

Focus on the Kingdom

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When Did God's Son Come into Existence? Part 2

by Ray Faircloth

4. The Sonship was prophesied and was therefore future. No son can exist before his birth (= his coming into existence, Gk. *gennao*; see Luke 1:35, Matt. 1:20 and 1 John 5:18, not KJV). If a son is alive before he is alive as a human person, this would lead to the impossible and unscriptural idea of a *passing through* the womb as taught by Justin Martyr as early as 150 AD. The concept of a pre-human and therefore non-human Messiah led to the non-biblical idea of the Incarnation of the Son, second member of a Trinity.

The Bible is quite clear about the Son's origin:

Isaiah 7:14: "A virgin will be with child and bear a son," i.e. he becomes the Son in the future.

2 Samuel 7:14 (note the 7:14 in both texts!): "I will be his father and he will be my son" (applied to Jesus in Heb. 1:5).

Isaiah 9:6: "There has been a son given to us" (prophetic past tense, meaning "will be given").

Psalms 2:7: "You are my Son; today, I have become your father" ("Today I have begotten you," NASB, RSV.) *Quoted in Hebrews 1:5 and Acts 13:33* of the coming into existence of Jesus (*but not in NWT*).

Psalms 89:26-27: "He himself calls out to me, 'You are my father, my God'...I myself shall place him as *first born*, the most high of all the kings."

All these statements are of a future *begetting* of God's firstborn Son. The Son is *promised* and not *preexistent*. There is a very great difference.

5. The Son was exalted to pre-eminence only after his resurrection. Philippians 2:8-9: "He humbled himself and became *obedient as far as death*...For this very reason *also* God exalted him *to a superior position* and kindly gave him the name that is above every name." Jesus *attained* that supreme position under God, which is impossible if he already had it!

Translation Issues

The Greek word *kai* in Philippians 2:9 for "also" (or "and") does not need to be translated separately because it is part of a Greek phrase which is correctly translated as "therefore" (NRS, ESV, NIV, REB), "because of this" (NAB), "and for this" (NJB), "that is why" (Barclay) or "for this reason" (NASB in Luke 1:35. *Dio kai* in Luke 1:35 means "for this reason precisely" he will be the Son of God).

Also the phrase "to a superior position" in Philippians 2:9 is ambiguous because it implies a *comparison* of two high positions. More accurately the word "highly" demonstrates the Greek as showing the *superlative*: "to the highest place" (NIV); "elevated him to the place of highest honor" (NLT). Hence both ESV and NRSV have: "Therefore God has highly exalted him." (Most other translations are similar.)

Jesus Was Not in His Ultimate Pre-eminent Position Prior to Resurrection

Colossians 1:18: "The firstborn from the dead that he might become the one who is first ['pre-eminent' in ESV and others] in all things."

Hebrews 1:4: "*So* he has *become* better than the angels, to the extent that he has inherited a name more excellent than theirs." This was because "he had made a purification for our sins" (v. 3). It does not say that he was being restored to some past inheritance, i.e. the number two position in the universe, but that he is only now worthy of such inheritance because he "became obedient as far as death" and "had made a purification for our sins."

Hebrews 5:8: "Although he was a son, he learned obedience from the things he suffered." Only after this learning process culminated in his becoming *obedient as far as death* did he become pre-eminent and gain his superlative position next to God (Ps. 110:1, where he is "my lord" (*adoni*) and certainly not a second God).

6. Did the Son speak prior to his recorded life?

Hebrews 1:2: "He [God] has at the end of these days *spoken* to us by means of a **Son**." Jesus, the Son, became God's spokesman only "at the end of these days" whereas God previously had used prophets and angels as His agents (Heb. 1:1; 2:2). If Jesus had been previously an archangel (Michael), then, as a messenger and as one "standing in behalf of the sons of your people" (Dan. 12:1), he most likely would have spoken for God prior to "the end of these days." Yet Hebrews 1:5 shows that the Son was never an angel: "To which one of the angels did he [God] ever say: 'You are my son'?"

7. The Son never goes back to the Father. Jesus never says he will be *returning* to the Father as if he had been with Him previously, but:

"...was going to God" (John 13:3).

"I am going my way to the Father" (John 14:12, 28; 16:28).

"I am going to the Father" (John 16:10, 17).

"I am ascending to my Father" (John 20:17).

NWT, NKJV, NRSV, Rotherham, and KJV are main versions that are correct for all these verses. The NIV and some others wrongly report that Jesus was going back or returning. This is highly misleading. Jesus departed to go to the Father. He is never said to return to the Father.

Misunderstood Issues

The “sending” of Jesus was his commissioning from birth. All the prophets were sent and this has nothing to do with being alive before you are born.

Sending of Jeremiah

Jeremiah 1:5, 7, 10: “Before you proceeded to come forth from the womb I sanctified you. Prophet to the nations I made you...to all those to whom I shall send you...See, I have commissioned you this day.”

Sending did not mean that Jeremiah literally pre-existed and came down from heaven, but was commissioned at birth.

Sending of John the Baptist

John 1:6, Young’s Literal: “There came a man — having been sent from God — whose name is John.”

The *sending forth* of John did not mean that he literally pre-existed and came down from heaven. It was simply a commissioning by God.

Sending of the Disciples

John 17:18: “Just as you sent me forth into the world, I also sent them [the disciples] forth *into the world*.”

The sending forth of the disciples in the same way as Jesus was “sent forth into the world” did not mean that they pre-existed.

Sending of Jesus

Galatians 4:4: “God sent forth His Son, who came to be out of a woman.”

Rengstorf in *The Theological Dictionary of the New Testament* says: “Linguistically there is no support for the thesis that in Galatians 4:4 the *ex* in *exapostellein* indicates that prior to the sending, the one sent was in the presence of the one who sent him” (Vol. 1, p. 406).

Romans 8:3: “By sending His own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh.”

1 John 4:14: “The Father has sent forth His Son as Saviour of the world.”

1 John 4:9: “God sent forth His only-begotten Son *into the world*.”

Jesus Was Raised Up and Then Sent

Acts 3:26: “To you first, God, after raising up his Servant, sent him forth.”

So no pre-human being was raised up in heaven and then sent down to earth. The sending came after Jesus was raised up at birth, just as Jeremiah was raised up at the time of his birth to be a prophet.

What About 1 Timothy 3:16?

“Who was manifested in flesh” (KIT). “He was revealed in flesh” (NRSV).

James Dunn tells us that “manifested” (*ephanerothe*) simply means “appeared”:

“Without any implication of previous hiddenness (cp John 9:3; Rom. 3:21; 2 Cor. 3:3; 4:10; 5:10; 1 John 3:5, 8), so that the context becomes of crucial importance in determining the intended meaning of the text...In this case, there is no indication that the thought was intended to include a third stage of existence prior to appearance on earth...[that is] without any intention of implying a previous [pre-existent] hiddenness.”¹

Compare John 9:3: “that the works of God might be manifested in his case.” These “works” did not pre-exist literally.

1 Corinthians 10:4: “That rock was Christ”

This is typology with reference to Christ accompanying Christians through life. The Christian experience is being read back into the experiences of the Israelites’ deliverance from Egypt and their wilderness wanderings toward the promised land. Paul tells us twice that he is speaking in this passage “typically.”

Passing through the red sea/cloud = Christian baptism.

The miraculous manna = continuous supply of spiritual food.

Striking the rock (*tsur*) at Rephidim = Christ in the flesh smitten for the sins of mankind.

The gushing out of water = the giving of holy spirit.

Striking the rock (*sela*) at Kadesh = Christ our High Priest not to be smitten twice but only to be addressed. Yet “they impale the Son of God afresh” (Heb. 6:6).

Water came out abundantly = the supplying of holy spirit.

The two rock incidents were at each end of the wanderings (Exodus 17 and Numbers 20). So Paul is in no way saying that Christ literally existed as a rock or that he existed in the time of the wilderness wanderings.

The Son of God Himself (Not Just a Body) Was Sacrificed

Hebrews 10:5: “When he comes into the world he says, ‘...you prepared a body for me.’”

This body was not something that the Son was poured into! If such was the case then only Jesus’ body was sacrificed. However, it is plain from the Scriptures that the Son of God himself died (Rom. 5:10). The Son of God was the sacrifice offered as God’s “Lamb.”

Additional Comments of Leading Bible Scholars

In the 1950s Pope Pius granted Catholic scholars significant freedom for a most in-depth examination of

¹ *Christology in the Making*, pp. 236-237.

the Scriptures without fear of any heresy charges concerning what they discovered. At the same time a number of Church of England bishops and scholars convened meetings to discuss the issue of who Jesus really was. The Lutheran Church also became involved in the same investigations.

The conclusions were startling for these churches. Yet the authorities, cardinals, etc. started to clamp down on the findings of these scholars, resulting in the excommunication or “sidelining” of some of the scholars. Happily these researchers wrote numerous books which have opened up the debate which is still going on today. The following are only a few brief quotes from their extensive and detailed discussions of this question as to who Jesus is.

James Dunn, Professor of Divinity: “There is no indication that Jesus *thought or spoke of himself as having pre-existed with God prior to his birth*...A complete discontinuity between Jesus’ own self assertions and the subsequent claims made about him would constitute a fatal flaw.”²

Karl-Josef Kuschel, Catholic theologian: “The christology of **Jewish Christianity**, which had been dominant for decades and knew of no pre-existence christology, was increasingly swept aside and was finally branded heretical...A christology today which heedlessly uses the dogmatic theme of ‘pre-existence’ and introduces it into the NT **foists on the NT** an idea which it does not contain in this form.”³

Professor James Mackey: “As soon as we recoil from the suggestion that something can pre-exist itself, we must wonder what exactly, according to this term [preexistence], pre-exists what else, and in what sense it does so...The logical path to alleged pre-existence is a tortuous one.”⁴◆

“Heaven” Is Not the Christian’s Destination

“Heaven” is everywhere in popular religion declared to be the goal of the faithful. Heaven is imagined as a place far removed from our planet earth. One leading evangelist, Billy Graham, has spoken of our Christian destiny in heaven as “polishing rainbows” and “preparing heavenly dishes.”⁵ Many intelligent people would find “polishing rainbows” interminably boring! The biblical teaching is very different.

Good New Testament scholars are frequently not heeded. The late J.A.T. Robinson, professor of New Testament at Cambridge, went on record as saying with conviction: “Popular speculation is focused rather on the question ‘With what body will [believers] go, that is to

heaven.’ *Heaven is never in fact used in the Bible for the destination of the dying*...The reading of 1 Corinthians 15 at funerals reinforces the impression that this chapter is about the moment of death: in fact it revolves around two points, ‘the third day’ and ‘the last day.’”⁶

Christians are challenged by Jesus to accept, believe and confess the *biblical* point of view and to expose erroneous tradition, however cherished and popular. The Bible, as professor Robinson and many others have told us, nowhere speaks of “heaven at death” as the Christian objective. Jesus and the Apostles constantly reinforced the Hebrew Bible’s (our Old Testament’s) promise that God is going to renew this planet earth and invite those who follow Him to “inherit the earth.” Jesus said it in words that ought not to be misunderstood: “Blessed are the meek, for they are going to inherit the earth” (Matt. 5:5). Could anything be clearer, as a statement of the point and purpose and goal of the Christian faith?

Jesus, whose words are the words of life (John 6:63) and who must be believed by all who claim to “believe in him,” was citing Psalm 37:11. The meek are destined to have **this renewed earth** as their reward and inheritance. Not less than five times that Psalm announces the Christian future:

“For evildoers will be cut off, but as for those who wait for the LORD, **they will inherit the land**. Yet a little while and the wicked man will be no more; and you will look carefully for his place and he will not be there. **But the humble will inherit the land** and will delight themselves in abundant prosperity...The LORD knows the days of the blameless, and their inheritance will be forever...For those blessed by Him **will inherit the land**, but those cursed by Him will be cut off...The **righteous will inherit the land** and dwell in it **forever**...Wait for the LORD and keep His way, and **He will exalt you to inherit the land**; when the wicked are cut off, you will see it” (Ps. 37:9-34).

Popular tracts continue to make the biblical reward obscure. By avoiding the clear verses which spell out the Christian future, they leave the impression that “heaven” as a place far distant from this planet is where Christians are headed. This unbiblical teaching is reinforced in hymns, at funerals and by a deluge of literature. Christians constantly and habitually speak of heaven as their destination. With this they reinforce their misunderstanding. Our own habitual words teach us — not necessarily the truth! All this popular language about heaven blocks, jams and rejects the words of Scripture and of Jesus about the Christian’s destiny and destination.

Tracts will tell you that Heaven is described under various terms, including “the Kingdom of Heaven.” From this you are invited to reinforce the traditional confusion over the Christian goal. Tracts do not tell you

² *Christology in the Making*, p. 254.

³ *Born Before All Time?* pp. 392-394.

⁴ *The Christian Experience of God as Trinity*, p. 51, 56.

⁵ *Hope for the Troubled Heart*, p. 214.

⁶ *In the End God*, pp. 104, 105, emphasis added.

that inheriting the Kingdom of Heaven or the synonymous Kingdom of God are explained in Jesus' lucid words about **inheriting the earth** (Matt. 5:5). This verse, Matthew 5:5, is regularly omitted from any discussion of the Christians' future goal. It is that verse which most effectively corrects our mistaken notions. A child can grasp that inheriting the earth does not mean going off to a place beyond the skies!

Daniel knew well that the Kingdom of Heaven describes the renewed earth. The Kingdom of Heaven was the well established Jewish phrase for the **future Kingdom of God** and of the Messiah to be established *on a renewed earth* "under the whole heaven" (Dan. 7:27). The saints, in that verse, are promised rulership with Messiah in the future Kingdom. "Under the whole heaven" means, of course, on the earth. And that is exactly where the heavenly, divine Kingdom will be located after Jesus comes back. New Testament disciples and people in general knew that the Kingdom of God would be headquartered in Jerusalem, the city called by Jesus "the city of the great King" (Matt. 5:35). "While they were listening to these things, Jesus went on to tell a parable, because he was near Jerusalem, and they supposed that the Kingdom of God was going to appear immediately" (Luke 19:11). They were not looking off into outer space! The Messianic King Jesus is the appointed ruler of the world and he will administer a new order from Jerusalem. The crowd were not wrong in this regard.

The Christians are promised the earth as their inheritance. Jesus made that more than clear (Matt. 5:5). The promise is repeated forcefully in a wonderful summary of salvation. These words are sung in praise of the Messiah: "Worthy are you to take the book and to break its seals; for you were slain, and purchased for God with your blood men [and women] from every tribe and tongue and people and nation. You have made them to be a kingdom and priests to our God; **and they will reign upon the earth**" (Rev. 5:9-10). This is a plain confirmation of Matthew 5:5. The location of the Kingdom is the earth and believers of all the ages will reign as kings with Jesus over the earth and of course, "upon the earth." How do we know this?

Jesus is **coming back** to the earth and so he will thereafter be **on the earth** to which he has returned. Then the words of Jeremiah and many other prophets will be fulfilled: "Behold, days are coming, declares the LORD, when I will raise up for David a righteous branch [the Messiah]; and he will reign as king and act wisely and do justice and righteousness **in the land**. In his days Judah will be saved, and Israel will dwell securely" (Jer. 23:5-6).

What a grand and wonderful promise of peace on earth. This, and not "heaven" as a place removed from the earth, is the location of the saints in the future. This will indeed be the Garden of Eden paradise restored.

Jesus' promise of the inheritance of the earth is described as "paradise." It will be on earth. "To the one who conquers I will grant to eat of the tree of life, which is in the **paradise of God**" (Rev. 2:7). Eden will not be in the sky, nor will the beloved "city of the great King" (Matt. 5:35). The saints will be on the earth and their residence is to be attacked (unsuccessfully, after the millennium) by Satan who will eventually be destroyed forever: "And they marched up over the broad **plain of the earth** and **surrounded the camp of the saints** and the beloved city, but fire came down from heaven and consumed them" (Rev. 20:9).

Popular tracts which have not carefully examined this issue of the Christian destiny continue to avoid any reference to inheriting the earth (Matt. 5:5) and deceive their readers with references to the "heavenly country" of Hebrews 11:16. They do not tell you that this "heavenly" country is the same as "the city **which is to come**": "Under present circumstances we do not have a permanent city; we are looking for the city to come" (Heb. 13:14). The city will be the restored city of Jerusalem where Jesus will reside, presiding from the throne of David over the first successful world government.

Jesus promised the thief on the cross, whose commendable faith was in the Messiah as the king of the future Kingdom, that he would be with Jesus in the future paradise on earth, the Kingdom of God. "Remember me," said the repentant thief to Jesus, "when you come bringing your Kingdom" (Luke 23:42). The thief demonstrates here his unswerving faith in the Gospel about the Kingdom. Jesus replied: "I tell you even today, you will indeed be with me in that future paradise" (Luke 23:43, promised likewise in Rev. 2:7 as the future reward of the triumphant believers). The thief was assured *that very day* that he and Jesus would be together in that Eden to be restored on this planet. (For a similar strong promise, see Acts 20:26: "I testify to you this day...")

Now notice the completely misleading mistranslation of the paraphrase version, the New Living Translation: "For this world is not our home; we are looking forward to our city in heaven, which is yet to come" (Heb. 13:14). The Greek original says not a word about a "city **IN** heaven"! If it did the basic promise of Jesus that Christians are going to **inherit the earth** would be meaningless. In fact, Jesus is **coming back** to the earth, to remain here and to establish the millennial Jerusalem on this planet earth, where the saints will rule as kings and queens with him upon the earth (Rev. 5:10). The hoped for city is "the city which is to come" (Heb. 13:14), *not* a city away from the earth to which we go! If Jesus is not going to be here on a renewed earth, then the Second Coming is a myth and a fantasy.

The Messiah will return to the earth (Acts 1:11). He will not be paying the earth a momentary visit! He is not

“driving by” but coming to stay. If you want to be with Jesus in the future, give up all talk about “going to heaven,” because Jesus *will not be* in heaven. He will be back here on planet earth. He will be here to bring into existence the worldwide Kingdom of God which is the principal subject of the Christian Gospel (Mark 1:14-15; Luke 4:43; Acts 19:8; 28:23, 31; Dan. 2:44; 7:18, 22, 27).

Christian language about the future will be corrected when heaven as our future home is dropped entirely from our vocabulary. We repeatedly reinforce our non-biblical hope when we speak of heaven. Certain hymns will need to be removed from our services as deceptive. Only then will Jesus’ promise about our inheriting the earth ring out clearly to us and our children, as we celebrate his wonderful words and the glorious future guaranteed to those who follow him fully to the end.

When Jesus preached the saving Gospel he commanded belief in *the Gospel of the Kingdom* (Mark 1:14-15). That is where Christianity begins. It is founded on the Gospel teaching of Jesus himself. The amazing mistake of C.S. Lewis that “the Gospel is not in the Gospels” needs to be reversed and rejected. Jesus is the first preacher of the saving Christian Gospel (Heb. 2:3; 1 Tim. 6:3; 2 John 7-9). Jesus’ words, which “are spirit and truth,” are all important as the basis of our faith. And they include, at their center, his promise to return to this planet to inaugurate worldwide the Kingdom of God, and to resurrect the faithful of all ages so that they may be with him assisting in his government on a renewed earth (see for example Luke 22:28-30; Matt. 19:28; 2 Tim. 2:12; Rev. 2:26; 3:21; 20:1-6; 1 Cor. 6:2). None of these passages has a word to say about “heaven” as the Christian objective. “Heaven” as the Christian goal is a post-biblical teaching, originating from a time when the faithful were losing their roots in the Hebrew Bible and the teaching of Jesus and Paul, and were espousing the seducing myths of Greek philosophy.

Greek philosophy promoted the pagan idea that there is an immortal soul or spirit in every human being which survives in full consciousness after death. This false premise led in its turn to a post-mortem conscious state for the dead, contradicting the Bible teaching that “the dead know nothing at all...There is no activity in the grave to which we are all going” (see Ecc. 9:5, 10).

If “souls” disappeared to a new location at death, it seemed reasonable to suppose that they went to heaven to be with God, or to a torturing hell. The sad result of this re-direction of the destiny of the dead was that the *future* resurrection at the *future* coming of Jesus (1 Cor. 15:23) for participation in the *future* Kingdom of God on earth was suppressed. (Augustine, hailed as a Christian hero by many, was the major player in the suppression of the Christian hope of inheriting the earth at the future resurrection.) Popular Christianity continues to support

the loss of the biblical hope of Christian participation in the future Kingdom of God which Jesus will introduce when he comes.

The “showcase” of contemporary evangelical Bible study, the *Word Bible Commentary* series, challenges us to give up Plato and paganism for Christ. Professor David Aune in his three-volume commentary on Revelation quotes a Stoic philosopher “reflecting a strong Platonic influence”: “When the day comes to separate the heavenly from the earthly blend, I shall leave the body where I have found it, and shall of my own will betake myself to the gods. I am not apart from them now but am merely detained in a heavy and earthly prison. These delays of mortal existence are a prelude to the larger and better life.”⁷

This stoic, platonic view of the afterlife is echoed today in hundreds of funeral sermons. The dead are alive and well and have departed disembodied to heaven (seldom to hell!). But on what basis is Platonism valid as Christian teaching? Dr. Aune says that this view of the cosmos “was prevalent in Greco-Roman *paganism*, providing the basis for the belief that upon death, the soul, the true self, ascends to a heavenly region, to the realm of the gods.”

Just as Plato approved homosexual love, an epidemic in ancient Greece, so the Christianized West follows him. But Plato has been well entrenched in what we call Christian theology since soon after apostolic times. This information is widely known to scholars, but the public demands an instant survival of the soul at death, in heaven. What they demand the clergy all too easily affirms for them.

I finish with the testimony of two among multitudes of witnesses against the Church’s introduction of Greek philosophy into the faith. Both are from Holland. At the University of Amsterdam Dr. F.W.A. Korff stated: “The doctrine of the immortality of the soul which we find in our theology does not come from a belief in Christ but from Greek philosophy, especially that of Plato. The doctrine of the immortality of the soul is based on a separation of the body and the soul, **but the Bible does not teach this. The resurrection** is the other side of the cross. The resurrection is the beginning of the new life. Both our body and soul become decomposed. But Christ shall raise body and soul and he will give us new life, real life.”⁸

And this from another Dutch professor. Dr. G.E. Van Niftrik of the University of Amsterdam wrote: “That anybody is so obstinate as to speak about the *mortal* remains, only shows that the world and the church fell away from the Bible. Only a few people seem to understand that this complexity of thoughts [about an

⁷ Seneca, *Ep. Mor.*, cited in *Revelation, WBC*, p. 404.

⁸ Cited in *The Conditionalist Faith of our Fathers*, Vol. 2, p. 659.

immortal soul] is absolutely contrary to the Holy Scripture. This whole line of thought is heathen, Greek philosophy but in no case Biblical...We have to be very careful that our Christian convictions are not adopted from history and judgment rather than from the Bible. Much too long has theology remained connected with certain conceptions of the world and man. We need *Scriptural* theology.

“The Bible teaches us to confess the resurrection of the flesh, and this is something quite different from the immortality of the soul. When the Bible speaks about the flesh this means not only the body but also the whole man, with everything belonging to him, his soul included. The soul is not something mysterious, not a spiritual entity which lives inside of me; no, the soul is the life of my entire being. Everything that is human is mortal. I am mortal. I am the soul of my body. I (the soul of my body) am mortal. God, only, the Bible teaches, is immortal.”⁹

Truly the Greek philosophy against which Paul warned (Col. 2:8) has thrown Christian understanding of Jesus and the Bible into confusion. The biblical system and the Greek system are at opposite poles. We have to choose one or the other. A mixture of both is detrimental to our spiritual health. We need the “health-giving words of our Lord Jesus” (1 Tim. 6:3).

The one-time president of the Methodist Church warned us, but churches seem bent on continuing “business as usual”:

“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 Kingdom of God is regarded as something achieved by *human effort.*’ 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. What, then, is to be done with the Bible? Is it 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.”¹⁰ (For more information please read Greg Deuble’s *They Never Told Me This in Church*, available from 800-347-4261 or www.restorationfellowship.org).

In stark contrast to Greek paganism and Plato, Jesus knew nothing of “immortal souls” surviving death. He described death with such transparent simplicity: “Lazarus is dead...Lazarus is asleep. I am going to wake him up out of his sleep” (John 11:14, 11).

The Christian who dies falls asleep, falls into unconsciousness. It is a state of non-existence which will, thank God, be reversed at the resurrection of the dead from the dust of the ground (Dan. 12:2). Daniel will rise with the rest of the faithful to receive his lot and inheritance in the future Kingdom of God on earth (Dan. 12:13). Belief in the future resurrection of the dead from their graves, *rather than belief in the Greek myth of surviving departed souls or spirits*, will make the Bible come alive, and make it relevant in a wonderful new way. ✧

Comments

“We won’t be reordering copies of Greg Deuble’s book *They Never Told Me This in Church*. The book has caused us considerable problems and we’ve decided not to continue carrying stock on our shelves.” — Koorong Christian bookstores, Australia

Greg Deuble’s response: “Thanks for your reply and update. I am sorry to hear of the ‘considerable problems’ the book has caused Koorong. I can only guess these problems have come from the kind of comments posted under the review ‘False Prophet’ on your website. Personally, I find this rather sad for that kind of person who is obviously unable to display the noble spirit of the Bereans who searched the Scriptures daily to see for themselves whether the things Paul was teaching were true. Your uncertain reviewer needed the word of his pastor before making his bold pronouncements!

⁹ The Reformed Church, 1948. *Ibid.*, p. 960.

¹⁰ Norman Snaith, *Distinctive Ideas of the Old Testament*, p. 187-88.

“I would be less than honest if I did not also say that Koorong’s capitulation is just as disappointing. Why not stand as a bastion for free and open research and speech? Why not stand for reasonableness and dialogue and encourage some lateral thinking? As I stated in my book, Truth has nothing to fear from an honest search under God’s Light. I would hope and pray that there will be a review of Koorong’s decision here. It would be so gratifying to see Koorong stand in the true spirit of the Evangelical Reformers it so loyally promotes. God’s Grace and Blessings to you through our Lord Jesus the Messiah.” — Greg Deuble

“Just a note to let you know that I just finished reading your new book *Jesus Was Not a Trinitarian*. I thought it was fantastic and enjoyed every page enormously.” — *Arkansas*

“Your insights into the Scripture should be shared with every pastor. Here at Living Waters Church we use your books to teach Sunday School and adult studies. We meet in our garage that is set up as a sanctuary, but the people have been faithful in attending. Please keep us, as we keep you in our prayers.” — *North Carolina*

“You have no idea how thrilled I am to have received your new book *Jesus Was Not a Trinitarian*. So logical — I keep thinking of others who might find it as absorbing as I am.” — *England*

“Have just got my hands on *Jesus Was Not a Trinitarian* and started it. Loving it. Just loving it!” — *Australia*

“Thank you for *Focus on the Kingdom*, a wonderful source of teaching and encouragement.” — *Colorado*

“I received your new book today, *Jesus Was Not a Trinitarian*. Your studies, books, etc. have been such a blessing and inspiration to me, personally, that words cannot describe them. But I feel I can only try. You know, people often ask me who, what or where am I being taught this ‘heretical, blasphemous’ teaching. All I can tell them is the truth. I tell them how, only a year ago, I accepted Jesus Christ as the Lord, Saviour, and light of my life and how I was convinced via the Holy Spirit of my sins and need for repentance — my need to turn from all wickedness, lies, and to be saved by a message of truth, love and a reality that some people are yet to see in Christianity. I tell them how, for most of my adult life, I had been seeking truth in the wrong places, in libraries, philosophical books, in men’s minds, as it were, and how it almost drove me to a mental breakdown and suicide. It is what philosophers term the ‘black hole,’ the ‘abyss’ that Nietzsche described so succinctly when he wrote ‘*When you look into the abyss the abyss looks into you.*’

“I also tell people how I was wisely directed by people, who had been revealed the true gospel of WHO the true Jesus and God were, to simply read the Bible. Simply read the Jesus biography of Luke, Mark, John

and Matthew. What God revealed to me through those first readings did not agree with what I was beginning to understand as being the doctrine of the Trinity. If anything, it clashed head on and I had to make a profound choice to question a doctrine which if you deny it you deny *being a Christian!* But I chose to question it and ultimately reject it. Why? Because I cannot for the life of me believe that what Jesus said is a lie! Because Jesus, being the perfect ‘generated’ human that he was, *could not* do anything but speak the truth in love, which is what God always put in his mouth to do!! That is what he was *sent* to do!!

“In any case, I thank you for your zeal, your faith and your unending voice that, along with the few others today and in days gone by, have been drowned out by a Christianity that will ultimately be revealed for what it is when the Son of Man comes in the clouds, in the glory of the ONLY ‘King of the ages ETERNAL, IMMORTAL, INVISIBLE, THE ONLY WISE GOD, honor and glory to the ages of the ages. Amen.’” — *Australia*

Jesus Was Not a Trinitarian ***A Call to Return to the Creed of Jesus***

In this new book Anthony Buzzard invites scholars and laymen alike to take seriously Jesus’ Jewish creed, his recitation of the Shema, “Hear, O Israel,” which proclaims God to be one single Lord. Defining God and His Son biblically remains part of the unfinished work of the Reformation. The evidence placed before the reader shows that a major paradigm shift is needed if Christians are to worship their God in spirit and in truth, uncluttered by the philosophical and confusing ideas about God which form part of received church tradition. Available from 800-347-4261 (404-362-0052) or www.restorationfellowship.org (465 pages, \$18)

2008 Theological Conference

Sunday-Wednesday, April 27-30, 2008
Simpsonwood Conference Center, Norcross, GA
Details will be announced in January *Focus*.