

THE BODY OF CHRIST AND THE ONLY TRUE GOD

As was presented prior to this article, it is believed that the body of Christ would never find themselves in contradiction to an unmistakable Biblical teaching. That statement should be self-evident.

As we have seen, not all teachings or Biblical statements are explicit and unmistakable, but there do exist those which are and are beneficial in our search for the true body of Christ among the counterfeits that would arise.

It is proposed in this article that there is a glaring error on the part of many who claim to be the body of Christ, and that has to do with what one could easily refer to as the very foundation of Christianity. Who is the “only true God” and the sole object of our worship? Is it one person? Is it more than one person, such as two, or three? Are the scriptures explicit as to who is the “only true God”?

The answers to the above questions would present a large differentiation as far as numbers and choices of those who claim to represent the true body of Christ. Since the Trinitarian religions represent by far the majority of all claimed “Christian” religions, this would negate a large portion of the “Christian” population if the “only true God” is only one person, and not three, or even two. It would necessitate a focus upon those religions which teach the truth about the identity of the “only true God” and who he is, eliminating the rest of the world of Christendom who would in effect, be worshipping a being that does not exist.

The focus of this article will be John 17:1-3 and any scriptures that are deemed as relevant, not just to the wording of the verse, but

relevant as to how the understanding of the verse should be affected.

John 17:1-3

1 Jesus spoke these things, and, raising his eyes to heaven, he said: “Father, the hour has come; glorify your son, that your son may glorify you, 2 according as you have given him authority over all flesh, that, as regards the whole [number] whom you have given him, he may give them everlasting life. 3 This means everlasting life, their taking in knowledge of you, the only true God, and of the one whom you sent forth, Jesus Christ.

From the outset, it seems undeniable according to the words of Jesus, that there is only one person who is the only true God, that being the Father. Jesus unambiguously makes that statement. There are however, as one can imagine, objections to the claim that it is explicit and unambiguously declaring the Father to be the “only true God” in the sense the he alone is God Almighty, to the exclusion of other persons.

Before considering these objections to this claim, let us take a look at the words used in the Greek language and see how they are used elsewhere and in what manner. Doing so can help us to determine how we should understand what is said in John 17:3. The important words for us to examine are the words for “only” and “true”. “Only” is the Greek word “monos” and “true” is the Greek word “alethinos”. Let us first examine phrases which use the word “monos”.

ONLY = MONOS

The definition for monos, within the context of John 17:3 is given as “alone”(without a companion) or “only”. Thayer’s presents the following information:

μόνος, -η, -ον, Sept. chiefly for מִן, [fr. Hom. down]; **1.** an adjective, *alone* (without a companion); **a.** with verbs: εἶναι, εὕρίσκεσθαι, καταλείπεσθαι, etc., Mt. xiv. 23; Mk. vi. 47; Lk. ix. 36; Jn. viii. 9; 1 Th. iii. 1; added to the pronouns ἐγώ, αὐτός, οὗ, etc.: Mt. xviii. 15; Mk. ix. 2; Lk. xxiv. 18; Ro. xi. 3; xvi. 4, etc. **b.** it is joined with its noun to other verbs also, so that what is predicated may be declared to apply to some one person alone [cf. W. 131 (124) note]: Mt. iv. 10; Lk. iv. 8; xxiv. 12 [Tom. L Tr br. WH reject the vs.]; Jn. vi. 22; Heb. ix. 7; 2 Tim. iv. 11; with a neg. foll. by ἀλλά, Mt. iv. 4. ὁ μόνος θεός, he who alone is God: Jn. v. 44; xvii. 3; Ro. xvi. 27; ὁ μόνος δεσπότης, Jude 4. οὐκ . . . εἰ μὴ μόνος: Mt. xii. 4; xvii. 8; xxiv. 36; Lk. vi. 4; οὐδεὶς . . . εἰ μὴ μόνος, Phil. iv. 15. **i. q.** forsaken, destitute of help, Lk. x. 40; Jn. viii. 16; xvi. 32, (Sap. x. 1). **2.** Neut. μόνον as adv., *alone, only, merely*: added to the obj., Mt. v. 47; x. 42; Acts xviii. 25; Gal. iii. 2; to the gen. Ro. iii. 29 [here WH mrg. μόνων]; referring to an action expressed by a verb, Mt. ix. 21; xiv. 36; Mk. v. 36; Lk. viii. 50; Acts viii. 16; 1 Co. xv. 19; Gal. i. 23; ii. 10. μόνον μὴ, Gal. v. 13; οὐ (μὴ) μόνον, Gal. iv. 18; Jas. i. 22; ii. 24; foll. by ἀλλά, Acts xix. 26 [L ἀλλὰ καί; cf. W. 498 (464); B. 370 (317)]; by ἀλλὰ πολλῶ μᾶλλον, Phil. ii. 12; by ἀλλὰ καί, Mt. xxi. 21; Jn. v. 18; xi. 52; xii. 9; xiii. 9; xvii. 20; Acts xix. 26 [Lchm. (see as above, esp. B.)]; xxi. 13; xxvi. 29; xxvii. 10; Ro. i. 32; iv. 12, 16, 23; 2 Co. vii. 7, etc.; οὐ μόνον δέ, ἀλλὰ καί: Acts xix. 27; and often by Paul [cf. W. 583 (543)], Ro. v. 3, 11; viii. 23; ix. 10; 2 Co. vii. 7; viii. 19; Phil. ii. 27 [here οὐ δέ μόνον etc.]; 1 Tim. v. 13; [2 Tim. iv. 8. κατὰ μόνας (sc. χώρας), see καταμόνας].

The word occurs 47 times in the Christian Greek Scriptures. Every time that it occurs, it simply means “only” or “alone” within the context that it is framed. For instance, Mark 6:47 says:

“ 47 Evening having now fallen, the boat was in the midst of the sea, but he was alone on the land.”

I think all would realize that this does not mean that Jesus was the only person in the world left on land, but within the context of what was being presented, he was standing alone on the land, no one was with him within the immediate vicinity. So we can see that the word does not have an absolute, universal meaning to it when it says that someone was alone or the only one, but it does carry that meaning within the given context, which sometimes must be discerned by the scenario presented.

TRUE = ALETHINOS

Thayer's offers the following for "alethinos":

ἀληθινός, -ή, -όν, (freq. in prof. writ. fr. Plato down; [twenty-three times in Jn.'s writ.; only five (acc. to Lchm. six) times in the rest of the N. T.]); **1.** "*that which has not only the name and semblance, but the real nature corresponding to the name*" (Tittmann p. 155; ["particularly applied to express that which is all that it pretends to be, for instance, pure gold as opp. to adulterated metal" Donaldson, New Crat. § 258; see, at length, Trench § viii.]), *in every respect corresponding to the idea signified by the name, real and true, genuine*; **a.** opp. to what is fictitious, counterfeit, imaginary, simulated, pretended: **θεός** (תְּהִיָּה לֵאלֹהִים, 2 Chr. xv. 3), 1 Th. i. 9; Heb. ix. 14 Lchm.; Jn. xvii. 3; 1 Jn. v. 20. (**ἀληθινοὶ φίλοι**, Dem. Phil. 3, p. 113, 27.) **b.** it contrasts realities with their semblances: **σκηνή**, Heb. viii. 2; the sanctuary, Heb. ix. 24. (**ὁ ἱππος** contrasted with **ὁ ἐν τῇ εἰκόνι**, Ael. v. h. 2, 3.) **c.** opp. to what is imperfect, defective, frail, uncertain: Jn. iv. 23, 37; vii. 28; used without adjunct of Jesus as the true Messiah, Rev. iii. 7; **φῶς**, Jn. i. 9; 1 Jn. ii. 8; **κρίσις**, Jn. viii. 16 (L T Tr WH; Is. lix. 4); **κρίσεις**, Rev. xvi. 7; xix. 2; **ἄρτος**, as nourishing the soul unto life everlasting, Jn. vi. 32; **ἄμπελος**, Jn. xv. 1; **μαρτυρία**, Jn. xix. 35; **μάρτυς**, Rev. iii. 14; **δεσπότης**, Rev. vi. 10; **ὁδοί**, Rev. xv. 3; coupled with **πιστός**, Rev. iii. 14; xix. 11; substantively, **τὸ ἀληθινόν** the genuine, real good, opp. to external riches, Lk. xvi. 11, ([οἷς μὲν γὰρ ἀληθινὸς πλοῦτος ἐν οὐρανῷ, Philo de praem. et poen. § 17, p. 425 ed. Mang.; cf. Wetst. on Lk. l. c.]; **ἀθληταί**, Polyb. 1, 6, 6). **2.** **ἰ. q.** **ἀληθής**, *true, veracious, sincere*, (often so in Sept.): **καρδία**, Heb. x. 22 (**μετ' ἀληθείας ἔν καρδίᾳ ἀληθινῇ**, Is. xxxviii. 3); **λόγοι**, Rev. [xix. 9]; xxi. 5; xxii. 6, (Plut. apoph. p. 184 e.). [Cf. Cremer 4te Aufl. s. v. **ἀλήθεια**.]*

BlueletterBible.org provides the following summary of the definitions for alethinos:

- 1) that which has not only the name and resemblance, but the real nature corresponding to the name, in every respect corresponding to the idea signified by the name, real, true genuine
 - a) opposite to what is fictitious, counterfeit, imaginary, simulated or pretended
 - b) it contrasts realities with their semblances
 - c) opposite to what is imperfect defective, frail, uncertain
- 2) true, veracious, sincere

When it comes to John 17:3, it would seem undeniable that the Father is called the “only” (only, alone) “true” (real, genuine) “God”. In a totally unaffected reading of that statement, this tells us that the person of the Father alone is the true God, which naturally would exclude anyone else.

But, due to the fact that the Trinitarian world does not accept the Father as the only person who is God, they must take exception to the otherwise clear and explicit statement that it is indeed only the Father. In other words, they would say that there are other considerations which “affect” the way that this verse should be understood.

The general objection takes the following form:

The word “only” is being used to differentiate between false gods and the true God and not necessarily to the exclusion of the Son. They therefore claim that the phrase is to be understood contextually, in the context of being contrasted with false gods. They use Jude verse 4 as proof of this understanding. There we see that Jesus is called our “ONLY Master and Lord”:

Jude 4 My reason is that certain men have slipped in who have long ago been appointed by the Scriptures to this judgment, ungodly men, turning the undeserved kindness of our God into an excuse for loose conduct and proving false to our only Owner and Lord, Jesus Christ.

It is argued that since the Father is referred to as Lord, Jude 4 would not be disqualifying the Father as our Lord anymore than John 17:3 would disqualify the Son from being the “only true God”. Both, it is argued, are context dependent.

It is further argued since we agree there is but ONE God, if Jesus is also called “god”, then he must be a false god, since there can only be one true God, making all other gods false.

Let us examine the above claims in the light of the scriptures and see if they are strong enough to overturn the explicit statement that the Father alone is the true God.

We have already determined that the word “only” is a context dependent word so there is nothing wrong with the claim that context could affect the meaning of the Father being the “only true God”. But what exactly is the context that we are dealing with in John 17:3, and what does the context tell us as to whom Jesus included or excluded within that title?

The claim is that the reason Jesus said the ONLY true God was to draw a contrast between the Father and the false gods of the world. If that is the case, although there is no mention of false gods in the context, why would that message only include the Father, and not the Son, or the Holy Spirit for that matter? If the intent was to highlight the only true God, who is the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit, why only draw attention to the Father as that only true God? The claimed context does nothing to excuse the limiting of the title to the Father. The question still remains. Why only the Father?

Jude 4 does not present a problem since that occurrence too is context dependent and the context is in contrast to men who try and draw us away from God, who in effect, act as our master and lord by doing so. In contrast with those ones, Jesus is the ONLY Master and Lord.

So we don't deny the context dependent understanding of the word "only", such as we have at Jude 4, but there is nothing in the context of John 17:3 that would excuse not including the Son and the Holy Spirit from the recognition of the "only true God". Furthermore, the Son actually removes himself from the title of "only true God" by contextually separating himself from that title with the words "AND the one whom YOU (the only true God, the Father) sent forth. The Son is clearly not included in the title via the immediate context.

The claim that making Jesus "a god" would necessitate making him a false god, also presents no problem to the Unitarian position, because the claim ignores the different connotations that "true" can possess. Yes, it can mean as mentioned above, an opposite to that which is false. However, as witnessed within the same work, it can also be used as; 1: b) in regard to those which are mere semblances of the reality.

Proof of this is the fact that Moses was called "elohim", as were angels and human judges. Jesus called some of the Jews of his day "gods", and all of these references are in a favorable context. Would we suppose that Moses, angels, human judges, etc. were called "G/god" in the sense that they were "false" gods?

Notice the following scriptures:

(Exodus 7:1) 7 Consequently Jehovah said to Moses: "See, I have made you God (elohim—plural) to Phar'aoh, and Aaron your own brother will become your prophet.

(Psalm 8:5) 5 You also proceeded to make him a little less than godlike ones (elohim—plural), And with glory and splendor you then crowned him. (speaking of angels according to Paul at Hebrews 2:7

(Hebrews 2:7) 7 You made him a little lower than angels; with glory and honor you crowned him, and appointed him over the works of your hands.

(John 10:34-37) 34 Jesus answered them: "Is it not written in your Law, 'I said: "YOU are gods (plural of theos)"'? 35 If he called 'gods' those against whom the word of God came, and yet the Scripture cannot be nullified, 36 do YOU say to me whom the Father sanctified and dispatched into the world, 'You blaspheme,' because I said, I am God's Son? 37 . . .

There seems to be no question among Trinitarian commentators that these ones were called god in the sense that they were representing God the Almighty, or in other words, they were semblances of the real, but not the real thing.

Notice the following comments:

(JFB) Exodus 7:1 I have made thee a god--"made," that is, set, appointed; "a god"; that is, he was to act in this business as God's representative, to act and speak in His name and to perform things beyond the ordinary course of nature. The Orientals familiarly say of a man who is eminently great or wise, "he is a god" among men.

(JFB) John 10:34-36. Is it not written in your law--in Psalms 82:6, respecting judges or magistrates.
Ye are gods--being the official representatives and commissioned agents of God.

(Henry) John 10:34-36 1. By an argument taken from God's word. He appeals to what was written in their law, that is, in the Old Testament; whoever opposes Christ, he is sure to have the scripture on his side. It is written (Ps. 82:6), I have said, You are gods. It is an argument a minore ad majus—from the less to the greater. If they were gods, much more am I. Observe, (1.) How he explains

the text (v. 35): He called them gods to whom the word of God came, and the scripture cannot be broken. The word of God's commission came to them, appointing them to their offices, as judges, and therefore they are called gods, Ex. 22:28.

Parallel comments by scholars are numerous. That is no doubt why Thayer's lexicon gives as one of the meanings of the word "theos" as:

4) whatever can in any respect be likened unto God, or resemble him in any way

a) God's representative or viceregent

1) of magistrates and judges

It can also be seen when looking at other scriptures that use the word "true" that the contrast is not always in regard to the other things being "false", but in regard to the other things merely being a semblance of the real or genuine thing. This can be seen when considering the following examples:

(Hebrews 8:2) 2 a public servant of the holy place and of the true tent, which Jehovah put up, and not man.

*All the other tents used by Israelites are not FALSE tents, but would only be a semblance of the ultimate tent mentioned here in Hebrews.

(John 1:9) 9 The true light that gives light to every sort of man was about to come into the world.

*Christians, who also serve as a light to the world, would not be FALSE lights but would merely be semblances of the real light, Jesus.

(John 6:32) 32 Hence Jesus said to them: “Most truly I say to YOU, Moses did not give YOU the bread from heaven, but my Father does give YOU the true bread from heaven.

*Manna was not FALSE bread but was just a semblance of the real bread, Jesus Christ.

An attempt is made in regard to 1 John 5:20 where it is claimed that the Son is called the “true God”. If this is the case, then we must understand John 17:3 differently than what it explicitly tells us. But is this claim true? Does 1 John 5:20 call the SON the “true God”. Let’s take a look and see what we find.

1 Jn 5:20 And we know that the Son of God is come, and hath given us an understanding, that we may know him that is true, and we are in him that is true, [even] in his Son Jesus Christ. This is the true God, and eternal life.

Is it not clear who the “true” one is that is referenced in this verse? Does not the phrase, “we are in him that is true, in his **Son** Jesus Christ” make it obvious that the Son is NOT referenced here as the one who is being called “true”, but is someone else, someone who has a SON called Jesus Christ? That would clearly be the Father. The first two instances of the word “true” are unmistakably in reference to the Father since it is said of this “true” one, that they were “in” HIS (the true one just mentioned twice) Son. Rather than calling the Son the “true God”, this verse confirms for us that the Father is indeed that “true God”, the same true one mentioned twice before in the preceding sentence.

It is noteworthy that many Trinitarian scholars admit that this verse does not call the Son, the true God. Notice the following:

In Harris's book, "Jesus

as God", in the chapter that deals with 1 John 5:20. He discusses all aspects of the verse that bear on the subject, and concludes the following:

"Although it is certainly possible that hOUTOS refers back to Jesus Christ, several converging lines of evidence point to "the true one," God the Father, as the probable antecedent. This position, hOUTOS = God, is held by many commentators, authors of general studies, and, significantly, by those grammarians who express an opinion on the matter."

The group of scholars who favor hOUTOS = God, as listed by Harris, is as follows:

Commentators: Huther, Alford, Haupt, Wescott, Holtzmann, Brooke, Dodd, Preisker, Stott, Smalley, Grayston.

Authors: Findlay, Harnack, Dupont, Howard, Wainwright, Taylor, Segond.

Grammarians: Winer, Buttman, Winer and Schmiedel, Robertson, Turner, Zerwick and Grosvenor, BAGD

We could also add G. Johnston (Peake's Commentary), and William Loader to the above list. Loader's words are worth quoting:

"Knowing the true God; avoiding idolotry. The Greek of 5.20 has only the true (one) and reads literally: we know that the Son of God

has come and has given us understanding `so that we know the true (one) and we are in the true (one)', in his Son Jesus Christ. `This (one) is the true God and eternal life.' It is clear from this that `the true (one)' is God throughout. Christ is his Son. In the final sentence this (one) most naturally refers still to God, not to Christ, as some have suggested. It is not unknown for Christ to be given God's name (Phil. 2.9-11) or even to be called `God' (Heb. 1.8-

9; John 1.1), but that would run contrary to the theme here, which is contrasting true and false understandings of God for which Christ's revelation is the criterion.

5.20 reminds us of Jesus' prayer according to John 17:3: `This is eternal life: to know you the only true God and Jesus Christ whom you have sent.' This is the life which is ultimately at stake in the issues addressed in the epistle. The author has already reminded us of that in 5.13, to which, in the structure of this final segment, 5.20 corresponds." (William Loader in *The Johannine*

Epistles (from the Epworth Commentaries, Epworth Press, 1992), pp.

79,80

It is abundantly clear, even from the words of well recognized Trinitarian scholars, that it is far from certain that the Son is here referred to as the "true God". The immediate context is very clear as to who is the "true" one.

However a point of scriptural pattern arises when we find that Daniel Wallace, a respected Greek scholar, states that "houtos" never refers to the Father in the writings of John. This is presented in his well-known grammar, *Beyond The Basics*" on pages 326 and 27 under his discussion of 1 John 5:20.

He represents there what he believes is the strongest argument that "houtos" refers to the Son rather than the Father. He admits that it is not conclusive, but statistical arguments are not to be ignored, especially if all the examples line up on one side of the fence. He believes that the fact that "houtos" is only applied to the Son in a positive light is because it is being used a theological motif intended only for the Son. This would mean statistically, there would be no reason to take "houtos" in 1 John 5:20 as a referent to the Father, since with John, it occurs nowhere else. This would necessitate then a different view of John 17:3 where the Father is called the ONLY true God. It would mean that the Son too is "true God" so that the word ONLY in 17:3 could not be excluding the Son, even though the context would clearly do so because the Son actually removes himself from the application of the title to himself as mentioned above.

However, upon a closer examination of the word "houtos" and its usage in the above described manner by Wallace, there is evidence that even Wallace admits in a footnote that stands against the theory. He notes that there are places in the writings of John that deny that John was trying to use the word exclusively in reference to the Son in a positive fashion. The two examples that he mentions are John 6:71 and 1 John 2:22.

(John 6:71) 71 He was, in fact, speaking of Judas [the son] of Simon Is·car'iot; for this one(houtos) was going to betray him, although one of the twelve.

(1 John 2:22) 22 Who is the liar if it is not the one that denies that Jesus is the Christ? This(houtos) is the antichrist, the one that denies the Father and the Son.

In both these cases, it denies the idea that John was using "houtos" in some theologically significant way as a positive reference only to the Christ. In the two places above it was used to identify both

Judas and the antichrist. Therefore, this theory does not exist without exceptions within the writings of John. And as far as "houtos" actually being used in reference to the Father, we do have an example outside the writings of John where the Father is identified by "houtos". In Acts 17:24 we find:

(Acts 17:23-24) . . . 24 The God that made the world and all the things in it, being, as this(houtos)One is, Lord of heaven and earth, does not dwell in handmade temples. . .

The context that follows that verse is unmistakably in reference to the Father. Therefore, we find no unmistakable pattern of "houtos" in John as referring to only the Son and we find that other writers had no issue with identifying the Father with "houtos".

What is more, the word "houtos" is directly related and derived from the related pronoun "autos", which we find numerous times in the writings of John that it is applied to the Father. This evidence weakens the strength of any theological motif being established in regards to a pronoun.

Therefore, as many Trinitarian scholars agree, the reference in 1 John 5:20 is best seen as referring to the Son. When one examines the places where we find the phrase "true God" outside of 1 John, it is always a reference to the Father. Of course this only happens in two places, John 17:3 and 1 Thes. 1:9, but in both places it refers unmistakably to the Father. Plus, as we have seen, the references to the "true one" in the target scripture, 1 Jn. 5:20, prior to the "houtos", clearly refer to the Father. For these reasons, there is certainly no strength to the argument that "houtos" must refer to the Son in 1 Jn. 5:20.

Two other verses should be considered which have caused some to think that the Son of God is unequivocally referred to as the

Almighty God which would affect the presented understanding of John 17:3.

The first is John 20:28. The exclamation of Thomas to Christ: “My Lord and my God” has caused many to conclude this puts Jesus on the same level as the Father, Jehovah, as to godship. This has been made even stronger in the minds of some because of the inclusion of the definite article “the” in the Greek before both “Lord” and “God”. Are such conclusions justified? On the usage and grammar of the Greek here, please note:

“The article in Jn 20:28 is explained by the mou (mou, moo, “of me”) which normally requires the article before it; by its use with the vocative [case]...and by its presence in the established formula ‘the lord and the god’...It should be further noted that ‘the god of me’, whether it is taken as vocative [direct address] or nominative, [identification] is predicative in sense and so cannot be used as evidence either way to show whether the god in New Testament usage ever appears as subject of a statement referring to Christ.”—Karl Rahner, S.J., Theological Investigations, Vol. i, p. 136

“The adoring exclamation of St. Thomas “my Lord and my God”: (John xx.28) is still not quite the same as an address to Christ as being without qualification God.—John Martin Creed, The Divinity of Jesus Christ, p. 123

“In John xx. 28 ο` ku,rio,j mou kai. ο` qeo,j mou, it is to be noted that a substantive in the Nominative case used in a vocative sense and followed by a possessive could not be anarthrous (see Hoskyns and Davey, Commentary, in loc.); the article before qeo,j may, therefore, not be significant.” C.F.D. Moule, An Idiom Book of New Testament Greek, 2nd Edition (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1959), 116.

So the use of the article in this particular construction by Thomas, as admitted by the above Trinitarians, toward Jesus does not necessitate removal of Jesus from the general class of ‘god’ to the position of “the God” of unqualified significance, the God of all persons, the unique God, **the only true God**.

Due to the ambiguity of how Thomas' words should be understood, they should be regarded in light of the unambiguous statement of John 17:3, that the Father is the only true God.

Another scripture that deserves mention is Titus 2:13.

About the year 1803, one, Granville Sharp, promulgated what he considered to be six rules of Greek grammar; that which is known as his ‘RULE I’, he stated it in this way;

When the copulative kai connects two nouns of the same case, viz. nouns (either substantive or adjective, or participles) of personal description, respecting office, dignity, affinity, or connexion, and attributes, properties, or qualities, good or ill,) if the article o&, or any of its cases, precedes the first of the said nouns or participle and is not repeated before the second noun or participle, the latter always relates to the same person that is expressed or described by the first noun or participle: i.e. it denotes a farther [further] description of the firstnamed person”. (e.a.)—Granville Sharp, REMARKS ON THE USES OF THE DEFINITIVE ARTICLE IN THE GREEK TEXT OF THE NEW TESTAMENT, Philadelphia: B.B. Hopkins And Co., Third Edition, 1807, p. 3.

(On pages 19, 22, Sharp used 2 Peter 1:1 and Titus 3:13 as examples of the syntax under consideration and application of his ‘rule’. By using “always” Sharp stated his “rule” as a law.)

In other words—according to Sharp—‘When two nouns of the same grammatical case are joined by the Greek word for ‘and’ (kai), if only the first noun has the article, both nouns always refer to the same subject.’

There are admitted exceptions to this stated rule such as when the nouns in the sentence are plural nouns or when the nouns in the sentence are names of individuals.

The reason there is no concern over Titus 2:13 for the Unitarian position is due to the fact that just like the phrase "Lord Jesus Christ" can be taken as the semantic equivalent of a proper name, since it includes a proper name, so can the phrase Savior Jesus Christ. If Savior Jesus Christ can be seen as the equivalent of a proper name, since it includes a proper name, then Titus 2:13 or 2 Peter 1:1 present no theological problem for the Unitarian position.

There is also this consideration as presented by other Trinitarian scholars in regard to Titus 2:13. I Let's briefly review what Trinitarian scholar Gordon Fee says in his commentary on Titus (NIB Commentary).

On p. 196, Fee explores whether Paul meant to apply the terms "our great God and Savior" to one person or two. He decides that since there is one single definite article preceding the words "great God," both nouns [God and Savior] should be applied to the same person. This is in harmony with the Granville Sharp rule. But note what else Fee mentions.

The next question that comes up is: who is the "great God and Savior"? Is it Jesus or is it the Father? This depends on what Jesus Christ is in apposition

to. Fee suggests that Jesus Christ is in apposition to "the glory of God" (DOXHSTOU MEGA'LOU QEOU). Thus, Tit. 2:13 would be telling us that "What will finally be manifested is God's glory, namely, Jesus Christ" (196). So Fee says that the "great God and Savior" is God the Father while Jesus is the great God's glory. In fact, as Fee points out, the view that he offers is not a new one but was also offered by F.J.A. Hort in 1909 and also by Greek scholar Phillip Towner.

Therefore, even Trinitarians deny any absolute application of Jesus in this verse being the "great God and Savior".

After the above considerations, there can be no reason, contextual or otherwise, to take the words of John 17:3 any other way than the way that they naturally and explicitly read. There is nothing in the immediate or distant context to affect the meaning of those words, in fact, just the opposite. As well, referring to the Father as the only TRUE (in the ultimate sense, real, genuine) God does not require all others who are called god to be "false" gods. Doing so, would make Moses, the angels and divinely appointed human judges all "false" gods, a truly untenable position.

John 17:3 unmistakably identifies the Father alone, as the Only True God. This is an explicit contradiction to the Trinity doctrine. The absolute nature of this verse should govern our views of any other references that might ambiguously suggest that Jesus is God, for, as we know, the absolutes should govern the non-absolutes.

If anyone would like to challenge the content of this article, please send an email to challenges@truetheology.net and request membership to the board to present your challenge.