



How the Bible view of God Was "Morphed" into a New Definition of God

Few seem to notice the subtle change

by Anthony Buzzard

How do you "morph," cleverly change, one into **two** or **three**? And hope that no one has spotted what you are doing?! Churchgoers seem to be so little concerned about where their official beliefs come from. They have politely and tacitly taken on board a lot of tradition unexamined. But did not Jesus warn very severely about the danger of "tradition learned by heart"? Quoting Isaiah 29:13-14, Jesus tried to impress a powerful truth on us all: "Because this people draw near to Me with their words and honor Me with their lip service, but their reverence for Me consists of tradition learned by rote, I will once again deal marvelously with them." The warning is threatening and clear.

Yes, Jesus cited these words in Matthew 15:8 and Mark 7:6. Note also the frustration of Ezekiel (33:31-33, please read) who found his audiences stubborn and unresponsive! The distinguished Bible scholar F.F. Bruce wrote to me many years ago and observed most astutely:

"Evangelical Protestants can be as much servants of tradition as Roman Catholics or Greek Orthodox Christians; only they do not realize that it is 'tradition.' People who adhere to *sola scriptura* ['the Bible only'] (as they believe) often adhere in fact to a traditional school of interpretation of *sola scriptura*" (correspondence, June 13, 1981).

Back to our topic of subtly turning ONE into TWO, hoping that no one will spot the trick. You either omit to say clearly that you are dealing with ONE, or you make the ONE as vague and difficult as possible so that no one sees when you are turning it into TWO or THREE. The morphing then takes place by imperceptible, almost unnoticeable steps and shifts, via waffling language, full of foggy terms, to arrive at 2 or 3! Compare the Church of England bishop, A. H. Newman, who became a Roman Catholic. Here is what he admitted, with refreshing honesty, about the amazingly complex doctrine of the Trinity:

"The Trinity is a contradiction, indeed, and not merely a verbal contradiction, but an incompatibility in the human ideas conveyed. We can scarcely make a nearer approach to an exact enunciation of it, than of saying **that one thing is two things**" (Sadler's *Gloria Patri*, p. 39, A. H. Newman).

This clever moving from **one idea to another**, unnoticed, amounts to a conjuring, card shark trick — using misdirection! “Misdirection” is a term used by conjurers when they make you look in one direction so that you do not notice something else which they hope you will not see!

The danger over muddle, fudging or complexity concerning the most basic of all teachings, **Who is God**, needs our earnest attention, full and sustained concentration. It matters very much to a jealous God, the God of Israel and of Jesus, that we define Him truthfully and biblically with Jesus as our Master rabbi and teacher. That is why Jesus, when asked about the “Greatest Commandment of all” — the one which we really must not get wrong — replied with the monumentally and centrally important **Shema** (Mark 12:29, citing Deut. 6:4; 4:35): “Listen, Israel, the Lord our God is one.” He is One Person. “He is alone and there is no God besides Him.” He is the “our one Lord” of Daniel 3:17 (in the LXX, Greek). Thousands upon thousands of **singular personal pronouns**, I, Me, Myself, Thou, Thee, Thyself, He, Him, Himself, My, Thy, His, Mine, Thine, define who God is and how many He is. They define the true God in terms which your young children can understand easily. God did not “mess with us” when He insisted that we define Him accurately. To say that one has to be a **learned scholar of languages or philosophy** to understand who the true God is, is to imply that the Bible is not for us all!

The Bible is meant to be understood in its most basic propositions and truths. The Trinity is a teaching which most churchgoers cannot explain at all. They have in most cases no idea how the idea of a Triune God came to be the heart of what everyone must believe!

The Trinity took centuries of post-biblical, furious argumentation, before an Emperor finally insisted that the believers stop arguing and settle on the “only right” view. They then called this “orthodoxy,” right belief. Eventually the sword was used to enforce that “right view.”

But was any of this in any way justified? What do you think about these quotations from highly-schooled Bible experts:

“It must be admitted by everyone who has the rudiments of an historical sense that the doctrine of the Trinity formed no part of the original message. St. Paul did not know it, and would have been unable to understand the meaning of the terms used in the theological formula on which the Church ultimately agreed.”[1]

“The evolution of the Trinity: No responsible NT scholar would claim that **the doctrine of the Trinity was taught by Jesus**, or preached by the earliest Christians, or consciously held by any writer of the NT. It was in fact slowly worked out in the course of the first few centuries in an attempt to give an intelligible doctrine of God.”[2] Jesus was perfectly intelligible!

Here is what happened after the death of the Apostles and the closing of the NT canon of Scriptures. Leadership of the church was transferred from Jewish followers of the Jew Jesus (yes, his father and mother were Jews!) to non-Jews. Under the influence of Greek philosophy, Jesus, the **Son of God**, who in Matthew and Luke is defined as **coming into existence, beginning to exist** in Mary, was “read back” into past history. Mary was then supposed to have taken into her womb an already existing Person. This followed a typical Greek idea. This was that the One God was too distant and had to be approached by one or more intervening “emanations” of that One God. This, it was thought, would bring us close to the one distant God. But the Bible does not teach this system of thinking. It was a pagan philosophical system, cleverly called “Gnosticism” (a system of “knowledge”).

What if those early post-Bible philosophically minded teachers, “church fathers” fell for a deception which became an entrenched tradition and creed? What if the creed which Jesus announced seemed to them too

“Jewish”? Did a hidden anti-Semitism take over, moving the Church away from Jesus, the master-rabbi and teacher? Jesus is the one we must always listen to (Acts 3:23).

Believers in a Triune God arrived at crypto-Gnosticism. That is, leaders began to think like this: “We reject blatant pagan Gnosticism, but we welcome it in a modified form at the back door. And this is our excuse: The Greek background and culture in which we are forced to preach **necessitated all this!**” Thus the “church fathers” unconsciously said, “Greeks will never accept a Jewish God!” The result: Jesus’/Judaism’s Shema (Deut. 6:4; Mark 12:29, 1 Cor. 8:4-6), unitary, not Trinitarian monotheism, was the inevitable victim and casualty.

Polytheism entered the Church camouflaged.[3]

Amazingly, the “church fathers” admitted that they were rejecting Jesus’ Jewish view of God as one Person! It did not seem to trouble them that the creed of Jesus was being made redundant!

Note this carefully from a leading authority on what the church “fathers” did: “The Church Fathers’ conception of the Trinity was a combination of Jewish [i.e. Jesus’] monotheism and pagan polytheism, except that to them this combination was a good combination. In fact it was to them an ideal combination of what is best in Jewish monotheism [Jesus’ creed] and of what is best in pagan polytheism, and consequently they gloried in it and pointed to it as evidence of their belief...The Christian conception of God, argues Gregory of Nyssa [leading Church Father], is neither the polytheism of the Greeks nor the monotheism of the Jews [of Jesus!] and consequently it must be true.”[4]

Show this information to your good friends and invite some reflection on what Jesus called “the greatest of all the commandments” (Mark 12:28-34).

It is **standard information** in all the big dictionaries and encyclopedias that Judaism, based on its Scriptures, believed God to be a single Person, a single undifferentiated Divine Self. That is what I and many others call **unitary monotheism** or unipersonal monotheism. This is often referred to as **strict monotheism**, although this last phrase could be ambiguous for some.

The Bible is turned into chaos if one superimposes non-biblical, philosophical language onto its simple realism. God is said to be a single Self (He calls Himself a nephesh, soul, self) thousands and thousands of times. This is the massive, pervasive and obvious evidence to be dealt with.

Dr. Murray Harris in his intensive study of God and Jesus said this about the Hebrew Bible and its view of God and his personal name YHWH: “Being a proper noun and the covenant name of Israel, God (Yahweh) is invariably **the name of a Person** who sustains relationships with other persons.”[5]

The Shema (Deut. 6:4; 4:35; 1 Cor 8:4-6) and the whole of Scripture convinced Judaism and NT Christians always to believe in unitary monotheism. Thus at Oxford, the Regius Professor of Theology lecturing on the Trinity said of the OT, “Judaism was always unitarian.”

The major point to be taken in is that **Jesus affirmed that unitary monotheism of Judaism** (Mark 12:28-34). The Jew who agreed with Jesus showed that Jesus was entirely Jewish in his description of who God is. One single Self. The Jew echoed back Jesus words by saying “there is no other except **Him**.” It takes no special learning to know that “Him” is **one “who” — one Self**, one Person! Some would urge that the Shema makes no proposition one way or the other about how many Persons God is! This is not true at all. What good is a creed if it is so unclear? It really impugns the integrity of Holy Scripture (and Jesus said that “salvation is from the Jews”), if we are unable to give a clear meaning to the Shema.

I need only quote **four sources** which are echoed by many:

“Abraham, Moses and Elijah were all equally zealous monotheists and in none of their successors was there any retrogression from the highest and purest form of **unitarian belief**.”[6]

“The monotheism of the Jews was then, as it is still, **unitarian**.”[7]

“Judaism has always been rigorously **unitarian**.”[8]

“Judaism [is] **Unitarian**.”[9]

Jesus agreed with the Jews in Mark 12:29, and as Dr. Dennis Nineham says in his commentary on Mark, this passage is meant to demonstrate that Jesus was thoroughly orthodox in his description of God.

These non-complicated facts should settle our discussion, since we are all agreed that our Christian task is to follow the teaching of Jesus.

Some Trinitarians suggest that in John 10:30 Jesus introduced something new. In this case Jesus was less than honest in his reply to the friendly Jew! But who today in commentary advances John 10:30 as any sort of Trinitarian proof? So the argument is defeated. Jesus did not change his mind on the definition of God. Nor did Paul when he affirms the same Shema in 1 Corinthians 8:4-6. Jesus said that he and the Father were working in perfect harmony as “one thing” in John 10:30. He desired the same harmony exactly for his followers (John 17:11, 22).

What Jesus did so brilliantly, anticipating no doubt controversy about his own status in relation to the one GOD, YHVH, **was to teach them immediately about Psalm 110:1**: “The LORD says to my lord: ‘Sit at my right hand until I make your enemies a footstool for your feet.’”

That Psalm, verses 1-4, is alluded to or cited 33 times in the NT and was decisive and should be decisive for us too. In Psalm 110:1 YHVH is still one single **self** (as 7,000 times in the OT). He directs an oracle to some other **self**. This of course defeats Modalism, which says that the Father and Son are the same Person. Modalism shows how terribly mired in controversy and unnecessary complexity our subject can become! Surely one does not need a PhD to tell us that a Father cannot be his own Son! Jesus never imagined such a thing, and the Trinitarians agree.

What Jesus shows in Psalm 110:1 is that the exalted Jesus is not a second YHVH or a second Person “in YHVH.” Rather he, the Messiah, is the supremely exalted man Messiah, my lord, tragically misrendered in many versions (not all) as “my Lord”! The capital letter on the second lord is a stunning mistranslation. Adoni, my lord, occurs 195 times and never means God.

Paul said it all very easily in 1 Timothy 2:5: “For there is one God and one mediator between God and mankind, **the man Christ Jesus**.” **One God and one man Messiah. Two selves. One of them is GOD**. The Bible is about God and man, not God and another God!

The issues we are discussing are simply huge, since billions of human beings deserve to hear who God and Jesus really are. At present the very complex philosophical Trinity smothers good information. And few seem to know that the church fathers, the orchestrators of the Trinity, admitted that they were deliberately eliminating **the “Jewish error”**! That “Jewish error” was in fact the teaching of Jesus. How much does the public know of what really went on?

The word God in the NT means the Father 1300 times. “Do we not all have one Father? Has not one God created us” (Mal. 2:10). None of the roughly 11,000 occurrences of the various words for God (Elohim, YHVH, Adonai, Theos) ever means a Triune God. So in the Bible when someone says “God” he never means a Triune God.

John A.T. Robinson: “John saw Christ as also being unique, a distinction he recognizes by reserving the word ‘Son’ for Jesus and ‘children of God’ for Christians. But, unlike later dogmatists [church fathers], he shows no awareness of a contradiction or even of a tension at this point. Indeed, it is of the essence of his insight into the incarnation [lower-case ‘i’!] that moral affinity and metaphysical union should not be seen as the alternatives they **so disastrously were** in the **subsequent dispute between Antioch and Alexandria**. Jesus can say in the same discourse that ‘the Father is in me and I in the Father’ (10:38) and ‘my Father and I are one’ (10:30), because *he is acting as his Father would (10:37), and his deeds are done in His name (10:25)*.

“Again he says in a later discourse (14:9-10), ‘Anyone who has seen me has seen the Father because I am not myself the source of the words I speak to you: it is the Father who dwells in me doing his own work.’ He is ‘God’s only Son,’ the very ‘exegesis’ [explanation] of the Father (1:18). Indeed he is himself ‘theos,’ ‘what God is’ (1:1), because as a mere man (10:33) Jesus is utterly transparent to another, who is ‘greater than himself’ (14:28) and indeed ‘greater than all’ (10:29). The paradox is staggering, and it is no wonder **that this Christology [John’s understanding of who Jesus is] later fell apart at the seams**. But for John there is no antithesis, any more than there is for the author to the Hebrews, between humanity and divinity, the historical and the theological.”[10]

Jesus is fully expressive of God, his Father. But Jesus never, ever claimed to *be* GOD, which would have contradicted the unitary monotheism of his Hebrew heritage, agreeing with a fellow Jew (Mark 12:28-34). A claim to *be* GOD would have violated the greatest of all the commandments! Jesus is the man Messiah (1 Tim. 2:5), the “my lord” of Psalm 110:1, a text which will yet change the world.

[1] Dr. Matthews, D.D., D. Litt., *God in Christian Experience*, p. 180.

[2] Dr. A. T. Hanson, Professor of Theology, University of Hull, *The Image of the Invisible God*, SCM Press, 1982.

[3] Paul Schrödt, *The Problem of the Beginning of Dogma in Recent Theology*, p. 121.

[4] Dr. H. Wolfson, *The Philosophy of the Church Fathers*, pp. 361-363.

[5] *Jesus as God*, p. 25.

[6] “Judaism,” *Hastings Encyclopedia of Religion and Ethics*.

[7] Leonard Hodgson D.D., Regius Professor of Theology at Oxford, *Christian Faith and Practice*, 1952, p. 74.

[8] “Deism,” *Jewish Encyclopedia*, 1906.

[9] *Dogmatics*, Vol. 1. p. 205.

[10] Dr. John A.T. Robinson, *Twelve More New Testament Studies*, SCM Press, 1984, p.151