

# Focus on the Kingdom

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Elohim Does Not Mean “God in Two Persons”

Ex-members of the Worldwide Church of God (founded by Herbert Armstrong) are often victims of a seriously misleading piece of information. This has to do with the vitally important meaning of the Hebrew word for God — *Elohim*. Without any lexical authority, former WCG’s have been taught that *Elohim* (God) in Genesis 1:1 is “uniplural,” meaning that “two persons make up the one God family.”

A number of tricks are played on the mind, when that proposition is advanced as a responsible way of explaining the Bible and the nature of God. Firstly, there is no such word as “uniplural.” And even if there were, it would be misleading as a description of the God of the Bible, of Jesus and of Christians. *Elohim* is never a collective noun.

The recognized facts of the Hebrew language will not support the theory that *Elohim* tells us that the God of Israel is more than one Person. It is wise for us all to “prove all things” and consider the lexical fact that *Elohim* is probably a “plural of majesty,” or, as others think, an honorific plural, a “plural of fullness,” or of “intensity.” *Elohim* cannot possibly mean that *two beings* (or three) make up the one God.

Many have not been told of other Hebrew plural forms which certainly do not tell us of more than one person:

Can the word “Lord,” also found in the *plural form* in Hebrew, refer to a single individual?

The word for Lord (*adon*) regularly appears with a plural ending when its meaning is singular. So it is with *Elohim* when it refers to God. God in the Hebrew Bible is described thousands upon thousands of times by *singular personal pronouns*. Yahweh, His personal name, is invariably accompanied by singular pronouns and verbs. On each of these occasions we have a testimony to the grand truth that there is One and only One Person in the eternal Godhead. Grasping this foundational truth and holding it fast will bring a new and brilliant light to Bible study — and to an understanding of the human Messiah, Son of God. It also frees the brain from the contortions involved in trying to make two or three into one!

Try this: If you were on a trip alone in the mountains what would you say to describe the fact that you were all by yourself? You would say, “I was alone, the only person on the trip. There was no one besides me.” You would continue with personal pronouns in the singular, “I” and “me.” That is exactly the language constantly used by the God of the Bible. He could not have done more to ensure His identity as a single divine Person. Isaiah 44:24: “Thus says the LORD, your Redeemer and He who formed you from the womb, ‘I am the LORD who makes everything, who stretched forth the heavens alone and by Myself. Who was with Me?’”

This and thousands of other verses were meant to build a hedge against anyone ever imagining that God was two or three! Language has no other way of expressing that great defining fact of the universe — that God is a single Person. (If, of course, one introduces into the discussion non-Biblical meanings for concepts like “person,” or unbiblical terms such as *ousia* [being, essence] the result is a considerable muddle and loss of revealed truth.)

Back to the issue of what Herbert Armstrong called a “uniplural” word. Consult any standard Hebrew lexicon or consult a rabbi or Old Testament scholar. *The Gesenius Hebrew Grammar* is a recognized authority worldwide. On p. 298 we read:

“The plural of majesty...sums up the characteristics belonging to the idea, besides possessing the secondary sense of an intensification of the original idea...That the language **has entirely rejected the idea of a numerical plurality in Elohim (whenever it denotes one God) is proved especially by its being almost invariably joined with a singular attribute.**”

*The Plain Truth* of February, 1984 tells us that in “Gen. 1:1, God (Hebrew, *Elohim* — **Gods**) means God and the Word.” Readers should be alerted to the obvious polytheism implied by *The Plain Truth*. Note also the complete absence of any support from grammars or lexicons. This failure to benefit from the wisdom of scholars and language experts has been the blight of much misguided theology amongst “worldwiders.”

A leader like Herbert Armstrong, who had no formal education in biblical languages, was an unreliable witness in the field of biblical exegesis.

“Worldwiders” have sometimes proceeded in the theological enterprise rather like someone investigating the English language and deciding on his own that Webster’s Dictionary is in error. No one can afford to “do theology” on an island. He must take note of the work of experts in the field of Biblical Studies. “Proving all things” may mean consulting others with a greater technical expertise than one has oneself. (It is worth remembering that many errors in Bible

understanding go back to the failure to deal with words and grammar. America is anyway often not strong in language, since many have not even a working knowledge of a language other than their own. They are ill-equipped to deal with Hebrew and Greek.)

If *Elohim* means “**Gods**” in Genesis 1:1 (where the verb is singular, “He,” not “they created”) how will we explain Psalm 45:6 where the Messianic king, a singular person, is addressed as *Elohim*? Why is Moses *Elohim* (Ex. 7:1)? Was he a plural person? Is Dagon more than one god? He is called *Elohim* (I Sam. 5:7). So is Chemosh (Jud. 11:24) and Baal in I Kings 18:24.

The fact is that where the New Testament translates the Hebrew word *Elohim* into Greek it does *not* render it as a plural (except where pagan gods or the judges of Israel are referred to). As a reference to the One God of Israel and of Jesus, *Elohim* is invariably rendered by the singular form of the Greek for God — *o theos* (the [One] God). On a rare occasion Jesus, the Messiah, is addressed as “God” (Ps. 45:6, cited in Heb. 1:8). This is rendered “God” in Greek, not “Gods.” Note carefully that Jesus is never called “the (one) God,” *absolutely*, in the New Testament. That title is reserved exclusively for the Father who is called the One God some 1320 times. The judges were also called “gods” (*Elohim* — here the word is used as a real plural) in Psalm 82:6, and Jesus claimed to be the supreme example of the perfectly obedient *Son of God* (see John 10:33-36), *representing God*, as His agent on earth. “Son of God” in the Bible never means God Himself. To be Son of God means you are not God! “Son of God” is the Messianic King and Jesus is just that — the Messiah of Israel. The fact that on a rare occasion he is addressed as “my Lord and my God” indicates that the Messianic titles of Psalm 45: 6, 11 are being used of him. The New American Bible wisely translates Psalm 45:6 “Thy throne, O god” (note the absence of the capital letter). When Thomas finally grasped who Jesus was, the Messiah (John 20:31), he articulated that faith by addressing the Savior as “my Lord and my God” (John 20:28). In an earlier conversation at which Thomas was present, both Thomas and Philip had not comprehended the stupendous fact that “he who has seen Jesus has seen the Father” (John 14:9). The Son perfectly reflects his Father, who worked *in Christ* (II Cor 5:19), but that does not mean of course that the Son *is God*.

The fact that Jesus is “worshiped” proves in no way that he was or is the Supreme Deity. As is well known the word “worship” can be used of God and man in both the Old Testament and the New. Note that the people “worshiped the Lord and the King” (I Chron. 29:20, KJV). Note also that the saints will be “worshiped” by former antagonists (Rev. 3:9). Does this mean that the saints or David are coequal with the eternal God? The argument that Jesus is God because he is “worshiped” collapses on the plain evidence of the biblical usage of the word “worship.”

“The ambiguity of the word *proskuneo* (worship), which can be used of oriental obeisance as well as actual [divine] worship makes it impossible to draw any certain conclusions from the evidence” (Arthur Wainwright, *The Trinity in the New Testament*, p. 104). In other words, as this Trinitarian author concedes, the word “worship” applied to Jesus does not in any way prove that he is Deity, rather than the Messianic Son of God. And Son of God is a vastly different notion from “God the Son” of later church tradition.

Psalm 45:11 describes the Messianic King as your “lords” (the form is plural, but the meaning is obviously singular and correctly so translated by all versions as a singular “lord”). In the phrase

“a cruel lord” (Isa. 19:4) the Hebrew actually has a plural form “lords.” But the proper translation is in the singular. Isaiah 26:13 correctly renders *adonim* as “masters.” So we see that there is an ambiguity in some Hebrew words which only context will resolve. False systems of interpretation are sometimes able to work out of that ambiguity (cp. the well-known grammatically ambiguous texts in the NT which *some* Trinitarians claim refer to Jesus as “God”— Titus 2:13 and I John 5:20. Others deny that the reference is to Jesus here).

It is clear that *The Plain Truth* did not always give you all the facts. It is entirely arbitrary to say that *Elohim* (Gen. 1:1) means two persons. This simply disregards the characteristics of the Hebrew language. And where God says, “Let us...” the plural can perfectly well be explained, as Gesenius says, as “communicative,” i.e., God was talking to His attendant angels, as elsewhere in Scripture He is seen talking to His divine council (Isa. 6:8; see for confirmation the note to Gen. 1:26 in the NIV Study Bible). The *Word Bible Commentary*, Gen 1-15, (p. 27) certainly no anti-Trinitarian publication, admits that “it is now universally admitted that the author of Gen. 1:26 did not intend [by ‘us’] a reference to Christ” or a second member of the Godhead.

Belief in *two* eternal beings contradicts the straightforward creedal statements of John 17:3—the Father is “*the only true God*,” or “the only one who is truly God.” This description of God from the lips of Christ should be relied upon as a definitive statement about who God is. Jesus addressed the Father as “the only one who is truly God.” We can with confidence approach the God of the universe with that unitarian understanding, which reflects the mind of Christ himself and ensures that our worship is “in spirit and truth” (John 4:24).

How rightly J.A.T. Robinson of Cambridge spoke when he pointed out that “John [and Jesus whom he reported] is as undeviating a witness as any New Testament writer to the *unitary monotheism* of Judaism” (John 17:3; 5:44) (*12 More NT Essays*, p. 175).

Jesus is the Messiah, *distinct from* the One True God. All Bible students should prayerfully consider the tremendous implications of John 17:3. The Trinitarian church father Augustine was baffled by these words and resorted to the completely unwarranted violence of actually altering the order of the words in John 17:3 to make them include Jesus in the Godhead! (See his *Homilies on John*.) He disregarded also John 5:44 which likewise states that the Father is “the one who alone is God,” “the only one who is God.” (This differs from what *The Plain Truth* taught). I Corinthians 8:4-6, in an expressly creedal statement, says that *the Father is the One God, that there is none besides Him*, and that Jesus is the One Lord Messiah (see Luke 2:11). Ephesians 4:4-6 likewise describes the Father as the One God as distinct from the Messiah Jesus. And the critically important text in I Timothy 2:5 again defines *the Father* as the One God and Jesus as the one mediator between God and man. He is the “*man* Messiah Jesus.” When proper attention is paid to these fundamental creedal statements the Jewish/Christian monotheism of the Bible is crystal clear.

This evidence should carry the greatest weight in our Bible study and devotional life. One ex-WCG Bible teacher asserted that Psalm 110:1 (“The Lord [Yahweh] said to my lord”) ought to be read “God said to my God.” This is quite inaccurate. The text simply says that Yahweh speaks to my (David’s) lord, i.e. the Messiah. The word lord in “my lord” emphatically does not mean here the One God. The word for the first LORD in Psalm 110:1 is YAHWEH (6,800 times the

personal name of the One God) while the word for David's lord is *adoni*. *Adoni* occurs 195 times in the Hebrew Bible and never refers to God. It is a title for a human or angelic superior. *Adoni* ("my lord") is the promised Messiah who is the supreme *human being*, i.e., the perfect, sinless Son of God. The Lord Messiah is clearly distinguished in Psalm 110:1 from the One God, Yahweh, who is "the Only True God" (John 17:3; 5:44). *Adoni* is a title which deliberately tells us that the one who bears it is not God, but God's Son.

The Bible says that God *alone* is the Creator:

II Kings 19:15, "Thou art God, even Thou alone...Thou hast made the heaven and the earth."

Nehemiah 9:6, "You are God, even You alone...You have made the heaven and the earth."

Job 9:8, "God...who alone spreads out the heavens."

Isaiah 44:24, "I am the Lord that makes all things, who stretches forth the heavens **alone**...who spreads abroad the earth *by myself*." The RV has "Who is with me?" Malachi 2:10 ascribes the creation to the One God who is the Father.

This clear evidence should be accepted by Bible students and the contrary notion of "two persons in One God" abandoned in favor of the strict and pure monotheism of Jesus (Mark 12:28ff.) and the Bible. Jesus never usurped the position of his Father as Creator. It would be quite untrue to say that "Jesus was the Yahweh of the Old Testament." What role would that leave for the Father? If the Father was not the Creator, why was it God, not Jesus, who rested after creation (Heb. 4:4)? God spoke through *a Son* only after that Son began to exist (Luke 1:35) and never in Old Testament times (Heb. 1:1-2).

Jesus himself fully endorsed the Jewish view that God is One Person (Mark 12:28-34). He aligned himself with the Jewish view of God. "We know what we worship, for salvation is of the Jews" (John 4:22). No Jew thought that God was a "family of two" or three or a Trinity of divine, coequal "Persons." Jesus agreed with the Jewish theologians about who God was. To interfere with that Jewish understanding of the nature of God is something of a slap in the face for the saints of the Hebrew Bible and the Apostles.

Christians should begin to follow Jesus in this crucially important matter. For too long they have been lured into subtle forms of polytheism — and polytheism breaks the **first** commandment. The fragmentation we now witness amongst believers could be healed if they returned to the great, cardinal Truth that God is One Lord (Deut. 6:4, affirmed by Jesus in Mark 12:28ff.). ♦

The Trinity: Time for a Public Discussion

**"Unitarianism [belief in the Father as the 'only true God' (John 17:3) and in Jesus as the Son and Messiah] as a theological movement began much earlier in history; indeed it antedated Trinitarianism by many decades. Christianity derived from Judaism, and Judaism was strictly Unitarian. The road which led from Jerusalem to the Council of Nicea was scarcely a straight one. Fourth-century Trinitarianism did not reflect accurately early**

**Christian teaching regarding the nature of God; it was on the contrary a deviation from this teaching.”<sup>[1]</sup>**

Common faith in God is supposed to be the great unifying factor in human affairs. In fact religion in its present forms is the great divider. Religious wars have been responsible for the deaths of countless human beings. Something is fundamentally askew in the world’s approach to God. Current denominationalism seems to point to a systematic problem preventing both Christian unity and Christian appeal to the Jews and Muslims with whom it finds itself permanently at odds — over the question of who God is. Theologian Hans Kung has long pointed out that Jews, Muslims and Christians oppose each other with irreconcilable understandings of the nature of the Deity. Kung speaks of “the unbiblical, very abstractly constructed speculation of the School Tractates” as well as “the Hellenization of the original Christian Message by Greek theology.” He expressed “the genuine concern of many Christians and the justified frustration of Jews and Muslims in trying to find in such formulas [post-biblical Christian creeds] the pure faith in One God.”

Likewise, in 1961, the General Synod of the Netherlands Reformed Church recommended a rethinking of the doctrine of the Trinity. In their appeal they pointed out that Jews and Muslims had objected to the Church’s doctrine of the Trinity as polytheism and urged the Church to “investigate how far the Church itself is jointly guilty for the rise of this misunderstanding through the formulations [creeds] in which the doctrine of the Trinity was gradually crystallized and presented.” Claus Westerman added his voice to this common complaint, which is still unresolved: “The question of the relationship of the persons of the Trinity to one another and the question of the divinity and humanity in the person of Christ as a question of ontic [i.e. to do with the Greek philosophical concept of substance or being] could only arise when the Old Testament had lost its significance for the early church. The Christological and Trinitarian questions structurally correspond to the mythological questions into relationships of the gods to one another in a [pagan] pantheon.”

The charge that our Christianity is poisoned by paganism needs to be faced by churchgoers and Bible readers everywhere. At present there is an alarming contentment with the status quo, and when informed questions arise (as from the experts cited above) the fundamentalist wing of Christendom is the most likely to answer with a fierce and unquestioning dogmatism. But is this the way critical thinking is to be done? Is this the Berean route to Truth? (Acts 17:11). Is there perhaps truth in the observation of the late choral conductor Robert Shaw, son of a Baptist preacher, that he avoided church because so often one was “supposed to check one’s brains at the door.”

The words of the Professor of Theology at Bern seem to have gone unheeded (does not the Bible warn almost on every page of the danger of accepting as truth what is no more than man-made tradition?). In a highly acclaimed work, *The Formation of Dogma*, Professor Martin Werner, D.D. observed that:

**“There was certainly no justification for substituting for the original concept of Jesus the Messiah, simply a Hellenistic analogy such as that of a redeeming divine being...It was a**

**myth behind which the historical Jesus completely disappeared, because there was nothing common between them”** (*Formation of Christian Dogma*, Harper Bros, 1957, p. 298).

**He deplored “the transformation of the eschatological Primitive Christianity in the Hellenistic mystery-religion of Early Catholicism” (p. vii).**

More recently Professor Ellens of the University of Michigan challenged the public to a choice between Greek philosophy and Biblical theology:

“From the councils of Nicea (325) and Chalcedon (451) the theologians of the church endeavored to define and describe God and His operation in the created universe. These were the questions before them because they were Hellenistic Jewish, Neo-Platonist and Gnostic questions which were everywhere in the air. They asked these questions in the way they did because the tools they possessed for their intellectual craft were those provided by their cultural moment and time. These were the tools: words, language, concepts, metaphors, images and thought-frames of Hellenistic, Neo-Platonic and Gnostic philosophy and theology... The problem that both Philo [Jewish philosopher] and the early Christian theologians had with Greek philosophical categories was that those categories and their distinctive language did not lend themselves readily to the Semitic sort of God who could be said to be heard ‘walking in the cool of the garden.’ Is God really present to the creation? The Hebrews were sure that God was. It seems likely that Plato and his pre-Philonic heirs did not ever think so... That the early theologians intended to describe divine ontology [the nature of God], and that they went beyond a modalism [God in three modes of existence] to describe a personalist ontological Trinity, *despite the lack of any Biblical imperative to do so*, seems a fatal philosophical and theological move, since there was nothing in which to ground this exquisite system but Greek (pagan, in the original sense of the term) philosophical speculation... This separates the faith from its biblical, historical foundation and from any substantial grounding in the authentic realities of the historical Jesus. I understand that this does not disturb any contemporary philosophical theologians in both Roman Catholic and Protestant traditions. For the construction of a coherent Systematic Theology, the nature and extent of early Christian philosophical speculation is not fatal. However, it is fatal to an attempt to create an ultimate footing for the traditional formulations of Christian truth in a comprehensive Biblical Theology.”

Professor Ellens sums up his complaint: “It is time, therefore, for the Christian Church to acknowledge that it has a very special type of material which constitutes its creedal tradition. *It is not a creedal tradition of Biblical Theology.* It is not a unique inspired and authoritative word from God. It is rather a special kind of Greek religio-philosophical mythology...It should be candidly admitted by the Church, then, that *its roots are not in Jesus of Nazareth...*nor in the central tradition of Biblical Theology, nor even in Pauline Christianized Hellenistic Judaism. Its roots are in Philonic, Hellenistic Judaism and in the Christianized Neo-Platonism of the second through the fifth century. Since this is so, the Church should acknowledge to the world of humans seeking truth and to the world of alternate religions, that the Christian Church speaks only with its own historical and philosophical authority and with neither a divine authority or unique revelation from Jesus Christ nor from God” (Harold J. Ellens, *The Ancient Library of Alexandria and Early Christian Theological Development*, pp. 36-39, 1997, emphasis added).

This is quite a challenging indictment! Surely it deserves careful examination by Christians wanting to be informed about the real content of their fundamental beliefs. Can we afford not to know where our faith comes from? Can we risk reciting and subscribing to creeds which may not be based on the Bible and Jesus but on Greek philosophy, however captivating and soothing?

With these concerns in mind, I was invited to a public debate on the Trinity at a community college in Riverside, California at the end of April. My opponent, Dr. Fred Sanders of Biola University and author of *Dr. Doctrine's Christian Comix*, asserted amongst other points that the Trinity requires real thinking and the exercise of the intellect. He doubted whether Unitarians could hope to "go to heaven." My reply was that the Trinity involves us in a fundamental contradiction not at all required by Scripture. The writers of the Bible thought like Jews and their ancestral, cardinal creed, the *Shema* (Deut. 6:4) proposes with lucid clarity that the "Lord our God is *One Lord*" (RSV), not two or three Lords. I pointed out that this single divine Person is designated by singular pronouns and verbs thousands of times. According to the laws of language which we all accept, and according to the grammatical method of interpretation by which words have their normal meanings, it would be utterly impossible to force "three Persons" into that One Person God of the Hebrew Bible. In other words, three cannot be equal to one. Trinitarians will defend themselves by asserting that God is One in one sense and three in a different sense. Thus they acknowledge that  $1x$  cannot equal  $3x$ 's. That would be a pure contradiction. However, in practice attempts to show in what sense God is one and in what different sense He is three have not succeeded. Erickson, evangelicalism's main defender of the Trinity, admits to a huge problem amongst adherents to the Trinity. For many Christians it is "a matter of not knowing whether they believe or disbelieve the Trinity because they do not know what the doctrine says" (*God in Three Persons*, p. 46). He says that "Christians who believe this strange doctrine seem incoherent" and claims that "we can make it partially understandable." Nevertheless the most brilliant of its exponents are at a loss to make this central tenet clear:

"Stephen Davis does not say the doctrine can never be shown to be coherent but that this has not yet been achieved." "**Davis, the logician, has examined the major contemporary explanations and having found them not to accomplish what they claim to do has been honest in acknowledging that he feels he is dealing with a mystery. In so doing, he has perhaps been more candid than many of us who when pressed may have to admit that we really do not know in what way God is one and in what different way He is three.**"

Finally this admission: "To say the doctrine has been revealed is a bit too strong, however, at least with respect to the biblical revelation" (p. 258).

"It simply is not possible to explain the Trinity unequivocally. What must be done is to offer a series, a whole assortment of illustrations and analogies with the hope that some discernment will take place. We must approach the matter from various angles, 'nibbling at the meaning' of the doctrine as it were... It may be necessary, in order to convey the unusual meaning involved in this doctrine, to utilize what analytical philosophers would term 'logically odd language.' This means using language in such a way *as intentionally to commit grammatical errors*. Thus, I have said of the Trinity, 'He are three,' or 'They is one.' For we have here a being whose nature falls outside our usual understanding of persons, and that nature can perhaps be adequately expressed

by using language that calls attention to the almost paradoxical character of the concepts” (p. 270, emphasis added).

Several problems attend this issue of the nature of God. Fundamentalist believers are told that believing that God is Three in One is the ultimate necessity for salvation and that deviation from that tenet will bring upon them an eternity of hell. However, no sermons are delivered on this subject (with some notable exceptions). Thus the average churchgoer does not know what the doctrine of the Trinity actually proposes (can it in fact be true that they believe it if they do not know what it entails as a proposition?). Members of churches have been told to say that “Jesus is God,” but at the same time that two others, Father and Holy Spirit, are God in exactly the same sense — all three being coequal, coessential, and all three being uncreated. The Athanasian creed threatens all dissidents with hell-fire if they do not agree that “The Father is God, the Son is God and the Holy Ghost is God, but these are not three Gods but one God.” Since this, without further explanation, is a blatant contradiction, what are church members to make of it?

It seems to us that this matter of defining God needs immediate attention. Can intelligent churchgoers, pursuing a relationship with God in spirit and truth (John 4:24), really afford to disregard all questions about the most fundamental of all beliefs? Are they aware of the historical, theological and biblical reasons for the existence of the Trinity?

Can they explain why it is justifiable, to support the Trinity, to agree to the importation into the Bible of the terms “Trinity,” “Substance,” “Persons,” “*eternally begotten* Son,” when the Bible finds it quite adequate to speak of “One God the Father, and One Lord Jesus Messiah” (I Cor. 8:4-6)? There is no verse which connects the number three with the One God. Moreover, when Bible writers use the term “God” (*Elohim* in Hebrew, *o theos* in Greek) some 4,350 times, why does that word God never once mean “God in three Persons,” or “God in two Persons”? This would suggest that the Bible writers knew nothing of a tripersonal God. They never intended such a God when they wrote “God.” As is well known and declared by Roman Catholic and Protestant theologians, the Bible means the *Father* of Jesus when it speaks of God in the New Testament. (On two occasions for certain the word “God” is applied in the New Testament to the Messiah, in an Old Testament, Messianic sense appropriate to the supreme representative of God. This is based on Ps. 45:6 where the NAB appropriately writes “god” and not “God.”)

Then there is the question of the “eternal begetting” of the Son. According to the view of God held by mainstream churches, Jesus is the Son of God who had **no beginning**. As Son he was eternally begotten. This assertion is frankly a use of words without meaning. The word “beget” means to bring into existence, to cause to exist. Eternity lies outside of time. Thus to speak of “eternal begetting” is to speak of square circles or triangles. Trinitarianism, when confronted with the biblical information in the all-important Psalm 2:7, “Today I have begotten you,” announces that when God says “Today” He means “in eternity.” Are intelligent churchgoers happy with this apparent assault on inspired Scripture? Is it safe to be challenging revelation with such violence and the abandonment of the grammatical method? The word “today” occurs over 200 times in the Bible. On no occasion would one doubt that it means a present moment in time. But when applied to the origin of the Son of God, theology has dictated otherwise: Today points to an event outside of time. On that basis the Son of God is removed from history, and the glorious revelation of the Son’s origin and *begetting* (Luke 1:35; Matt. 1:20; I John 5:18, not

KJV, where the text is corrupted) in the womb of Mary by miracle is ruled out of court. Acts 13:33 refers to the beginning of the Son while verse 34 refers to his resurrection — note in verse 33 a mistranslation in the KJV, confusing the origin with the resurrection of Jesus.

Then there is the matter of the meaning of the phrase “Three Persons in One God.” Does the popular definition offered by “the Bible Answer Man” on radio, “Three Who’s in One What,” satisfy the inquiring Christian? Where does the God of the Bible, who is constantly defined by personal nouns and pronouns, ever appear as a “What”? It was the Greek philosophers who described God as a “What” and as an “Essence,” and the philosophical church fathers handed on a legacy to us of speaking of God as one impersonal *ousia* (Being) consisting of three Persons.

But what does “Person” mean here? We are warned by theologians about thinking in terms of three *individuals* which would lead at once to belief in three Gods — tritheism. But what in fact we are to understand by “Person,” no Trinitarian can say. Note the puzzlement of a former Trinitarian scholar famed for his biblical and patristic studies:

“I do not and cannot understand them [the meaning of ‘Persons’ in the Trinitarian creed]. And to a definition I cannot consent, still less defend it, until I do understand what it signifies. I have no hesitation in saying that my mind is absolutely unable to elicit any distinct and certain ideas from any of the definitions of ‘Person’ which I have ever examined” (Moses Stuart).

Of the definition of the Trinity it has been said that “It is as dangerous to get it wrong as it is difficult to get it right.” It is constantly described as a “Problem,” ultimately inexplicable, rather like trying to place three billiard balls on one spot. Meanwhile many standard authorities warn us of the extraordinary absence of Christianity’s central doctrine in Scripture:

“Because the Trinity is such an important part of later Christian doctrine it is striking that the term does not appear in the NT. Likewise the developed concept of 3 coequal partners in the Godhead found in later creedal formulations cannot be clearly detected within the confines of the canon” (“Trinity,” *Oxford Companion to the Bible*, ed Metzger, Coogan). ♦

#### Comments

“Thank you for the wonderful service you are doing for the Good News of the Kingdom of the one God and his Messiah, the Lord Jesus Christ.” — *North Carolina*

“I have read your book *Our Fathers Who Aren’t in Heaven*. The simplicity of your message astonishes me. You just barely opened the door, and I saw the whole picture. Discarded is the Greek Gnostic thinking of the church fathers. I had knowledge about practically everything you are writing about in the book, but I hadn’t comprehended anything. My wife and I have become devout Kingdom adherents almost overnight. We have spent the whole Passover sharing these thoughts and insights with several friends. Their reaction is promising. We are very excited. We hope and pray for a reformation, but realize it will be more than a struggle. Thank you very much for the books you sent! We really feel privileged to have received such insight into the plain and simple teachings of Jesus. The New Testament has practically become anew!” — *Norway*

“May God bless, direct and prosper your efforts in preaching and distributing the message about Him and His glorious kingdom and Messiah.” — *Minnesota*

“Your program has opened my eyes of understanding to the message in the Bible. I heard your program ‘by accident’ and receive your *Focus on the Kingdom* each month. This magazine is a plus for me in my newly found understanding.” — *Michigan*

**A One God Conference will be hosted by Ken Westby of the Association for Christian Development on July 25-27 at the Ramada Inn, Tyler, Texas. Speakers include Charles Hunting, Anthony Buzzard and Ken Westby. Further details at [www.godward.org](http://www.godward.org)**

**Anthony’s commentary on Mark (in two videos) is available for any who would like it. We suggest a cost of \$6 per video (this includes postage). We offer it free to our overseas readers.**

**We hope to have available in video or audio the recent debate between Dr. Sanders and Anthony in California. We suggest a cost of \$6 to cover our costs. Free to all overseas readers.**

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[1] *Encyclopedia Americana*, 1956, Vol. 27, p. 2941.

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