

Does Everyone Really Believe that the Trinity is Biblical? Obviously Not.

(collected by Anthony Buzzard, 2016). We must help to open eyes!

“So that all the peoples of the earth may know that the LORD is God; there is no one else.” (1 Kings 8:60, NAU). “Our one Lord” (LXX of Dan. 3:17). “Do we not all have one Father? Has not one God created us” (Mal. 2:10) Jesus: “Why do you call me good, only One Person is good, that is God Alone” (Mk 10:18) Paul in I Cor. 8:4-6 “There is no God but one. There is one God, the Father. (Paul repeats the Shema cited by Jesus in Mk 12:29 as the greatest and most important command of all) Zech. 14:9 looks forward to the day when biblical unitarian faith will be all pervasive. Why not prepare now?

Ps.110:1 is key text more often quoted in the NT than any other verse from the OT. It gives us an oracle of YHVH to my lord. The title “my lord” for Jesus is ADONI in the Hebrew, and in all 195 times it occurs it defines non-Deity, someone who is not God!. Deity by contrast is ADONAI, the Lord God (449 times) (see Focus on the Kingdom, Sept, 2015). The capital on the second lord in most translations is false and misleading, making the reader believe that the Messiah is adonai, Lord GOD. He is in fact “the man Messiah” (I Tim. 2:5, and Luke 2:11 introduces him at his birth as the “Messiah lord.”

Martin Werner, DD, Prof. at Bern:

“The Church found itself in a dilemma as soon as it tried to harmonize the doctrine of the Deity of Jesus and the Deity of the Father with **monotheism**. For according to the NT witnesses, in the teaching of **Jesus** relative to the monotheism of the OT and Judaism, there had been **no element of change whatsoever**. **Mk 12:29ff. recorded the confirmation by Jesus himself, without any reservation, of the supreme monotheistic confession of faith of Israelite religion in its complete form... The means by which the Church sought to demonstrate the agreement of its dogma of the Deity of both Father and Son with monotheism, remained seriously uncertain and contradictory** (Dr. Martin Werner, *Formation of Christian Dogma*, 1957, p. 241).

How many persons is the God of Israel?

“YHVH the God of Israel” (203 times). YHVH is the God of Israel, how many Persons is He? God of Jacob (28 times), God of Abraham (17 times), God of Isaac (17 times). Of no other ethnic group. Never: God of Europe! But God of Jews and Gentiles. **God of the Hebrews (Exod.. 3:18; 5:3; 7:16; 9:1; 9:13; 10:3)**
One God = one Father ?” (Mal. 2:10). God can only be ONE PERSON, the Father.

“It was reported by the Associated Press of London, June 25, 1984 that a majority of Anglican bishops interviewed by a Television program said ‘Christians are not obliged to believe that Jesus Christ was God.’ The poll was of 31 of England’s 39 bishops. The report further stated that 19 of the 31 bishops said it was sufficient to believe that Jesus was the supreme Agent of God.” From London’s weekend TV Program, Credo.

Church of England, Archbishop Ramsay: “Jesus did not claim Deity for himself.” *Jesus and the Living Past*, p. 39.

- “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” (Dr. Matthews, D.D. D. Litt. *God in Christian Experience*, p. 180). He was well known as a weekly correspondent in London’ *Daily Telegraph*.
- 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).

“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” (*The Image of the Invisible God*, SCM Press, 1982, p. Dr. A. T Hanson, Professor of Theology University of Hull)

“It might tend to moderation and in the end agreement, if we were industrious on all occasions to represent our own doctrine of **the Trinity as wholly unintelligible**” (Dr. Hey, *Lectures in Divinity*, 2, 235)

Theological Dictionary of the NT (Kittel): “As regards Trinitarianism in John, there is no express doctrine of the Trinity in the metaphysical sense of oneness of essence and substance. The Father, Son and Holy Spirit are formally interrelated only in the non-authentic comma Johanneum [spurious forgery]” (Vol. V, 1003)

Vol. 5, p. 1010: “For the first beginnings of Trinitarianism....” see the quote above. [That the Trinity did not begin in the Bible is admitted]

“The NT does not actually speak of Triunity. We seek this in vain in the triadic formulae of the NT. The Spanish texts of the 6th century are the first to offer a clear trinitarian formula in the so-called Comma Johanneum of I John 5:7ff.. The Spanish Catholics made of this a trinitarian formula by continuing, after ‘bear witness’ “...in heaven, the Father, the Word and the Holy Spirit, and these three are one.” They thus **imported a conclusion of early dogma** into the NT. Early Christianity itself, however, does not yet have the problem of the Trinity in view.”

New International Dictionary of NT Theology, ed. Dr. Colin Brown at Fuller Seminary: *The Trinity*.

“The NT does not contain the developed doctrine of the Trinity. The Bible lacks the express declaration that the Father, the Son and the Holy Ghost are of an equal essence and therefore in an equal sense God himself. And the other express declaration is also lacking, that God is God thus and only thus, i.e., as the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit. These two express declarations, which go beyond the witness of the Bible, are the twofold content of the church doctrine of the Trinity (Karl Barth, CD 1, 1 437)... That God and Christ belong together and that they are distinct, are equally stressed, with the precedence in every case due to God, the Father, who stands above Christ... There is no strict dogmatic assertion... All this underlines the point that primitive Christianity did not have an explicit doctrine of the Trinity such as was subsequently elaborated in the creeds of the early church.” (Dr. J. Schneider, Prof. of Theology in Berlin.)

Harper Collins Bible Dictionary, p. 865:

“But for Israel there was only one God and sole devotion to this One God was a paramount essential. To serve or follow other gods was a cardinal offense, emphasized particularly in Deuteronomy and Isa. 40-55.” “The NT follows this tradition by **taking for granted the established monotheism of Judaism.**” “In the NT the monotheistic convictions [the all-essential Shema, he has just said] of Judaism are taken for granted. (p. 701, “monotheism”). “The first of all commandments according to **Jesus** is the shema, the affirmation of the Oneness of God” (Mark 12:29) (p. 701) Jewish opponents are not represented as criticizing Christianity for abandoning monotheism. The close association of Jesus with God seems to lead towards the seeing of monotheism in a different way [John 17:3 and Mark 12:28ff. contra!!]. The implications of this are not yet worked out within the NT” (James Barr, distinguished prof. at Vanderbilt) “The NT follows this monotheistic tradition in taking for granted the established monotheism of Judaism. The NT does not depict Jewish opponents as criticizing Christianity for reintroducing polytheism.” (p. 865)

Harper Collins, Thomas Longstaff, Colby College Maine:

“The explicit doctrine of the Trinity was thus formulated in **the post-biblical** period, although the early stages can be seen in the NT. Attempts to trace the Trinity origins still earlier to the OT [Jesus believed in the monotheism of the OT, Mk 12:29; Deut. 6:4!] cannot be supported by historical critical scholarship” and these attempts are readings back. (1179)... The formal doctrine of the Trinity as defined in councils of the 4th and 5th centuries IS NOT TO BE FOUND IN THE NT.”

“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 three coequal partners in the Godhead found in LATER credal formulations cannot be clearly detected within the confines of the canon” (*Oxford Companion to the Bible, Trinity*” Daniel Showalter, Prof of Religion, Carthage College, WI, 1993, eds. Metzger and Coogan, p. 782

“The Apostles did not identify Jesus with Yahweh. There were passages which made this impossible, for example **Ps. 110:1** [“**the LORD said to my lord**”], Malachi 3:1.” “It would be **rash** to conclude that St. Peter identified Jehovah with Christ” (citing Prof. Hort).

Charles Bigg, DD, Regius Prof. of Ecclesiastical History, University of Oxford, in *International Critical Commentary on I Peter*, 1910, pp. 99, 127.

“The word Trinity is not found in the Bible.... It did not find a place formally in the theology of the church until the fourth century” (*Illustrated Bible Dictionary*, part 3, Intervarsity Press, Tyndale House Publishers, 1980, p. 1).

The Trinity “is not directly and immediately the Word of God” (*New Catholic Encyclopedia*, 1967, Vol. XIV, p. 304).

“In Scripture there is yet no single term by which the Three Divine Persons are denoted together. The word ‘Trias’ (of which the Latin ‘Trinitas’ is a translation) is first found in Theophilus of Antioch about 180 AD.... Shortly afterwards it appears in its Latin form of ‘Trinitas’ in Tertullian” (*The Catholic Encyclopedia*, 1912, Vol. 15, p. 47).

“Hasty conclusions cannot be drawn from usage, for [Tertullian] does not apply the words [which were later applied to Trinitarianism] to Trinitarian theology” (Michael O’Carroll, *Trinitas: A Theological Encyclopedia of the Holy Trinity*, 1987, p. 208).

“The Revelation of God in the Gospels: the Father: (*Hastings Dictionary of Christ and the Gospels*, art. “Trinity,” Vol. 2, p. 761

We must never forget that **Christianity was built upon the foundation of Jewish monotheism [which was unitary]**. A long providential discipline had secured to the Jewish people their splendid heritage of faith in the one and only God. "Hear, O Israel, Yahweh our God is the one and only Yahweh, and you are to love Yahweh your God with all your heart and all your soul and with all your might" (Deuteronomy 6:4). This was **the cornerstone** of the religion of Israel [and of Jesus, Mk 12:29] these were perhaps the most familiar of all sacred words to the ears of the pious Jew [including Jesus], they were recited continually. **Our Lord himself had them frequently in his mind** (Matthew 22:37 Mark 12:28, 29, Luke 10:27). That Jesus thought of God always as the supreme One is unquestionable. Indeed the very idea of fatherhood, which with our Lord, is the characteristic conception, and which is capable of being presented in a way which might weaken or injure a true monotheism, becomes **in his teaching absolutely monotheistic** because absolutely universal Matthew 5:45, 48; 7:11, 8:11; 10:29; Luke 6:35, 13:29, 30; 15). To the Jewish mind the sovereignty of God was the natural and characteristic thought. In our Lord's teaching the divine Fatherhood overshadows and also transforms the divine sovereignty, but never threatens to dissolve **the pure and splendid monotheism** of the original doctrine... [But the church fathers threatened and overthrew it].

God is the universal Father. He is, in a very intimate and special way, the Father of the disciples of Jesus. He is in a highest and unique sense the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ.

We find then that **the teaching of our Lord Jesus and of the Gospels concerning God is the union of a true and unwavering monotheism**, with a great doctrine of mediation, according to which God and man enter into very close relationship in the person of Jesus Christ, the Son of God.”

“There was certainly no need nor justification to substitute, in the interpretation of the person of Jesus, for the original concept of the Messiah simply a Hellenistic analogy such as that of a redeeming divine being... Indeed it was entirely invalid. **It was a myth behind which the historical Jesus completely disappeared, because there was nothing common between them**” *Formation of Christian Dogma*, p. 298.

“When the Greek and Roman mind rather than the Hebrew mind dominated the Church there occurred a disaster from which we have never recovered.” Canon Goudge of Ch. of England, “The Calling of the Jews” in *Judaism and Christianity*, 1939, 50.

Hastings Encyclopedia of Religion and Ethics (Judaism): “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.**”

Mark's point in Mark 12:28ff was to emphasize **the essential orthodoxy of Jesus and his faithfulness to the law**...Mark's emphasis on the strict monotheism of Christianity was particularly necessary (Dr. D. Nineham, *Pelican Commentary on Mark*, pp. 323, 327)

Leonard Hodgson D. D., Regius Professor at Oxford: :

"The monotheism of the Jews was then, as it is still, **unitarian**." (*Christian Faith and Practice*, 1952, p. 74.)

The Jewish Encyclopedia:

"Judaism has always been rigorously **unitarian**," ("Deism," *Jewish Encyclopedia*, 1906.)

Emil Brunner:

"Judaism [is] **Unitarian**" (*Dogmatics*, Vol. 1. p. 205.)

Richard E. Rubenstein:

"the monolithic God worshipped by the Jews [is worshipped] by... **unitarians**." (*When Jesus Became God*, 1999. p. 209.)

Bishop Beveridge:

"the Jews... to this day... still assert that God is only **one in person**, as well as nature." (*Private Thoughts on Religion*, 1829. p. 66.)

"There was no real doubt as the great commandment, **the Shema** was repeated daily by the Jews. It was the foundation text of their **monotheism**, which was not a speculative theory but a practical conviction." (Peake, Arthur Samuel. *A Commentary on the Bible*, Mark 12:28ff. 1920, p. 696.)

Bishop Tom Wright: "The answer Jesus gave [in Mark 12:29] was thoroughly noncontroversial, quoting the most famous of Jewish prayers. 'Hear O Israel, YHVH our God is one.' The prayer, **the Shema** which begins with these lines, was as central to Judaism **then as it is now**" (*Jesus and the Victory of God*, p. 305) "Jesus was a first-century Jewish monotheist," p. 652.

Hugh Anderson, *New Century Bible Commentary on Mark*, p. 280. Mk 12:29:

"We must suppose that the Markan form goes back to oral tradition passed on by a Church that **did not any longer recite the Shema [!]**. But here at least in his statement of the first commandment **Jesus stands foursquare within the orbit of Jewish piety**." [Why do we not follow him?]. "**If you love me keep my commandments.**"

"The Unitarians were originally nothing less than the **whole body of Christians** and the Trinitarians were the innovators; appearing at first modest and candid, as was natural, while they were a **small minority**" [*A History of the Corruptions of Christianity*, by Joseph Priestley p. 334]

"It is difficult to understand how and why Jesus' affirmation of the Shema, which is **neither remarkable nor specifically Christian**, would have been created by an early Christian prophet." (*Commentary on Mark 8-16*, Craig Evans, pub. Thomas Nelson, 2001, p. 261). [So the teaching of Jesus about God, he says, is not Christian!]

His point is that the recorded saying of Jesus, defining God, must surely be genuinely the words of Jesus. But he gives himself away with his astonishing remark that Jesus' affirmation of the **Shema** is "neither remarkable *nor specifically Christian*" The point should not be missed. Apparently the teaching of Christ at the most essential point of defining the true God, is not remarkable or important for us today! Christ, then, can be happily divorced from his teaching, and the Church can go confidently on its way, disregarding the basis of the theology of Jesus. This points surely to a huge need for a reformation of the Reformation, to achieve a real return to Jesus, allowing for the savior's words to be the controlling factor of all Christian teaching.

Dr. James Dunn in his recent "*Did The Early Christians Worship Jesus?*" gives us reason for hope that the Trinitarian system may reconsider and return to Jesus — may in fact thus be revived. (Revival is not achieved by anything less than a revolutionary return to the Gospel and actual words of Jesus!). Dr. Dunn must be read carefully — and he not infrequently blunts clear statements with various qualifications and retractions, but he does say this very clearly: "The New Testament writers are really quite careful at this point, **Jesus is not the God of Israel**, he is not the

Father, he is not Yahweh” (p. 142). The New Testament writers “recalled that this was Jesus of Nazareth, who affirmed the **same monotheistic creed as they did**, who forbade worship to any other than God and who prayed to God as an expression of his own need and reliance upon God” (p. 145). “In an important sense, Christian monotheism, if it is to be truly monotheism, has still to assert, that only God, only the one God, is to be worshiped” (p. 146).

1. Dunn, “Early Christian and Jewish Monotheism”: (p. 109)

The point then is that Jesus is remembered in earliest Christian tradition not simply for putting the love commandment (‘love your neighbor as yourself’) at the heart of his teaching. The influence of that teaching on the first Christians is clear enough from first century Christian writings, and there are no grounds for denying that the inspiration of that focus in early Christian teaching is to be attributed to Jesus. For such a consistent singling out of just this commandment (Lev. 19:18) can hardly be coincidental. More to the point, Jesus is remembered as also putting the love commandment second to **the primary command** to love God with all one’s being (Mark 12:30, par.). **For Jesus the Shema was fundamental and fundamentally determinative of the whole orientation of life. It is not the case that Jesus’ ethic can be boiled down to love your neighbor. On the contrary, the implication is that the two go together and perhaps is only possible in long-term reality as the corollary to the first.**

The conclusion is strong then that the Shema [Mk 12:29] continued to be of central importance for Jesus during his mission and the teaching he both gave and lived out, which also means that the conviction that God was One continued to be a basic axiom for Jesus, a core principle from which he drew his inspiration and instruction. To that extent, at least, in other words, we have to answer the question ‘was Jesus a monotheist’ of our title with a clear affirmative.

The clear implication of Mark’s account (10:18) is that Jesus declined the epithet ‘good’ because properly speaking only God is good... Its theological rationale is obvious: God alone is worthy of such devotion because God alone is the source and definition of all goodness...the God-foundation of his whole mission.”

From *New International Dictionary of NT Theology*, Vol. 2, ed. Colin Brown:

The New Testament rests firmly on the foundation of the Old Testament, when it speaks **about God**. But its emphases are new. He is the God who is near, **the Father** of Jesus Christ who justifies freely by his grace. His action in election bursts all claims to exclusiveness. But it is **the same God who reveals Himself here as in the Old Testament, and whose plan of salvation, there promised, comes to fulfillment here.** The one God, *o theos*, is the most frequent designation of God in the New Testament. Belief in the **one, only and unique God** (Matthew 23:9; Romans 3:30; I Corinthians 8:4, 6; Galatians 3:20; I Timothy 2:5; James 2:19) is an **established part of primitive Christian tradition.** **Jesus himself made the fundamental confession of Judaism his own and expressly quoted the Shema (Deuteronomy 6:4ff.; Mark 12:29ff. cf. Matthew 22:37; Luke 10:27).** This guaranteed continuity between the Old and the New Covenant. For the God whom Christians worship is the **God of the Fathers** (Acts 3:13; 5:30; 22:14), **the God of Abraham, of Isaac and Jacob** (Acts 3:13; 7:32; cf. Matthew 22:32; Mark 12:26; Luke 20:37), **the God of Israel** (Matthew 15:31; Luke 1:68; Acts 13:17; cf. II Corinthians 6:16; Hebrews 11:16), and **the God of Jesus Christ** (II Corinthians 1:3; Ephesians 1:3; first Peter. 1:3). Just as God once made Israel his people so now He has chosen those who believe in Christ as an elect race and a holy people for His possession (Acts 15:14; 20:28; I Peter 2:9; Hebrews 11:25).

Faith is in Him (Romans 4:3; Galatians 3:6; Titus 3:8; James 2:23; Hebrews 6:1; I Peter 1:21), hope is in Him. The community of Jesus may have no false gods beside Him, whether Mammon (Matthew 6:24), the “belly” (Philippians 3:19) or the cosmic powers. Galatians 4:8ff.. It must serve Him alone, do His will and remain faithful to Him.”

So if the Shema was God’s attempt to reveal a compound unity in God, the attempt was an epic failure. It makes much more sense that God gave the verse to the Jews and intended it to mean what the Jews say it means. Furthermore, the Jews did not take the Shema as their primary statement of monotheism because many other verses made that point (we will cover that shortly). Third, the context of the Shema in both the Old and New Testaments, backed by the Scope of Scripture, shows that the Shema is not [only] saying “God is ‘one,’ but rather is saying that Yahweh “alone” is our God.

Notable Quotes on Trinity and Christology

“God’s begetting the Messiah” in IQSa. Morton Smith (NTS 5, p. 218-224). See also “the begotten Messiah” by Gordis in VT 2, 1957.

Smith says: “But the most generally accepted opinion

Is summed up by Black’s statement that it is an order for the plenary session of the council of the assembly as it will be in the end time when a meal of bread and wine is celebrated when God begets the messiah or anointed one of Israel.” There are rules for assembly to study Torah, in the event of God’s begetting the Messiah.

**Me: How can Jesus *be* God if he speaks of “our God”!
Is he his own God?**

21stcr.org The Only True God by Eric Chang (free on line), p.2

The Problem Remains:

“But the fundamental problem created by elevating Jesus to the level of Deity is that a situation is created in which there are **at least two persons** who are both equally God; this brings trinitarianism into conflict with the **monotheism** of the Bible...In regard to the N.T. it is Trinitarianism that is on trial; it will have to explain why it has taken the monotheistic Word of God and interpreted it in polytheistic terms, thereby utterly distorting its fundamental character.” “Could it not be this distortion that is the reason for the disastrous disappearance of the Shema from our prayer lives? Jesus was a thorough-going, monotheistic, Shema-reciting Jew. We have redefined the core principle inherent in the Shema. Is this valid?”

The one true God for Justin is the God of the Jews and is one and the same as the father of Jesus. Justin is a unitarian' (Dr. Dale Tuggy, [*The Lost Early History of Unitarian Christian Theology*](#), paper delivered at CoGGC Theological Conference, Atlanta [May, 2013], 7:24-32)

The comment of the writer on “Christ and Christology” in the *Dictionary of the Apostolic Church*, C. Anderson Scott, is instructive:

The writer [of Revelation] carries the equating of Christ with God to the furthest point short of making them eternally equal. Christ is still “the beginning of the creation of God” by which is probably to be understood (cp. Col. 1:18, “the beginning, the firstborn from the dead”; also Col. 1:15) that *Christ himself was part of the creation*.^{1[1]}

As the Harvard theologian F. Auer says so well:

“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...It developed against constant unitarian opposition and was never wholly victorious. The dogma of the Trinity owes its existence to abstract speculation on the part of a small minority of scholars.”^{2[1]}

Encyclopedia Americana, Vol. 27, p. 69, 1949: “The doctrine of the Trinity is nowhere expressly taught in the OT... the plural form used to designate the Deity in the account of the creation and many other incidental circumstances or expressions are however held as implying, if not teaching, this doctrine...In the NT it is evident that the doctrine of a Trinity in the divine nature is clearly and copiously taught”

Mackintosh DD, *Doctrine of the Person of Christ* speaking of Prof. S. S. Faut: “Granting the absolute character of the redemption which Jesus mediates and in consequence the absolute character of the Mediator’s person, he yet holds that the difficulties of predicating real Deity to Jesus are insurmountable...But if we go so far, in logic [describing the position of the exalted Jesus to the RH] we must go still further and attribute Godhead also to Jesus of Nazareth — which gives us pause. It is unfitting to speak of the historical Christ as GOD, medium of the final revelation though he be. For it blurs the interpretation of his earthly life; also it conflicts gravely with Jesus’ monotheism. The one thing we dare not do is to create antagonism between Jesus and his own creed. It is

^{1[1]}Lowell Institute Lectures, Boston, 1933.

simply unevangelical to dim the clear shining of the Gospel by dogmatic assertions which collide with trust in One only God, the Father Almighty (cited from *Die Christologie seit Schleiermacher*, 1901, pp. 97, 98).

International Critical Commentary. (John 1-4), 2009, p. 51

“Since most readers of the Gospel of John approach the gospel with a firm belief in the Nicene dogma of the Holy Trinity, a plea for caution is here imperative. Those who listened to Jesus during his life-time [and the warning should apply to those who desire to listen to him today] did not come already endowed with faith in a Trinitarian Godhead, nor did those who heard the preaching of the Apostles; it was not a matter of teaching people who already believed in a Holy Trinity that one of those divine persons had become a human being. **Neither in Judaism nor elsewhere is there any trace of such a belief.**” [Nor is there a trace of such teaching in Jesus, who stood foursquare on the creed of Israel, Mk 12:289ff.]

Hugh Anderson, New Century Bible Commentary on Mark, p. 280. Mk 12:29:

“We must suppose that the Markan form goes back to oral tradition passed on by a Church **that did not any longer recite Schema** [!]. But here at least in his statement of the first commandment **Jesus stands foursquare we within the orbit of Jewish piety.**” [Why do we not follow him?]. . . **Jesus statement consists entirely of an almost word for word citation of two Old Testament texts Deuteronomy 6:4 and Leviticus 18, a former at the heart of Jewish piety and both much canvassed by the rabbis.**” **In stating the first commandment Jesus only repeats what Israel had repeated for centuries**”

“The primary **sense of logos** [word, Jn. 1:1] is equivalent to Memra, the very embodiment of God’s everlasting protective Presence (sein ewiges Dasein, his eternal being) as disclosed in Exod. 3:15” (p. 30).

Theological Dictionary of the New Testament (Vol. 4, p. 133, 134) on **Logos [word]**: Jesus Christ is the incarnate form of the Logos. . . . grace and truth are the nature of the logos [Paul speaks of grace and truth and logos]. They are the content of the revelation [**IT, the logos**] given in Jesus Christ (v. 17b). **which** replaces the **Mosaic nomos**, the Torah [David calls the Torah logos also]. . . The terms logos and nomos are interchangeable in Ps. 119. The statements **concerning the pre-existence and majesty of the Torah** but they are now intentionally heaped upon **the logos**. **IT** was in the beginning with God. **IT** was with God and was God, or divine. All things were made by [through] **IT**. In **IT** was life. **IT** was the light of man. In the rabbis theses are sayings about the Torah. But they are now statements about Christ. In him the eternal word of God and the word of creation, the word of the Law is not just passed on (“given”) but **enacted** (*egeneto*). [cp the script is enacted in the actor]

Christ is not just a teacher and transmitter of the Torah. He is himself the Torah, the new Torah [for the new creation]. Mosaism which is provisional and intermediary, has passed. In Jesus Christ the word of God has taken place in truth. What they behold is the content of this true, final and only Torah: grace and truth [so Paul when speaking of grace and truth is speaking of the new Torah of Messiah] “Through the firstborn God created the heaven and earth and the firstborn is none other than the Torah” (rabbis). The divine nature of the Torah. The Torah is life, **life** for the world. Light: the Torah is **light**. The world lies in darkness and its inhabitants are without light. The Torah is truth. . . .”

“Seven things were created before the world was created, namely the Torah, repentance, Garden of Eden, Gehenna, throne of glory [Matt. 19:28], sanctuary, **and the name of the Messiah.**” [not the Messiah himself] **The eternal being of the Torah was with God. IT lay on God’s bosom while God sat on the throne of glory.**”

Dr. John A T Robinson on John 17:3 Bampton Lecture, and **The Priority of God.**

“In the first place it should be noted **that John is as undeviating a witness as any in the New Testament to the fundamental tenet of Judaism, of unitary monotheism (Rom. 3:30; James 2:19. There is one true and only God (John 5:44; 17:3) Everything else is idols; I John 5:21.** In fact nowhere is the Jewishness of John [and of Jesus], which has emerged in all recent study, more clear. The only possible exception is in I John 5:20, where ‘this is the true God could grammatically relate not to the Father, but to the immediately preceding words ‘His Son Jesus Christ, though the ‘his’ in ‘His Son’ must refer to ‘the one who is true,’ that is God the Father, as everywhere else [including Malachi 2:10, Do we not all have one Father? Has not one God created us?])”

The ambiguities of phrasing in the Johannine epistles are notorious, but I find it very difficult to be persuaded by such as Schnackenburg, Bultmann and Brown that is Christ who is being designated as ‘the true God’ [contradicting Jn. 17:3 and the rest of the Bible!]. I am convinced with Westcott, Brooke and Dodd that the remaining

Johannine usage (particularly ‘This is the true God, this is eternal life, I John 5:20 and “This is eternal life, to know thee who alone art true God (John 17:3) which I believe the former deliberately echoes, **requires the reference to be to the Father**. There is also the parallel in II John 7 where ‘this is the deceiver and the Antichrist’ must refer to the secessionists and not to the immediately preceding words ‘Jesus Christ coming in the flesh.’”

He then says, that “despite **the clear evidence of the Gospel that Jesus refuses the claim to be God (10:33) or in any way to usurp the position of the Father, this is clearly for John not the whole picture.**” He goes on to point out that the logos is God. But he has said above that John’s Jesus is a unitarian. The logos is therefore the wisdom/word of God and **not a second Person in a Triune Godhead**. Jesus is thus what the word (not Word) *became*. God, the Father is still “the only one who is true God,” which excludes the Son from Godhead, although Jesus is the human expression of God.. Jesus and John were unitarians, as were all Jews.

Goppelt on the word, *Theology, II, p. 634*

“The logos of the prologue [John 1:1] becomes Jesus. Jesus is the incarnate logos **not the logos as such.**”

Lee Strobel: Case for Christ

- “The truth is that Jesus was a bit mysterious about his identity, wasn’t he? He tended to shy away from forthrightly proclaiming himself to be Messiah or Son of God...
- [Witherington] It is not because he did not think of himself in those terms...If he had simply announced ‘Hi, folks, I’m God,’ that would have been heard as ‘I’m Yahweh’ because the **Jews of his day did not have any concept of the Trinity [nor did Jesus!]**. They only knew of God the Father, whom they called Yahweh and not God the Son or God the holy spirit.” [If he said ‘I am Yahweh,’ that would be a clear announcement of two Yahwehs]

Professor A.T Hanson, Prof of Theology at the University of Hull, UK

- 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.
- (*The Image of the Invisible God*)

Dr. W. R Matthews, Dean of St. Paul’s, writer for years in London’s *Daily Telegraph*

- “It must be admitted by everyone who has the rudiments of a 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” (*God in Christian Experience*, p. 180).

Augustine on John 17:3. He violates the Scripture, tampering with it to force it to yield a Trinity.

- “And this,” Jesus adds, “is eternal life, that they may know Thee, the only true God, and Jesus Christ, whom Thou hast sent.”
- **Augustine (*Homilies on John*): “The proper order of the words is, ‘That they may know Thee and Jesus Christ, whom Thou hast sent, as the only true God.’** Consequently, therefore, the Holy Spirit is also understood, because He is the Spirit of the Father and Son, as the substantial and consubstantial love of both. For the Father and Son are not two Gods, nor are the Father and Son and Holy Spirit three Gods; **but the Trinity itself is the one only true God**. And yet the Father is not the same as the Son, nor the Son the same as the Father, nor the Holy Spirit the same as the Father and the Son; for the Father and Son and Holy Spirit are three [persons], yet the Trinity itself is one God. [4,300 occs. of God and none of these = triune God]

Karl Barth on the Trinity

- “The Bible lacks the express declaration that the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit are of equal essence and therefore in an equal sense God himself. And the other express declaration is also lacking, that God is God thus and only thus, i.e. as the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit. These two express declarations, which **go**

beyond the witness of the Bible, are the twofold content of the Church doctrine of the Trinity" (Karl Barth, *Church Dogmatics*, I.1.437, our emphasis).

•
Theological Dictionary of the New Testament on Trinity

- The NT does not actually speak of triunity. We seek this in vain in the triadic formulae of the NT....Early Christianity itself...does not yet have the problem of **triunity in view**" (Kittel, *Theological Dictionary of the New Testament*, Vol. 3.108-9).

Donald Guthrie on Trinity

- **Donald Guthrie's** evangelically-oriented *New Testament Theology*, while arguing that there are "adumbrations" of Trinitarianism in the New Testament, is similarly obliged to admit that:
- It cannot be said that the doctrine (Trinitarianism) is expounded. **Indeed, it is significant that none of the NT writers sees the need to speculate about such a doctrine.** They are content to present data which imply the divine nature of both Christ and the Spirit and which naturally gave rise to reflections about the unity of God (op. cit., 122).

Dr. R. M Grant on Substance

- R. M. Grant likewise agrees in his discussion of the Trinitarian controversy that there is no recorded mention of the Godhead's "oneness of substance" before the Apology ("A Plea for the Christians") of Athenagoras (ca. A.D. 177), when for the first time anywhere we read that "the Son of God is the Mind and the Word of the Father," the latter being "the One uncreated, eternal invisible, impassable, incomprehensible, uncontainable God" (*The Early Christian Doctrine of God*, 91).

Thomas Jefferson, US President, 1801-1809 [there were 5 unitarian presidents of the USA]

- "When we shall have done away with the **incomprehensible jargon** of the Trinitarian arithmetic, that three are one and one is three; when we will have knocked down the artificial scaffolding, reared to mask from view the simple structure of Jesus; when, in short, we shall have unlearned everything which has been taught since his day, and got back to the pure and simple doctrines he inculcated, we shall then be truly and worthily his disciples; and my opinion is that if nothing had ever been added to what flowed purely from his lips, the whole world would at this day be Christian."

F.F. Bruce on Preexistence and Trinity, in personal correspondence:

- "On the preexistence question, one can at least accept the preexistence of the eternal Word or **Wisdom** of God **which** (who?) became incarnate in Jesus. But whether any New Testament writer believed in his separate conscious existence as a "second Divine Person" [i.e. of the Trinity] before his incarnation is not so clear. On balance I think John did. I am not nearly so sure about Paul (June 13th, 1981, correspondence)

F.F. Bruce on Preexistence and Trinity

- "Paul identifies Christ with the creative word or **wisdom** of God which certainly existed as long as God did." (July 29th, 1981)

Dr. James Dunn, who has written massively on Christology, on Preexistence

- "To avoid confusion, therefore it would be better to speak of the Johannine Christ as the incarnation of God, as God making Himself known to human flesh, **not as the incarnation of the Son of God (Intro to Christology in the Making**, xxvii)... To speak of Christ as himself preexistent, coming down from heaven, and so forth, has to be seen as metaphorical; **otherwise it leads inevitably to some kind of polytheism.**"

Dr. Dunn on Preexistence

- 'That the Messiah himself existed before creation is nowhere stated in the Tannaitic [Jewish] literature... the name of the Messiah is the *idea* of the Messiah, or more exactly the idea of redemption through the Messiah. This idea did precede creation' (Klausner, *Messianic Idea*, p.460). Strack Billerbeck II, 334ff., Vermes, *Jesus*, 138, Mowinkel, *He That Cometh*, 334 (294, *Christology*)

Dr. Dunn, "Early Christian and Jewish Monotheism:" (p. 109)

“The point then is that Jesus is remembered in earliest Christian tradition not simply for putting the love commandment (‘love your neighbor as yourself’) at the heart of his teaching. The influence of that teaching on the first Christians is clear enough from first century Christian writings, and there are no grounds for denying that the inspiration of that focus in early Christian teaching is to be attributed to Jesus. For such a consistent singling out of just this commandment (Lev. 19:18) can hardly be coincidental. More to the point, Jesus is remembered as also putting the love commandment second to the primary command to love God with all one’s being (Mark 12:30, par.). **For Jesus the *Shema* was fundamental and fundamentally determinative of the whole orientation of life.** It is not the case that Jesus’ ethic can be boiled down to love your neighbor. On the contrary, the implication is that the two go together and perhaps is only possible in long-term reality as the corollary to the first.

The conclusion is strong then that the *Shema* continued to be of central importance for Jesus during his mission and the teaching he both gave and lived out, which also means that the conviction that God was One **continued to be a basic axiom for Jesus, a core principle from which he drew his inspiration and instruction.** To that extent, at least, in other words, we have to answer the question ‘was Jesus a monotheist’ of our title with a clear affirmative.

The clear implication of Mark’s account is that Jesus declined the epithet ‘good’ because properly speaking only God is good... Its theological rationale is obvious: God alone is worthy of such devotion because God alone is the source and definition of all goodness..... the God-foundation of his whole mission.”

Leading expert and author Dr. James Dunn (*Christology in the Making*, 251) **provokes serious thinking about the paganism in popular Christianity. He wrote, “There is always the possibility that popular pagan superstition became popular Christian superstition by a gradual assimilation and spread of belief at the level of popular piety (we must be beware of assuming that all developments in Christian thought stem from the Pauls and the Johns of Christianity.”** (1980, 1989)

The Trinity: The Problem

Dr. Gregory Boyd: in *Trinity and Oneness Pentecostals*

- Trinitarians are quite clear that God is one: “There can be no question that the Bible does uniformly and unequivocally teach that there is One God. Certainly it was the proclamation ‘Hear O Israel, the Lord our God, the Lord is one,’ that formed **the cornerstone for everything** that was distinctive about the faith of God’s people in the OT. The message of God’s uniqueness and **singularity** is driven home literally **hundreds of times throughout** the pages of the OT (Isa 42:8; 43:10; 44:6.) This **strict monotheism** is by no means forgotten when we enter the NT era. **Rather it forms the presupposition of the Christ-centered faith articulated in the NT** (Mark 12:29ff. I Cor. 8:4-6; Eph. 4:4; I Tim. 2:5). It is therefore an incontestable fact that the Bible is monotheistic through and through. No biblical author would have entertained the idea that there could be more than one supreme being. This is the cornerstone to ancient and to contemporary Judaism.” [And powerfully confirmed and commanded by Jesus! (Mk 12:29)

Dr. W. N Clarke, 1909, Professor, Colgate University

- [In the NT] there is no mystery about their oneness **and no attempt to show that there are three in one.** The word Trinity is never used and there is no indication that the idea of Trinity had taken form. It has long been a common practice to read the NT as if the ideas of a later age upon this subject were in it, but they are not. **In the days of the Apostles the doctrine of the Trinity was yet to be created.** But the materials for it were already there, and the occasion for the growth of the doctrine was sure to arise.

Elohim is not a Proof of Plurality in God

- **Dr. Sir William Smith,** *Dictionary. of the Bible*, art Jehovah:
- With regard to Elohim, it has been held by many that in the plural form of the word there was shadowed forth the plurality of persons in the Godhead and the mystery of the Trinity was inferred therefrom. Such according to Peter of Lombard, was the true significance of Elohim. But Calvin, Mercer, Drusius, Bellarmine have given the weight of their authority against an explanation so **fanciful and arbitrary.**
- **Bishop Colenso:**
- The word Elohim is a plural noun; it is the general name for Deity in the Hebrew language, and may be used, accordingly for a heathen god... **It is therefore quite a mistake to think of proving the doctrine of the**

Trinity, as some do, from the fact that Elohim is a plural name... And as above it is used of an idol, Dagon (I Sam. 5:7); Astarte (I Kings 1:2, 3, 6), as of the true God.... Thus we have ‘a cruel lords’ (adonim) (Isa. 14:4)

- **Kitto**, *Cyclopedia of Biblical Literature*:
- An old opinion is that... the usage of a plural noun with a singular verb [proved] that God has revealed Himself in His word as subsisting in Trinity, One yet Three... This has few supporters among the scholars, and has been formally repudiated by several who were strongly attached to Trinitarian views: Calvin, Drusius, Buxtorf, Bellarmine, Hottinger.
- **Sixtus Senensis**, *Bibliotheca Sanctor*, bk. 5, annotation. 1
- With the exception of Peter of Lombardy and Paul of Burgos, there has not been amongst the Greek, Latin and Hebrew writers, **one commentator worthy of imitation who has explained the word Elohim of the Trinity.**
- **Dr. South**, a disputant in the controversy over the Trinity in the later middle ages, in which the King interposed. (*Consideration on the Trinity*)
- It must be allowed that there is no such proposition as this, that One and the same God is three different Persons, formally and in terms to be found in the sacred writings, either of the Old or New Testaments; neither is it pretended that there is any word of the same signification or importance as the word Trinity, used in Scripture with relation to God”
- **Rev. Mozeley**, brother in law to Cardinal Newman:
- I ask with all humbleness where the idea of the Threeness is expressed in the New Testament with a doctrinal sense and force? Where is the Triune God held up to be worshiped, loved and obeyed? Where is he preached and proclaimed in that threefold character? We read ‘God is one.’ and ‘I and the Father are one.’ but never do we read that the three are one, except in one interpolated text, (I John 5:7). To me the whole matter is most painful and perplexing and I should not even speak as I do now, if I were not on the threshold of the grave, soon to appear before the throne of all truth.
- Certainly we do not find in Scripture the expression God the Son, or God the Holy Ghost. Whenever I pronounce the word God simply, and first, I mean God the Father, and I cannot help meaning that if I am meaning anything. [NT means Father 1300 times, when speaking of GOD.]
- **James Hughes**, Roman Catholic Priest:
- “My belief in the Trinity is based on the authority of the Church: no other authority is sufficient. I will now show from reason that the Athanasian creed and Scripture are opposed to one another. The doctrine of the Trinity is this: There is one God in three persons, Father, Son and Holy Ghost. The Father is God, the Son is God and the Holy Ghost is God. Mind, the Father is one person, the Son is another person and the Holy Ghost is another person. **Now according to every principal of mathematics, arithmetic, human wisdom and policy, there must be three Gods, and yet only One God.** The Athanasian creed gives the universal opinion of the Church, that the Father is uncreated, the Son uncreated and the Holy Ghost uncreated—that they existed from all eternity. Now the Son was born of the Father; and, if born, must have been created...therefore to assert that the Son is eternal is absurd and bangs of nonsense (cont.d.)”
- Each has his distinct personality: each his own essence. How then can they be one Eternal? How can they all be God? Absurd; extravagant. This is rejected by Arians, Socinians, Presbyterians and every man following human reason. The creed says further that our Lord Jesus Christ is the Son of God and the Son of Man, ‘not by the conversion of the Godhead into flesh, but by taking of the manhood into God.’ Now I ask you, Did the divinity absorb the manhood? He could not at the same time be one person and two persons. I have now proved the Trinity opposed to human reason.”

Bishop Smallridge (Anglican) on the Trinity

- **It must be owned that the doctrine of the Trinity as it is proposed in our Articles, our Liturgy and our Creed**, is not in so many words taught us in the Holy Scriptures. What we profess in our prayers we nowhere read in Scripture, that the one God, the one Lord is not only one person, but three persons in one substance. There is no such text in Scripture as this; that the Unity in Trinity and the Trinity in Unity is to be worshiped. None of the inspired writers has expressly affirmed that in the Trinity none is before or after the other, none is greater or less than the other.

On the Trinity, **Athanasius**

- The Jews at the time being in error and thinking that the Messiah would be a mere man of the seed of David, for that reason the blessed Apostles in great wisdom first instructed the Jews in the things concerning our savior's humanity
- All the Jews were so firmly persuaded that their Messiah was to be nothing more than a man like themselves, the apostles were obliged to use great caution in divulging the doctrine of the proper divinity of Christ.

John of Damascus (675-749) on Trinity

- John of Damascus replied to the criticism that icons are unscriptural by admitting the fact and adding that you will not find in Scripture the Trinity or the "one substance" or the two natures of Christ either. But we *know* these doctrines are true. And so having acknowledged that the icons, and the incarnation are innovations, John goes on to urge his readers to hold fast to them as venerable traditions delivered to us by the fathers. If they were lost the whole gospel would be threatened.
- He adopted the argument of John of Damascus that the Trinity should be accepted just as tradition. Professor Don Cupitt comments: "It brings out an odd feature of Christianity, its mutability and the speed with which innovations come to be vested with religious solemnity to such an extent that anyone who questions them finds *himself* regarded as the dangerous innovator and heretic (*Myth of God Incarnate*, p. 133)

Gregory of Nazianzus (leading church father) on Spirit

- Gregory was "the theologian." Born in 328, friend of Basil of Caesarea, nominated patriarch by Theodosius, wrote in 380:
- "Of our thoughtful men, some regard the holy spirit as an operation, some as a creature, some as God; while others are at a loss to decide, seeing the Scripture determines nothing on the subject."
- In 387 the Nicene creed was added to: "With the Father and the Son the Spirit is worshipped and glorified."
Before that the creed in 325 attempted no definition of the Spirit.
- **Dr. Longley**, Bishop of Ripon.
- It was our blessed Lord's divinity which, we have seen, **he studiously concealed** [!], but wished all men to come to the knowledge of (*Tracts for the Times*, Vol. 4, 80)
- **Richard Armstrong** (1904) (*Trinity and Incarnation*)
- Most of those who profess and call themselves Christians, both in this country and in the rest of the world are in the habit of saying that Jesus is God. It is taught by the creeds. The average Englishman holds this opinion in a vague and loose sort of way. He has not thought out exactly what he means by it. So he carries about with him in his mind four propositions:
- 1) Jesus Christ is **God**. 2) **God** is our heavenly Father. 3) Jesus Christ is not our heavenly Father 4) There are **not two Gods**.
- Yet he has never considered how to reconcile these four separate opinions of his together. It has probably not occurred to him that they are **inconsistent** with one another... The average Englishman has not troubled himself with the matter.

Dr. James Dunn on Luke 1:35

- (*Christology in the Making*, p. 51)
- Luke is more explicit than Matthew in his assertion of Jesus' divine sonship from birth (1:32, 35). But here too it is sufficiently clear that it is a **begetting**, a becoming, which is in view, the **coming into existence of one** who will be called, and will in fact **be** the Son of God, not the transition of a preexistent being to become the soul of a human baby, or the metamorphosis of a divine being into a human fetus... Luke's intention is clearly to describe the creative process of begetting.... Similarly in Acts there is no sign of any Christology of preexistence.
- "For Matthew and Luke there was no thought of preexistence or incarnation associated with the mystical [sic] dogma of the virgin birth. **The fact is that Virgin Birth and preexistence cannot be reconciled.** A

preexistent being who becomes man reduces himself to the state of a human embryo, but he is not conceived [or begotten] by action exterior to himself in the womb of a woman. Conception is the point at which an individual is formed who did not exist before at least as an individual.” (p. 43)

Fitzmeyer on Luke (Anchor Bible)

- Luke presents Jesus as a Palestinian Jew, born in Bethlehem of Davidic lineage and raised in Nazareth. He speaks of him as ‘a man attested to you by God with mighty deeds, wonders, and signs, which God did through him in your midst.’ With many a deft stroke of the artist’s brush he has painted a portrait of Jesus as a human being with great concern for others... In Lukan Christology there are four phases of Christ’s existence. The first begins with his virginal conception... In Lukan Christology there is **no question of Jesus’ preexistence or incarnation**... Neither of these aspects of his existence emerge in the Lukan portrait of him... In the time of Jesus the title ‘Messiah’ would have denoted an expected anointed agent sent by God either in the Davidic, kingly or political tradition for the restoration of Israel and the triumph of God’s power and dominion, or in the priestly tradition... We have no certain way of assessing what form that relationship would have taken in his own consciousness... Luke’s [concept of Son] does not yet carry the later connotations of physical or metaphysical sonship or identity of substance associated with the later Nicene or Constantinopolitan creeds. Nor adoptive sonship. Luke’s explicit relation of the title Son to the conception of Jesus connotes much more.

Fitzmeyer on Luke 1:35

- Holy spirit is understood in the OT sense of God’s creative and active power present to human beings. Later church tradition made something quite other out of this verse. Justin wrote: ‘It is not right therefore to understand the Spirit and power of God as anything else than the Word, who is also the first begotten of God (*Apology* 1:33). In this interpretation the two expressions, spirit and power, are being understood of the Second Member of the Trinity. It was scarcely however before the 4th century that the Holy Spirit was understood as the third person... There is no evidence here in the Lukan infancy narrative of Jesus’ preexistence or Incarnation. Luke’s sole concern is to assert that the origin of God’s Messiah is the effect of His creative spirit on Mary (p. 350, 351). [He says the elements of the Trinity but not the doctrine itself are found in Luke]
- **Dr. John Owen** on Trinity:
- What is there in the whole book of God that nature at first sight more recoils at than the doctrine of the Trinity. How many still stumble and fall at it? (*Divine Origin of Scriptures*, p. 132)

Bishop Hurd on Trinity

- In this awfully stupendous manner (the scheme of redemption by the sacrifice of a person of the Godhead as maintained by Trinitarians) at which Reason stands aghast, and Faith herself is half confounded, was the grace of God at last manifested (*Sermons at Lincoln’s Inn*, 2, 17)

Jacques Barzun, *From Dawn to Decadence* 2000, p. 30)

“Luther said of the Trinity that he did not so much believe it as find it true in experience... Can Luther have done anything but allegorize, if it was experience and not faith alone which made him a Trinitarian?... Servetus, a Spanish physician, paid with this life at the hands of Calvin for disbelieving that three could simultaneously be one.”

A. H. Newman on the Trinity

- It 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).
- Moody Bible Institute on Trinity, Doctrinal statement, 1994-5:
- God is a **Person** who has revealed Himself as a Trinity in unity, Father, Son and Holy Spirit — **three Persons** and yet one God (Deut. 6:4; Matt 28:19; I Cor. 8:6) [3 x’s = 1x]
- Trinitarians Contradict their Creed
- *Expositors. Comm.* (10: 286) on I Cor. 15:27:

- “God will be recognized by all as sovereign and He – the Triune God – will be supreme.” cp. Rev. 22:3-5.
- [So the one God is a He, and not a “What”?]

Dr. John Blanchard on ECHAD. the Hebrew word for ONE

11th April, 2005 (I had written to him to challenge the idea that ONE in Hebrew means more than one).

- Following our recent correspondence I have taken theological and academic advice and it seems clear that in the final paragraph on page 450 of *Does God Believe in Atheists?* my comments on the Hebrew word *echad* are inaccurate. I am very grateful to you for pointing this out, and assure you that in the future printings of the book the paragraph will be replaced by one that uses other OT arguments for the plurality of Yahweh’s being. Thank you again for preventing that particular error being perpetuated in the book.”

Dr. Emily Palik on ONE

- One place (Gen. 1:9), one man (Gen. 42:13), one law (Ex. 12:49) one side (Ex 25:12) one ewe lamb (Lev. 14:10), one of his brethren (Lev. 25:48), one rod (Num. 17:3), one soul (Num. 31:28), one of those cities (Deut. 4:42), one way (Deut. 28:7) one ephah (I Sam 1:24) one went out into the field (I Kings 4:39). One shepherd (Ezek 37:24), one basket (Jer. 24:2). One thing (Ps. 27:4), two are better than one (Ecc. 4:9), for one day or for two (Ezra 10:13) Abraham was only one person (Ezek 33:24), a unique day Zech 14:7.

Dr. Hey, lecturing on the Trinity at Cambridge, on Trinity

- It might tend to moderation and in the end agreement, if we were industrious on all occasions to represent our own doctrine (the Trinity) as wholly *unintelligible* (*Lectures in Divinity*, 2, 235

Is Orthodoxy Orthodox?

Dr. Norman Snaith

- Dr Snaith, leading Methodist: “Your sons, O Zion, against your sons, O Greece.” (Zech. 9:13) arose first as a rallying cry in days long ago when some Jews sought to reinterpret Judaism in order to make it more acceptable to Greek ways of thought and life. There have always been Jews who have sought to make terms with the Gentile world and it has in time meant the death of Judaism for all such... the question needs to be faced as to whether it is right. Our position is that the reinterpretation of Biblical theology in terms of the ideas of the Greek philosophers has been both widespread and everywhere **destructive to the essence of Christian faith**. Father Hebert (RC) rightly sees in the Catholic system a conception of salvation conceived in Aristotelian terms and ‘an idea of Beatitude... closely related to the Neo-Platonic idea of the Vision of the One and bearing little relationship to the Beatitudes of the Gospel.’ Equally rightly he sees a marked tendency in contemporary Protestantism ‘to lay emphasis on the development of personality and a human movement towards the realization of ethical ideals. The KG is regarded as something achieved by human effort’ cont’d
- If these judgments are sound, and we believe they are sound, **then neither Catholic nor Protestant theology is based on biblical theology. In each case we have a domination of Christian theology by Greek thought.** cont’d
- “What, then, is to be done with the Bible? It is to be regarded as the norm, and its distinctive ideas as the determining factors of Christian theology? Or are we to continue to regard Plato and Aristotle with their pagan successors as contributing the norm, and the main ideas of Greek philosophy as the determining factors of Christian theology, with the Bible as illustrative and confirmatory when and where suitable?... We hold that there can be no right answer to the question what is Christianity until we have come to a clear idea of the distinctive ideas of both the OT and the NT and their difference from **the pagan ideas which have so largely dominated ‘Christian’ thought.**”
- **Dr. Norman Snaith:**
- We find in the OT no passages at all which speak of the any immortality of the soul, which is not a biblical idea at all.
- **Dr. Millard Erickson** *God in Three Persons [He is promoting the Trinity]*
- “Davis has examined the major contemporary explanations [of the Trinity], 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 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.**” (p. 258)

Erickson, God in Three Persons

- “It is claimed that the doctrine of the Trinity is very important, crucial and even basic doctrine. If that is indeed the case, should it not be somewhere more clearly, directly and explicitly in the Bible?... Little direct response can be made to this charge. It is unlikely that any text of Scripture can be shown to teach the doctrine of the Trinity in a clear, direct and unmistakable fashion.” (p. 109)

Erickson Making Sense of the Trinity

- “Thus the **begetting** passages should be seen as referring to the earthly residence of Jesus rather than some everlasting continuous generation by the Father.” (p. 86)
- “The status of the propositions forming the doctrine of the Trinity is not that they can be shown directly, either from Scripture or from experience. They are however part of a coherent whole, which can be shown to fit well and integrate and explain well the data that it is called on to tie together. As a necessary (or at least the best available) explanation of the data of biblical revelation, this doctrine is meaningful... **It is simply not possible to explain [the Trinity] unequivocally**... It may also be necessary, in order to convey the unusual meaning involved in this doctrine, to utilize what analytical philosophers would call ‘logically odd language.’ This means using language in such away as **intentionally to commit grammatical errors**. Thus, I have sometimes 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 only be adequately expressed by using language that call attention to the almost paradoxical character of the concepts” (pp. 267, 268, 270).
- Nonsense is fully admitted!
-

Reinhold Niebuhr, The Nature and Destiny of Man, , vol. 2, p. 61

- **The mixture of God and man is “logical nonsense”**

John Hick, The Myth of God Incarnate, by John Hick, 1977, p. 35

- “The simple equation ‘Jesus = God’ not only fails to represent what Christian tradition has claimed, but is distinctly odd. To reduce all of God to a human incarnation is virtually inconceivable.”

Apostle Peter on Jesus. Apostle John on Jesus.

- “You are the Christ, the Son of the Living God.” (Matt. 16:16-18)

John on Jesus, “These things have been written [Gospel of John] that you might know that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God.” (John 20:31)

Professor Godet, Commentary on Luke 1:35

- “By the word ‘therefore’ the angel alludes to his preceding words: he will be called the son of the Highest. We might paraphrase it: ‘And it is precisely for this reason that I said to you....’ We have then here, from the mouth of the angel himself, an authentic explanation of the term SON of GOD, in the former part of his message. After this explanation Mary could only understand the title in this sense: a human being of whose existence God Himself is the immediate author. **It does not convey the idea of preexistence... But it implies more than the term Messiah which only refers to his mission. The word upsistou, of the Highest also refers to the term ‘Son of the Highest., v.32 and explains it...** how could we assign any serious meaning to the moral struggles in the history of Jesus, the temptation for example, if his perfect holiness was the necessary consequence of his miraculous birth? But it is not so.... Entering into life in this way he was placed in the normal condition of man before his fall and put in a position to fulfill the career originally set before man, in which he was to advance from innocence to holiness... Jesus had to exert every instant his own free will and to devote himself continually to the service of good and to the task assigned to him, namely the keeping of his Father’s commandment” **His miraculous birth in no way prevented this conflict from being real. It gave him liberty not to sin but did not take away from him the liberty of sinning” (p.58, 1881)**

- “The holy thing begotten in you will be called the Son of God.”

Dr. W. N. Clark on Trinity, 1909, Prof. at Colgate University

- [In the NT] there is no mystery about their oneness and **no attempt to show that there are three in one**. The word Trinity is never used and there is no indication that the idea of Trinity had taken form. It has long been a common practice to read the NT as if the ideas of a later age upon this subject were in it, but they are not. In the days of the Apostles the doctrine of the Trinity was yet to be created. But the materials for it were already there, and the occasion for the growth of the doctrine was sure to arise.

Dr. A.T. Hanson on Trinity

- The puzzling fact is that the synoptic gospels, which as publications are later than Paul and contemporary with Hebrews, do not exhibit any tendency to elaborate a doctrine of preexistence [and thus no Trinity]
- (*Image of the Invisible God*)

Dr. A. T. Hanson on Trinity (*Image of the Invisible God*)

- In Hebrews it is not even certain that the name 'Son' is unhesitatingly applied by the writer to the preexistent state. Heb. 1:2 could be rendered: 'He has in these last days spoken to us in the mode of a Son, which would imply that the sonship only began at the incarnation.'

F. F. Bruce on Acts 13:33

- "raised up" – that is by raising him up in the sense in which he raised David (v.22). For *anistemi* in this sense, see 3:22; 7:37; 3:26 ("raised him up and sent him"). The promise of v. 23, the fulfillment of which is described in 13:33, has to do with the sending of the Messiah, not his resurrection (for which see v. 24). The addition of "from the dead" in v. 34 differentiates this use of "raise up" from its use in v. 33" (*Acts of Apostles, Comm. on Greek text*)

Dr. Dorner on the Defects of Trinity

- It must be allowed of course that the doctrine of the Trinity, as laid down even by the Nicene fathers, leaves much to be desired. In one point above all, that is to say, that the Father is represented not merely as the logical commencement of the trinitarian process, but often as the root and source of all Deity and identified with the Monas. He thus acquires a predominance which necessarily involves the subordination of the Son and the Spirit.
- (*Person of Christ, Div, 1, Vol. II, p. 327*)

Encyclopedia Britannica, 1949

- Unitarianism. "It is usually conceded that even though it might not be correct to speak of Christianity during the first two or three centuries as being substantially Unitarian, it at least was not Trinitarian. It was this generally held belief that Jesus was a man that Arius was trying to save in his conflict with Athanasius... those who held to the simple humanity of Jesus were usually subjected to bitter persecution... Later at the Reformation Servetus was burned at Geneva at the direct instigation of Calvin for the sin of writing (1531) "errors of the Trinity." Bishop Mant in his history of Ireland records that in 1326 at Dublin, one Adam Duff was burned alive for his denial of the Trinity. In 1551 George Van Parris was burned alive for the same offence. Martin Cellarius (1499-1564), a close friend of Luther, had written against the Trinity; and Ludwig Haetzer, whose views were not disclosed until after his execution for anabaptism in 1529. Servetus first put the issue squarely before the world; "Your Trinity," he wrote, "is a product of subtlety and madness. The Gospel knows nothing of it. The old fathers are strangers to it. It is from the school of the Greek sophists, that you, Athanasius, prince of tritheists, have borrowed it. "

Dr. Dorner on "Defects of the Trinity"

- The second defect is that these [Nicene] teachers determine rather negatively than positively what 'hypostasis' is. But when the idea of the Father suffering (patripassionism) was rejected, the question naturally suggested itself: How shall we determine the nature of the distinction **between the God who became man and the God who did not become man**, without destroying the unity of God on the one hand, or interfering with Christology on the other. Neither the Council of Nicea, nor the Church Fathers of the 4th century satisfactorily answered that question. (p. 330)... Through their labors the pantheistic and deist conception of God and the heathen and Jewish error was excluded... the How of the procession of the Son and the Spirit is unsearchable (p. 331).

Professor Loofs on the Trinity

- Orthodoxy **cannot say what 'begetting'** in the case of the Son strictly signifies (*What is the Truth about Jesus Christ?* p, 165) The Trinity is said to be the One God of the 'Hear, O Israel.' [According to orthodoxy] It is

not a human personality that the Son of God assumed... The Divine subject in the life of Christ properly speaking did not suffer or die.

- I wish at the outset to state quite openly that I cannot hold this old Christology. 1) To rational logic it is quite untenable. 2) It does not agree with the NT. 3) We can show that it was influenced by antiquated conceptions of Greek philosophy.... Reason cannot approve such thoughts as hopelessly contradict themselves.
- It is the orthodox doctrine that the incarnated Son of God retained the human nature he had assumed, even after the ascension. The oneness of the Trinity is dissolved after the Incarnation. The Trinity has become something different after the Incarnation from what it was before.

Professor Loofs on the Trinity

- **The criticism of orthodox Christology which I have described is not the property of a few people. To a certain extent it may be considered as generally recognized by the whole German Protestant theology of the present time (1911)...** At present all learned Protestant theologians of Germany really admit unanimously that the orthodox Christology does not do justice to the truly human life of Jesus and that the orthodox doctrine of the two natures in Christ cannot be retained in its traditional form. All our systematic theologians... are seeking new paths in their Christology (p. 202, 3)

Dr. Edwin Hatch. *The Influence of Greek Ideas on Christianity, 1888*

- “I do not propose to dwell on the sad and weary history of the way in which for more than a century these metaphysical distinctions [*ousia* and *hypostasis*] formed the watchwords of political as well as ecclesiastical parties— of the strife and murder, the devastation of fair fields, the flame and sword connected with it.
- These evils mostly came from that which has been a permanently disastrous fact in Christian history, the interference of the state which gave the decrees of councils that sanction the resolutions of the majority upon the deepest subjects of human speculation to the factitious rank of laws which must be accepted on pain of forfeiture, banishment or death” (p. 280)

Professor Colin Brown, currently at Fuller Seminary, CA

- The title ‘Son of God’ is not in itself a designation of personal deity or an expression of metaphysical distinctions within the Godhead. Indeed to be a ‘Son of God’ one has to be a being who is *not* God.’
- (“Trinity and Incarnation,” *Ex Auditu*, 7, 1991)
- It is a common but patent misreading of John’s gospel to read it as if it said: ‘In the beginning was the Son, and **the Son** was with God and the **Son was God.**’ What has happened here is the substitution of Son for word (logos), and the Son is thus made a member of the Godhead which existed from the beginning. (*Ex Auditu*, 7, 1991)

Colin Brown and unitarians

- “I thought you would appreciate hearing that you [AB] were given honorable mention by Dr. Colin Brown in class the other day. He briefly commented on how the NT does not establish a trinitarian creed and that there are some scholars who do not follow the early church’s venture to establish such a doctrine. He mentioned one such scholar with whom he has a warm friendship, who teaches in Atlanta, an Englishman such as himself: you.” (27th March, 2007)
- **Dr. J.A.T Robinson,** Professor of NT at Cambridge, *Twelve NT Essays*
- “John is as undeviating a witness as any in the New Testament to the unitary monotheism of Judaism.” (John 17:3; 5:44)

Professor Mackey on Preexistence

- “It is best to begin with the problem of preexistence, not only because there are linguistic difficulties here, because it leads directly into the main difficulties encountered in all Incarnational and Trinitarian theology. As soon as we recoil from the suggestion that something can preexist itself, we must wonder what exactly preexists what else, and in what sense it does so” (*The Christian Experience of God as Trinity*, p. 51).
 - “It does not take a systematician of any extraordinary degree of perspicacity to notice how exegetes themselves are the unconscious victims in the course of their most professional work of quite dogmatic (that is, uncritical) systematic assumptions.”

Dr. Simon Gathercole, *The Preexistent Son*, 2006, p.9

- That there is no preexistence in the synoptics certainly would represent the **majority view of commentators**.
- Raymond Brown notes the fundamental difference between the Virgin Birth and preexistence. In preexistence christology, conception cannot be a real begetting. For Kuschel the absence of preexistence is virtually determined by the presence of the virginal conception.

Dr. Simon Gathercole *The Preexistent Son*, by, 2006, p. 41

- [In preexistence christology] “it is the person of Jesus who is continuous with the preexistent one.”
- [This means that no new person came into existence in Mary, thus eliminating the Son of David/Son of God/New Adam/New creation]

Dr. H.R. Mackintosh, on Preexistence

- We need have no hesitation in confessing that the preexistence of Christ outstrips our faculty of conception, and that no theoretic refinements alter this in the very least. Christ cannot after all be preexistent in any sense except that in which God himself is so relatively to the incarnation... When we speak of the preexistent one, what is, as logicians say, the subject of discourse? *Who* preexists? Not the historical Jesus, exactly as he is known in the Gospels. The church has never affirmed that the humanity of Christ was real prior to the birth in Bethlehem [note how Jesus has been reduced to ‘human nature’ which is NOT the Son of David, and thus not the Messiah]... These are a few of the perplexities we meet in the effort to derive from history the content of ‘the Preexistent.’
- ...And if problems so baffling gather around it, the pretemporal being of the Son cannot surely be a datum for faith [but you may be excommunicated for not believing it today!]
- (*The Person of Jesus Christ*, 1912, p. 457, 8)

Dr. A Reville, *History of the Dogma of the Deity of Christ*, 1905

- Gospel of the Hebrews made the holy spirit the mother of Jesus. “My mother the holy spirit,” Jesus is made to say. For the NT writers Jesus was not the less a man, but a man born miraculously. **No thought either of preexistence or of Incarnation was associated in their minds with the doctrine of the Virgin Birth.** The fact is that the two ideas cannot be reconciled.
- A Preexistent being who becomes man, reduces himself, if you will, to the state of a human embryo; but he is not *conceived* by action exterior to himself in the womb of a woman. Conception is the point at which an individual is formed, who did not exist before, at least as an individual.”

Dr. Hanz Schwartz, *Christology*, p. 236

- Preexistence should not be construed to mean that Jesus waited in some heavenly realm until the time ‘was fully come,’ and he could be incarnated. As the analogy and even interchangeability of logos, sophia, and Jesus indicates, preexistence does not imply a preexistent **person** but the certainty and insistence that that which appeared in the human form of Jesus of Nazareth was indeed of divine origin and had occurred with divine sanction.

Hastings Bible Dictionary. Vol. 5, p. 696, on Micah 5:2

- “The reference to the remote antiquity from which the origin of the Messiah dates... Deut 32:7 shows that this is the meaning of *y’me olam* (not ‘days of eternity’ as if what were spoken of were the eternal preexistence of the Messiah).”
- **New Int. Dict. of OT Theology and exegesis** (Vol. 3:347):Micah 5:2 predicts the coming of a Messianic King from Bethlehem whose origin was “from old, from ancient times.” Here the phrase could well refer to the pristine days of the Davidic monarchy (as the reference to Bethlehem, David’s hometown suggests. It probably expresses the hope for the new David who would take control of the decrepit monarchy and restore Israel’s glory (Cp. Ezek.34:23-24; 37:24-25. While it is tempting to see here a reference to the eternal preexistence of the Messiah, no such an idea is found in biblical or post-biblical Jewish literature before the time of the similitudes of Enoch, 1st cent. BC – 1st cent AD (I Enoch 48:2-6). Joel 2:2 says that the Day of the Lord is such as “never was of old,” the phrase essentially means forever. There has never been a day like it before.

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Dr. Dean Inge

- The intelligent study of Christianity is impossible without knowledge of Greek and Roman religion. We generally assume that there is an unbroken line of continuity between the religion of the Jews and our own, and that there is none between paganism and Christianity. But the opposite is the truth...
- The Catholic Church was the last creative achievement of classical antiquity; it owes far more to Greece and Rome than to Palestine... Christian ethics are a blend of Platonic and Stoic teachings about the good life” (*Lay Thoughts of a Dean*)

Dr. Hans Schwarz, *Christology*, 1998

- “Preexistence should not be construed to mean that Jesus waited in some heavenly realm until ‘the time was fully come’ and then he could be incarnated. As the analogy and even interchangeability of word, wisdom and Jesus indicates, preexistence does not imply a preexistent PERSON but the certainty and insistence that that which appeared in the human form of Jesus of Nazareth was indeed of divine origin and had occurred with divine sanction” (p. 236)

Marcellus of Ancyra on Trinity

- On the basis of a work of Valentinus, entitled *On the Three Natures*, Marcellus claimed that the latter was the first to conceive of a trinity of Father, Son and Holy Spirit (Ps. Anthimus, *de sancta ecclesia*, 9 = Valentinus frag. 9)
- Alistair Logan, *Gnostic Truth and Christian Heresy*, 1996, p. 60

Dr. Logan on Trinity

- It would only make sense for Gnostics claiming to be Christians and evidently influenced by the 4th Gospel and its community, to compose a pseudegraphical work in the name of John, son of Zebedee, when the Gospel had come to be accepted in the Great Church, i.e. by the time of Irenaeus and Theophilus. The next stage of adding the frame story, developing the *pronoia-epinoia* scheme with its final *pronoia* hymn... dates from the last quarter of the second century” (p. 44).
- [Note the frame story implies putting the picture into a new frame– reframing the theology of John as the Apocryphon of John, Jesus talking to John personally. Composing a new story, or plot, just as the Da Vinci code composes a new plot, altering the story drastically]

Strongs Concordance on Logos

- **3056** logos (log'-os), word
- **Meaning:** 1) of speech 1a) **a word**, uttered by a living voice, embodies a conception or idea 1b) what someone has said 1b1) a word 1b2) the sayings of God 1b3) decree, mandate or order 1b4) of the moral precepts given by God 1b5) Old Testament prophecy given by the prophets 1b6) what is declared, a thought, declaration, aphorism, a weighty saying, a dictum, a maxim 1c) discourse 1c1) the act of speaking, speech 1c2) the faculty of speech, skill and practice in speaking 1c3) a kind or style of speaking 1c4) a continuous speaking discourse - instruction 1d) doctrine, teaching 1e) anything reported in speech; a narration, narrative 1f) matter under discussion, thing spoken of, affair, a matter in dispute, case, suit at law 1g) the thing spoken of or talked about; event, deed 2) its use as respect to the MIND alone 2a) reason, the mental faculty of thinking, meditating, reasoning, calculating 2b) account, i.e. regard, consideration 2c) account, i.e. reckoning, score 2d) account, i.e. answer or explanation in reference to judgment 2e) relation, i.e. with whom as judge we stand in relation 2e1) reason would 2f) reason, cause, ground 3) In John, denotes the essential Word of God, Jesus Christ, the personal wisdom and power in union with God, his minister in creation and government of the universe, the cause of all the world's life both physical and ethical, which for the procurement of man's salvation put on human nature in the person of Jesus the Messiah, the second person in the Godhead, and shone forth conspicuously from His words and deeds.

Strongs on God (*theos*)

- **2316** theos {theh'-os}
- **Meaning:** 1) a god or goddess, a general name of deities or divinities 2) the Godhead, trinity [no verse given! There is none]. 2a) God the Father, the first person in the trinity 2b) Christ, the second person of the trinity 2c) Holy Spirit, the third person in the trinity 3) spoken of the only and true God 3a) refers to the things

of God 3b) his counsels, interests, things due to him 4) whatever can in any respect be likened unto God, or resemble him in any way 4a) God's representative or vice-regent 4a1) of magistrates and judges

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- **Origin:** of uncertain affinity; a deity, especially (with 3588) the supreme Divinity; TDNT - 3:65,322; n m
- **NAB Notes on Psalm 110:1**
- <1> [Psalm 110] A royal psalm in which a court singer recites three oracles in which God assures the king that his enemies are conquered (Psalm 110:1-2), makes the king "son" in traditional adoption language (Psa. 110:3), gives priestly status to the king and promises to be with him in future military ventures (Psalm 110:4-7). <2> The LORD says to you, my lord: literally, "The LORD says to my lord," a polite form of address of an inferior to a superior. Cf. 1 Sam 25:25; 2 Sam 1:10. The court singer refers to the king. Jesus in the synoptic gospels (Matthew 22:41-46 and parallels) takes the psalmist to be David and hence "my lord" refers to the Messiah, who must be someone greater than David. Your footstool: in ancient times victorious kings put their feet on the prostrate bodies of their enemies.

Strong's on ADON (lord)

- **0113** 'adown {aw-done'} or (shortened) 'adon {aw-done'}
- **Meaning:** 1) firm, strong, lord, master 1a) lord, master 1a1) reference to men 1a1a) superintendent of household, of affairs 1a1b) master 1a1c) king 1a2) reference to God 1a2a) the Lord God 1a2b) Lord of the whole earth 1b) lords, kings 1b1) reference to men 1b1a) proprietor of hill of Samaria 1b1b) master 1b1c) husband 1b1d) prophet 1b1e) governor 1b1f) prince 1b1g) king 1b2) reference to God 1b2a) Lord of lords (probably = "thy husband, Yahweh") 1c) my lord, my master 1c1) reference to men 1c1a) master 1c1b) husband 1c1c) prophet 1c1d) prince 1c1e) king 1c1f) father 1c1g) Moses 1c1h) priest 1c1i) theophanic angel 1c1j) captain 1c1k) general recognition of superiority 1c2) reference to God 1c2a) my Lord, my Lord and my God 1c2b) Adonai (parallel with Yahweh)
- **Origin:** from an unused root (meaning to rule); TWOT - 27b; n m
- **Usage:** AV - lord 197, master(s) 105, Lord 31, owner 1, sir 1; 335
- **J. Skinner**, D.D. pointed out in 1902 in his *Cambridge Commentary for Schools and Colleges*, p. 94: "Isa. 49:14. 'my Lord,' better as RV, The Lord. The word when pointed as here (ADONAI) is always equivalent to Yahweh. The suggestion that it may be used in the sense of husband (Gen. 18:12) would require a different vocalization (ADONI)." [my lord, never a ref. to Deity]
-
- Robert Morey, *Jesus is God*, 1983, cannot read the Hebrew!
- "Jesus' reference was to the **oft-quoted Ps. 110:1**, readily acknowledged by the Jews of his day to be both Davidic and Messianic, where King David called the Christ 'my Lord', using one of the names of Deity, Adonai." (p. 321)
- "Messiah' was not merely David's son after the flesh by genealogical descent, he was God's Son in eternity past— one known and loved and acknowledged by David..."
- "Incidentally note the Trinitarian reference in this passage, Jehovah, Adonai, Spirit!" (p. 321)

Strong's on *gennao*, beget, procreate, cause to exist

- **Meaning:** 1) of men who fathered children 1a) to be born 1b) to be begotten 1b1) of women giving birth to children 2) metaph. 2a) to engender, cause to arise, excite 2b) in a Jewish sense, of one who brings others over to his way of life, to convert someone 2c) of God making Christ his son 2d) of God making men his sons through faith in Christ's work
- **Origin:** from a variation of 1085; TDNT - 1:665,114; v
- **Usage:** AV - begat 49, be born 39, bear 2, gender 2, bring forth 1, be delivered 1, misc 3; 97
- **5685** Tense - Aorist (See 5777) Voice - Passive (See 5786) Mood - Participle (See 5796) Count - 215
- **1080** *gennao* {ghen-nah'-o}
- **Geneva Bible Notes:**

- Mat 1:20 but while he pondered on these things, behold, an angel of *the* Lord appeared to him in a dream, saying, Joseph, son of David, fear not to (1) take to *thee* Mary, thy (2) wife, for that which is (3) begotten in her is of *the* Holy Spirit.
- Youngs Literal Trans: **Matthew 1:20** And on his thinking of these things, lo, a messenger of the Lord in a dream appeared to him, saying, 'Joseph, son of David, thou mayest not fear to receive Mary thy wife, for that which in her was begotten is of the Holy Spirit'"
- DBY **Matthew 1:20** but while he pondered on these things, behold, an angel of *the* Lord appeared to him in a dream, saying, Joseph, son of David, fear not to take to *thee* Mary, thy wife, for that which is begotten in her is of *the* Holy Spirit.

Thayer's Lexicon on *gennao*

- Passive, *to be begotten*: *to en aute gennethen* 'that which is **begotten** in her womb,' Matt. 1:20.

Bauer's Lexicon on *Gennao*

- **1624 gennao**
- • See A Rahlfs, Genesis 1926, 39. Generate, to cause something to come into existence, primarily through procreation or parturition.
- **1. become the parent of, beget**

Liddell and Scott on *Gennao*

- **8263 gennao**
- *Gennao.*) Causal of *gignomai*. of the father, *to beget, engender*, Aesch., Soph.; rarely of the mother, *to bring forth*, Aesch.

German on I John 5:18

Munchener NT, 1998

- MNT **1 John 5:18** Wir wissen, daß jeder aus Gott Gezeugte nicht sündigt, sondern der aus Gott **Gezeugte** bewahrt ihn, und der Böse berührt ihn nicht.
- [the one begotten, Jesus, protects him, the believer]
-

My Question to Dr. Paula Fredriksen

- I have read your interesting account of early Christianity and gained much from your research and vigorous writing. I do have an observation on a point which has been of concern to me as a teacher of NT and biblical languages. You say on p. 139 that Ps. 110:1 refers to the Messiah as *adonai*. But this is not actually so. The Hebrew is not the divine title *Adonai*, Lord God, but *adoni*, my lord, RV, RSV, etc.
- It seems to me that this is rather a crucial issue, since the early Christians were not thinking of Jesus as the Lord God, as *kurios*=Yahweh, but as the human lord Messiah (Luke 2:11) *Adoni* as opposed to *Adonai*, is not the divine title in all of its 195 occurrences.

Reply from Dr. Frederiksen

- Thank you for this note. I have just grabbed my Jewish Bible. You are absolutely right. I made a mistake. My English transliteration is wrong (also misleading) and I will take advantage of your notice to me to fix it in the next printing. I am terribly grateful to you for bringing this to my attention. We all depend on each other. Yours with thanks.

The Torah of Christ (Gal. 6:2; I Cor. 9:21)

"In rabbinical circles there was talk of the Torah of Messiah... a new interpretation of the Old Torah, not a suppression of it, but in some sense a new Torah: Midrash on Qoh (Ecc.) 11, 8: "The Torah which a man learns in this world is nothing compared with the Torah of Messiah.

(Strack-Billerbeck, Vol. 3, p. 577)

Prof. Dale Brown of Bethany Seminary, on Abrahamic Faith

Aug. 4, 1992

- “It is an honor to have had the privilege of working with a student who edits a Journal of substance and impeccable diction and style. What you and your church put together as theology increasingly makes more sense to me.” cont.d, 145

Henry Alford on II Pet. 1:2

- Undoubtedly as in Titus 2:13, in strict grammatical propriety, both God and savior would be predicates of Jesus Christ. But here as also in Titus 2:13, considerations interpose which seem to remove the strict grammatical rendering out of the range of probable meaning.
- In II Pet. 1:1 I think that God refers to the Father and the savior Jesus Christ to the Son. Here there is the additional consideration in favour of the view that the Two are distinguished most plainly in the next verse.

Professor Brown of Bethany Seminary

- “I wonder whether your Journal [*Journal from the Radical Reformation*] is getting the reviews and reading it deserves. I wonder about the nature of the dialogue, if any, you may have with liberal Unitarians. The revised hermeneutic of premillennialism is both prophetic and useful to many rooted in or attracted to the chiliastic tradition.”

Dr. John Meagher (three PhD’s)

- “I think it is relevant for me to say that I am a professor of theology and of New Testament at a Roman Catholic institution...and that I think that your publication *Focus on the Kingdom* is theologically important, however much it may be neglected by the sector that I thus represent. You address radically important issues in Christian theology which are entirely appropriate because in fact the theological exercise is only adolescent and in need of further guidance. I think you are doing a good work that I hope will eventually have an impact on my own church tradition. There is much work to be done before we can, collectively, think clearly, and I am glad that your magazine’s honesty about these things is so unflinching. What you are doing strikes me as a very important contribution. And I thank you for it.”(2002)

John Morris

- Anthony, I know that you don’t like the praise, at least it is not your own lips, but I can hardly be silent. I feel like you are my ‘father’ in the faith. I wouldn’t know how else to put it. I have literally been in darkness, and Oh, how dark it has been. Your broadcast and the conviction of the spirit of the Lord have been my salvation. I shudder to think of the hardness which would have been built up in my heart if I had not received the truth of what you have spoken. All praise to Him who has called us to be His own. How thankful I am. Life in Christ has never been so sweet. Thank you for your obedience to Him. Until next time I remain your brother in the Beloved. (March, 2000)

Worship

- “Worship was sometimes offered to Christ and prayer addressed to him. Some indefiniteness attaches to this subject, partly owing to the two senses of the Gk. *Proskuneo*.
- It cannot be proved in any of the cases where *proskuneo* is used of Jesus that anything more than an act of homage and humble obeisance is intended. Josephus uses the word of the High Priests (BJ, iv 5. 2)... The physical act of prostration in profound humility and as rendering great honor is all that can be meant... The prayers of the saints are presented to him (Rev. 5:8) and songs are sung in honor of him (9. 11, 12). II Cor. 12: 8, 9 Paul speaks of praying to Christ (lord).”
- (*HDB*, Vol. 4, p. 943, W.F. Adeney)

William Barclay on John’s human Jesus

- The blood at the cross was the final unanswerable proof [for John] that Jesus was a real man with a real body. Here was the answer to the gnostics with their ideas of phantoms and spirits and unreal manhood. Here was proof that Jesus was bone of our bone and flesh of our flesh (*Comm.* II, p. 304)

Marcellus of Ancyra

- **"Now with the heresy of the Ariomaniacs, which has corrupted the Church of God...These then teach three hypostases, just as Valentinus the heresiarch first invented in the book entitled by him 'On the Three Natures'. For he was the first to invent three hypostases and three persons of the Father, Son and**

Holy Spirit, and he is discovered to have filched this from [Hermes](#) and Plato." (Source: Logan A. Marcellus of Ancyra (Pseudo-Anthimus), 'On the Holy Church': Text, Translation and Commentary. Verses 8-9. *Journal of Theological Studies*, NS, Volume 51, Pt. 1, April 2000, p.95).

Dr. Hinrich Wendt on John 17:3

- Jesus is not speaking in John 17:3 about eternal life, as to its *essence*, but about how eternal life is to **be obtained**. 'Jesus is the resurrection' means that Jesus is the answer to the question about how we get resurrected... **his words are the means to achieving eternal life (6:63)**... John 17:3 tells us that the knowledge of God and Messiah is the exclusive and perfect means of obtaining eternal life... Jesus was sent to impart life for ever... in 6:63 he was conscious that a divine spiritual power operated [energized] through his preaching – a power shared in by all who received his message in faith (*Teaching of Jesus*, 244-247) [Cp. I Thess. 2:13]

Dr. Bultmann, *Primitive Christianity*.(1956)

- The proclamation of Jesus must be considered within the framework of **Judaism**. Jesus was not a "Christian" but a Jew and his preaching is couched in the thought forms and imagery of Judaism" (p. 71).

Isidore Epstein, *Judaism*, 1959

- Philo's conception of the logos was totally alien to Judaism. The God of the Bible is a living God, not the impersonal being of Greek metaphysics. He does employ intermediaries to execute His will, but is certainly not inactive Himself. Furthermore the conception of the Logos as a second God seemed to impair the absolute monotheism of the Jewish religion... all this accounts for the little influence Philo exerted on Jewish thought. His works were however studied eagerly by Church Fathers who found in them much material for the synthesis of Jewish and Greek thought that came to be known as Christian theology. (p. 198)

Basil of Caesarea, on holy spirit, 18, 44

- **We confess one God, not in number but in nature.**
-
- **Gregory of Nazianzus**, "The divine is indivisible in its divisions." (*Oration 31*, 14)

Dr. J. S Whale, *Christian Doctrine*. 1952

- "Christian thought, working with the data of the NT and using Greek philosophy as its instrument, constructed the doctrine of the Trinity in Unity. It acknowledged in the Godhead, not one Individual, nor three Individuals, but a personal unity...
- The systematic thought of **the church** inevitably involved **a further definition of monotheism [goes beyond]**, an elaboration of the unitary conception of the Godhead, not in terms of Tritheism but of Triunity

Dr. Gromachi

- "Nor did Jesus ever use 'we' or 'us' in reference to his theanthropic [God-Man] person. **He always used 'I' or 'me' because he was just one person.**")(*The Virgin Birth: A Biblical Study of the Deity of Jesus Christ*)
- [God also described himself as 'I' and 'Me' 'He' because He was one Person. Thousands of singular personal pronouns tell us that God is a single Person. This elementary fact of language known to all has been submerged and drowned out by the massive counter-power of ecclesiastical authority]

Dr. Harold O.J. Brown, *Heresies*, 1984, p. 341

- There was a transition within biblical monotheism, itself: from **the unitary monotheism of Israel** to the Trinitarianism of the Council of Chalcedon. The difference was symbolized by the transition from the prayer 'Hear O Israel the Lord our God is one Lord' to the confession of the Athanasian Creed, 'we worship one God in Trinity and Trinity in Unity.'
- "Was the transition from the personal monotheism of Israel to the tripersonal theism of Nicea a legitimate development of OT revelation? Christians affirm that it is, holding that Nicea represents a fuller unfolding and not a distortion of the self-disclosure of the God of Israel... a valid and necessary interpretation of the claims of Jesus Christ."

Me on Harold Brown:

- If the Trinity was a valid interpretation of the claims of Jesus Christ, how is it that **Jesus' own claim** was that he fully believed in the Shema of Israel (Mark 12:29) which Brown *admits* was unitary monotheism.
- The evidence shows that Christians have 'progressed' beyond Jesus and II John 7 warns against going beyond the teaching of Jesus. Jesus' teaching—his affirming of the unitarian creed of Israel—remains as a witness against Trinitarianism. Why don't Christians follow Christ?

Luther on Isa. 48:16, used by some to support the Trinity:

- "This passage has been amazingly darkened. The Jews understand it of the prophet and this opinion I adopt.... It will not validly support the mystery of the Trinity."

Dr. Joseph Klausner on Messiah

- Paul the Jew did not go so far as to call Jesus "God" (*Messianic Idea*, p. 528).

Klausner on the false development

- "The second step was to identify Jesus with the Word [losing the message behind the messenger] by which the world was created acc. to Judaism Aboth 5:1, or with the Logos which for Philo is a sort of angelic being. This identification we find in John [no]. It was natural that Gentiles whom Paul brought into Christianity should take the third and final step and make Jesus a God-Man, one Person with two natures, God and man at the same time. Thus Jesus' Messiahship was gradually obscured. Jesus the Messiah gave way to Jesus the God-man or the God Jesus. And matters finally reached such a pass that the name Christ became the essential cognomen of Jesus (Jesus Christ and not Jesus the Messiah) The Messiahship of Jesus became secondary to his deity (p. 528)

Dr. W. A. Brown, *Outline of Christian Theology*

- **Steps to the Trinity:** The first is the identification of the preexistent Christ with the Logos of Greek philosophy. 2) Origen's doctrine of eternal generation of the Son. 3) the victory at Nicea of the Athanasian formula "of the same substance."

The Fatal Shift under Justin Martyr (Brown)

150 AD

- In the theology of Justin and the apologists we note a change of emphasis. Here the preexistent Christ is identified with the Logos of Greek philosophy, and whatever the philosophers have attributed to the latter is affirmed of Christ. The **human Jesus falls into the background** and the marks of limitation in his life [he is ignorant of the day of his return] are either overlooked or explained away. The Catholic fathers vindicate the orthodoxy of the Logos and against the simple Messianic christology [Matt. and Luke give this in detail] and so determine the lines of the **later dogmatic** development.
- Finally note the brilliant testimony of the three young men about to be burned alive by Nebuchadnezzar for refusing belief in other than the God of Israel. The LXX of Dan 3:17 (cp John 17:3!) reads "our one Lord... will save us."
- One Lord is one Person! Three can never make one.

The One God, the Father, One Man Messiah Version

A Pre-Trinitarian Translation of the New Testament, Restoring Clarity on the One God, the Messiah and the Gospel of the Kingdom, by Anthony Buzzard

Introduction

“The Deity of Jesus is inherently un-Jewish. The witness of Jewish texts is unvarying belief that a second being in God involves departure from the Jewish community.”^{3[1]}

“According to the New Testament witnesses, in the teaching of Jesus and the Apostles relative to the monotheism of the Old Testament and Judaism, there had been no element of change whatsoever. Mark 12:29 recorded the confirmation by Jesus himself, without any reservation, of the supreme monotheistic confession of faith of Israelite religion in its complete form.”^{4[2]}

This translation has as its premise the conviction that the Church today, in its preaching, teaching and tradition, generally gives you a strongly Greek philosophically-influenced version of the NT. This unfortunate departure from the original faith of Jesus and the Apostles dates from the second century AD, that is, after the canon of the NT closed with the book of Revelation. A full reformation and return to the beliefs of the NT Church did not occur in the 16th-century Reformation under Luther and Calvin.

The tragic lapse from apostolic truth leads you away from the original NT community’s essentially simple account of the faith — “the faith once and for all delivered to the people of God” (Jude 3). Voices of protest and alarm, among many, may be cited in support of our thesis, Eberhard Griesebach, Canon Goudge, Dean Farrar, and Dr. E.F. Scott and Dr. Martin Werner.

Griesebach wrote: “In its encounter with Greek philosophy Christianity became theology. That was the fall of Christianity.”^{5[3]} Anglican Canon Goudge: “When the Greek and Roman mind instead of the Hebrew mind came to dominate the Church there occurred a disaster in doctrine and practice from which we have never recovered.” Anglican Dean Farrar was frank enough to concede that the Church has constantly made a mess of its attempt to interpret the Bible. He notes that “Holy Scripture contains everything necessary for salvation” (6th Article of the Church of England) and that “the plain teachings of Christ are the sole infallible guide.” He then laments the evident failure of expositors to agree on what the Bible says. “Truly, if over the whole extent of what we call ‘religion’ men have an infallible guide, they have — and that to all appearances inevitably — regarded it worse than useless by fallible expositions.”^{6[4]}

Then this marvelous insight from E. F. Scott, D.D. “Christianity, in the course of the Gentile mission, had changed into another religion. The Church...had forgotten or refused to know what Jesus had actually taught.”^{7[5]}

If the Bible is taken at face value within its brilliant, Jewish apocalyptic setting,^{8[6]} “sooner or later the time will come when the simple and natural will be recognized as the true.”

Dr. Martin Werner’s summary of the early chaos which overcame the Messianic Jesus and his teaching deserves the widest possibly hearing:

“The cause of the Trinitarian-Christological problem, which so perplexed Post-Apostolic Christianity, lay in the transition from the apocalyptic Messiah-Son of Man concept of the Primitive Christian eschatological faith, with its sense of imminence, to the new dogma of the Divinity of Jesus. There was certainly no need nor justification... to substitute for the original concept of the Messiah, simply a Hellenistic analogy, such as that of redeeming Divine Being...Indeed it was wholly invalid. It was a myth behind which the historical Jesus completely disappeared...”^{9[7]}

Christian Becker in *Paul’s Apocalyptic Gospel* points out that the shift from Jesus’ and Paul’s apocalyptic Gospel of the Kingdom “constitutes something like a fall of Christendom.” He calls this rightly “a fall from the apocalyptic world of early Christianity to Platonic categories of thought.” This had “a tremendous impact on the history of Christian thought,” bringing about “an alienation of Christianity from its original Jewish matrix.”^{10[8]}

Translations, particularly some modern ones like the NIV (New International Version), “help” the reader to see things in the New Testament which reinforce his or her impression that later “orthodoxy” is solidly biblical. But this involves “pushing” the Greek text beyond what it actually says. This unfair process is an attempt to justify the later *departure* from the original faith. It smoothes over the embarrassing difference between the original Greek Scripture of

^{3[1]}Maurice Casey, *From Jewish Prophet to Gentile God*, p. 176.

^{4[2]}Dr. Martin Werner, *Formation of Christian Dogma*, p. 241.

^{5[3]}*Lecture on Christianity and Humanism*, 1938.

^{6[4]}*The Bible, Its Meaning and Supremacy*, 1897, p. 142.

^{7[5]}*The Kingdom of God in the New Testament*, p. 156.

^{8[6]}Albert Schweitzer, *Geschichte der Leben-Jesu-Forschung*, p. 597.

^{9[7]}*The Formation of Christian Dogma*, Harper and Bros., 1957, p. 298.

^{10[8]}Christian Becker, *Paul’s Apocalyptic Gospel: the Coming Triumph of God*, 1982, pp. 107, 108,

the original community of faith and what from the 2nd century developed as a tragic departure from the biblical orthodoxy of Jesus and Paul.

The most striking example of this embarrassing difference between Jesus and the beliefs of those claiming to follow him is the unitarian creed affirmed with maximum emphasis by Jesus in discussion with a colleague Jew (Mark 12:28ff.). On this critical passage of scripture the Church has adopted an alarming posture of silence! (Often it is what we do *not* say which gives away a flaw in our thinking.)

In that marvelously instructive passage of Scripture a Jewish scholar had asked Jesus about what is the *most critically important command of all*. Jesus replied by endorsing the monumentally significant creed of Israel's heritage, the core of all true religion: "The Lord our God is one Lord" (as read from the NT Greek, citing the LXX, Greek version of the OT). This is a unitary monotheistic and certainly not a Trinitarian creed. "One" is a quantifier, a simple, mathematical numeral, and God is defined here, as innumerable times in the Hebrew Bible and the NT as one *single* divine Lord, one Person, one divine Self. One Yahweh. He is so described by thousands of singular personal pronouns, which as we all know designate a single person. Malachi 2:10 encapsulates with delightful simplicity, the totality of the Bible's view of God as one Person: "Do we not all have one Father? Has not one God created us?"

The importance of this point needs to be repeated: The clash between the original teachings of Jesus and what later emerged as Christianity is most starkly demonstrated by the failure of Bible readers to take with utmost seriousness Jesus' own unitarian, i.e. unitary monotheistic definition of God in Mark 12:29. In that classic passage Jesus is seen to be in total harmony with a friendly Jewish Bible scholar. In John 17:3 Jesus proposed as the key to the Life of the Age to Come (inadequately rendered in our versions as "eternal life") that we come to recognize and know the Father as "the only one who is true GOD" (cp. John 5:44). In John's writings the Father is equated with God nearly 150 times and in the NT it is obvious that "GOD" (often "*the* GOD" in the original Greek) means the Father and not Jesus. "God" means the Father about 1300 times in our NT.

The creed of Israel was never Trinitarian. Thus the fact that Jesus affirms and endorses the unitarian creed of Judaism (Mark 12:28ff) ought to provide a provocative and life-changing embarrassment to today's Church, which has ceased to quote and believe the creed of Jesus.^{11[9]} It has departed from Jesus at the most crucial level of all theological and spiritual endeavor. Thus Christianity is distinguished by the remarkable characteristic that it is the only world religion which begins by discarding its own founder's creed. Mark 12:29, and Jesus as our rabbi-teacher, not just one who provided forgiveness by dying for us, must be reinstated, if Bible study and preaching are to be honest with the Christian documents.

Well did Professor Karl-Heinz Ohlig write: "There is no indication that Jesus would have understood the 'Father,' from whom he felt himself to have been sent and to whom he felt himself to be related in a special way, differently from the monotheistic God of Judaism... This consensus of New Testament research need not be more closely examined here."^{12[10]}

There are places in some modern translations which plainly depart from the Greek in order to give the impression that the later "orthodoxy" is biblically based. A classic example is in Philippians 2:5 where the Son of God is described in the NIV as "being in very nature God." But this is a horrible imposition on the text, which says not a word about Jesus *being* God. The word "nature" here is meant to encourage the notion of a "GOD the Son" who is of the same "essence" as the Father. But "essence" and "hypostasis" belong to a theological vocabulary of post-biblical times, when the simplicity of the pristine belief in God the Father as "the only one who is true God" (John 17:3) had been lost.

The NIV commits a sort of treachery against the original text of Scripture when it reports Jesus as "going back" or "returning" to the Father (John 13:3; 16:28; 20:17). Jesus said no such thing. He said he was "going to the Father," not going *back* to Him. We note too that in a very subtle way the NIV does not want you to see that the Gospel (of the Kingdom) was preached equally by Jesus and Paul. Introducing the ministry of Jesus, it reports him as preaching "the Good News," while Paul is said to be preaching "the Gospel."

But that distinction is absent from the original Greek and encourages a discontinuity between Jesus and Paul. Both Jesus and Paul, who followed Jesus faithfully, preached the same saving Gospel of the Kingdom. It is misleading to

^{11[9]} "The *shema* was the prayer which all pious Jews were expected to recite three times daily... It occupied a similar special position in late Judaism to the Lord's prayer in Christianity." Dr. Anderson speaks of "the Church that did not any longer recite the *shema*. But here at least in his statement of the first commandment, Jesus stands foursquare within the orbit of Jewish piety" (Hugh Anderson, *New Century Bible Commentary on Mark*, p. 280). But on what authority was this fundamental teaching of Jesus defining the one true God discarded? The Church did not abandon the Lord's prayer! Why abandon his creed?

^{12[10]} *One or Three? From the Father of Jesus to the Trinity*, p. 31. The title in German was *Ein Gott in Drei Personen? Vom Vater Jesu zum "Mysterium" der Trinitat*, Matthias-Grunewald-Verlag, Mainz, 2000

translate *evangelion* for Jesus' preaching as Good News and the same word for Paul's preaching as Gospel. It points to a dangerous systematic error — that Jesus' teaching has been discarded in favor of a misunderstood "Gospel of Paul." We have failed to call Jesus "rabbi and lord" (John 13:13) when he everywhere urged us never to fall short of grasping and obeying his saving words (John 3:36; 12:44ff. cp. Heb. 5:9). C.S. Lewis reflects this mistake when he claims that "the Gospels are not the gospel, the statement of Christian belief."^{13[11]} It would be hard to imagine a more damaging blow to the saving words of Jesus. Billy Graham was mistaken too when he claimed that "Jesus came to do three days work, to die, to be buried and to rise."^{14[12]}

Using the standard Greek manuscripts as base (i.e., the text edited by Bruce Metzger) my hope is to bring into clear focus the very uncomplicated NT definition of God as the Father of Jesus and certainly not as Triune. We want to emphasize constantly the definition of the saving Gospel as the Gospel **about the Kingdom of God**, of which Jesus was the original and authoritative preacher (Heb. 2:3; Luke 4:43). I have of course gained immensely from all of some 60 modern translations, in various languages, available on the standard software used by scholars. These translations mostly convey the sense of the Greek in varied but entirely acceptable ways. However in certain key passages they misrepresent the Greek text, in an effort to portray Jesus as God the Son, second member of an eternal Trinity.

This second major objective, to define the saving Gospel as Jesus defined it, means restoring the voice and mind of Jesus to our Bible reading. At present the public never gets a clear concept of what Jesus preached as the saving Gospel. Our observation is that the "Gospel about the Kingdom," with which Jesus laid the foundation of all sound belief (Mark 1:14-15), is virtually absent from contemporary tracts, books and websites and blogs offering "salvation." The voice of Jesus, at the most fundamental level of defining the Gospel, has been silenced.

In place of the Gospel as Jesus preached it to the public we hear offered a very "washed out" version of the Gospel, geared largely to psychological self-improvement, or as Dallas Willard calls it, "gospels of sin management."^{15[13]} Popular evangelicalism has been emptied of its vivid, apocalyptic flavor, announcing the future of human society and warning of the future return of Jesus in judgment and to rule on a renewed earth. The Gospel announces God's future revolutionary government which will put an end to all war!

Without grasping the proper starting point, following Jesus himself, Bible readers are left with a hazy conception as to the definition and content of the saving Gospel. Paul is then often twisted by a selection of a few verses taken without regard to context. Romans 10:9-10 is typical, and Jesus' version of the Gospel is bypassed in the process. Paul did not contradict Jesus' insistence on the necessity of believing the Gospel of the Kingdom (Mark 1:14-15). Paul concludes Romans 10 (v. 17) by saying that faith comes by hearing and believing the "word [Gospel] of Christ," that is, the Gospel **Christ himself preached**. Paul is misunderstood (with the NIV, not the more accurate NASU) when he is made to say that one needs only to "hear of" Jesus, i.e. about him, when in fact one must "hear Jesus," that is, hear and respond intelligently to his own Gospel of the Kingdom message.

In 1 Corinthians 15:1-3 Paul should not be pitted against Jesus! Paul did not say there that the death and resurrection of Jesus comprise the *whole* Gospel. Those facts were items "amongst things of first importance." After all Jesus had preached the Gospel for years without, at that stage, so much as a mention of his death and resurrection, introduced first in Matthew 16:21.

My conviction about the absence of the center of the saving Gospel from popular preaching, as the Kingdom, is trenchantly stated by a professor of missiology. Dr. Mortimer Arias observed:

"We seem to be faced with **an eclipse of the Kingdom of God from the apostolic age to the present** particularly in our theology of evangelism. The Kingdom of God is God's own dream, His project for the world and for humanity. He makes us dreamers and He wants us to be seduced by his dream. It is not we who dream but God who dreams in us... **When I left the seminary I had no clear idea of the Kingdom of God, and I had no place in my theology for the Parousia (Second Coming). I had no concerns about the future.** Thousands of books are printed and circulated every year on evangelization. Most of these fall into the category of 'how to' manuals for churches (devising plans, strategies, methodologies, goals)... Our traditional mini-theologies — 'the plan of salvation,' 'four spiritual laws' — do not do justice to the *whole* Gospel. Not all this activity or activism is a sign of health or creativity. The Good News of the Kingdom is not the usual way we describe the Gospel and evangelization. The Kingdom of God has practically disappeared from evangelistic preaching and has been ignored by traditional evangelism.

"The evangelistic message has been centered in personal salvation, individual conversion, and incorporation into the church. The Kingdom of God as a parameter or perspective or content of the Gospel has been virtually absent.

^{13[11]}J.B. Phillips, *Letters to Young Churches*, Introduction. p. 9.

^{14[12]}"What is the Gospel?" Roy Gustafson, Billy Graham Association, 1980. Equally unbiblical is Billy Graham's notion of the prospect for believers of "polishing rainbows in heaven" and "preparing heavenly dishes" (*Hope for the Troubled Heart*, p. 214).

^{15[13]}*The Divine Conspiracy: Rediscovering Our Hidden Life in God*, p. 57.

Those interested in evangelism have not yet been interested in the Kingdom of God. Why not try Jesus' own definition of his mission — and ours? For Jesus evangelism was no more and no less than announcing the Kingdom of God.”^{16[14]}

My translation attempts to restore to the Gospel of the Kingdom the central prominence it always enjoys throughout the NT.

It is clear that Jesus was a Jew as the descendant of David. The most spectacular of his teachings — and all of his teachings will be our judge (John 12:44ff; Acts 17:32, etc) — is his impassioned affirmation of the *Shema* of Israel, found in Deuteronomy 6:4. This belief in the one and only single-Person God, the Father, is enthusiastically affirmed and agreed to by a Jewish scribe in Mark 12:28ff. On no account should any reader of the NT in its own context imagine that Jesus believed in the Trinity of post-biblical councils! In this translation I make a concerted effort to remind readers of the unitary monotheistic faith of the NT, the definition of the Son of God as the lord Messiah, who was born (Luke 2:11), and not a second Person of a Triune Godhead. God cannot be born and the immortal God cannot die.

A great deal of refreshing simplicity and peace of mind results from reading the writings of the NT community in their Jewish, first-century context. We are touching base with the original roots of the faith, and the NT comes alive in a brilliant way. Ignorance of the Bible produces a disastrous alienation from God (Eph. 4:18).

Evidently a lot of my fellow countrymen have abandoned the Bible entirely, since they go to Church regularly in the UK only at the rate of about 5%, and the rest only to be “hatched, matched and dispatched.”

The confusion caused by the later (from the early second century) fall from the original faith is gargantuan in its effects. It will take time to clear the air and defog our minds. We have been drinking toxic theology and the church needs to be decontaminated. But the effort is well worth it, although revolutions are never without pain.

Religion from the second century developed its own “improved version” of the biblical drama presented in Scripture. The Bible itself is a gripping drama, portraying the great Plan of God to bestow on human persons the gift of indestructible life, immortality. There will be peace on earth when the nations are required to beat swords into plowshares and learning to make war will never again be permitted. No one will be permitted to take a gun and shoot his neighbor. This sounds like good sense and Good News to me!

From the second century, the emerging Catholic Church created its own embroidered version of the Bible's original plot and thus lost the plot for itself and its billions of followers. At the same time the “improved version” created a powerful and wealthy hierarchy designed to suppress the ignorant and guarantee a huge prestige to its priest leaders. They capped this effort finally by declaring the chief leader, the Pope, to be infallible when speaking officially.

The spectacular drama of the *origin* of the unique Son of God, Jesus Messiah (*genesis*, Matt. 1:18), provided in the birth narratives of Matthew and Luke was given an additional tabloid twist when Mary, a teenage virgin, was said to be herself always sinless (the doctrine of “the immaculate conception”) and permanently a virgin, without sexual experience for her whole married life. Jesus' half brothers had then to be denied that status and turned into cousins (or children of Joseph by a previous marriage). Mary was said to have been assumed to heaven bodily without dying.

The Roman Catholic Church assumed power over the secular state as the Kingdom of God coming in advance of Jesus at his future Second Coming. In Scripture the nations of this present world system are never the Kingdom of God. The saints are *not* ruling at present (though they will), and Jesus is the only ultimately legitimate King and world ruler. The system of faith promoted by the “new improved version” of the biblical drama elevated priests as the only ones educated to minister the mysteries of the new faith. The laity were put under guardians.^{17[15]} The control of millions of minds was ensured and theological education was denied to all but leadership. The permanence of this massively powerful tradition was thus guaranteed.

The Protestant reformation in the 16th century was provoked by the obvious abuses of the inherited system, to call for change, but its reform was partial. The same mysterious Triune God continued to replace the single God of the Bible, the Father of Jesus. Jesus' unitarian heritage and definition of God, long suppressed by tradition, was not permitted in general to resurface from under the rubble of tradition which held the minds of the masses under its sway.

Heaven (or eternal hell) at death for “immortal souls” continued to replace the biblical vision of resurrection into the Kingdom of God on a renewed earth, which was the heart of the Hebrew dream of peace on earth, as well as the heart of the saving Gospel of the Kingdom announced by Jesus and the NT community.

^{16[14]} *Announcing the Reign of God*, 1984. For further quotations from leading authorities about the almost total absence of the Kingdom of God from church Gospel teaching, see my *The Coming Kingdom of the Messiah* (free at our website, restorationfellowship.org). For an excellent treatment of the NT Gospel of the Kingdom, see *The Gospel of the Kingdom* by Wiley Jones also at our site.

^{17[15]} Harnack, *History of Dogma*, 3: 8-10.

A smaller more radical wing of the Reformation was cruelly suppressed when it challenged the theology of the major Reformation led by Luther and Calvin. Englishman John Biddle, a school-master who exposed the error of the Trinity, had the “honor” of having an act of the British parliament passed against him and he died in prison. His crime was merely to have pointed to the unvarnished simplicity of Jesus’ own definition of God in the Shema, the “Hear O Israel” of Deuteronomy 6:4 and Mark 12:29. The brilliant Spanish scholar Michael Servetus was burned at the stake at the instigation of Protestant reformer John Calvin, in an act of mindless and unrepented brutality. Servetus’ “crime” was having shown that the Trinity is not a biblical doctrine. Does the public know of this atrocity in the name of religion?

The emerging Church achieved an enormous success by adding a number of show-stopping features to its version of the biblical drama. However the casualty in this unfortunate development was the original divine drama of Scripture in two acts, offering to suffering mankind the hope of immortality and a place of responsibility in the future Kingdom of God on earth, when Jesus returns to take up his position on the restored throne of David. The original storyline and plot of the divine drama in the pages of Scripture was replaced with a dazzling but perverted story, a mixture of paganism and Scripture. Once we lose the plot of the astonishing drama, Scripture becomes confusing, Church tradition takes over and intelligent Bible reading is obstructed.

Professor J. Harold Ellens makes our point, based on the clear testimony to what the Church has done with its central figure:

“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...**not in the central tradition of biblical theology...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 appeal and with neither a divine nor a unique revelation from Jesus Christ nor from God**” (*The Ancient Library of Alexandria and Early Christian Theological Development*).

The “complication” of God through the addition of two other Persons to the God known to Jesus led inevitably to the complication of the Messianic personality of Jesus. Once he became God, true monotheism was violated. The result: “Jesus Christ was now no longer a man of flesh and blood like ourselves, but a [preexisting] heavenly being of supernatural origin in human form. With the help of a metaphysical system taken over from Greek philosophy, Christological dogma came into being, and an attempt was made to describe the person of Jesus Christ in the form of the so-called ‘doctrine of two natures.’ ‘Jesus Christ, true man and true God.’ So men said...From the very beginning right up until the present day the Church has been tempted to stress the ‘divinity’ of Christ so one-sidedly that his ‘manhood’ threatened to become a mere semblance. In this Jesus Christ was made an historical abnormality...What happened to this Christ was no longer the fate of a man, but the fate of a remarkable shadowy fairy-tale figure, half man and half God...Man has woven a golden veil of pious adoration, love and superstition and spread it over the rugged contours of God’s action in history” (Zahrnt, *The Historical Jesus*, 1963, p. 29).

Theologians lost themselves in a maze of obfuscating language, and indignation at this lamentable exercise was well expressed by Harvard Professor Andrews Norton in 1833, in his *Statement of Reasons for not Believing the Doctrines of Trinitarians*. He begins with a scathing attack on the complex issue of how Jesus can be 100% God and 100% man at the same time: “The doctrine of the communication of properties, says Leclerc, ‘is as intelligible as if one were to say that there is a circle which is so united with the triangle, that the circle has the properties of the triangle, and the triangle those of the circle.’ It is discussed at length by Petavius with his usual redundance of learning. The vast folio of that writer containing the history of the Incarnation [and Trinity], **is one of the most striking and most melancholy monuments of human folly which the world has to exhibit.** In the history of other departments of science we find abundant errors and extravagances; but orthodox theology seems to have been the peculiar region of words without meaning; of doctrines confessedly false in their proper sense, and explained in no other; of the most portentous absurdities put forward as truths of the highest import; and of contradictory propositions thrown together without an attempt to reconcile them. A main error running through the whole system, as well as other systems of false philosophy, is that words possess an intrinsic meaning, not derived from the usage of men; that they are not mere signs of human ideas, but a sort of real entities, capable of signifying what transcends our conceptions, and that when they express **to human reason only an absurdity** they may still be significant of a high mystery or a hidden truth, and are to be believed without being understood.”

From Cambridge in recent years comes an impressive analysis of the disaster that occurred when the Jewish Jesus was replaced by a pre-existing Eternal Son. The consequences of the process of reinterpretation by which the Son of God became identified with “God the Son” are far-reaching indeed. Professor Lampe points out that when the Son was projected back on to an eternally existing pre-human Son, and when the holy spirit was turned into a third “hypostasis”: “The Christian concept of God then becomes inescapably **tritheistic**. This is because three ‘persons’ in anything like the modern sense of the word ‘person’ means in fact **three Gods**...The effects especially in popular piety have been even more far-reaching than this. The Nicene Creed speaks of ‘Jesus Christ’ in person, not the Logos as preexistent...It is thus the Jesus of the gospels whom the imagination of the worshipper pictures as pre-existing in heaven and descending to earth.” There is “the absurdity of the picture of Jesus reflected in much traditional devotion which is essentially that of a superman^{18[16]} who voluntarily descends into the world of ordinary mortals, choosing, by a deliberate act of will, to be born as man...God the Son is conceptualized as Jesus, Son of God; the obedience of Jesus, the Servant of God and Son of God, the true Adam indwelt and inspired by God’s spirit, is attributed to God the Son; God the Son becomes eternally the subject of Jesus’ self-dedication to his Father’s will, and eternally the object of the Father’s love...This means in effect the **abandonment of monotheism**, for such a relation between God the Son and God the Father is incompatible with the requirement of monotheism that we predicate of God one mind, one will and one single operation.”

Professor Lampe was a specialist in the post-biblical development of the Trinity and observed also that “the interpretation of Jesus as preexistent Son and of the Son as a pre-existent Jesus causes inconsistency and confusion...The doctrine which follows from the identification of Jesus with a pre-existent personal divine being is ultimately **incompatible with the unity of God.**”

Equally problematic for a true monotheism and a genuinely human Messiah is the Trinitarian concept of the Son as “assuming human nature.” Professor Lampe reminds us that “a person is created by his relationships with other people and especially by his interaction with his parents and family.” What happened then to the first-century Galilean Jew Jesus? He was lost and replaced by a philosophical abstraction whose identity as the son of David, and thus the true and only Messiah, became irrelevant.

The Christological concept of the pre-existent divine Son...reduces the real, socially and culturally conditioned, personality of Jesus to the metaphysical abstraction “human nature.” It is this universal humanity which the Son assumed and made his own...According to this Christology, the eternal Son assumes a timeless human nature, or makes it timeless by making it his own; it is a human nature which owes nothing essential to geographical circumstances; it corresponds to nothing in the actual concrete world; Jesus Christ has not, after all, really “come in the flesh.”^{19[17]}

The observant reader will note that the professor rather obviously assigns to the orthodox doctrine of Jesus the label of antichrist. It was the Apostle John who late in the New Testament period warned that any reduction of the human individual Jesus Christ to a personality not essentially human is a menace to true faith (1 John 4:2-3). The Jesus to be confessed, as distinct from other Jesuses, is the one who has truly “come in the flesh,” as a fully human person. Luther set the pattern for reading into John’s “theological test” the post-biblical definition of Jesus. Luther mistranslates 1 John 4:2 as “Jesus Christ coming *into* the flesh.”^{17[6]} The doctrine of the Incarnation was thus imposed on John.

Christianity is defined by God’s purpose. The divine Plan is discovered in the purpose statement of Jesus in Luke 4:43. There he stated that the One God had commissioned him for the express purpose of announcing the good news or Gospel about the coming Kingdom of God. The purpose could have a frightful negative outcome. Jesus expressed this in Matthew 8:11-12. He warned his fellow countrymen that they ran the risk of a colossal failure. “When you see Abraham and Isaac and Jacob and all the prophets in the Kingdom of God and yourselves being rejected there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth.” To avoid this catastrophic negative outcome Jesus exhorted the people, and us all, to pay the closest attention to his teachings, which provide the only route to rescue and salvation — living forever.

Jesus’ first and last words are critically important. He begins by issuing a first and fundamental command, that we are to repent and *believe the Gospel about the Kingdom of God* (Mark 1:14-15). Jesus’ last words summarize and reemphasize the all-important matter of obedience to his teachings. These are found for example at the conclusion of his public ministry in John 12:44-50. The words, Gospel of Jesus are the criterion for our future judgment. We neglect them at our peril, since the words of Jesus are the words of God who commissioned and inspired him:

“And Jesus **cried out and said**, ‘Whoever believes in me, believes not in me but in him who sent me. And whoever sees me sees him who sent me. I have come into the world as light, so that whoever believes in me may not

^{18[16]}Very much like a Hindu avatar.

^{19[17]}See *God As Spirit*, pp.132, 136-138, 140-144.

remain in darkness. **If anyone hears my words and does not keep them**, I do not judge him; for I did not come to judge the world but to save the world. The one who **rejects me and does not receive my words** has a judge; the word that I have spoken will judge him on the last day. For I have not spoken on my own authority, but the Father who sent me has himself given me a commandment — what to say and what to speak. And I know that his commandment is eternal life. What I say, therefore, I say as the Father has told me” (John 12:44-50, ESV).

Christianity is based on our making a choice between two different ways. The principle is beautifully encapsulated by John 3:36, where belief in Jesus is equivalent to obedience, and unbelief with refusal to obey. These stark alternatives are laid out for us in the introductory Psalm 1. Two contrasted lifestyles are depicted here, the one leading to disaster, an extinction of life, and the other to indestructible life, immortality in the future Kingdom of God on a renewed earth. We all have to choose. (In Calvinism the word “choose” has been emptied of intelligible content.)

As early as the second century would-be followers of Jesus began to lose the central storyline of God’s great unfolding drama, embodied in the Gospel of the Kingdom and the work of Jesus Christ. The influence of alien Greek philosophy confused the drama of salvation. The person of Jesus Christ was replaced gradually by an abstract “God the Son,” who by definition really could not be a true human being, since his origin was antedated prior to his actual origin as Son of God in the womb of his mother (Luke 1:35). Once this new form of belief, affecting the central creed of the Bible, had been worked out over a period of centuries, it was enforced on pain of death and excommunication. Dogma based on this new version of the faith dominated the Church, and the laity were placed under the control of a clergy who learned these dogmas and assumed that they corresponded to the original teachings of Jesus and the Apostles. At the Council of Nicea in 325 anathemas were attached to any who might question the Church’s central dogma.

Readers of English versions of Scripture sometimes express their desire to have a “literal translation” of the original. What they really need is one that conveys the sense of the original (in this case Greek) faithfully into the target language. There are occasions when a “literal,” “word for word” translation is the least desirable. In fact it can lead to nonsense! What if I render the English “I am pulling your leg” literally, or “I have a frog in my throat” word for word. The misunderstanding will be obvious. “I am mad about my flat” can well mean in British English that “I am excited about my apartment.” In the USA it pictures a person sweating at changing a flat tire. “Jane and John have broken up” means in the UK that their school term is ended. In the USA quite a different sense would be conveyed. The list could be multiplied. “Bouncing off the wall” does not need to be translated literally into another language. It will mislead.

More seriously, a literal word for word translation in John 17:5 is misleading. Jesus’ words translated word for word, “glorify me with the glory I had with you” lead or mislead the reader to think that Jesus was with the Father before he came into existence, was born! The Hebrew idiom “to have something with someone” means to have a reward promised and stored up in advance. Jesus warned that ostentatious performance of “good works” will mean that we “have” (present tense) “no reward with the Father” (Matt. 6:1). This means of course that if we do well we now have a reward stored up for the future, a reward to be given at the return of Jesus. Jesus in the very same discourse in John 17 spoke of *having given* glory to Christians who were not even born when he made that promise! (v. 22). It was the same glory which had been promised to Jesus by the Father. It is glory prepared and planned in heaven with the Father ready to be bestowed in the future. Jesus asked in John 17:5 to be rewarded with the glory promised to him at the completion of his ministry. It was a glory stored up and promised by God from the beginning. It was not a glory to be “restored” to him, since he had never yet had it.

This issue is parallel exactly to the misleading idea conveyed by the NIV in some places. In John it takes liberties with the text in the interests of inherited dogma. It makes Jesus say what he did not say. The NIV renders John 16:28, 13:3 and 20:17 “going back,” or “returning” to the Father. But the historical Jesus had not been there yet! There is a world of difference between “going,” which is what John wrote, and “going back.”

Another example of misleading translation is found in many versions in Luke 23:43. It is a matter of punctuation. Since Jesus had not yet been to the Father even on the evening of the Sunday of his resurrection (John 20:17), he could not have promised the thief a place in the presence of the Father that day, the day of his death. The thief had asked to be remembered when Jesus came back in the future, inaugurating his Kingdom. Jesus’ promise goes beyond the request and assures him on that very day, that he would indeed be with Jesus in that future Kingdom of God, the paradise restored (Rev. 2:7). “I say to you today [you don’t have to wait until the future for this assurance], that you will be with me in the future paradise of the Kingdom” (cp. Acts 20:26). In this way one verse will not be made to contradict Luke in 14:14 and 20:35, where rewards are not given until the resurrection. Nor will that one verse be made to contradict and confuse the rest of Scripture.

There are of course verses which in their sublime simplicity and clarity ought to be definitive. Most striking of these is Luke 1:35 where the words of the angel define with precision the meaning of the title “the Son of God.” Very few verses come with their own “built in” definition, but Luke 1:35 does. No footnotes are needed, no special glossary.

Luke 1:35 includes its own lucid explanation. Gabriel defined how, why and where Jesus is to be Son of God. Son of God is who he is “because of,” “precisely because of” (*dio kai*) the miracle worked by God in the womb of Mary. It is “for that reason” and no other that Jesus is the Son of God. This defining statement rules out at once any possibility of an “eternally begotten” Son. Luke and Gabriel could not have been Trinitarians, and nor was Jesus (Mark 12:29; John 17:3).

The celebrated commentary on Luke by Godet got it right when he stated:

“By the word ‘therefore’ the angel alludes to his preceding words: he will be called the Son of the Highest. We might paraphrase it: ‘And it is precisely for this reason that I said to you....’ We have then here, from the mouth of the angel himself, an authentic explanation of the term Son of God, in the former part of his message. After this explanation Mary could only understand the title in this sense: a human being of whose existence God Himself is the immediate author. It does not convey the idea of preexistence.”^{20[18]}

Alas, the Church disregarded the explicit theology of Gabriel. Alas, too, Godet did not, as he should have, provoke a complete rethinking of Christology. Instead there has occurred a flurry of plain contradictions of the text, to uphold beloved conciliar “orthodoxy.” One of the most striking of these is the statement of Dr. John MacArthur: “I do not believe that the virgin birth alone proves that Jesus is the Son of God. In other words, *Jesus is not the Son of God because He was born of a virgin*. He was born of a virgin because He was the Son of God. Jesus existed long before Mary.”^{21[19]} Note that MacArthur is in direct opposition to Scripture and Gabriel. MacArthur: “Jesus is not the Son of God because he was born of a virgin.” Gabriel and NT Scripture. “Precisely because of the miracle in Mary he will be the Son of God.”

This alarming contradiction of Scripture dates from the candid admission by early church fathers, architects of Trinitarianism, that the Church rejected the Jewish “heresy,” the unitarian creed of Judaism and of Jesus, and replaced it with a new concept of God as Triune. This was a middle path, they claimed, between the rejected “Jewish” unitarian creed of Jesus and the blatant polytheism of the Gentiles. The rather obvious problem is that in this process Jesus was banished and his definition of God refused. The simplicity of the unitary monotheistic creed was overlaid, suppressed and lost by the fearfully complex theology of a Triune God. So brain-breakingly complicated and abstract were the terms of what became the official creed that unitarian scholar and poet **John Milton** was moved to lament the appallingly confused language in which it was presented as dogma:

“Christ himself therefore, the Son of God, teaches us nothing in the Gospel respecting the one God but what the Law had before taught and everywhere clearly asserts Him to be, his Father. John 17:3: ‘This is eternal life: that they might know You, the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom You have sent.’ 20:17: ‘I ascend to my Father and your Father; to my God and your God.’ If therefore the Father is the God of Christ and the same one is our God, and if there is no God but one, there can be no God beside the Father... Though all this *is so self-evident* as to require no explanation — namely that the Father alone is a self-existent God, that a being which is not self-existent cannot be God — it is wonderful with what futile subtleties, or rather with what juggling artifices, certain individuals have endeavored to elude or obscure the plain meaning of these passages; leaving no stone unturned, recurring to every shift, attempting every means, as if their object were not to preach the pure and unadulterated Truth of the Gospel to the poor and the simple, but rather by dint of vehemence and obstinacy to sustain some absurd paradox from falling, by the aid of sophisms and verbal distinctions, borrowed from the barbarous ignorance of the schools.”^{22[20]}

Sir Isaac Newton was no less scathing about the very non-Jewish definition of God as Trinity:

“Newton became almost obsessed with the desire to purge Christianity of its mythical doctrines. He became convinced that the a-rational dogmas of the Trinity and the Incarnation were the result of conspiracy, forgery and chicanery... [Newton maintained] that the spurious doctrines of the Incarnation and the Trinity had been added to the creed by unscrupulous theologians in the fourth century. Indeed, the Book of Revelation had prophesied the rise of Trinitarianism – ‘this strange religion of ye west, the cult of three equal Gods’ — as the abomination of desolation.”^{23[21]}

Bible readers need a fresh reading of the NT, with some of the encumbrance of later “orthodoxy” which now blocks a clear understanding, removed. No translation is final, of course. There is no perfect translation. There are scores of different ways of conveying the same propositions. Most of the NT is perfectly intelligible in many of the

^{20[18]} *Commentary on Luke*, 1881, p. 58.

^{21[19]} “Unleashing God’s Word One Word at a Time,” Issue 3.

^{22[20]} John Milton, *On the Son of God and the Holy Spirit*, p. 13-18, 20.

^{23[21]} Karen Armstrong *The Battle for God*, p. 69.

different versions. Readers of the Bible should avail themselves of various translations. No one translation conveys all of the truth. Some do much better than others.

Some contemporary commentary on the traditional doctrine of the Incarnation of “God the Son” becoming a man ought, we suggest, to shock readers into the realization that something has gone terribly wrong.

Dr. Jim Packer is well known for his evangelical writings. In his widely read *Knowing God*, in a chapter on “God Incarnate,” he says of the doctrine of the Trinity and the Incarnation:

Here are two mysteries for the price of one — the plurality of the persons within the unity of God, and the union of Godhead and manhood in the person of Jesus. It is here, in the thing that happened at the first Christmas, that the profoundest and the most unfathomable depths of the Christian revelation lie. “The Word was made flesh” (John 1:14); God became man; the divine Son became a Jew; the Almighty appeared on earth as a helpless baby, unable to do more than lie and stare and wriggle and make noises, needing to be fed and changed and taught to talk like any other child. And there was no illusion or deception in this: the babyhood of the Son of God was a reality. The more you think about it, the more staggering it gets. *Nothing in fiction is so fantastic as is this truth of the Incarnation.* This is the real stumbling block in Christianity. It is here that the Jews, Muslims, Unitarians, Jehovah’s Witnesses...have come to grief...If he was truly God the Son, it is much more startling that he should die than that he should rise again. “’Tis mystery all! The immortal dies,” wrote [Charles] Wesley...and if the immortal Son of God really did submit to taste death, it is not strange that such a death should have saving significance for a doomed race. Once we grant that Jesus was divine, it becomes unreasonable to find difficulty in any of this; it is all of a piece and hangs together completely. The Incarnation is in itself an unfathomable mystery, but it makes sense of everything else that the New Testament contains.^{24[22]}

Had the lucidly simple description of the Son of God proposed by Luke been allowed to stand as the official doctrine of the Son of God, the course of the Christian faith and of church history would have been vastly different: “the holy thing begotten in you will be called the Son of God” (Luke 1:35) was easy enough. But when evangelicals rewrite the biblical story and read into it an eternal Son of God, this is the result. Charles Swindoll, chancellor of Dallas Theological Seminary, writes:

On December 25th shops shut their doors, families gather together and people all over the world remember the birth of Jesus of Nazareth...Many people assume that Jesus’ existence began like ours, in the womb of his mother. But is that true? Did life begin for him with that first breath of Judean air? Can a day in December truly mark the beginning of the Son of God? Unlike us, Jesus existed before his birth, long before there was air to breathe...long before the world was born.^{25[23]}

Dr. Swindoll goes on to explain:

John the Baptist came into being at his birth — he had a birthday. *Jesus never came into being*; at his earthly birth he merely took on human form...Here’s an amazing thought: the baby that Mary held in her arms was holding the universe in place! The little newborn lips that cooed and cried once formed the dynamic words of creation. Those tiny clutching fists once flung stars into space and planets into orbit. That infant flesh so fair once housed the Almighty God...As an ordinary baby, God had come to earth...Do you see the child *and* the glory of the infant-God? What you are seeing is the Incarnation — God dressed in diapers...See the baby as John describes him “in the beginning” “with God.” Imagine him in the misty pre-creation past, thinking of you and planning your redemption. Visualize this same Jesus, who wove your body’s intricate patterns, *knitting a human garment for himself*...Long ago the Son of God dove headfirst into time and floated along with us for about 33 years...Imagine the Creator-God tightly wrapped in swaddling clothes.^{26[24]}

Dr. Swindoll then quotes Max Lucado who says of Jesus, “He left his home and entered the womb of a teenage girl...Angels watched as Mary changed God’s diaper. The universe watched with wonder as the Almighty learned to walk. Children played in the street with him.”^{27[25]}

No one opening a New Testament and reading the matchless story of the origin of Jesus will be misled into thinking that “God was born,” or that as a Roman Catholic priest said on television, “God came to Mary and said, ‘Will you please be my mother?’”

^{24[22]}J.I. Packer, *Knowing God*. Intervarsity Press, 1998, 46, 47, emphasis added.

^{25[23]}*Jesus: When God Became a Man*, W Publishing Group, 1993, 1-2.

^{26[24]}*Ibid.*, 3-8, emphasis added.

^{27[25]}*Ibid.*, 10, quoting Max Lucado, *God Came Near*.

We offer the following version with a view to restoring the truth that God is one Person, that Jesus is the Messiah, Son of God by miracle and that the saving Gospel is about the Kingdom of God, as Jesus preached it, and about all that Jesus said and did to instruct in the way that leads to indestructible life in the future Kingdom of God. Jesus of course spoke in Paul too and the other writers of New Testament Scripture. And none of these writers discarded the precious writings of the Hebrew Bible, but developed the truths of the New Covenant working from a base in the Hebrew Scriptures which Jesus had endorsed as inspired canon in Luke 24:44.

If we are seeking the mind of Christ the obvious place to start is with Mark 1:14-15, Jesus' opening first command to us all. Note the later warning: "Why do you call me 'lord' and do not do what I say?" (Luke 6:46).

"Jesus came announcing the Gospel of God. He said, 'The time predicted has come. The Kingdom of God is coming soon. Repent and believe that Gospel about the Kingdom'" (Mark 1:14-15). God's Gospel is the Gospel of salvation which originates in God. God's saving Gospel **about the Kingdom** was preached by all the NT writers and of course first by Jesus himself (Heb. 2:3). God issues the ultimate statement about the Kingdom, and His great immortality program is modeled in the man Jesus and taught by him as saving Gospel in addition of course to his substitutionary death and resurrection. The "Testimony of Jesus" in Revelation, meaning Jesus' own Gospel preaching which one must hear to be saved (Rom. 10:14-17; Luke 8:12); "the Gospel of the age to come" in Rev. 24:6; the Kingdom about to begin (Luke 21:31; Rev. 11:15-18, cp Luke 19:11ff.).

Repentance means a complete reorientation in thinking and understanding, and in lifestyle. The **first command** of Jesus is thus to believe the Gospel about the Kingdom of God, which is the empire of the Messiah, certainly not just a figurative kingdom "in the heart." Some translations such as Ferrar Fenton's correctly render Daniel 2:44, "In the days of those kings the God of heaven will establish an everlasting **empire**, which is indestructible, whose sovereignty will not be transferred to another people." Thus also in Daniel 7:17, 18, 22, 27: "Those four great beasts which you have seen are four **great empires** which will be established on the earth. The saints of the Most High will afterwards take the **Empire** and possess it forever, and forever and ever...The time came for the saints to possess **the empire**...**The empire** and dominion and grandeur of the **empire under the whole heavens** will be given to the Holy People of the Most High. All nations will serve and obey them."

Hence the reward of the faithful in the NT is nowhere said to be to "go to heaven," but "you shall have the governorship of ten towns" or "five towns" (Luke 19:17, 19). Jesus echoed this same Gospel promise when he said to the apostles: "You who followed me, in the new birth, when the Son of Man will sit on his throne of glory, will sit on twelve thrones reigning over the twelve tribes of Israel" (Matt. 19:28). Paul was surprised that his converts had forgotten the elementary truth that the saints "are going to govern the world" (1 Cor. 6:2). Jesus will be Head of State in the coming Kingdom and the saints will be his assistant rulers, princes (see Dan. 2:44; 7:14, 18, 22, 27; Isa. 32:1).

"In Revelation the eternal messianic Kingdom is placed *on a renovated earth* so that Christ comes to his people on earth rather than gathering them to a heavenly abode."^{28[26]}

In order to get off to the right start with Bible reading, it is essential that Jesus' saving Gospel of the Kingdom be understood. What better place to define the Kingdom than with the Gospel of Matthew? The analysis of Matthew's phrase "Gospel of the Kingdom" offered by Professor W.C. Allen of Oxford is lucidly clear. And since the Kingdom is the key term for understanding all NT preaching, we offer the professor's fine statement. To misunderstand "Kingdom" is to misunderstand the whole NT teaching about **the Gospel** which saves us, and leads to immortality.

W.C. Allen, MA, Prof. of OT at Oxford, on the Kingdom of God:

The objective **analysis of the Kingdom of God**^{29[27]} in Matthew, provided by the *Dictionary of Christ and the Gospels*,^{30[28]} ought to serve as a much-needed guide to all our thinking about the Kingdom. The Gospel as Jesus and Paul preached it is about the Kingdom, and so an inaccurate understanding of the Kingdom leads automatically to an inaccurate Gospel:

"The Kingdom — **the central subject** of Christ's doctrine. With this **he began** his ministry (4:17) and wherever he went he taught it as Good News [**Gospel**] (4:23). The Kingdom he taught was coming, **but not in his lifetime**. After His ascension he would come as Son of Man on the clouds of heaven (16:27, 19:28, 24:30; 25:31) and would sit on the throne of His glory...Then the twelve Apostles would sit on twelve thrones judging the twelve tribes of Israel (**19:28**). In the meantime he himself must suffer and die and be raised from the dead. How else could he come on the clouds of heaven? And the disciples were to **preach the Good News [Gospel] of the coming Kingdom** (10:7, 24:14) among all nations making disciples by [water] **baptism** (28:18). The body of disciples

^{28[26]}David Aune, *Word Biblical Commentary*, Rev. 17-22, p. 1069.

^{29[27]}Or its exact synonym "Kingdom of Heaven."

^{30[28]}W.C. Allen, MA, Prof. of OT at Oxford, on the Kingdom of God, Vol. II, p. 145

thus gained would naturally form a society bound by common aims. Hence the disciples of the Kingdom would form a new spiritual Israel (21:43; [Cp. Gal. 6:16; Phil 3:3]).

The same authority goes on to say:

“In view of the needs of this new Israel of Christ’s disciples, who were to await his coming on the clouds of heaven, it is natural that a large part of the teaching recorded in the Gospel should concern **the qualifications required in those who hoped to enter the Kingdom when it came...** Thus the parables convey some lesson about the nature of the Kingdom and **the period of preparation for it [sowing before harvest]**. It should be sufficiently obvious that if we ask what meaning the parables had for the editor of the first Gospel, the answer must be that he chose them because...they taught lessons about the Kingdom of God *in the sense in which that phrase is used everywhere in the Gospel of the Kingdom which was to come, when the Son of Man came upon the clouds of heaven.*

Thus the Parable of the Sower illustrates the varying **reception met with by the Good News [Gospel] of the Kingdom as it is preached amongst men**. That of the tares also deals not with the Kingdom itself, but with **the period of preparation for it**. At the **end of the age**, the Son of Man will come **to inaugurate His Kingdom...** There is nothing here nor elsewhere in this Gospel to suggest that **the scene of the Kingdom is other than the present world renewed**, restored and purified.^{31[29]}

The last sentence of our quotation makes the excellent point that Matthew (and the whole New Testament, indeed the whole Bible) does not expect believers to “go to heaven,” but that Jesus will **come back to the earth** to rule with them in a renewed earth (Rev. 5:9, 10; Matt. 5:5; Dan 7:14, **18, 22, 27**). The perceptive reader of the New Testament will note the striking difference between the biblical view of the Kingdom, and thus of the Gospel of salvation, and what in post-biblical times was substituted for it: a departure of the faithful at death to a realm removed from the earth. (Bishop Tom Wright tries to have both systems when he speaks of “Life *after life* after death.” Better to shed the philosophically-based life before **resurrection** which **always** means coming not from life, but from death!). There can be no resurrection from the dead, if a person is not really dead!

The popular idea that the Kingdom is mainly a “spiritual” state of mind or life-style *now*, or social ethics expecting to bring the Kingdom in *now*, is false to the New Testament. Joseph of Arimathea, a Christian, was “waiting for the Kingdom” after the ministry of Jesus (Mark 15:43). Luke 19:11ff. teaches us to connect the arrival of the Kingdom with the **future return of Jesus**. (cp., above: “The Kingdom He taught was coming, but not in His lifetime.” “In Matthew [and in the NT] the Kingdom of God is conceived, **first of all**, as something **in the future**” (cited above). So say leading analysts of the Gospel records.

Luke 21: 31 presents the Kingdom of God as the event to **be introduced at the Second Coming**. This is exactly Rev. 11:15-18 — the Kingdom of God beginning at the future, seventh, resurrection trumpet (= I Cor. 15:23, Last Trumpet, vv. 51ff.).

We may add a further statement from a recognized authority on Luke:

It cannot really be disputed that Luke means by the Kingdom **a future** entity. The spiritualizing interpretation according to which the Kingdom is present in the Spirit and in the Church is completely misleading...It is *the message* of the Kingdom that is present, which in Luke is distinguished from the Kingdom itself. He knows nothing of an immanent [i.e., already present] development on the basis of the preaching of the Kingdom.^{32[30]} *The International Standard Bible Encyclopedia* (1929), Vol. 4, p. 2667 gets the emphasis on the future right, and thus clarifies the Christian Gospel, and thus the Christian faith:

“The Kingdom of God is at hand” had the inseparable connotation “judgment is at hand” and in this context, ‘Repent,’ in Mark 1:14, 15 must mean ‘[to avoid being judged], lest you be judged.’^{33[31]} Hence our Lord’s teaching about salvation **had primarily a future content: positively admission into [entrance into] the Kingdom of God and negatively, deliverance from the preceding judgment [fire]**. So the Kingdom of God is the highest good of Christ’s teaching... Man’s nature is to be perfectly adapted to his spiritual environment and man is to be ‘with Christ’ (Luke 22:30) and with the patriarchs (Matt. 8:11). Whatever [?!] the Kingdom is, it is most certainly not exhausted by a mere reformation of the present order of material things.”

Equally clear is the *Good News According to Mark*, Eduard Schweizer:

^{31[29]} *Ibid.*, emphasis added. The same view of the Kingdom is expressed by the author of this article on Matthew in his commentary on Matthew (W.C. Allen, *The International Critical Commentary, St. Matthew*, T & T Clark, 1907, pp. lxxvii-lxxi).

^{32[30]} Hans Conzelmann, *The Theology of St. Luke*, p. 122.

^{33[31]} The popular notion of an unending, torturous hell-fire for the wicked is utterly unbiblical. The fate of the incorrigibly wicked, after full exposure to the Gospel, is annihilation, ceasing to exist.

“Mark 1:14, 15: Mark gives a brief summary of the preaching of Jesus. Preaching and Good News (Gospel) are Mark’s favorite expressions. **The Gospel call of Jesus is accurately summed up** in 1:15, where the association of repentance and faith reveals the language of the church (Acts 5:31; 11:18; 20:21). Mark’s concern is to make clear that in this preaching Jesus continues to go forth into the world and this call, therefore, is being directed also to the one who reads this Gospel today. Consequently this section serves as **a caption** to the whole Gospel (cp. the epilogue).

“**The Kingdom of God.** When Jesus proclaims that the Kingdom of God is near, he is adopting a concept which was coined in the OT. Although it denotes God’s sovereignty over creation (Ps 103:19; 145:11ff.) it **refers primarily to God’s unchallenged sovereignty in the end time (Isa 52:7)**...Judaism spoke of the reign of God which comes after the annihilation of every foe [Isa. 24:6] and the end of all suffering.... In the NT the **Kingdom of God** is conceived **first of all as something in the future** (Mark 9:1, 47, 14:25; Matt. 13:41-43; 20:21; Luke 22:16, 18; 1 Cor. 15:50. Luke 21:31, *et al*) which comes from God (Mark 9:1; Matt. 6:10; Luke 17:20; 19:11). Therefore it is something man can only **wait for** (Mark 15:43), seek (Matt. 6:33); receive (Mark 10:15; cp Luke 12:32) and inherit (1 Cor. 6:9f; Gal 5:21; James 2:5), but is not able to create it by himself... In the acts and words of Jesus the future Kingdom has come upon him already. It is decided at that very moment whether or not he will ever be in the Kingdom....

Repentance is nothing less than a whole-hearted commitment to the Good News [of the Kingdom]” (pp. 45, 46, 47) .— that is, the Gospel of the Kingdom to come, a downpayment of which can be tasted in the spirit received now.

Ernest Scott, D.D. Prof of NT, Union Theological Seminary, *The Kingdom of God in the NT*, NY, 1931, pp. 11-21, on the other hand reveals the hopeless confusion into which the church has fallen in regard to Jesus’ Gospel and thus of the Christian faith. He seems uncertain about the Gospel, but gives us a good sense of what it meant to Jesus and his followers:

“It seems almost impossible to define the Christian ‘Gospel.’ Sometimes it is identified with our religion as a whole, sometimes with some element in it which is regarded as central. To accept the Gospel is to believe in the atonement or the love of God, or the revelation in Christ or the fact of human brotherhood [!].

“Yet it is well to remember that the word which is now used so **loosely** had, at the outset a meaning which was **clearly understood**. “Jesus came into Galilee, preaching the Gospel of the Kingdom of God and saying, The time is fulfilled and the Kingdom of God is at hand.” The Gospel underwent a marvelous development... but the Good News has always been essentially what it was at the first — **the announcement of the Kingdom**. It is evident from the manner in which Jesus made the announcement that he took up an idea which was already familiar. [Luke 19:11ff. is a brilliantly clear place to start in defining the Kingdom.]. He did not explain what he meant by the Kingdom, **for he could assume that all his hearers were looking forward to it**. Their hope for it had been newly stimulated by John the Baptist... They had long been thinking of the Kingdom and wondering when it would come and a prophet had now arisen who declared that it was close at hand.... **In the religion of Israel we must seek for the immediate origin of the Kingdom idea of Jesus...** The idea persisted long after the royal house was firmly established that the reigning king was only the vice-regent of the invisible King.... Israel had been chosen by a unique God who was known as yet only by His own people, but was nonetheless King of the whole earth. **The day was coming when all nations would own his sovereignty**.... On the higher levels of prophecy the purified Israel of the future is conceived as attracting all nations by its high example, to the service of the One God. More often it is assumed that Israel when fully disciplined will be restored to God’s favor and advanced by Him to the sovereign place (Acts 1:6). As King of this preeminent people God will reign at last over the world.... On the one hand God is already King. On the other hand it is recognized that the Kingship lies in the future... They look for **a coming day** when He will overcome all usurping powers and assert Himself as King. So the prophets keep before them **the vision of a new age when the Kingdom of God will be fully manifested**. In that happy time Israel will be exalted, the cause of justice will be established, the earth full of the glory of the Lord. Nature in that day will be restored to its pristine glory and the wolf will lie down with the lamb and cattle will feed in large pastures, the light of the moon will be as the light of the sun. He [and His Messiah] will reign from Mount Zion and all nations will serve Him. King over a righteous nation he will extend his dominion over the whole earth.

The admission of today’s leading evangelical scholar confirms the chaos into which the Gospel had fallen:

Prof. and Bishop NT Wright (*Jesus and the Victory of God*, 1996, xiv): “In one sense I have been working on this book on and off for most of my life. Serious thought began, however, when I was invited in 1978 to give a lecture at Cambridge on ‘**The Gospel in the Gospels.**’ The topic was not just impossibly vast; **I did not understand it. I had no real answer**, then, to the question of how Jesus’ whole life, *not just his death* on the cross in isolation, was somehow ‘gospel.’ 15 subsequent years of teaching at Oxford. Montreal and Cambridge have convinced me that this question... is worth asking.”

But the question is just as mystifying to millions of Bible readers. This ought not to be so.

Further authorities point us in the right direction: “In the Book of Acts the Kingdom of God was still the general formula for the substance of Christian teaching” (*Hastings Dictionary of the Bible*, Vol. II, p. 855). This formula is absent from evangelical tracts promoting salvation.

On the lips of Jesus the term Kingdom of God unquestionably summarized the very heart of his Message. “The Kingdom of God is the central theme of the teaching of Jesus, and it involves his **whole understanding** of his own **person and work**.”^{34[32]} Luke 4:43 is repeated by Paul in Acts 20: 24, 25 where Paul defines his own ministry course given by Jesus, Gospel of the grace of God = the **preaching of the Gospel of the Kingdom**, v. 25.

“The Kingdom announced by the Messiah who is the Son of Man is possible only through his death and will be finally and fully realized **on earth only at his glorious return**. *This is indeed the heart of the Gospel.*” (Donald Hagner, PhD, *Word Biblical Commentary on Matthew, 1-13*, p. 214.

The essential understanding conveyed by Jesus teaching is captured by these propositions about Messiah: “The Son of God came to give us an **understanding** so that we might know God” (I John 5:20). Isa. 53:11, “By his knowledge my Servant will make many righteous.”

The New Testament is based on the Old. Jesus came to:

- 1) Proclaim the **Gospel about the Kingdom of God** (Luke 4:43; John announced the same Gospel of the Kingdom, Matt. 3:1). This is the whole reason for Christianity, including, of course, the death and resurrection of Jesus. Jesus commands the believers to continue announcing the same Gospel of the Kingdom (Matt. 28:19, 20)
- 2) Confirm the Abrahamic and Davidic promises made to the Fathers (Rom 15:8; Gal. 3:8)
- 3) To give us an understanding that we might know God (I John 5:20)
- 4) To make people righteous, right before God, not only by his death but by his knowledge (Isa. 53:11; Dan 12:3).
- 5) To invite whoever will believe in God’s plan for themselves and the world to prepare now to rule the world with Jesus when he returns “Don’t you know the saints are going to manage the world?” (I Cor. 6:2, Moffat, see also Dan. 7:14, 18, 22, **27**; Rev 3:21; 2:26; 5:10; 20:1-6; Matt. 5:5; 19:28; Isa. 16:5; 32:1).
- 6) Luke 8:12, Mark 4:11, 12, in the parable of the seed: An intelligent reception of the Gospel of the Kingdom is the necessary condition for repentance and forgiveness. Without a clear statement about the Kingdom how can anyone repent and believe Jesus?

In post-biblical times the original faith in the Gospel of the Kingdom suffered massive alteration, turning the Gospel into something quite different. Greeks rather than Jews became leaders in the church, and they imported alien Greek philosophy into the church’s teachings. Gal. 3:8 which defines the Christian Gospel as the content of the promises **made to Abraham**, about land, progeny and blessing, is missing from contemporary versions of the “Gospel.”

This alteration of the original faith led finally in the 1500’s to the Reformation which was a plea to go back to the Bible. But these reformers did not fully recapture the Gospel of the Kingdom. Luther disparaged the synoptic gospels and CS Lewis wrote that “the Gospel is not in the Gospels”! Billy Graham announced in 26 languages that “Jesus came to do three days work.”

This dictum would render the Gospel preaching of Jesus virtually unnecessary. A fatal “dispensationalism” underlies much popular preaching. I Tim 6:3, II John 7-9, Heb. 2:3; John 3:36 are fair warning.

The process of restoration is furthered when people earnestly **seek the original meaning of the Kingdom of God as preached by the original (human) Jesus**. The Gospel itself is all about the Kingdom of God, as well as the death and resurrection of Jesus, and “Gospel” should never be divorced from the Kingdom. The pagan notion of “heaven” for “souls” at death has replaced the hope of the Kingdom coming on earth. That paganism must be banished from the Christian vocabulary if the Bible is to be understood.

Harper Collins’ Bible Dictionary states: “The Gospel is the proclamation of the Kingdom announced by Jesus (Mark 1:14, 15) and now proclaimed by the church.” [but is it?]

Do churches preach the Gospel of the Kingdom of God?

Gary Burge, *NIV Application Commentary* doubts the modern gospel: “The Gospel as most of my church friends and I have known it in the past **is so small a part of the whole deal, that it is hard to call it an accurate Gospel at all**. Perhaps this limited Gospel message as proclaimed by modern Christians explains the limited impact it is having on America today.” Exactly. One might say that the churches are playing golf with the club held upside down. A complete restructuring is needed. No cosmetic alterations will solve the problem. There is a fatal flaw in the foundation of what we know as the faith. The Kingdom Gospel is missing or at best hopelessly vague.

^{34[32]}*Theological Word Book of the Bible*, Alan Richardson, p. 119. Cp. “golf tournament” and “tennis tournament” would be meaningless if golf and tennis are not understood.

Revisioning Evangelical Theology. “Stanley Grenz has reviewed the failed attempts of evangelical theology to fire the imagination of the modern world. He argues for the Kingdom of God as **the new organizing center** of what we say and do.” It ought to be, and must be if Jesus in Luke 4:43 is really heard. And Paul in Acts 20:24, 25; 19:8; 28:23, 31 (cp. Acts 8:12).

Do seminaries understand the Gospel? *Theology, News and Notes* (Fuller Theological Seminary, Spring 2004: “Over the course of the past year, faculty from each of Fuller’s three schools have met together to discuss the question: **What is the Gospel?** A dozen years ago, the late Robert Guelich made the question the topic of his inaugural address, noting that years of professional work has returned him again and again to this fundamental subject. Guelich told the story of an encounter with the founder Charles Fuller after a seminary forum, with the “inspiration of Scripture” as its topic. Fuller commented that he longed for the day **when the seminary would host a forum on the question: ‘What is the Gospel?’”**

This is an amazing and instructive admission. The fact is that they really are not sure what the Gospel is, and yet they say they are saving people by preaching “it.” The plain fact is that the Gospel of the Kingdom, including of course the covenant-ratifying and atoning blood of Jesus and his resurrection, is the Gospel. Until the “heaven” at death teaching, which is Plato’s and not Jesus,’ is dropped, how can progress be made? And how can we be sure that anyone is saved by believing the teaching of Plato and calling it the teaching of Jesus? Is God as sloppy as we are with our thinking?! Is He so indulgent that He really does not care as long as we are sincere, although ignorant, — of the nature of man, his destiny, the identity of God and Jesus? And Jesus’ own definition of the Gospel?

Shailer Matthews, D.D., Professor of Theology, Chicago Seminary, *The Messianic Hope in the New Testament* (University of Chicago Press, 1005, pp. 144, 155) saw how essential a part is played in the teaching of Jesus, by the Kingdom:

“It is a serious error to hold that **the Kingdom of God** plays no important role in apostolic Christianity. Such a view both lacks historical perspective and is at variance with the entire thought of the literature of apostolic Christianity. The very name of the new movement, *Christianity*, would suggest the contrary opinion. So far from the eschatological Kingdom of God being a secondary element in the early church, **it is its great conditioning belief.** The preaching of the first evangelists was not a call to ethical ideals or an argument as to certain truths. Rather it was the proclamation of a Message [about the Kingdom].... As regards the person of the Messiah, there is of course no question that the early church believed that Jesus was the Christ who had gone to heaven, whence he would come to introduce the new age and the new Kingdom. **This was the very core of the entire Christian movement.**” “**To think of Jesus as deliberately using a term [Kingdom of God] with a meaning different from what it would have been for others is not only to raise a question as to his morals, but as to his capacity as a teacher.**”

How very *much unlike* popular evangelism the **NT data on the Gospel of the Kingdom** sounds!

I make no apology for repetition. Churchill said: “If you have an important point to make, don’t try to be subtle or clever. Use a pile driver. Hit the point once. Then come back and hit it again. Then hit it a third time — a tremendous whack.”

I have adopted in this translation what I admit is a somewhat shocking practice of placing a small, non-capital letter on “lord” when the reference is to Jesus. The point is to remind readers of the fundamental distinction between the Lord God (YHVH) and the lord Messiah (Luke 2:11). This is based on the Bible’s favorite umbrella text in Ps. 110:1 where YHVH, the one GOD addresses an oracle to the predicted Messiah who is David’s son and also his lord (*adoni*, “my lord,” not Lord). In I Cor. 8:4-6 Paul echoes the unitarian creed of Jesus in Mark 12:29. He defines God as the Father from whom all originates, and then adds his definition of Jesus as the one “lord Messiah.” Ps. 110:1 and its very easy distinction between the One LORD YHVH and the non-Deity lord (*adoni*, “my lord,” all 195 times not Deity!) lies behind Paul’s thinking as it does behind all the thinking of Jesus (Mark 12:28-37). On no account should the two lords of Ps. 110:1 be muddled, resulting in two who are “LORD GOD,” an obvious violation of monotheism. Adoni, my lord, is the deliberate and unambiguous non-Deity title for Jesus, the Man Messiah (I Tim. 2:5, etc.).

Sometimes the NT text does not make it clear whether the Lord God or the lord Messiah is intended. This affects nothing of vital importance, since Jesus and God are working in harmony, Jesus being the supreme agent of God his Father, who is also Jesus’ God (Heb. 1:8). The point of using lower case for the lord Jesus is to remind readers over and over again of the central truth provided by the oracle of YHVH in Ps. 110:1. The relationship between God and Jesus is firmly established by the contrast between YHVH, the One God of the Bible, and the non-Deity figure now appointed to sit at the right hand of YHVH, pending his return to the earth to rule in the future Kingdom. Jesus is the *adoni*, “my lord” of Ps. 110:1 and his relation to the Father is repeated continually in the NT, summarized by Paul’s un-complex creed in I Tim. 2:5: “God wants everyone to come to the knowledge of the truth, namely that “there is ONE GOD, and one mediator between God and man, Messiah Jesus, himself *man*.”

This is the task of a Church desiring to be faithful to Jesus and Scripture.

For those readers of this translation who might be skeptical that the long-held, cherished traditions of Christianity could be radically mistaken, the words of the leading Christologist, Dr. James Dunn are suggestive:

“There is of course always the possibility that ‘popular pagan superstition’ became popular *Christian* superstition, by a gradual assimilation and spread of belief at the level of popular piety (we must beware of assuming that all developments in Christian thought stem from the Paul’s and Johns of Christianity).^{35[33]}

It may well be that “orthodoxy’s” massive dependence on John and Paul ought to raise our suspicions that the Bible is being used selectively and thus misleadingly to bolster the status quo.

The reader is invited to assess this issue with a Berean attitude (Acts 17:11). Luke in that verse commends a searching, noble-minded approach suitable to all those invited to rule the world with Jesus in the coming Kingdom on earth.

The ultimate admission!

Dr. McGrath (from my book *Jesus was Not a Trinitarian*):

“Attempts to sustain a Trinitarian view of God from Scripture are unimpressive and often confusing. A leading modern exponent of the Trinity, Alister McGrath, rightly tells us that Jesus Christ reveals God. He makes no mention of Jesus’ express revelation of God as the One God of Israel. He notes that one can find three examples in the whole New Testament of the term “God” being applied to Jesus. McGrath attributes the sparseness of references to Jesus as “God” to the fact that the writers were mostly Jews. But, one might ask, weren’t they also authentic Christians, and did they not know which God to worship? Were they not apostolic exponents of the Christian faith? McGrath says:

The New Testament was written against a background of the **strict monotheism** of Israel... Given the strong reluctance of New Testament writers to speak of Jesus as “God,” because of their background in the strict monotheism of Israel, these three affirmations are of considerable significance [John 1:1; 20:28; Heb. 1:8].^{36[1]}

Dr. McGrath’s remarks provide eloquent evidence that Jesus and his followers did not alter the Jewish creed. If they were strongly reluctant to speak of Jesus as God, could this not simply be because their creed, affirmed by Jesus, forbade them to call anyone but the Father the supreme God? They show no sign of being Trinitarians. Nor, of course, did Jesus.

The three examples of the word “God” for Jesus, as compared with over 1300 references to the Father as “God” in the New Testament, are easily explained.^{37[2]} They provide no justification at all for departing from the creed of Jesus, who believed that “The Lord our God is one Lord” (Mark 12:29).

When it comes to the Trinity itself McGrath remarks:

The casual reader of Scripture will discern a mere two verses in the entire Bible which seem, at first glance, to be capable of a trinitarian interpretation: Matthew 28:19 and 2 Corinthians 13:14. Both these verses have become deeply rooted in the Christian consciousness... Yet these two verses, taken together or in isolation, can hardly be thought of as constituting a doctrine of the Trinity.^{38[3]}

This is a significant admission. McGrath then goes on to give us twenty pages of post-biblical historical development of the Trinity. He has only a page and a half to offer us for its biblical foundation. Then comes this amazing statement. How securely does he really find the Trinity in the New Testament?

The doctrine of the Trinity can be regarded as the outcome of a process of sustained and critical reflection on the pattern of divine activity revealed in Scripture, and continued in Christian experience. *This is not to say that Scripture contains a doctrine of the Trinity*; rather, Scripture bears witness to a God who demands to be understood in a trinitarian manner. We shall explore the evolution of the doctrine and its distinctive vocabulary in what follows.^{39[4]}

^{35[33]} *Christology in the Making*, Second Edition, 1989, p. 251.

^{36[1]} Alister McGrath, *Christian Theology: An Introduction*, Blackwell, 2006, 280, 281.

^{37[2]} John 20:28 is in the context of Jesus saying he is going to ascend to “my God and your God” (v. 17). Thomas had failed to recognize that in seeing Jesus one was seeing God at work (14:7, 9). Thomas’ exclamation “My Lord and my God!” beautifully summarizes his realization that in meeting his Lord Jesus, he is also meeting the One God who is at work in him. The address is to both “my Lord” (the Messiah) and “my God,” the God of Jesus and of Thomas. See further Appendix 1.

^{38[3]} McGrath, *Christian Theology*, 248.

^{39[4]} *Ibid.*, 249, emphasis added.

I suggest that Dr. McGrath's faith is rooted firmly in post-biblical tradition, against his own Protestant principle of *sola scriptura*. He seems internally conflicted. There is no doctrine of the Trinity in the Bible, he admits, and yet in its pages, God demands belief in the Trinity.

I invite some prolonged reflection on the statement italicized above: "This is not to say that Scripture contains a doctrine of the Trinity." Yet God "demands to be understood in a Trinitarian manner." There is curious illogicality and irrationality at work here. Can anyone explain how the absence of a Trinitarian doctrine in the Bible is good evidence that God demands to be worshipped as a Trinity? If Scripture is taken as the foundation of faith, as Protestants claim, its pages yield no information about "God in three Persons." The God of Jesus and of the New Testament is a single divine Person, the Father of Jesus and of Christians.

Frank admissions about the creed of the earliest Christians are found frequently in standard works on the New Testament: "The first Christians were orthodox Jews who had been brought up to believe that God was one. They never abandoned their belief that God was one, but they gradually came to understand the oneness of God in a new way."^{40[5]} But was that novelty justified? Were later disciples of Jesus authorized to abandon his unitarian creed?

Hebraic Theism presupposed by the Christian Movement (Rawlinson on the Development of the Trinity)

"Our Lord Jesus Christ was a Jew and the Christian movement was in its beginnings a movement within Judaism. Even the fourth gospel, written as many scholars believe, specially for the purposes of showing Jesus to the Greeks (John 12:20-21) is emphatic in its assertion that 'salvation is from the Jews' (John 4:22). Through all the stages of its Hellenization [who said that this is legitimate?!], Christianity presupposes and takes for granted that **Jewish belief in God**. Its distinctive spiritual dynamic is lost whenever for practical purposes the living God of religion is lost behind the abstractions of philosophical theology. And belief in the living God was the gift of Judaea to the world."

But has Christianity in fact maintained Judaism's and Jesus' belief in unitary, non-Trinitarian monotheism? We are going to be judged by the words of Jesus (Acts 17:31, etc.)

^{40[5]}Colin Chapman, *The Case for Christianity*, Eerdmans, 1981.