



Epilogue

A Future for Monotheism

Excerpt from *Jesus Was Not a Trinitarian* - pp 380-384
by Anthony Buzzard

“For a Jew the word God could mean one Person only...The use of the word God for Jesus would have seemed to have been an infringement of monotheism, whereas by calling Jesus Lord they confessed that he was associated with his Father in the exercise of authority.”¹

“In my view Christianity should be much more tightly focused upon Jesus’ words than it usually has been in the past...The real Jesus is a much more interesting and religiously relevant figure than the divine Christ of later faith and he has the advantage of having actually lived.”²

“In the teaching of Jesus Christ God is preeminently the Father.”³

“Forget the pseudo-orthodox attempts to make Jesus of Nazareth conscious of being the second Person of the Trinity...The word Messiah had of course nothing to do with Trinitarian or incarnational theology.”⁴

The Original Jesus

The original Jesus was a Jew who recited and affirmed as the center of true theology the unitarian creed of Israel. Attempts to expand that creed, *on the basis of the Bible*, into a Trinitarian one have failed, as historians and many Bible experts recognize. The creed of Jesus must on no account be modified. To do so is to risk compromise with paganism.

The original Jesus is not only a confirmed unitarian, underlining the creed of Israel. He himself is the one whose “genesis” or origin (Matt. 1:1, 18) is spelled out for us in the clearest terms in Matthew’s and Luke’s opening chapters. Jesus is the Son of God who is rooted in a miraculous human history (Luke 1:35) and specifically by divine promise in the history of Israel. He is the “Jesus Christ” who came “in the flesh” (not “into the flesh,” as mistranslated by Luther⁵), that is to say as an originally human, historical person, a member of the human race. This is John’s yardstick for our grasp of the true spirit (1 John 4:1-6).

The original Jesus is not a *pre*-historical person. That would not fit the profile of the son of David promised as Messiah by the Hebrew Bible. Once his history is moved out of history and outside time and space, the faith loses its anchor in history and in fact. We are then left adrift on the stormy seas of speculation and fantasy.

The very same timelessness and spacelessness which in *later* theology was applied to Jesus’ origin has adversely and confusingly affected Jesus’ very Hebrew view of the future. Our destiny is not to disappear as souls to heaven, but to govern a renewed society on a renewed earth over which the returned Messiah will preside (Matt. 5:5; Rev. 5:10, etc.). The “end of the world” in the Bible is in fact not the end of the space-time universe. It is (as properly translated from the Greek) “the end of the [present] age.”⁶

¹D.E.H. Whiteley, *The Theology of St. Paul*, Blackwell, 1980, 106.

²Don Cupitt, *The Debate About Christ*, 138.

³“God,” *International Standard Bible Encyclopedia*, 1983 ed., 2:1261.

⁴N.T. Wright, “The Historical Jesus and Christian Thought,” *Sewanee Theological Review* 39, 1996.

⁵“In das Fleisch gekommen” (1 John 4:2; 2 John 7). Other German versions corrected the mistake by translating the Greek *en sarki* “im Fleisch.”

⁶Jesus was asked about this future end of the present era of history and the arrival of the Kingdom of God with the Messiah’s return in Matt. 24:3.

Jesus announced that the age of the Kingdom of God fully manifested would follow the end of this age. The new age of the Kingdom is positively not beyond space and time!

Both the beginning of God's story of salvation in the historical Messiah born in Bethlehem and the end of God's story promising a restored earth have become confused in the churchgoer's mind, and the Bible becomes a difficult book to read with pleasure, because our traditional story is not that of the Bible writers.

"Orthodoxy" not only disturbs the biblical picture of Jesus as the human Messiah. It defines the Gospel in a way which excludes Jesus as the model evangelist whose task was to preach the Gospel about the Kingdom of God (Mark 1:14, 15; Luke 4:43). In the Great Commission (Matt. 28:19, 20) the task of taking the very same Gospel of the Kingdom to the world was conferred by Jesus on the Church until his return (see also Matt. 24:14).

Astonishingly, leading evangelicals, while claiming the Bible as their authority, set themselves in direct opposition to Jesus' commission to announce the Kingdom of God as the Gospel. In *1001 Bible Questions Answered* two leading evangelicals wrote, "We are convinced that this [the belief that Jesus commissioned the Church to preach the Gospel of the Kingdom] is an error. It would be a strange thing to find the Church's commission in the Kingdom Gospel."⁷ An amazing assault on Scripture and the Messiah's teaching is revealed by these authors' confident assertion, reflected widely in evangelical literature:

I have long been convinced, and have taught that the Great Commission of Matthew 28:19, 20 is primarily applicable to the Kingdom rather than to the Church. If this were kept in mind we should not fall into confusion regarding our marching orders, which are found in Acts 1:8, with details in the Epistles to the Churches. The Matthew commission [i.e. the command to preach the Kingdom of God Gospel as Jesus always did] will come into force for the Jewish Remnant after the Church is caught away.⁸

Then this staggering rejection of the teaching of Jesus:

Mark's gospel, like Matthew's and Luke's, is primarily a kingdom book, and I am satisfied that none of them contains the Church's marching orders — not even the so-called "Great Commission" of Matthew 28:18-20...To be sure, we are to preach the gospel to every creature but what gospel? The only gospel known to the synoptics was the gospel of the kingdom. Our gospel of the grace of God is found among the four evangelists only in John.⁹

The loss of the Gospel as the Jewish Jesus preached it (Heb. 2:3) goes hand in hand with the Church's rejection of his unitarian creed.

According to the prophets of Israel one day the whole world will indeed recognize the God of Israel as the one true God: "And the Lord will be king over all the earth; in that day there will be one Lord and His name one" (Zech. 14:9). Jesus will be acknowledged too, not as Almighty God, but as the unique servant of that one God. He will be recognized for who he truly is, "the Son of God, the Messiah" (Matt. 16:16), and "the man Messiah Jesus" (1 Tim. 2:5), the mediator between the One God and mankind to whom all judgment has been delegated: "The Father judges no one, but has given all judgment to the Son" (John 5:22).

1 Timothy 2:5, defining the One God as the Father, distinct from the man Messiah Jesus, if believed, could in an instant revolutionize two thousand years of distorted theology and enable us to return to our Jewish roots in Jesus. No other testimony is really needed when once the words of Paul's creed are grasped: "There is one God and one mediator between God and men, the man Messiah Jesus." Could not

⁷Pettingill and Torrey, *1001 Bible Questions Answered*, 120.

⁸Ibid., 127.

⁹Ibid., 113. Note that for Paul the Gospel of grace is synonymous with the Gospel of the Kingdom (Acts 20:24, 25) and the whole notion of two saving gospels is utterly foreign to the NT. For a similar systematic departure from the Gospel as Jesus preached it, see the article "Gospel" in *Unger's Bible Dictionary*, and in scores of evangelical tracts which do not invite the convert to obey Jesus' command in Mark 1:14, 15 to repent and believe the Gospel of the Kingdom.

the creed of Jesus and Paul provide a rallying point, at least a center of intense conversation, between millions of Jews and a billion Christians, and of course more than a billion Muslims?

Liberal Christians are very much aware of the early loss of the Jewish creed from the faith, but they do not regard this defection from the Bible as very serious, holding a low view of Scripture. Evangelicals however regard the Bible as authoritative and have so far been unwilling to face the difference between their creed and that of Jesus. In fact they are the ones who have shown the most ingenuity in attempting the hopeless task of finding the Trinity in the Bible, even in the Old Testament. By cobbling together their case using a small number of verses, taken out of the overall biblical context, they try to turn the New Testament writers into Trinitarians or at least struggling to become Trinitarians!

In practice Trinitarian proof texts are taken almost exclusively from John and Paul with some help from Hebrews. But the doctrine of God must be established across the whole range of Scripture, certainly not neglecting the Old Testament in which the New is rooted. The fact that Jesus' creed was not a Trinitarian creed does not seem to disturb or deter evangelicals. This is because of the enormous emphasis they place on the death of Jesus rather than on his teaching. Many evangelicals seem to view Paul as the founder of the faith they recognize as Christian and forget that Jesus was the original preacher of the Gospel and that the Apostles describe as the greatest peril of all the failure to hear and heed the words of Jesus (Heb. 2:3; 1 Tim. 6:3; 2 John 7-9; 1 John 5:20). Being Christlike should surely include believing the same creed as Jesus.

The problem requiring resolution is simply this: Jesus must be taken seriously in the matter of defining God. The sacred birth narratives of Matthew and Luke were designed as definitive accounts of the supernatural origin of Jesus as descendant of David and Son of God. That picture should have guaranteed that the human Messiah remain at the center of Christian faith.

However, under the distorting influence of a post-biblical philosophical theology from the Greek world, John and Paul were made to support that later creed. They were found to be the most susceptible of "interpretation" in support of that later "revised" view of God and Jesus. But they have been made to say what they did not intend. The post-biblical creeds have simply been read into them and not out of them. They have thus been made to disturb the cardinal unitarian creed of Jesus, something they never intended. John and Paul have been turned into servants of a creed they did not recognize. They should be read in harmony with the Hebrew Bible and synoptic and Acts accounts of Jesus which preserve, as the primary data about his person, his descent from King David and his supernatural status as Son of God, not God Himself. Only then will the God of Jesus be honored as the single unrivaled God of the universe.