

Christian Monotheism . . .

New Hope or More Confusion?

by Frank Selch

Christian Monotheism is a movement emanating from the USA, promoting a new and allegedly biblical, monotheism based on the so-called *Creed of Jesus*.

Is this just one more American innovation like many other spiritual movements that have come out of America? Is this concept capable of restoring a first century Christianity by focussing on an alleged *Creed of Jesus* without addressing all the related religious and cultural factors? Is there a connection between this movement and the many pseudo Jewish Messianic movements, which proclaim adherence to an Abrahamic faith; claiming to practice the authentic Biblical-Judean faith based in Yeshua the Jewish Messiah, yet are no more than Christian sects in Jewish garb?

Essentially, *Christian Monotheism* is a non-trinitarian movement acting as a shopfront for several non-trinitarian Christian denominations. Although the movement is fighting a noble fight to dislodge the Trinity from Christian theology, it is also opening a Pandora's box. When the Trinitarian dogma is removed from Christian thought and practice, a direct conflict arises at the same time. The moment one removes divinity from Jesus, Christianity as a unique religion collapses. What propelled Christianity throughout the ages was its claim of God becoming a human being, dying on a cross for the sins of humanity and rising from the dead after three days! Without this and the traditional incarnation event, which declares the divinity of Jesus, many other issues come into play; some of which I will address further on in this paper— especially the Atonement.

The question I am presenting here is whether this concept offers hope to the untold millions starving for spiritual realities and truth, or is it leading to more confusion and perhaps even a deepening despair? Even a cursory glance at websites with theological content shows the enormous confusion many Christians seem to be under and often massive ignorance of the Scriptures, which abounds.

Christian Monotheism is a somewhat confusing term because most Christians would say of themselves that they are already monotheistic; it is just that they believe that the Creator God exists as a Trinity of beings while remaining one whole [but compound ?] person. The incarnation of God through Mary was not the creation of a new member of the Godhead, but the physical manifestation of the second person of the Trinity, i.e. the pre-existent Son who eventually re-submerged into the Godhead when his work on earth was done; albeit remaining fully human— according to Paul (1 Tim. 2:5). Contrary to the vast majority of monotheistic Christians, *Christian Monotheism*, as discussed here, rejects the deity of Jesus and the traditional understanding of his 'incarnation' whilst offering a new perspective of a 'notional incarnation'.

In the following pages I want to discuss this new approach to show that historic Christianity cannot be upgraded or revamped by adding or deducting scripture or by using different terms; it is and remains governed by a theology of replacement (the church is the New Israel) irrespective of the *Shema*.

Concerning the Creed of Jesus

In order to clarify my argument, I have reproduced here the Statement of Faith from the website <http://www.christianmonotheism.com/> , which is encouraging Christians to *return* to the *Creed of Jesus*. I want to demonstrate that such an undertaking is not possible because it would require the followers of Jesus to become Jewish; simply because Jesus neither established a new religion within Judaism, nor did he ever say a word about starting one among the gentiles. What actually does it mean to *return* to the *Creed of Jesus*, because the idea of a *Creed* (in a Christian sense) has never existed in Judaism?

Christian Monotheism states:	
<i>we affirm</i>	<i>we deny</i>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • that the Bible, both Hebrew and Greek Scriptures, are inspired and true • that God is a singular individual named Yahweh (the Father of Jesus) • that Jesus was miraculously begotten by God in the womb of the virgin Mary • that Jesus could have sinned but instead chose to consistently obey the will of his Father in every situation • that God was at work in his Messiah in an unparalleled way such that Jesus was empowered to do many miracles • that Jesus is God's supreme agent and thus may be called God because he represents Yahweh • that Jesus died for our sins, was resurrected from the dead, ascended into heaven, and will return to judge the living and the dead • that the holy spirit is the means by which Father and Son are able to be present in the world even though they remain in heaven • that tens of thousands of singular pronouns mean that God is a singular individual 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • that belief in the Trinity is necessary for salvation • that Jesus had to be God in order for his death to pay for the sins of the world • that salvation has anything to do with consenting to unintelligible creeds • that it is possible to be both God and human at once • that it is possible to be immortal and yet die for the sins of the world • that it is possible to be omniscient and yet not know the day or hour of one's return • that one can be begotten and yet have no beginning • that the holy spirit is a distinct individual from the Father and the Son • that truth is determined either by how many people believe it or by how long it has been a cherished belief • that Jesus believed in the Trinity since he agreed with a non-trinitarian scribe on who God is by confirming the central creed of Judaism: <i>The Shema</i> • that the thousands of references to "GOD" in the Bible ever mean a Triune God • that we know it all

Christian Monotheism is an anti-Trinitarian movement that uses Jewish terminology (i.e. the *Shema*) to establish its identity. That sounds good since there is now a growing awareness among many people that not everything is totally *kosher* within normative Christianity. The contributors to the doctrinal pool of the movement hail from a diversity of Christian backgrounds— some of whom are actually virulently

hostile to Judaism as a religion and who deny that the seventh day Sabbath and the Torah have any validity for Gentiles.

There is only one monotheistic biblical religion, which is Judaism. Out of that grew two spiritual children, i.e. Christianity and Islam of whom only Islam has remained truly monotheistic in terms of worshipping a singular deity. Tragically though, Islam pursued a direction, which turned it into a virtual *Abomination of Desolation*— a religion that worships death and destruction!

Be that as it may!

So what about this *Creed of Jesus*? It has been made the mainsail of the movement, which they claim to be the Hebrew *Shema*. However, to suggest that the single phrase, '*Hear O Israel, the LORD our God is One LORD*'. constitutes the entire spiritual philosophy of Jesus is highly simplistic and misleading. The main focus of this movement is the trinity and it seems that all other issues, which have affected Christianity since its inception, are considered irrelevant.

The website says that **christianmonotheism.com** exists in order to '*promote the fearless pursuit of truth concerning God and Jesus from a biblical and historical perspective*'. Christian Monotheists (also called biblical Unitarians) insist that Jesus *must* be taken seriously when he says that his Father is the only true God (John 17:3). Dare I say that most Trinitarians will agree with that!

I greatly applaud their declaration that one should not be afraid of truth and that one needs to approach all things with humility. It is in this spirit that I too am offering the following considerations; especially this: the term *Christian Monotheism* is an affront to Jewish people since monotheism is a Hebrew concept, in which Christianity has had its Genesis. Since the Jewish people have maintained that understanding for 3500 years, to proclaim a *Christian Monotheism* is quite misleading as the term suggests there could be different forms of monotheism, among which the Christian variety and especially this one, are supreme; in other words *Sesessionism* in a new form. At best we should say, '*Praise God, we are rediscovering the Biblical Monotheism of Israel!*' However, this process must also go deeper than merely re-establishing the truth that God is One. What does it really mean to promote the 'simple truth' that God is One and to 'take Jesus seriously'? What will it lead to assuming all agree that this is so? What Christian group will then take the lead to teach? Biblical Monotheism is first and foremost an ethical monotheism— not merely the defence of a belief in a singular deity. That is why James writes in his letter that '*...you believe that there is one God! You are doing well - even the demons believe—and tremble!*' James 2:19. Is it therefore enough to hold the right theological position by declaring that GOD IS ONE or is there also an ethical dimension to this much vaunted *Shema* that should receive equal attention?

If the goal is indeed to '*... promote the fearless pursuit of truth concerning God and Jesus from a biblical and historical perspective . . .*', then the task ahead must be more than the rediscovery of an alleged '*Creed*' of Jesus. Such a task would involve a reappraisal of doctrines held as sacred by most [if not all] of Christianity with the view of a closer alignment with Judaism.

So, what is the ‘Creed’ of Jesus?

The Dictionaries define ‘Creed’ as *a brief authoritative formula of religious belief!* Creeds are formulated by humans to clarify their *modus operandi*. The term referred to as *Shema*, on the other hand, is only a truncated expression of a verse in Deuteronomy (6:4) that was quoted by Jesus in response to challenges by Hebrew scribes concerning what constituted the Greatest Commandment. The *Shema Israel* is not a creedal statement that begins with “*I believe. . .*”, rather it is a commandment and affirmation from God to Israel. In fact the N.T. quote from Mark 12:29, often used by Unitarian Christians, ‘*Hear O Israel, the LORD our God, the LORD is ONE...*’ is the declaration of an immutable fact [whether anyone believes it or not] and only the beginning of an injunction from God upon the children of Israel and ends in v.9 of the same chapter in Deuteronomy. It is one of the most foundational texts in the entire T^enakh as it outlines the way of life for all of God’s people. Virtually all translations miss its significance by rendering v.4-9 it as individual and unconnected verses— thus missing the point completely that they translate the declaration expressed in v.4 into an ethical dimension and way of life for all the descendants of Jacob.

Here is how it should read, based on the Hebrew text:

*“Hear, O Israel: the LORD our God is one LORD **and** you shall love the LORD your God with all your heart **and** with all your soul **and** with all your might.*

***And** these words which I command you this day shall be upon your heart; **and** you shall teach them diligently to your children **and** shall talk of them when you sit in your house **and** when you walk by the way **and** when you lie down **and** when you rise.*

***And** you shall bind them as a sign upon your hand **and** they shall be as frontlets between your eyes. **And** you shall write them on the doorposts of your house **and** on your gates” (Deut.6:4-9).*

Twelve times the conjunction **and** is used not merely as a connective in this segment, but as an **injunction** to highlight the imperative of this entire segment for making it an intrinsic part of everyday life in Israel. To this day it can be found on doorways of Jewish homes throughout the Jewish community wherever you may travel throughout the world; even secular Jews will put a Mezuzah on their doorways thus highlighting its eternal significance for the people of God and their connectedness. Therefore, if the *Shema* is the Creed of Jesus, then the above injunction should equally become an imperative for every Unitarian Christian; not just ornamentally, but in thought word and deed! No Jewish person can honestly recite the *Shema* and then disown his people! For the same reason no Christian has the right to lay claim to v.4 as the ‘**Creed of Jesus**’ and reject or disown the Jewish people. The significance of this passage can be seen in the fact that it is repeated further along in Deut.11:13-21. Does that mean that by adhering to the *Creed of Jesus* we will also align ourselves with Israel and the Jewish people in particular in this regard since they too subscribe to the same *Shema* ?

If it is claimed, to use Christian phraseology, that Jesus had a Creed, then the truncated statement quoted in Mark’s Gospel in the N.T. is grossly misleading. The full expression by Jesus, when asked concerning the greatest commandment, was, “*You shall love the LORD your God with all your heart, with all your*

soul, and with all your mind. This is the first and great commandment. And the second is like it: 'You shall love your neighbour as yourself.' On these two commandments hang all the Law and the Prophets.” ; Mark 12:28–34; c/f. Matth. 22:37-40

In other words, Jesus' philosophy included both God and man, as it were, on an even footing. What is significant here is the fact that this entire statement did not originate with Jesus, but with the Sage Hillel and thus clearly upholds the strict Hebrew Unitarian position.

If we are to speak of Jesus, then we must look beyond a theological declaration and to his lifestyle. Any creed, if devoid of life-application remains an empty rhetoric. However, if we link the full *Shema* with Jesus' life style we will find ourselves in the midst of Biblical Judaism.

That means that if we look to Jesus' alleged creed as a template for our own, then we must also embrace his overall philosophy of a Torah life according to the strict asceticism preached by some Jewish sects in his time; e.g. the Essenes of Qumran.

Is that what *Christian Monotheism* has in mind?

Based on the *Faith Statement* of Christian Monotheism quoted above, I now want to show that the idea of returning to an alleged '*Creed of Jesus*' is seriously flawed. Let us look therefore at the individual components of the Statement:

Biblical Inspiration

1) '*Both Hebrew and Greek Scriptures are inspired and true*'.

Incorrect! This statement is as confusing and convoluted as the doctrine of the trinity itself. The fact is that the Hebrew Scriptures and their Greek translation, the LXX or Septuagint, are not compatible. There are many errors in the Greek text that could be attributed to any number of reasons.¹ On the other hand, the Dead Sea Scrolls have confirmed that the Hebrew texts of the T^enakh can be trusted. Another factor is that the LXX after all, is no more than a translation. If we are willing to ascribe divine inspiration to the LXX, then we must also afford the same standing to all modern translations since they too claim to have the ancient Hebrew text as a basis. The significance of the 'translation factor' lies in this that there is only one *LORD*, which is revealed only in the Hebrew text and that there is no equivalent in any other language; just as there is no equivalent for the term Torah! In fact there is very credible evidence that the Tetragrammaton '*LORD*' was actually used in some of the earliest versions of the LXX, but eventually omitted when it saw greater usage by Christians. The support for my claim lies in this that the Almighty has declared that He will not share His glory with any other. For that reason His Hebrew title **YHWH** cannot be applied to any other IN ANY language. Such is however NOT the case with the titles used in various translations, be it the LXX, the KJV or any other no matter how brilliant the translation may be!

¹ There are some DSS texts, which seem to indicate underlying Greek MSS, but these equally cannot be used as proof absolute.

The Being of God2) *'God is a singular individual named Yahweh...'*

I do take issue with anyone taking the liberty of calling the Creator an 'individual'. God is not a person, though He is attributed with personality and personal traits by the authors of the T^enakh. A human individual is understood to be one among many, albeit distinct and isolated from others by degree and/or location; the term belongs to the creature NOT the Creator. God, however, is the all-encompassing, ever present Being in Whom everything exists and has its being. His One-ness is not that of a single person standing by himself in the midst of a vast empty plain, but of the One Who is everything and Who fills everything, not numerically one, but One in His Absoluteness that leaves no room for any other to exist alongside of Him. He alone, in His Oneness, is the source of everything and He ought NEVER, therefore, be referred to as an individual, for in Him alone everything exists and has its being and there is nothing that can exist without him.

Jesus may be called God...3) *'...Jesus is God's supreme agent and thus may be called God because he represents Yahweh...'*

Throughout the Scriptures one comes across several 'Agents of God'. However, none of these ever merited the privilege of being called God. The closest anyone comes to that is Moses during his dealings with Pharaoh (Exod. 7:1) where God declares, "*See, I have made you as God to Pharaoh, and Aaron your brother shall be your prophet. You shall speak all that I command you...*". Then we have several occasions where a heavenly messenger speaks to humans 'as God' (*c/f. the burning bush episode (Exod.3:2-6), the binding of Isaac (Gen 22:11-18), Gideon (Judg.6:22-23), Manoah (Judg.13:2-22) et al.* Here we have a clear statement that Moses was bestowed that 'agent power' by God Himself, but would anyone dare to call Moses God? Moses initiated some of the greatest miracles ever worked by a human being as part of his 'agency', yet he received no special favours from God. What about Enoch, Elijah and Elisha? The term 'God', in relation to Moses, was used in a temporary sense at a specific time for a specific purpose. If Jesus 'acted' as God (or as His agent) for a specific purpose, fine, but there is not one incident where Jesus made recourse to the title God in order to do what he did. For that reason I consider it wrong and misleading to say that two thousand years on we are free to worship Jesus as God, because he acted as an agent for God then. Moreover, someone's agent is akin to being a messenger, which would translate as 'angel' (from the Greek ἄγγελος, *angelos*) based on the Greek N.T. Should we therefore worship Moses as well where we have a specific statement from God Himself that He made Moses as God for Pharaoh's sake; a factor not in place during Jesus' time.

Jesus could have sinned

4) *'...but he chose to consistently obey the will of his Father in every situation...'*

This means that anyone can do what he did. If Jesus was 'pure' man, not a supernatural hybrid, then every human being has the potential to live a sin-free life if he aligns himself with the Word of God as Jesus did!

Jesus died for our sins...

5) *'... Jesus died for our sins, was resurrected from the dead, ascended into heaven, and will return to judge the living and the dead' ; '... God demonstrates His own love toward us, in that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us...' Rom. 5:8 and '...Christ died for our sins according to the Scriptures...' 1 Cor.15:3b*

The previous statement says that Jesus *'could have sinned...'*, but that makes nonsense of this one. If he was mere man, and thus mortal – at least initially – then every one of us can accomplish the same thing. If we orientate our lives according to Torah as he did, we too will live lives that are pleasing to God. The more one studies the T^enakh, the more difficult it becomes to accept the view that God demanded a human sacrifice so that He could forgive mortal man. Furthermore, there is not a single mention in the Scriptures that God was expecting a human sacrifice so that he could forgive the transgression of Adam; it is not implicit in either Genesis 3 or anywhere else. Adam received his punishment in that he died a spiritual death. God's objective was to restore life to Adam, i.e. *'...can these bones live?'* (Ezek. 37:3)

The Omnipresence of Jesus...

6) *...the Holy Spirit is the means by which Father and Son are able to be present in the world even though they remain in heaven.*

This declaration is a confusing hangover from the Nicene, Trinitarian doctrine. Let us therefore consider its implications! The Scriptures clearly teach **that God IS SPIRIT** and HE IS HOLY. This means that there cannot be a second Entity called the Holy Spirit; it is pure nonsense and distortion of a plain biblical teaching. In addition, if we can take the view of Paul as inspired concerning the presence of Jesus at the right hand of God, then Jesus is still a man. As such are we to ascribe him the same omnipresence as the Father? In addition, the term heaven is not describing a place as such, but a dimension that is largely incomprehensible to man. God is forever present within the created order and therefore does not need an additional spirit as a postman; this concept is also a hangover from the Nicene Creed. The Scriptures show beyond a shadow of doubt that the Almighty uses messengers of His choosing, i.e. on some occasions they may be ordinary men (Gen 18:1 ff.) or beings of fire (*see above*; also c/f. Ezek. 1:4-14) on others. The Eternal One is forever present simply because HE IS; there cannot be a place in the Universe where God IS NOT. To say that Jesus is wherever God is ascribes to him the same omnipresence and that makes him God. The proposition is therefore not true if the Trinitarian concept is rejected.

Christian Monotheism denies in the above Statement that ‘Jesus had to be God in order for his death to pay for the sins of the world’. Psalm 49:7, however, teaches unambiguously that ‘No-one . . . can by any means redeem his brother, nor give to God a ransom for him . . .’. How much clearer can it get! But, if we accept that however, we end up in real strife— why did Jesus have to die?

No room for the Jewish people...

Despite a total reliance on their scriptures for authenticity, the Christian world largely treats Judaism and Zionism with contempt and with it the Jewish people.

As I said earlier, *Christian Monotheism* is clearly another form of supersessionism by the very force of its title. The Apostle Paul teaches with great clarity to ‘...remember that you [Christians] do not support the root, but the root supports you...’ Rom.11:18. Now what is this root? Is it not the Jewish people, who have been the custodians of the Scriptures since Moses? There can be no question on that, because even Jesus supports that view (c/f. Luke 16:19, 31). Furthermore, virtually every teaching that has been promoted over the century as authentic Christian comes from Jewish/OT sources. Virtually all of Paul’s teachings rely entirely on OT sources, so why is there no room for the Jewish people; especially since Paul admonished the Christians to live in a way that will make the Jewish people jealous. Indeed Jesus himself had told his disciples that ‘...unless your righteousness exceeds the righteousness of the Pharisees, you will never see the Kingdom of God (c/f. Matth.5:20)!

A close examination of the New Testament therefore— especially the life of Jesus – shows that there has never been any intention to create a new religion for the Gentiles to supersede the faith of the Judeans. Does not Paul speak of a middle wall of partition having been broken down by the death of Messiah?

So why is there no room, in the thinking of Christians, for the Jewish people other than as objects of conversion and Israel as a barometer for the ‘Second Coming’? There is much evidence from the pages of the Old Testament that Christians have misunderstood God’s intentions and promises to the Jewish people and, indeed, the gentile nations. Furthermore, the conduct of the church for almost 2000 years has done everything except promote good-will between the two sides. The consequence of that is now a deep-seated mistrust by Jewish people of most things Christian!

Just quoting a portion of the Shema will simply not fix the problem; if anything— intensify it!

More Confusion?

Christian movements have come and gone throughout the centuries. However, virtually all have led to an eventual deepening despair among many people through the creation of cultic environments that separated western society and even split families by means of doctrinal prohibitions.

A ‘*Christian Monotheism*’ sounds fine since Christianity never promoted anything, but monotheism— albeit in a Trinitarian cloak...! Nevertheless, the movement under discussion here re-interprets this 2000 year old Christian position by manipulating terminology to arrive at a Unitarian deity, but one that is still comprised of all the Trinitarian components; i.e. *Father, Son and Holy Spirit*. Although they reject the

Nicene Creed, the son still sits at the Father's right hand and both still send the Holy Spirit into the world as the Creeds tell it! Christian Monotheism is little different from the many Messianic groups offering a *'back to our Hebrew Roots, allegedly Torah observant, form of worship'*, but without abandoning the Trinity or any of the standard protestant doctrinal positions.

A Need for Hope

There can be absolutely no doubt that Christian theology needs to be reformed!

However, such a thing will not happen simply by renaming and re-shuffling existing theological components. The answer lies in the fact that the Creator always planned to redeem all of mankind; a concept firmly embedded in *'remnant idea'* first revealed through the rescue of Noah and subsequently through the Hebrew prophets. Nevertheless, ever since Cain, there has always been a rebellious element to fly into God's face. Irrespective of that, God understood that remnant to emerge from the natural seed of Abraham with a portion of the Gentiles grafted onto that remnant. Irrespective of the proportions of this remnant, He never envisaged just the sons of Israel or gentiles only to comprise this remnant in full.

Traditional Christian theology is seriously flawed and its support comes from an also deeply flawed New Testament. On the one hand are the Trinitarians who are comprised of most of Christendom and on the other are the Unitarians and Deists, Binarians, etc. All of these are comprised of Roman Catholics, Protestants, Anglicans consisting of R.C. affiliates as well as those who feel closer to Evangelicals, several varieties of Eastern Orthodox believers, Evangelicals of many different persuasions, Pentecostals of numerous confessions, Jehovah's Witnesses, Mormons, Christadelphians, Messianics, as well as non-aligned Christians. All of these defend their turf as the only true church with the only true answer!

The major flaw is the separation from the Hebraic origins of Christianity and its cast-iron allegiance to Greek thought and the political, Constantinian perspective of the Cross of Jesus. If that separation had proved itself to be a blessing to the world, and indeed caused a massive jealousy among the Jewish people over righteous Christian lifestyles down the centuries, then fine— let's run with the Greeks. As history shows, however, such is not the case and in many respects the world is even more pagan today than it ever was millennia ago, albeit under an alleged monotheistic guise.

The Almighty will not be mocked, but that is exactly what we are doing. He outlined His pathway for global redemption in the Torah and the wider body of the T^enakh for Jew and Gentiles alike, but He also gave a measure of wisdom to the Hebrews that is absent from among the Gentiles. Is it for that reason that Zechariah prophesies in 8:23 that in the last days some Gentiles will be looking for answers, viz. *'Thus says the LORD of hosts: In those days ten men (a small number) from the nations of every tongue shall take hold of the robe of a Jew, saying, 'Let us go with you, for we have heard that God is with you.'* " (NKJV)?

This is a highly significant prophecy and we have no option, but to ask *'is it true?'* If it is not true, then the question arises as to what IS true in the Scriptures?! However, since it is generally accepted by Jew and Gentile alike that Zechariah was a true prophet of God Most High, then that prophecy should cause us to sit up in our Christian pride and take note!

Why would the prophet emphasize such a dependence on the Jewish people at a future time? Did the Almighty not know that Christianity would arise to relegate the Jews to irrelevance? The term *Christian Monotheism* is in many ways a misleading term, for the simple reason that Trinitarians would vehemently deny that they subscribe to anything but monotheism contained within the mystery of the Trinity. *Christian Monotheism*, an outreach of the *Abrahamic Faith Movement*, still depends to a degree of divinity of the Son of God in order for the Atonement to work. The moment Jesus becomes an ordinary human being the theology of the cross collapses into absurdity and blasphemy to insinuate that the Creator would ask for a human sacrifice when He clearly demonstrated through Abraham that such was not His way.

Our war and disease ridden world needs to have a reason for hope! I firmly believe, based on biblical evidence, that God never condemned anyone to hell, but theological perspectives, which developed in the Christian world over the course of two-thousand years, have obscured the truth about a loving caring Creator whose mercy and compassion for the human race has been recorded over and over again in the Hebrew Bible. The amazing story of the Hebrews, from Scriptural evidence, is sufficient to show that God's idea of salvation was never based in blood sacrifices; rather in a wholehearted turning to Him. As the prophet Isaiah points out so eloquently in chapter one:

“Wash yourselves, make yourselves clean (i.e. purify yourselves); put away the evil of your doings from before My eyes. Cease to do evil, learn to do good; seek justice, rebuke the oppressor. Defend the fatherless, plead for the widow. Come now, and let us reason together,” says the Lord, “Though your sins are like scarlet, they shall be as white as snow; though they are red like crimson, they shall be as wool. If you are willing and obedient, you shall eat the good of the land; but if you refuse and rebel, you shall be devoured by the sword; for the mouth of the Lord has spoken”.

The idea of God deliberately sacrificing Himself in the form of Jesus so that He could forgive is bizarre at best. The collective witness of the Scriptures testifies that God is against bloodshed. However, He also says that he who pollutes the land through bloodshed must atone for it by his own blood (Nu. 35:33; Ezek.18; 33:1-20).

I fully agree with Sean Finnegan when he says that the truest doctrines are those couched in simplicity. The hope of the world is not in complex doctrines, but in a trusting, wholehearted turning to God for forgiveness and embracing His ways according to the Hebrews.

Conclusion

I do commend the founders of *Christian Monotheism* for their efforts in seeking to restore truth to the Christian religion. Trinitarian Christianity has been and still is, a tragic religion and is in desperate need of reform to a Biblical religion that resembles anything written in the full Sh^cma. However, as I have shown above there are substantial flaws in their overall perspective and for that reason there can never be such a thing as *Christian Monotheism*.

Christian Monotheism is a contradiction of terms. If Jesus was a mere man as the movement insists he was during his time on earth, then when and on what basis did he acquire divinity that he is now a joint

custodian of the Holy Spirit? Notwithstanding the above, the major obstacle that remains is the Atonement. How could Jesus, as a mere human, pay a price that allegedly no human being could pay (c/f. Ps.49:7)? And then there still remains the question of the incarnation, which they defend; albeit from a different perspective to the traditional view. I too held this view for a very long time; nevertheless I have found it wanting. What Finnegan et al, seek recourse to is, what he calls, a ‘notional view’ of the incarnation; meaning that Jesus did not pre-exist as a person, but is the same creative Word of God that produced the universe with all it contains. The idea would have incredible merit— if it was not for the sacrificial aspect concerning the sin and guilt of Adam, for which the human race allegedly is still paying capital plus interest! That again is rooted in the Augustinian theology of ‘Original Sin’, based in ‘concupiscence’— upheld by Luther and Calvin alike. Biblically the idea is unsustainable, however, if the idea of an ‘*original sin*’ cannot be upheld, with it falls the need for a sacrifice as demanded by the Christian concept of atonement. If the Creator never condemned Adam and his descendants to hell, then there was also no need for a blood sacrifice.

As God says through Jeremiah, the prophet, viz. ‘. . . *for I did not speak to your fathers, or command them in the day that I brought them out of the land of Egypt, concerning burnt offerings or sacrifices . . .* (Jer. 7:22). The prophet explains here that God did not deliver the Israelites from slavery because of sacrifices or their worthiness; He delivered them because of His Covenant with Abraham, Isaac and Jacob. Isaiah teaches us a mighty lesson in his first chapter that God does not delight in sacrifices; what he wants from his people is purity of heart, obedience to Him and a moral/ethical conduct toward all creation. And one of the keys he provides in how to accomplish that is by cessation of evil and a promotion of everything that is good (Isa.1:16-18). It is no less than learning to manage the good and evil impulses we have inherited from Adam.

A major problem arises therefore, that if one removes the traditional view of the incarnation, i.e. God becoming man, a so-called sacrifice for sin according to the historical models of atonement, becomes meaningless. The Scripture states plainly that no man can pay the price for another’s sin; e.g. ‘*None of them can by any means redeem his brother, nor give to God a ransom for him—*’ (Ps. 49:7). Coupled with this is the issue concerning the Gospel of John, on which many of these doctrines depend including the nativity chapters of Matthew and Luke, considered by many as spurious and later additions to create a basis for the claims of Jesus’ divinity.

I agree wholeheartedly that the Sh^cma is probably the major key, but only if seen through the eyes of Jesus, which is an orthodox Jewish way of life; whether as righteous Gentiles, based on the Apostolic decree of Acts 15:28-29 (i.e. Noahide Laws), or as full converts to Judaism!

The most significant aspect of all, however, is repentance toward God with a full and sincere heart and a lifestyle guided by the Torah, the Prophets and the Writings in harmony with the Jewish people.

Selah!