

Focus on the Kingdom

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Anthony Buzzard, editor

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Have Jesus and His Creed Been Excluded from the Church at the Most Fundamental Level of Defining the True God?

From *The New International Dictionary of New Testament Theology* edited by Colin Brown we read: "The New Testament rests firmly on the foundation of the Old Testament, when it speaks about God. But its emphases are new. He is the God who is near, the Father of Jesus Christ who justifies freely by his grace. His action in election bursts all claims to exclusiveness. But it is the same God who reveals Himself here as in the Old Testament, and whose plan of salvation, there promised, comes to fulfillment here. The one God, *o theos*, is the most frequent designation of God in the New Testament. Belief in the one, only and unique God (Matt. 23:9; Rom. 3:30; 1 Cor. 8:4, 6; Gal. 3:20; 1 Tim. 2:5; James 2:19) is an established part of primitive Christian tradition. Jesus himself made the fundamental confession of Judaism his own and expressly quoted the Shema (Deut. 6:4ff; Mark 12:29ff; cf. Matt. 22:37; Luke 10:27). This guaranteed continuity between the Old and the New Covenant. For the God whom Christians worship [do they today?] is the God of the Fathers (Acts 3:13; 5:30; 22:14), the God of Abraham, of Isaac and Jacob (Acts 3:13; 7:32; cf. Matt. 22:32; Mark 12:26; Luke 20:37), the God of Israel (Matt. 15:31; Luke 1:68; Acts 13:17; cf. 2 Cor. 6:16; Heb. 11:16), and the God of Jesus Christ (2 Cor. 1:3; Eph. 1:3; 1 Pet. 1:3). The community of Jesus may have no false gods beside Him" (Vol. 2, p. 73).

Then please read this in direct contradiction of Professor Brown's fine statement:

"Early Christian Mutation [i.e. the shift from a unitarian to a Trinitarian view of God]: The Shema was of course a pre-Christian Jewish confession [so Jesus is pre-Christian!?] constructed from Deut. 6:4-9; 11:13-21; Num 15:37-41. The Greek wording of Deut. 6:4 is especially relevant — "The Lord our God is one Lord" (Dr. L.W. Hurtado, *One God, One Lord*, pp. 93, 162).

So then we see what has happened. Jesus has been sidelined and dismissed. Jesus has been relegated to Judaism and his theology replaced and changed. Jesus has been left out and left behind, while Gentiles move on and beyond him (cp. the strong warning against this in 2 John 9: "Whoever in the name of progress goes forward..."). The post-NT Church redefined God and slapped Jesus in the face. John gave us the dire warning that "whoever

does not remain in the teaching of Messiah does not have a relation with GOD" (2 John 9).

If as Dr. Hurtado says the creed of Jesus is pre-Christian, we must therefore now be in post-Christianity! We have avowedly moved away from and beyond Jesus. Paul is made the culprit. Americans complain bitterly about moving beyond the constitution, but does no one care about going beyond the confession, charter and creed of Jesus? (Mark 12:29; John 17:3). How is it that church members gather under the umbrella of a definition of God not approved by Jesus? Jesus was a Jew, the founder of Christianity and a unitary, non-Trinitarian monotheist!

In *Putting Jesus in His Place* Bowman and Komoszewski say: "If Judaism has a creed it is the words of Deuteronomy 6:4-5, known as the *Shema*, meaning 'hear,' the first word of the verse: 'Hear, O Israel, the Lord our God, the Lord is one.' The Septuagint translated this [as does the New Testament] 'the Lord our God is one Lord' (*kurios eis*). In first-century Judaism the affirmations One God and One Lord were synonymous and referred to the same divine Being, YHVH, the God of the patriarchs, of Moses and of the prophets. Jesus affirmed the *Shema* as the first and greatest commandment (Matt. 22:36-38; Mark 12:28-30; Luke 10:25-28), and in that regard Jesus' view was in the mainstream of Judaism...Paul and other NT writers echo the *Shema* when they affirm that God is one or that there is one God (Rom. 3:30; 1 Cor. 12:6; Gal. 3:20; Eph. 4:6; 1 Tim. 2:5; James 2:19; see also Rom. 16:27; 1 Tim. 1:17; 6:15-16; Jude 25 [cp. Bauer: 'the only one']). Jews, however, could just as surely have understood Paul's affirmation of 'one Lord' (particularly in the same breath as affirming one God as an echo of the *Shema*) yet with one potentially shocking 'twist' Paul identifies the one Lord as Jesus Christ" (p. 166).

Note this amazing assertion! Jesus has been superseded by Paul. Paul, it is alleged, has changed the terms of the creed to include a second Person. Bowman makes Paul reformulate Jesus' own definition of God. Paul would be shocked to know that he is being read in that way. Paul of course knew of one Lord *Messiah*, not two who are Lord GOD. Will no one stand up for Jesus? Paul never deviated one iota from his conviction, and that of Jesus and Israel, that the One God of true monotheism is the Father, and no one besides him (cp. Mark 12:29; 1 Cor. 8:4-6).

Dr. Hugh Anderson in the *New Century Bible Commentary on Mark* speaks of “the Church which no longer recited the Shema.” The Church which had forgotten, therefore, the theology and creed of Jesus! They have forgotten Jesus who cannot be separated from his words, concentrated in the Shema.

“The opening words of Jesus’ reply to the scribe’s question about the first commandment, ‘Hear, O Israel the Lord is one,’ are the beginning of the *Shema* (Deut. 6:4-9), the prayer which all pious Jews were expected to recite three times daily and which occupied a similar special position in late Judaism to the Lord’s prayer in Christianity [but this Shema was *also* the confession of the pious Jew Jesus, the founder and model of the original Christian faith!]. Only in Mark among the Synoptics are these words included...Though they are not strictly part of the commandment [but ‘Hear’ is a command!] they are of vital significance and must be presupposed, since it is only because God is **one** that He is worthy of all man’s devotion. That they were retained out of a need to defend monotheism in a Gentile milieu like Mark’s is doubtful...The Markan form goes back to oral tradition passed on by a church **that did not any longer recite the Shema**. But here at least in his statement of the first commandment, **Jesus stands foursquare within the orbit of Jewish piety**” (p. 280) — and yet his followers do not! Who said that the NT Church no longer needed to believe in its founder’s stated creed?

Dr. Harold O.J. Brown, *Heresies* inadvertently admits that the Church lost touch with Jesus in its definition of God. He notes “the transition within biblical monotheism, from the **unitary monotheism of Israel [and Jesus!]** to the Trinitarianism of the Council of Chalcedon. The difference is symbolized by the **transition** from the prayer *Shema Israel* of Deut. 6:4, ‘Hear, O Israel, the Lord our God is One Lord...’ to the confession of the Athanasian Creed, ‘We worship one God in Trinity and Trinity in Unity’ [which symbolizes the exclusion of Jesus from the Church, a permanent lapse into paganism].

“Was the transition from the personal monotheism of Israel [and Jesus!] to the tripersonal theism of Nicea a legitimate development of OT revelation? Christians affirm that it is, holding that Nicea represents a fuller unfolding, not a distortion of the self-disclosure of the God of Israel [and the God of Jesus]. Indeed the Trinitarianism of Nicea and the Christological definition of Chalcedon are seen as the valid and necessary interpretation of the claims of Jesus [**the Jesus whose major claim was that his own creed and the creed of Israel was the most important consideration of all!**] in the context of the OT witness to the God who is One. [This is an amazing obfuscation, since it is precisely the witness to the unitary monotheism of the OT which Jesus

makes the true basis of true faith! Mark 12:29; John 17:3.]

“Without Nicea and Chalcedon, it would not have been possible to maintain that Christianity is a biblical religion, the legitimate daughter of OT Judaism. Today the clarity and necessity of Chalcedon, if not refuted and disproved, has been widely forgotten and ignored [or has the unitary monotheism of Jesus been widely forgotten and ignored?]

“Christianity took four centuries to formulate its witness to the deity and humanity of Christ in the context of the One God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob, in such a way that it preserved a coherent approach to the unity of truth. It has taken fifteen centuries more to forget Chalcedon again; as it loses touch with Chalcedon [as once it lost touch with its founder, the unitarian monotheist Jesus], the Christian world is in the process of losing its coherence. It is in fact losing the conviction that that there is any final truth about the one who said, ‘I am the way, the truth and the life’ (John 14:6)” (p. 431).

Yes. But the very same Jesus, as the ultimate teacher of truth, said that the *unitary, non-Trinitarian monotheism* of his Hebrew heritage was the indispensable foundation of true belief and worship! His creed was superseded by a manmade creed. This was the work of post-biblical Greek philosophically minded church fathers.

Christianity thus turns out to be the only world religion which begins by discarding its own founder’s creed! This is a troubling and real incoherence. The NT says on page after page that we must believe and obey the words of Jesus to be saved (Heb. 5:9; John 3:36, etc.).◊

The God of the Bible Is One Person

Churchgoers who have grown up believing that the true God is *three Persons* will be surprised (and we hope enlightened) to find out that Scripture says that God is in fact **ONE Person**.

Turn to Galatians 3:20. Paul wrote: “God is one.” This cardinal doctrine originates in the famous creed of Israel: “Hear, O Israel, the Lord our God, the Lord is **ONE LORD**” (Deut. 6:4). This is the creed which Jesus taught and believed. He quoted it in Mark 12:29ff. Jesus agreed with his colleague Jew about this, the greatest of all the commandments. So Jesus, as Israel always had, believed that God is one Lord, not two or three.

An examination of the word “one” in a number of passages reveals that the proposition “God is one” means simply that He is one Person. Take, for example, the sentence: “Abraham was one” (Ezek. 33:24) or “Abraham was one when I called him” (Isa. 51:2). Does anyone have the slightest difficulty in catching the sense

of “one”? Translators have recognized that the meaning is “Abraham is one party,” or “one person.” Take another example: In Ecclesiastes 4:9 we read: “Two are better than one...If they fall the one will lift up his fellow. But woe to him who is one [i.e., alone] when he falls. There is not a second [person] to lift him up.” To be “one” and “a second” in these verses means of course to be “one person” and “a second person.” In the Song of Solomon 6:9 the text states that “my dove, my perfect one, is one. She is the ‘the one’ of her mother.” In smooth English, “my dove, my perfect one, is *unique*. She is her mother’s only daughter” (NASV). In all these cases, and hundreds of others, one (*echad*) means one, or one single! That is its easy meaning.

It is surprising that Bible readers sometimes react with perplexity when they encounter the biblical statement that “God is one.” Why should this be a problem? *The Amplified Bible* in Galatians 3:20 reads: “God is only *one person*. He was the sole party in giving the promise to Abraham, but the Law was contracted between two, God and Israel.” Only a few verses earlier, similar language describes Jesus as “one seed” as contrasted with many. As *The Amplified Bible* puts it: “God does not say ‘and to seeds,’ as if referring to many persons, but ‘and to your seed,’ obviously referring to one individual, who is Christ.” “Christ is one” obviously means that he is one person.

Could anything be clearer than that Christ is one individual and that God is one Person, one individual, one Father? “Do we not all have one Father? Has not one God created us?” (Mal. 2:10). “**God is only one Person**” (Gal. 3:20). “There is one God, the Father” (1 Cor. 8:4-6). This startling revelation could, if believed, put to rest centuries of wrangling about who God is. But few seem to be able to grasp this truth. Some search for more complicated views of God. They turn to John 10:30 where Jesus stated that he and the Father are “one.”

Our English translation does not show that the word “one” in that verse is a neuter form of the numeral “one.” It means one *thing*, one in power and will. The verse does not say that the Father and the Son are one *God*. And Galatians 3:20 and Deuteronomy 6:4 say that God is *one Person*. The word in this case is not “one thing” (neuter) but “one person” (masculine). Thousands and thousands of singular personal pronouns to designate the One God tell us that He is one individual Divine Person. His personal name is Yahweh and it appears with singular verbs and pronouns 6,700 times.

The Biblical creed is that the Father is “**the only one who is truly God**” (John 17:3), the “one who alone is God” (John 5:44). That, of course, means that no one else is God — not even Jesus, who is the **Son** of God, that is, the Messiah. Psalm 110:1 defines who God is and who Jesus is with precision. The God who speaks is

“Yahweh” and His Son is addressed as “*adoni*,” my lord — not *Adonai* which is another word for God. Check this special word *adoni*. It will tell you who Jesus is. This form of the word “lord” (*adoni*) is reserved in the Bible, in all of its 195 occurrences, for *human* superiors¹, as distinct from God Himself. Jesus is that supreme *human* Lord, but he is not God. He is a different person from his Father. God, His Father, “is only **one Person**” (Gal. 3:20). Paul summed up this simple truth in 1 Timothy 2:5: “There is one God, the Father, and one mediator between God and man, *the man* Messiah Jesus.” Do you believe this?♦

The Chemistry of Atonement

by Keith Relf, New Zealand

God’s grace is not according to a mathematical formula but is possibly more consistently illustrated by chemistry.

Orthodox teaching has varied but usually holds the idea that sin against an infinite God required an “Infinite Sacrifice.” This was one argument for the idea that Jesus was God. However, they did not pursue the conflicting details of Jesus being a real human being, and that it had to be the *human* Jesus, a descendant of Adam, who died. After all, God by definition could not be tempted or die! Therefore, the “Infinite Sacrifice” theory collapses, a point not mentioned by the teachers of orthodoxy. The idea that God, not as God, somehow died defies reason. It makes no sense at all.

Atonement is achieved by a process more like a chemical experiment, where a container full of colorful liquid is rendered crystal clear by the addition of a small amount of another chemical. This proposition is only an illustration of the process by which God “made peace” with “things in heaven and on earth.” The idea that Jesus suffered the accumulated physical pain/wrath of His Father against the accumulated sin of humanity (and beyond) is obscene.

Just as one animal’s sacrifice could atone for a nation’s sin, for a time, so the one perfect man’s sacrifice atones for the effects of sin “in heaven and on earth,” for all time. It is not a question of quantity or intensity but quality. The one perfect sacrifice suffices for all sin.

The “why” and “how” of atonement we may not understand fully, as the scope of the need for atonement went far beyond the human condition. The one thing we can be sure of is that, for reasons we may not yet fully understand, atonement is made by the shedding of blood. All the other suffering associated with Jesus’ crucifixion was a demonstration of mankind’s brutality and evil nature. Many, in those days, were crucified for various

¹ Occasionally an angel may also be addressed as *adoni*, my lord.

reasons and many will have physically suffered more than Jesus — some victims hung on their crosses for days. It was only the shedding of the blood of the sinless “second Adam,” the one Perfect Man, that could secure a total atonement, and darkened hearts could be made “white as snow.”♦

“This individual, the Man of Sin, ‘opposes and exalts himself over everything that is called God or is worshiped.’ His direct and determined opposition to the true God will be a leading feature of the continuing apostasy. It will be especially marked by removal of the symbolic articles of the Jerusalem Temple. The man of lawlessness will occupy the holy precincts in order to accept and even demand worship that is due to God alone. This evidently is a Jewish Temple to be rebuilt in Jerusalem in the future. Dependence of these words on Daniel 9:26, 27; 11:31, 36, 37 (compare Matt. 24:15; Mark 13:14) demands such a reference. There is no impressive evidence for understanding ‘Temple’ in a non-literal sense. The well-known ‘abomination that causes desolation’ is sometimes regarded as a person and sometimes as an act of desecration by that person (Mark 13:14 [‘standing where HE ought not to’]). The act of desecration to which this verse looks will transpire halfway through the 70th prophetic week of Daniel 9:24-27, when the covenant made earlier with the Jewish people is broken. This will mark the climax of this lawless one’s career. Historically, a foreshadowing of this blasphemous intrusion happened when Antiochus Epiphanes desecrated the Temple in Jerusalem just before the Maccabean revolt.”

— *The Expositor’s Bible Commentary*,
2 Thessalonians, R.L. Thomas, Th. D., p. 322

The Doctrine of Pronouns Applied to Christ’s Testimony of Himself

Noah Worcester, D.D., 1827

No. 1. The Doctrine of Pronouns stated.

Pronouns are words used as substitutes for the names of persons or things, to avoid a too frequent repetition of the same word or sound. A personal pronoun is a substitute for the name or title of a person; and it implies all that the name or title would imply, if used in the same place.

Example: Abraham was a good man, *he* was the friend of God, and God loved *him* and made a covenant with *him*. In this sentence *he* is used once and *him* twice as a substitute for the name Abraham. The meaning would be the same in the following form: Abraham was a good man, Abraham was the friend of God, and God loved Abraham and made a covenant with Abraham. *He*

and *him* therefore are pronouns. The word *person* is applied to any intelligent being — to God, to Christ, to any angel, or any man, whether in the body or out of the body.

No. 2. The Doctrine of Pronouns applied.

Let the preceding remarks be applied to the Trinitarian mode of explaining the testimony of Christ respecting his dependence on God. It is well known that the Trinitarian adopts this hypothesis, that Christ is God and man in one person. Here we have two distinct minds to one body, supposed to be united and identified in the one person, Jesus Christ. The possibility of such a union I shall neither deny nor discuss. I am ignorant on that subject. But admitting the hypothesis to be correct, it is very clear that the man is as nothing to the Deity in this person. The Divinity must be all in all, as to the sufficiency, the operations, and the glory of Christ. In this case, as in the one before stated, some things might be truly affirmed of one part of the person, which could not with propriety be said of the other. But when Christ or any other person says, *I can*, or *I cannot* do this or that, the pronoun *I* embraces all the powers of the person. Every one will admit that it would be improper for me to say, “I cannot think” expecting to clear myself from falsehood, on being questioned, by saying that I spoke only of my body or my little finger. How unfortunate then is the method which has been adopted in explaining the language of Christ. He said, “I can do nothing of myself; the Father in me, he does the works.” “My Father is greater than I.” When such language is urged as proof that Christ was not the independent God, the Trinitarians venture to say that, in such declarations, “Christ spoke only of his human nature. As man he was dependent; yet as God he was independent.”

Let it now be supposed that, in the trial of Christ before the Jewish Sanhedrim, he had been questioned as to his meaning in so often declaring his dependence on God; suppose too that he had given the Trinitarian explanation, saying, “I spoke then of my human nature only; yet I am God, equal with the Father. Nay, I am the God of Abraham, who was worshipped by your fathers, and whom you profess to worship.” Would not his judges have had ground for a more serious accusation than they had on his claiming that he was the Son of God? Might they not very justly have said to him “Either the language which you adopted in your preaching to the people was equivocal and deceptive, or what you have now said is positively false. Asserting, as you did, that you could do nothing of yourself was a full declaration that you had no claim to be regarded as God. How then can you now expect to be believed in saying that you are God equal with the Father? Besides, who before this ever heard of the Father of Abraham’s God?”

But no such formidable accusation could his enemies bring against “the Faithful and True Witness.” Never, I believe, did the Messiah, in any instance, so contradict his testimony respecting his dependence, as to intimate even to his apostles that he was **God and man in one person**; or that he was in any sense or respect the independent God. Nor does it appear that his apostles ever understood him to assert his independence or self existence.

No. 3. John's care to prevent misapprehensions.

John was the disciple whom Jesus loved, the last of the Evangelists who wrote his history, and the one who recorded the discourses in which Christ most explicitly asserted his dependence on God, for his commission and authority, his wisdom and power, in all he said or did. In many instances John evinced special care to have the words of Christ understood, or to prevent any misapprehensions of his meaning. He not only explained several names and titles, as Cephas, Thomas, Siloam, Rabbi, and Messiah, but he also told Christ’s meaning in several instances, in which he had been misapprehended by his hearers, and some which were likely to be misunderstood by the readers of his history.

In the second chapter we are told that the Jews said to Jesus: “What sign do you show us seeing you do these things?” To this demand Jesus answered, “Destroy this temple, and in three days I will raise it up.” By their reply the Jews fully evinced that they misunderstood what he meant by the temple. Jesus did not then deem it incumbent on him to correct their mistake. But lest readers should be at a loss respecting Christ’s meaning, John thus explains: “But Jesus spoke of the temple of his body” (vv. 18-21).

In chapter 6:64, Jesus said to his audience “But there are some of you who do not believe.” John explains, “For Jesus knew from the beginning who they were who did not believe, and who would betray him.”

John 7:38, 39: Jesus had said, “He who believes in me, as the scripture has said, out of his belly will flow rivers of living water.” On this metaphorical language, John observes, “But this he spoke of the spirit which those who believe in him would receive; for the Holy Spirit was not yet given [i.e., was not given from the risen Christ], because Jesus was not yet glorified.”

John 11:11, 12, 13: Jesus said to his disciples, “Our friend Lazarus is sleeping, and I am going to wake him out of sleep.” Then said his disciples, “Lord, if he is sleeping he will do well.” John then explains, “Jesus spoke of his death; but they thought he had spoken of taking rest in sleep.”

John 12:32: Jesus said, “And I, if I am lifted up from the earth, will draw all men to me.” John again explains, “This he said, signifying what death he was about to die.”

John 13:10, 11: While washing his disciples’ feet, Jesus said, “You are clean, but not all of you.” The

reason for this remark is given by John: “For he knew who should betray him; therefore he said, you are not all clean.”

John 21:18: Jesus said to Peter, “Truly, truly I say to you, When you were young you dressed yourself and walked where you wanted to; but when you are old, you will stretch forth your hands and another will dress you, and take you where you do not wish to go.” Here John adds, “This he spoke, signifying by what death he would glorify God.”

In the last mentioned chapter John relates that “Peter, seeing him, said to Jesus, ‘And what will this man do?’ Jesus said to him, ‘If I want him to wait until I come, what is that to you?’” Having related the question and the answer, John states and corrects a mistake which occurred: “Then this saying went abroad among the brothers and sisters that that disciple would not die. Yet Jesus did not say to him, He will not die, but if I want him to wait till I come, what does this matter to you?”

Now let it be seriously considered how often Christ had in a direct form declared his dependence on God, or disclaimed self-sufficiency — and how certain it is that John must have known that such language was adapted to impress the belief that Christ was not the independent God; then we may ask, why did not John give an explanation, as in less urgent cases, and say, “These things Christ spoke of his human nature, and not of himself as God?” Surely if John knew or believed that Christ was an independent person or being, he must also have known that such an explanation was of vastly greater importance than any now to be found in his Gospel? Had he been a Trinitarian, like those of modern times, he would not have suffered such a mass of testimony describing the personal and absolute dependence of Christ to have passed without endeavoring to neutralize it by some explanation. Had John regarded Christ as God, of how little importance it would have appeared to him to explain what Christ meant by the sleep of Lazarus, or the temple that he would raise up in three days, compared with telling what he meant by a hundred passages which implied that he was a dependent being, and received all his sufficiency from the Father!

It is not in my heart to call in question the uprightness or sincerity of my Trinitarian friends; but I am compelled to wonder that they do not see that their explanation of our Lord’s words imputes to him such a habit of using equivocal and deceptive language, as would ruin the character of any other person. Had he been an independent person, I do not know what language he could have used more false and deceptive than many things which John has recorded as said by him. Yet this language was not explained by himself, nor by his careful and friendly disciple. Neither by himself nor by John is it so much as intimated that, in speaking of his personal

dependence, he did not speak of his whole person as Moses would have done in using the same language. Is it not then an extraordinary method of honoring the Messiah, to assert his independence as God at the expense of his veracity? Yet this seems to be done with very great confidence by his Trinitarian disciples. But let any Trinitarian ask himself whether he would feel safe in frequently using such deceptive language, without explanation, as his theory imputes to Jesus in whose lips there was no guile? May I not say that a good man would shrink with horror at the thought of adopting such a practice?

No. 4. The Trinitarian explanation not in accordance with his own hypothesis.

I may now advance a step farther. If Jesus Christ was personally the independent God, his declarations of dependence on the Father *cannot be true*, in the sense contended for by Trinitarians. For their hypothesis is not that the human nature was united to the Father, but to a second person, as independent as the Father. Now who cannot see that self-sufficiency precludes the possibility of personal dependence? If Christ was personally self-sufficient, how could his human nature need any aid from another person? Yet Christ did assert his personal dependence on the Father. He did not say, "My human nature can do nothing of itself, yet I as God do the work." But speaking of himself as a distinct, single person, as the Messiah, the Son of God, he says, "Of my own self I can do nothing." "The words which I speak to you, I speak not of myself: but the Father who dwells in me, He does the works." "If you loved me you would rejoice that I said I go to my Father, for the Father is greater than I." "I do nothing of myself, but as my Father hath taught me, I speak these things."

Could such declarations possibly be true, if Christ had been like the Father, self-sufficient and independent? If it had been a special object of Christ to put his disciples on their guard against deifying himself, I hardly know what language he could have used better adapted to such a purpose. If he had said, "I am not God, but the dependent Son and Ambassador of God," the Trinitarian might still have said "he spoke only of his *human nature*."

Another question occurs. If the Messiah was personally the living God, what occasion or motive could he have had to speak of the dependence of his human nature on a different person? Was not his own infinite wisdom and almighty power sufficient to supply all the defects and wants of his human nature? Besides, what motive could there have been for him to speak of the dependence of his human nature in a manner which he must have known implied the dependence of his whole person? The question whether he was a dependent or an independent being was one of great importance. It is so

viewed this day by his friends of all denominations. It could not be otherwise viewed by the Messiah himself, and by his apostles. If, then, on a subject so serious and interesting to mankind, he could habitually speak in language so equivocal, so deceptive, so completely adapted to mislead both the learned and the ignorant, what confidence can be placed in what he said on other subjects? If he could repeatedly say "I can do nothing of myself," while in fact he could do *everything* of himself, what evidence can we have that he had not in all he said a concealed meaning, directly opposite to what his words naturally conveyed? Something more serious in my view than the natural dignity of the Messiah is involved in the present inquiry — that is, his moral dignity, his uprightness, his benevolence, and his veracity as a Teacher sent from God.

No. 5. Two important texts considered.

In the affectionate interview between Christ and his apostles a little before the crucifixion, he said to them, "The Father himself loves you, because you have loved me, and have believed that I came forth from God." In his prayer immediately following, while speaking of the apostles, Christ said to the Father, "Now they have known that all things that You have given me are of You; for I have given to them the words which You gave to me; and they have received them, and have known surely that I came forth from You, and have believed that You sent me."

These passages deserve the serious attention of Christians. To have known surely that Christ "came forth from God," and to "believe that God sent him," must be very different from knowing that Christ was God, equal with the Father, and believing that he was an independent being. This must be admitted by Trinitarians; for they censure the faith of unitarians as heretical or defective, although they truly believe that Christ "came forth from God," and was sent by God. Yet I think it must be owned that Christ, in his prayer, approved the faith of his apostles in saying, "They have believed that You sent me" — and that too without the least intimation that they ever had believed, or ever would believe, that he *was* the living God.

I may further remark that in the passage first quoted, Christ gave them a solemn assurance of God's love to them, and explicitly stated why they were so beloved by God. He however did not say, "The Father loves you because you have believed that I am God and his equal" — but these are his words: "The Father himself loves you, because you have loved me, and have believed that I came forth from God." After having heard the numerous and dreadful censures which have been passed on all who believe that Christ was *not* God, but a beloved Son who "came forth from God," as commissioned and sent by the Father; who would have supposed that such a text as we

have now before us could be found in the Bible? If Christ did not make a mistake as to the ground of God's approving love of the apostles, there certainly appears a great difference of opinion and feeling between God and too many Trinitarians. The very faith which was approved both by God and his Son has been censured by Trinitarians as blasphemous, by many who would have it supposed that they are truly orthodox in their views of the Messiah.

It can be of no avail here to say, "It was only the human nature that the apostles believed 'came forth from God.'" For their love to Christ, and their believing that he came forth from God, are the only grounds on which it is said "the Father Himself loves you." Besides, believing that Christ "came forth from God" is the only article of faith mentioned in the text. Whether the doctrine that Christ is the independent God be true or false, it certainly was not a belief in this doctrine which secured to the apostles the Father's love. ♦

"Christianity has traditionally been much more than a religion that espouses Jesus' teachings. Indeed, if Jesus was the apocalyptic prophet that he appears to have been, then the Christianity that emerged after his death represents a somewhat different religion from that which he himself proclaimed. To put the matter in its simplest terms, Christianity is a religion rooted in a belief in the death of Jesus for sin and in his resurrection from the dead. This, however, does not appear to be the religion that Jesus preached to the Jews of Galilee and Judea...[Christianity's] official line — that is, the one that ended up winning over the most adherents and so became the standard interpretation — didn't spring up out of the ground overnight. Nor was it *directly* tied to the actual words and deeds of the historical Jesus."

— Bart Ehrman, *Jesus: Apocalyptic Prophet of the New Millennium*, p. 230, 241

Bright Young Minds

We enjoyed a most stimulating and useful week (March 3-7) with Professor Brian Atra, a good colleague of mine, who teaches at the 10,000-student University of Southern Indiana. Brian is a most engaging instructor of young minds at the university level. He was voted by students to be the Teacher of the Year at his university. In this university setting, not a church, topics about who God and Jesus are, and how to define the Gospel, can be tackled without fear of heresy-hunting or censure. On the Wednesday of our visit we invited any of the students to ponder the fact that Jesus was a Jew claiming to be the Messiah and future ruler of the world, who affirmed the unitarian monotheism of his Jewish heritage. Brian Atra's classes on ethics and on world religion were prompted to

consider the intriguing question of what we may or may not have learned in church. If that subject is of interest to you please read Greg Deuble's book *They Never Told Me This in Church!* available at restorationfellowship.org

Comments

"Loving fraternal greetings to you in the shared Hope we have in the Lord Jesus. It is quite a long time that I hear from you. Thank you so much for the helpful literature sent in the past. I am still looking forward to receiving available edifying *Focus on the Kingdom* newsletters. Thank you for your huge fatherly support and encouragement in the Truth, helping me to be free from the errors of Christendom which is astray from Christ." — *Nigeria*

"Please keep the *Focus* coming. My wife and I have enjoyed it for years." — *Oregon*

"I found Sir Anthony's writing on what happens when we die on the internet and it has been very helpful and allowed me to understand this very important question. It's not a mystery anymore and I no longer subscribe to the myths and fables I learned in church." — *United Kingdom*

"Kudos to you for your belief in a unitarian God. I was raised as a Roman Catholic. I never had any doubts about a Trinitarian God until I befriended a Jewish boy in 8th grade. His mother one day asked me who Jesus was. I answered that he was God in the flesh. Her response was that God was not a man therefore if Jesus was a man he could not be God. Furthermore she stated God is not a liar because He cannot lie and does not change His mind. She recommended I attend their synagogue to get some good sense in my head. I never did but I do enjoy your debates and your articles." — *Canada*

"I picked up (and already finished) Greg Deuble's book *They Never Told Me This in Church!* and it was very insightful. He does a good job examining arguments of Trinitarians. Many of his conclusions about the Trinitarian proof-texts were much like those I was arriving at. Greg's book has also challenged me again on the issue of death/sleep. I'm almost fully convinced that death is like sleep, not a conscious state in Hades now. I will keep studying all these topics though to get more grounded in the Scriptures. I've begun making videos on youtube to start spreading the truth of one God, our Father and one Lord Jesus Christ. So I've now joined that spiritual battle openly. I've already lost a number of friends and so far no one close to me has communicated with us about our views except one man who was also in our church. Our elders at the church decided they would not even hear us out regarding the Trinity and our concerns." — *Ohio*