



Elohim

Excerpt from *Jesus Was Not a Trinitarian* - pp 102 - 103

by Anthony Buzzard

Jewish historians and theologians have no doubt about what first-century Jews believed about God. Otto Kirn, PhD, ThD, professor of dogmatics at the University of Leipzig, commented:

Early dogmaticians were of the opinion that so essential a doctrine as that of the Trinity could not have been unknown to the men of the Old Testament. However, no modern theologian who clearly distinguishes between the degrees of revelation in the Old and New Testaments can longer maintain such a view. Only an inaccurate exegesis which overlooks the more immediate grounds of interpretation can see references to the Trinity in the plural form of the divine name *Elohim*, the use of the plural in Genesis 1:26, or such liturgical phrases of three members as the Aaronic blessing of Numbers 6:24-26 and the Trisagion of Isaiah 6:3.¹

Dr. William Smith warned against the imaginative attempts to find the Trinity in the Hebrew Bible: "The plural form of Elohim has given rise to much discussion. The fanciful idea that it referred to the *trinity of persons* in the Godhead hardly finds now a supporter among scholars."²

Doctor of Theology Wolfhart Pannenberg stated:

Jesus is what he is only in the context of Israel's expectation. Without the background of this tradition, Jesus would never have become the object of a Christology. Certainly this connection is also clear in other titles and generally throughout the New Testament, especially in Jesus' own message. His message can only be understood within the horizon of apocalyptic expectations, and the God whom Jesus called "Father" was none other than the God of the Old Testament. This context is concentrated in a most particular way in the title *Christos*...This justifies the formulation of the content of the confession of Jesus...he is the Christ of God.³

How very confusing then to say he *is* God.

To the men of the NT, God was the God of the OT, the living God, a Person, loving, energizing, seeking the accomplishment of an everlasting purpose of mercy, the satisfaction of His own loving nature...Perhaps it would be more correct to say that the monotheism of the OT was never abstract, because the God of the OT was never a conception, or a substance [essence], but always a *Person*. Personality, indeed, has never the bare unity of a monad.⁴

¹*The New Schaff-Herzog Encyclopedia of Religious Knowledge*, Baker, 1960, 12:18.

²*A Dictionary of the Bible*, Thomas Nelson, rep. 1986, 220.

³Wolfhart Pannenberg, *Jesus – God and Man*, Westminster Press, 1968, 32.

⁴Thomas B. Kilpatrick, Prof. of Systematic Theology, Knox College, Toronto, "Incarnation," *A Dictionary of Christ and the Gospels*, 1:807.