [the evil prince] comes desolating.' This happens in the latter half of the seven years mentioned in Dan. 7 as 'a time, times, and half a time,' and also 42 months and 1260 days unpacked in the book of Revelation. The set-up of an Idol, most probably the image of the Antichrist himself, in the newly built Temple marks the start of the latter half of the last seven years in man's matured evil against God. As soon as Antichrist stops the sacrifices and obligations in the Temple, his image will be set up in the Temple for public worship to take God's place. It is a time of blasphemy and persecution, also called the Great Tribulation, until the Lord Jesus and his Saints take the Kingdom...."

"All these passages have a solemn interest and importance to the last days' believers. We should remember what our Lord said in Matthew 24:15, 'when you therefore see the Abomination of Desolation spoken of by Daniel the prophet stand in the holy place, whoever reads, let him understand, then let them who are in Judea flee to the mountains.' The holy place in which this abomination will be set up of course means the Temple of God at Jerusalem. Little as God can own or recognize the sacrifices which the Jews may offer in unbelief whether in times of past or future, yet the place is that which God looks upon as one with which His own honor is greatly connected. It is the holy place still. Our Lord speaks of the holy place as that in which the abomination of desolation is set.

"An abomination, generally speaking, in the Bible signifies an Idol on account of which God brings in desolation. There is no abomination in God's sight greater than an Idol because it takes God's place. To worship an idol is to violate the second commandment. This, of course, is a great sin. This Idol appears to

be set in some prominent place, the wing or pinnacle of the temple which is hence called the wing of abominations...Revelation 13 gives a full account of the erection of Antichrist's image being worshiped as an Idol. Though it does not mention the place we believe it is no other place than the Temple at Jerusalem as Daniel and our Lord testified. At that time there will be no freedom of belief. To worship the image is to live and prosper; not to worship means death and disaster. It is not a portrait but a living image that could speak and has power to kill all who refuse to bow to it. Many will be killed for Christ's sake. So we hear the cries from the slain souls for vengeance on the killers still active on the earth, as spoken of in Revelation 6:9-11. It will be a hard time that Christians have never met with before. They have to be patient to go through the time by counting the months and the days. So in Revelation it specially mentions 42 months or 1260 days. They have to wait for those months or days to pass by, just as the allied soldiers waited for the day in World War II, because after 42 months or 1260 days our Lord will surely come to avenge and to deliver them. In this connection we remember our Lord's words, 'but he who endures to the end will be saved' (Matt. 24:13) and so endurance is the only means to overcome hardships" (George D. D. Ding, *Prophecy and the World*, pp.146, 147, 1988).

### **Changing the World One Word at a Time**

Bishop Tom Wright has done us all a service by putting in his *Kingdom New Testament*, and Ray Faircloth has done just as well (in fact far better in getting the unitarian point over) in his excellent *The Kingdom of God Version* of the NT, the phrase "life of the age to come," replacing the foggy, vague expression "eternal life." We Abrahamics would do well to speak, always, following Daniel 12:2, of "the life of the age to come." Life in the future Kingdom. We would then sound like Jesus and not like Greek philosophers. Why not speak of people "dying, falling asleep in death," rather than playing into the hands of philosophy with the popular language about "passing, passing on, passing away or going home," all of which promote the philosophy we are against.

The "crunch" of the issue we are dealing with is getting *Jesus' own creed* back into the church. We are up against such a cherished tradition that this is going to involve some persistent work. Fishing on Facebook could be the place to start, or teaching by Tweeting, or websites, writing to the local papers, or tracts, or whatever — persuading by posting (Paul did it for hours and hours without the benefit of the internet, Acts 19:8). Jesus has been drowned out and stifled by the popular definition of God as THREE in ONE. Bishop Wright could be contacted and urged to rethink. That could be a mini-ministry.

Here is how Wright now shockingly deals with Paul in 1 Corinthians 8:4-6. In one of his roughly 30 always attractively written books, *Simply Christian* (2006), we find this on p. 138: "Glimpsing the Triune God. How then can we summarize the Christian understanding of God? God is the Creator and lover of the world. Jesus spoke of the Father who sent me, indicating that, as he said elsewhere, 'he who has seen me has seen the Father' (John 14:9). [Note that John 17:3 was not quoted but 14:9 was,] Look hard at Jesus, especially as he goes to his death, and you will discover more about God than you could ever have guessed by studying the shining heavens...or the moral law in your conscience. God is the one who satisfies the passion for justice, the longing for spirituality, the hunger for relationships, the yearning for beauty. And God, the true God, is the one we see in Jesus of Nazareth, Israel's Messiah, the world's true Lord. The earliest Christians spoke of God and Jesus in the same breath and, so to speak, on the same side of the equation. When Paul quoted the most famous slogan of Jewish monotheism [note that this is "Jewish," though Jesus quoted it as the basis of all true faith!]: 'Hear O Israel, Yahweh our God, Yahweh is ONE,' **he explained 'the Lord,' that is Yahweh, in terms of Jesus, and 'God' in terms of the Father.**"

Stop right there! And catch your breath. This is from the summit of evangelical theology. Yahweh is Jesus and God is the Father!! This is astonishing, and will I hope prod us all into a frenzy of activity. I am reminded of Jeremiah's horror: "An appalling and horrible thing has happened in the land: the prophets prophesy falsely. And my people love to have it so. But what will you do at the end of it?" (Jer. 5:30-31).

The amazing thing is that this is exactly what an expert Mormon professor told me about his faith when I was visiting the University of Southern Indiana. God is the Father, and Yahweh is Jesus. We seem to be back to the Oneness Pentecostal idea that "God's name is Jesus," "Jesus only."

Bishop Wright continues: “‘For us,’ Paul wrote, ‘there is one God, the Father, from whom are all things and we to him, and one Lord Jesus the Messiah, through whom are all things and we through him’ (1 Cor. 8:6). Even earlier he had written that if you really want to know who the real God is, as opposed to the non-Gods of paganism, you think in terms of the God who, to fulfill His age-old plan to rescue the world, sent first His Son and then the Spirit of His Son. **The Church’s official doctrine of the Trinity was not fully formulated until three or four centuries after the time of Paul.** Yet when the later theologians [mostly celibate and ascetic church fathers!] eventually worked it all through, it turned out to be in effect extensive footnotes to Paul, John and Hebrews, and the other NT books, with explanations designed to help later generations grasp what was already there in principle in the earliest writings” (pp. 138-139).

The Bishop gives his full blessing to those most “helpful” church fathers. But we must register a strong protest. Did Paul really call Jesus YHVH! The YHVH of the Shema? Has Paul really split the SHEMA, or is the Bishop trying to split God? Had not Paul already in this passage repeated the Shema of Jesus in Mark 12:29 and John 17:3, by saying “there is no God but one: there is for us One God, the Father”— and was not Paul saying *exactly* what the Jewish scribe had said with such passion, agreeing with Jesus in Mark 12:28ff about the Shema? That God is “one single Lord, and there is no God besides Him.”

Earlier Bishop Wright had said, with his historical sense coming to his rescue, that “the earliest Christians, those who had followed Jesus during his short public career, had *never imagined* that a Messiah would be *divine* [=Deity]. Part of our difficulty here is that people use the word ‘Christ’ [Jesus Christ the son of Mary and Joseph Christ!] as though it were a divine title [i.e. Jesus GOD]. In the same way the phrase ‘Son of God’ is often quoted as if it meant, without further ado, ‘the Second Person of the divine Trinity.’ **It didn’t.** At least until the early Christians began to give a different meaning that pointed in that direction [!!!]...But from the earliest days of Christianity [how early?!] we find an **astonishing shift** for which nothing in Jewish traditions of the time had prepared Jesus’ followers. **They remained firmly within Jewish monotheism.** And yet they said from very early on that Jesus was divine” (*Simply Christian*, pp. 116-117).

Did you catch that? He smoothes over, slithers over the gigantic departure from Jewish **monotheism**, affirmed by Jesus and Paul, which happened via the post-biblical church fathers, whose preconversion training in Greek philosophy was not abandoned, but used as a grid **to rewrite** the faith and reinvent Jesus. Paul has been twisted and Jesus rejected, in the definition of God. Paul spoke of Jesus as “the Lord Jesus Messiah” in 1 Corinthians 8:4-6, and all one has to do is to distinguish the Lord Messiah from the Lord God! Jesus had laid out that teaching in Mark 12:28ff. First Jesus teaches us **the unitarian Shema**, and then he quickly goes on to speak of a second lord, to be sitting at the right hand of the One God (Ps. 110:1). The second lord could not be God, because God is only One Lord, and a second Lord God would make two Lord Gods and smash the cornerstone of Scripture. The second lord (*adoni*, never, all 195 times, the title of Deity) is none other than the Lord Jesus Messiah. Messiah, 516 times in the NT. “Lord Jesus Messiah,” 63 times. And we are going “to receive the reward of the inheritance from the Lord Messiah” (Col. 3:24). **He is “the lord son of David.” (Matt. 15:22; 20:30.)**

Jesus knew that God was not talking to God in Psalm 110:1. He knew that *adoni* was not God, and Jesus spoke of “the Son of Man” at the right hand of God (Mark 14:62). So also Stephen, as he fell asleep in death, saw the son of man (*adoni*, not *Adonai*) at the right hand of God (Acts 7:56ff). Psalm 8 which is all about the destiny of man, not of God, links to Psalm 110:1 with its reference to “all things being put under his feet” (Ps. 8:6).

Meanwhile Jesus is sitting next to God and Christians are sitting in heaven with Jesus figuratively (Eph. 2:6), as “lords” in training for the task of managing the world when Jesus comes.

The Bible is the epic drama of **man** being reconciled to God. The story line is fatally flawed if it is misunderstood to be about God and God.

Will you help the 23 million Seventh-Day Adventists who announced the cornerstone of their theology as ONE + ONE + ONE = ONE? They also wrote that the Hebrew *echad* (one) is “inherently a plural word”!<sup>13</sup>

Luke, excellent teacher as he was, had from the start laid out the difference between the two lords. “Today is born in the city of Bethlehem the one who is the ‘Messiah lord’” (Luke 2:11). Then only 15 verses later (2:26) he defines the lord Messiah as the LORD’s (Yahweh’s) Messiah. No wonder Elizabeth greeted Mary as “the mother of my lord” (Messiah). Not “the mother of God.” Those amazing early Christians may have had little formal education, but they did not think that God could be born, nor that the immortal God could die! So much for our savvy technological age! We can send people to the moon, but can we count up to one?

The blight of much current discussion is that “doctrine” is disparaged and played down and “Christian living” is exalted. This is a pernicious falsehood. Jesus puts the definition of God and of himself at the top of the list for matters which determine life! (John 17:3, etc.). The doctrine is the framework and structure of what we believe and do as believers. To say that “doctrine” does not matter would be like a man saying “I am an excellent husband at home, loving and caring — the fact that I commit adultery all the time does not affect the good person that I am.” His framework doctrines have been swallowed up by a false dichotomy.

Could Jesus sign the faith statement of the thousands and thousands of churches which gather in his name? May the army of evangelists be busy, day by day, changing an awful situation.

President Obama is the only one who is currently the President of the USA. No one has **the slightest difficulty** with that proposition which is exactly parallel to John 17:3: “You, Father, are the only one who is true God.” No one else is. (I scored a commendatory “point Buzzard” when I suggested this on a blog with Prof. Tuggy.)

Now we have to get busy changing the world, one word, one person at a time. For some encouragement and good training, read Greg Deuble’s *They Never Told Me THIS in Church!* Read on line, Eric H. H. Chang, *The Only True God, A Study of Biblical Monotheism*, 2009.

### **Good News from Abroad**

“I joined the Restoration Fellowship Facebook page sometime ago, and feel that it's now time to properly introduce myself. I am from Adelaide, South Australia, married with three children, and gifted in the area of music and song writing.

Like the vast majority of Christians, I grew up in a church that preached the doctrine of the Trinity, and although my understanding of the details was fuzzy, I never questioned the validity of this teaching. Yet my hunger for the completeness of God's truth remained, and--guided by His spirit--about three years ago I embarked upon a period of intense study and reflection, at the end of which I finally rejected the doctrine of the Trinity, and recognized the truth that God is one personality only--the Father--and that Jesus is his human son endowed with God's own power; he is the Messiah elevated to the Father's right hand, but is not God himself.

In this journey, your teaching material (web articles, Focus on the Kingdom newsletters etc) has been invaluable. By the time I got my hands on a physical copy of your book 'Jesus was not a Trinitarian,' I was pretty much already convinced of the truth, and reading the book itself was the icing on the cake. I underlined large portions of the text and refer back to it often.

My search for truth and the considerably large step of rejecting the doctrine of the Trinity was undertaken in complete isolation, e.g. without any allies on this journey whatsoever. Not only are the majority of churches in my city denominationally traditional and piously conservative, there is also a strong pro-Trinity teaching ministry based here. At best, my new position is considered erroneous by all and dangerously heretical by many. Out of a need for fellowship, my family and I attend a conservative evangelical Baptist church--but I dare not speak of my rejection of Trinitarian theology. Through various internet wanderings I have connected with the Red Words church in Melbourne (they have recently joined

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<sup>13</sup>Whidden and Moon, *The Trinity*, p. 76.

the Church of God General Conference) and their pastor Steve Katsaras. But Melbourne is 850km distant from Adelaide, and as yet I haven't met anyone here who shares my new convictions.

The other 'arm' of your teaching that has been of great benefit to me is the clear and straightforward way in which you speak about God's Kingdom. Satan has thrown a vast deception over the minds of average Christians regarding the Kingdom of God, and I was no different. I wrestled for many years about what, exactly, the Kingdom was--and like many my answer was muddled by the claim that the Kingdom arrived with Jesus' first appearing, and so is here now. Your insistence that the gospel preached by Jesus and the early church was the message of a coming future political reality upon a renewed earth governed by Messiah and his saints was like a beacon to my soul, and it stripped away my confusion and fruitless wrestling with the apocalyptic scriptures. Not only that, but it helped to reset my understanding of the Christian faith as a life-pilgrimage, a journey of hope towards a City that is currently only seen by faith.

A recent experience with my current church family serves to highlight just how serious the confusion about God's Kingdom is for the average Christian. In a group discussion setting, the church was asked to define the Kingdom of God. Answers ranged from 'wherever God is working, that is the Kingdom,' to the mystical 'the Kingdom is inside us all', to the downright concerning, 'God is the King of the whole earth. Therefore the whole earth (in it's present state) is the Kingdom of God. Everyone is already in the Kingdom; some just don't know it yet.'

Of even greater concern is the acceleration in charismatic churches towards a complete 'post-millennial' mindset. The power-hungry elite in these circles covet control of the so-called 'seven mountains of society' and believe that it is their role to create God's Kingdom on earth, only after which Jesus returns in something of an afterthought. They talk much about 'the Kingdom' but sadly promote a false kingdom of their own creation that is only playing right into the hands of Satan and his future global empire of the anti-christ.

I believe that as the time draws nearer to Christ's return, the differences between the gospel of the Kingdom preached by Jesus and an orthodox Nicene mindset will become greater, more visible, and more pronounced. I believe that in time, I will begin and lead a fellowship here that is committed to these truths, in the hope that I might preserve some believers from the great deception that is coming and has already come. I strongly believe in the Lord's promise to preserve for Himself a remnant of true believers; however, I'm waiting for the Lord's timing and his release before I do so, and think that at the moment the pressure of being a lone voice might be too great for my young family. But I'm certainly committed to preserving and promoting these great truths of God, his Messiah, and the coming Kingdom within my songwriting and whatever other avenues present themselves.

Anthony, may Messiah bless your ongoing work for the Kingdom. I will remain in touch, and keep you updated on any developments here in Adelaide.

Maranatha!"

[anthonybuzzard@mindspring.com](mailto:anthonybuzzard@mindspring.com)

[restorationfellowship.org](http://restorationfellowship.org)

Jesus is still a Jew, and many videos at youtube