

God Is a Single Divine Person

Excerpt from *Jesus Was Not a Trinitarian* - pp 46-48



A straightforward reading of the Bible reveals that God is presented as a single Person, with all the characteristics of a Person. He is not a “What” but a “Who.”

Admissions that “language is inadequate” to spell out the Trinity clearly have not prevented the printing of oceans of words attempting to explain the Trinity, using the non-biblical language of Greek philosophy, that the One God of the Bible is three hypostases in one essence, and that the Son of God was, incredibly, “man” but not “a man.” (Did you know that this is what official Christendom believes?) The Bible nowhere, however, calls God “an essence” and never speaks of “three hypostases.” And any reader of the New Testament should be able to see that Jesus was a man.

And if language is unable or inadequate to tell us how many God is, or how three is really one, then it is the Bible which has failed to do this. Is God unable to communicate to us through the number “one”? The biblical language is entirely adequate as revelation about what God intends us to understand, at least in terms of His single personality.

It is a matter of astonishment to us that Erickson in his 350-page defense of the Trinity omits entirely any reference to Mark 12:28-34 where Jesus publicly affirms the authoritative creed, that of Israel. Erickson mentions “passages of distinction” like Psalm 110:1, which “speak of one Lord and another Lord, thus drawing some distinction between them (Ps. 110:1; Acts 2:34).”¹ But this is much too vague. The presence of two lords in no way proves that both are God! The second lord, as we shall see, is expressly *not* God, that is, not given the title of Deity. And if “Yahweh is *one* Lord” (Deut. 6:4), it should be obvious that another cannot be Yahweh! Another can of course *represent* Yahweh or act for Yahweh, reflect Yahweh’s character, or carry out the will of Yahweh — and Jesus did all of those things — but if Yahweh is one Person, Jesus cannot *be* Yahweh. Two Yahwehs do not make one Yahweh. And the Son is always described in the New Testament (and by prophecy in the Old) as a person distinct from his Father, who is another and different Person. They enjoy, as has been said, an “I-Thou” relationship. And Jesus speaks of himself and his Father as “we” and “us,” and as parallel to two individual witnesses (John 8:16-19). He also confessed his subordination to the Father: “The Father is greater than I” (John 14:28).

There seems to be a conspiracy in Christian literature generally to hide this very simple piece of information about Jesus’ Jewish creed. Ought not the creed of Jesus Christ to be sufficient for his followers? And need more be said than the creed of Paul in 1 Timothy 2:5 that “there is one God and one mediator between God and men, the man Messiah Jesus”? Understanding that fact about the constitution of the universe Paul has just called “coming to the knowledge of the truth” and “being saved” (1 Tim. 2:4).

I am thankful nevertheless for Professor Erickson’s candor. He admits that the introduction of the *logos* (word) concept of John 1:1 as meaning *the preexisting Son of God* “legitimized the incorporation of philosophical speculation, specifically, Neo-Platonic philosophy within the creed of the church.”² Paul however issued a severe warning against trying to define God in terms of philosophy (Col. 2:8). It happened nevertheless. It needs to be corrected, so that we can worship God in the spirit and truth taught by Jesus, basing ourselves on the very words of Jesus about who God is.

¹Ibid., 53.

²Ibid, 54. John did not of course write “In the beginning was the *Son*,” but “In the beginning was the *word*.” Cf. Dr. Colin Brown’s very telling challenge: “It is a common but patent misreading of [John 1:1] to read it as if it said: ‘In the beginning was the *Son*’” (“Trinity and Incarnation: In Search of Contemporary Orthodoxy,” *Ex Auditu* 7, 1991, 89). It would be an extraordinary exegetical step to suppose that John in one sentence turned God into two! Not least because Jesus clearly knew only of the God “who alone is truly God,” and he was addressing his *Father* in that statement (John 17:3), as a good Jewish unitary monotheist.