

Being Loyal and Wise About Who God Is

by Anthony Buzzard

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Who is God? We encourage our audience to acquaint themselves with this age-old controversy about who God and Jesus are. We are urged by Jesus to worship God in spirit and in truth (John 4:24).

Why study these great issues? By being involved in the discussion you equip yourself to help other seekers to understand the Jesus of the Bible and the God of the Bible as they should.

Our object as disciples is to align our thinking with that of our Master Rabbi and Savior Jesus. Jesus was profoundly interested in keeping us straight on the issue of God and how many He is. John wrote that “Jesus came to give us an *understanding* that we might know God” (1 John 5:20). Isaiah 53:11, in a much neglected text, teaches that “the Messiah will make many righteous by his knowledge.” Popular tradition in churches is easily offended by such verses! Did not Jesus die for me to save me? Yes, of course that is true but it is not the whole truth: “By his knowledge the Messiah will cause many to be accounted righteous” (Isa. 53:11, see RSV). That is equally true. Jesus came to die and rise but he also (we repeat the point!) came to “give us an understanding that we might come to know God” (1 John 5:20). That word “understanding” in the Greek is a strongly intellectual word! The Devil trades often on the idea that “intellect” is of very secondary importance; what counts is “sincerity.” “Doctrine divides,” so goes the popular saying. But what is doctrine other than teaching? Doctrine means teaching! Every proposition you make about faith or Jesus or the Bible is “doctrine.”

A preacher who does not preach “doctrine” would in fact remain silent at the pulpit! He would say nothing. The issue is: Are we preaching true or false doctrine? Partial or complete doctrine? The doctrine about love is not less a doctrine than the teaching which defines God properly or defines the Gospel rightly as the Gospel about the Kingdom (Luke 4:43). Paul urged preachers to deliver to their flocks the “whole counsel of God” (Acts 20:27). With this apostolic injunction he warned against falling for the easy trap of preaching just what is “acceptable” — even what keeps the paycheck secure or popularity polls high.

Did not Messiah plead with us to remember that “he who is ashamed of me and my words...I will be terribly disappointed in him when I come back in the glory of my Father” (see Mark 8:38). The whole counsel of God means the whole range of Biblical teachings. These are to be taught firmly and kindly without partiality or deferring to “lobbies” in the congregation who have decided they know better than their leader! Paul’s advice is so very compelling and relevant to today’s church scene.

The point of discussing Jesus' teaching about who God is involves our whole relationship to God and truth. It was Jesus who said that "this is the most important commandment of all: Listen Israel: the Lord God is one Lord" (Mk. 12:29). What if the public, rather casually accepting the status quo of church tradition, aids and abets the strange idea that God is really THREE? Many have heard of the Athanasian Creed recited for centuries in churches. Amongst dogmatic pronouncements assigning you to eternal hellfire if you dare to differ with it, it says, "The Father is Almighty, the Son is Almighty and the Holy Spirit is Almighty, but this is not three Almighties, but one Almighty."

Are you impressed? Or horrified? Why did one Archbishop even say he wished we could get rid of that creed? Are God and Jesus pleased when those gathering as congregations utter what is evident nonsense? Are we supposed to break the rules of common sense and grammar and proclaim before God our faith in what makes no sense at all?

What if the Bible's definition of God is actually very simple and entirely unambiguous. Try this: We read in 1 Corinthians 9:24, "Remember that in a race everyone runs, but only **one** person [*eis*] gets the prize. You also must run in such a way that you will win." Did you understand "one person"? Of course. Now read about God in Galatians 3:20: "God is one Person." The Greek word is exactly the same as in 1 Corinthians 9:24: *eis*, one, one Person.

The Crunch Point in Discussions of Who God Is

You say that the Father is Yahweh, the Son is Yahweh, and the Holy Spirit is Yahweh. How many Yahwehs are you proposing?

We invite some prolonged reflection on this question. It reveals the inherent non-logical contradiction involved in the proposition "Jesus *is* God/Yahweh." Once that is declared, one is committed automatically, since the Father is obviously God, to *two* who are God, and thus to two Gods! (*Three* including the Holy Spirit). This puts one in direct collision with Jesus who stated that "the Lord our God is ONE Lord" (Mark 12:29: "the one and only Lord," NLT).

One may try to cover up what sounds so strange — that three are God — by quickly trying to change the meaning of God to one triune essence (one "What"). But the singular masculine pronouns for God, countless times and constantly in the whole Bible, ought to signal the fact that one's argument has gone badly wrong. One may assemble texts, mostly from John and a few from Paul, *but none from the beginning of Matthew and Luke*. But having put together various verses, a Trinitarian believer arrives at a conclusion which forces him to say, "The Father is God (Yahweh). The Son is God (Yahweh). The Spirit is God (Yahweh). But there is *only one* Yahweh."

At this point one has not made any sense, according to the rules of simple language we all agree on and use without difficulty in any other setting (except theology!). The proposition “Jesus is God and the Father is God, but that is not two Gods” sounds exactly like the Athanasian Creed above. It involves a blatant contradiction and one ends up making a non-intelligible statement about God.

If your friends invite you to discuss the Trinity, by all means ask them politely to state *how many* YAHWEHs they are proposing. If they hesitate or run away from the question, ask “Do you believe Jesus is Yahweh?” The answer will typically be “Yes.” “Do you believe the Father is Yahweh?” The answer will be “Yes.”

Your conversation partner has just revealed to him/herself and you that he/she believes in TWO Yahwehs. This violates the first commandment and Jesus’ assertion of the greatest of all truths that the Lord our God is **one Yahweh** (Mark 12:29).

It is fascinating how enthusiastically supportive of Jesus’ monotheism the Jewish scribe was. Jesus began by reciting the Jewish creed (therefore also the *Christian* creed because Jesus affirmed it). The Jewish scribe reacts to Jesus by saying, “Bravo, Master, He is one and there is no other besides Him.” Notice now the impressive accumulation of *singular* grammatical forms, describing of course a single person:

He (=singular personal pronoun) **is** (=singular verb) **one** (=the numeral one, meaning one and not more than one) and there **is** (=singular verb) no **one** (=singular person) **other** (=singular adjective) than **He** (=singular personal pronoun meaning one single person).

Is anyone still convinced that Jesus or the scribe believed that God was THREE Persons? If so, then pronouns have ceased to carry meaning for you. Yet in ordinary conversation you have not the slightest doubt about them!

Think about this. The Trinity is a sort of moving target. It often does not let you know what it proposes. Various explanations of the Trinity are offered. Some say God is “one WHAT.” Others claim He is “one Person, in three modes.” But once someone identifies Jesus, the Son of God, as Yahweh, he is committed to two Yahwehs. That cannot be right, because it interferes with the first commandment of all that the Lord God is a single Person, and we are to imagine no other Gods but HE.

When Christianity soon after Bible times began to cut ties with its parent faith, the ancient faith of Judaism and the Jew Jesus, it rebelled against its mother. The results of a rebellion against parents are always disastrous. The church needs to reconnect with Jesus the Jew and his very Jewish and unitarian belief that God is a single Divine Father. After all, in the Bible Jesus is never once called “the Lord God,” and never once called “the Almighty” (*pantokrator*). The Father is jealous of His own unique position as the ultimate and only One God.

“Let Us Reason Together”

Every argument has a premise. If the premise or basis of an argument is flawed or faulty, what is built on the basis will be faulty. Trinitarians argue that God is **one Essence** existing as three Persons (check the faith statements of vast numbers of “Bible churches”).

A leading Trinitarian exponent is James White. He defines the idea that **God is one Essence** clearly when he argues that God is “**one what and three who’s.**”¹ **But in the Bible God is not a WHAT!** The Bible contradicts this faith statement about a Triune God as **one Essence** when it tells us thousands of times that God is one single Person, a WHO. The Bible conveys this simple premise and fact to us by means of thousands of *singular personal pronouns* to describe God. There are in English (with equivalents in the biblical languages) 14 forms of the singular personal pronoun: I, me, myself, my, mine, thou, thee, thyself, thy, thine, he him, himself, his. We use them every day (not today the archaic King James forms, thou, etc.). They are completely clear. They describe a single person. We could add three more “relative pronouns”: “who,” “whom,” “whose.” These also define the God of Scripture as one single divine Person, one single WHO.

The God of the Bible is defined and described by these singular personal pronouns multiple thousands of times. Thus thousands of these indicators describe God as a unique Person. But the counter force of another theory about God, that He is *three* Persons, manages to block in the minds of many churchgoers the straightforward grammatical fact that the Bible never describes the One God as three Persons.

There are thousands of occurrences of the various words for God in the Bible (*theos, Adonai, YHVH, elohim*). Can you point to a single one of these as meaning “the Triune God”? Which verse?

Of Himself God repeatedly says, “**I** am God, and there is no other God besides **Me.**” Biblical people address God by saying “**You** alone are God. There is no other God except **You.** There is no God besides **You.**” Biblical writers refer to God as **He, Him, Himself.** “**He** is God and there is no other besides **Him. He** alone is God.” These singular personal pronouns, describing God as a single divine Person, occur constantly, repeatedly and uniformly across the pages of Holy Scripture. They ought to convince a Bible reader that God is a single Person, not two Persons, not three or more Persons — certainly not one **WHAT!**

The great truth about the sole Creator of heaven and earth and all life is summed up by this very straightforward information given in Malachi 2:10: “Do we not all have **one Father**? Did not **one God** create us?” The second sentence reinforces the first. This easy language is provided by the Bible to prevent us from breaking the

¹ *The Forgotten Trinity*, p. 27.

first commandment, which is that we are to imagine no other God but the God of Scripture: “No other gods besides **Me**.”

We must not risk turning “Me” into “Us,” or “He” into “They.” This would be to commit a “felony” against the sacred words of Scripture. It would be to muddle language and undermine monotheism, the greatest of all truths. It would be to pulverize innocent pronouns. It would be to bludgeon the clear words of the Bible. The text of the Bible must not be so manipulated. Holy Scripture needs to be upheld at all costs. We are not to alter the revealed words of God. God knows **who He is (He is not “one WHAT”)**, and we are commanded by Jesus to believe *first* in that One God, who is the Father, a single divine Person.

Paul repeated this same monumental truth when he declared that pagans believe in more than one God, but “for us Christians there **is one God, the Father**, and no other God except **Him**” (see 1 Cor. 8:4-6).

Paul went on, as we know, to *place beside that One God, the Father*, the “one lord Jesus Messiah,” i.e. the Lord Jesus who is the Messiah, or the Jesus who is the lord Messiah. But that one lord **Messiah**, Jesus, is carefully distinguished from the One **God**, who is the Father. There is for us believers one single **God, the Father**, and one single lord *Messiah*, Jesus.

On no account are these two individuals to be confused. One is the Lord God and the other is “the man Messiah” (1 Tim. 2:5), the lord Messiah.

Paul’s definition of the One God who is the Father simply repeats the thousands of references to God as He, Him, Himself, Thee, Thyself, I, Me, Myself. One Father is of course one Person and the Hebrew Bible states that very uncomplicated fact when it asks this question (we repeat it here for emphasis), “Do we not all have one Father? Has not One God created us?” (Mal. 2:10).

Jesus (in John 17:3) emphasized the importance of defining the One God when he said, “This is eternal life, that they recognize You [he was addressing the Father] as the only true God.” He placed himself (also a single person!) alongside that single Person, the Father. He defined that one Father as “the only one who is truly God.”

If this evidence is not clear, then language at the simplest level cannot speak to you. You are blocking it with a counter theory which disables your capacity to understand what in any other situation you do understand with perfect clarity — that I, Me, Thou, Thee, He, Him define a single Person.

The disabling of our understanding is a result of years of traditional church thinking which went beyond the evidence of the Bible. While the Bible massively defines God as a single Person, readers of the Bible become crippled and confused when that plain and simple language fact about God becomes foggy.

Violence to the Text

It is interesting to note how a very famous “church father” struggled to make the Bible’s definition of God fit with his own *later*, non-biblical definition of God. I (a single person!), the writer of this article, am referring to the celebrated Augustine. In his *Homilies on John* he **tells us to alter the words of John 17:3**. We are not to let the text say what it actually says — that the Father is “the only true God.” Rather we are to **change the order of the words as Jesus gave them** and make Jesus say what he did not say. Augustine tells us to rearrange Jesus’ words to read “You *and* Jesus Christ, the only true God.”

I encourage you to look this up online. *The Homilies on John* are readily available for you to read in English and you will be able to see for yourself the awful manipulation of John 17:3 by this so-called “church father.” The words of Jesus were neutralized when Augustine dared to rearrange the Greek Scripture at John 17:3 to force it into line with his Trinitarian idea that Jesus was equally the One God. Trinitarian commentators like Henry Alford rightly protested this “violence to the text.” Augustine was slavishly followed by other church fathers who desperately wanted to support their philosophical concept of God as three in one. They tried to make Jesus into a Trinitarian! Instead Jesus’ words are designed to correct and deliver us from man-made traditions.

In a court of law such manipulation would be spotted and condemned, but the massive weight of tradition makes churchgoers reluctant to believe Jesus’ definition of the one true God in John 17:3. The word “only,” as we all know, limits what is so described as “on its own.” Since “the Father is the only true God,” then no one else is the “only true God.” Others might be gods or even “god” in a different sense. But only the Father is the “one true God.” Exactly as Paul declared, “To us Christians there is one God and none besides him; there is to us one God, **the Father**” (see 1 Cor. 8:4-6).

With this premise in mind, one can read the Bible with new eyes, and you can rest assured that you are not being misled if you say, echoing Jesus: “The Lord our God is one Lord,” “There is none beside Him,” and “You, Father, alone, are the true God” (John 17:3). And remember that thousands of Bible verses, with their singular personal pronouns for God, state and confirm the same truth.

The reader should make up his mind about what “I,” “Me,” “He” really mean. Is this so hard?