

# Focus on the Kingdom

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Anthony Buzzard, editor

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## Listen, Israel; Listen, “Israel of God” (Gal. 6:16); Listen, “the true circumcision” (Phil. 3:3)

*For Brechanah, a young Jewish Christian*

Paul applies the above titles and labels to the *international* group of believers in Christ — “no Jew, no Gentile...no male nor female...all one in Messiah” (Gal. 3:28). This is the body of people who have accepted the truth that Jesus of Nazareth was and is the true Messiah of the Bible’s promises made to Israel. He is also the Messiah who is coming again to set up his Kingdom in a renewed earth.

For Paul becoming a member of this one universal church meant repentance and belief in the Gospel of the Kingdom and of course in Jesus as King of the Kingdom (cp. Acts 8:12). Baptism as an outward public confession of faith meant the reception of the spirit of God as a sealing of our commitment. 1 Corinthians 12:13 gives us the great central truth of Paul’s ministry, telling us how we all began the Christian journey: “For in one Spirit we were all baptized into one body — Jews or Greeks, slaves or free — and all were made to drink of one Spirit.”

Paul distinguishes this “Israel of God” (Gal. 6:16) or “the true circumcision [“spiritual Jews”] who worship God in the spirit” (Phil. 3:3) from what he calls “Israel according to the flesh” (1 Cor. 10:18). By “Israel of the flesh” he means the at present *unconverted* national Israel, who have not accepted the Messiah who came 2000 years ago. Paul was distressed about his colleague non-Christian Jews who had *rejected their Messiah* and he attempted to save them from their “zeal without knowledge” (Rom. 10:2). Paul’s theology was also that of Peter: that there is salvation for no one apart from Jesus (Acts 4:12).

Paul *also* hoped for a future national and collective conversion of that present *unconverted* “Israel of the flesh.” He expected this for a future remnant of Jews who would finally be willing to accept the returning Messiah when he comes to establish the Kingdom on earth. Micah had expressed that same hope for a national conversion of Jews. He wrote that God would surely “save all Israel; I will surely save *the remnant*” (Mic. 2:12). Paul details this future for national Israel in a special discussion in Romans 9-11, particularly in 11:1-32 when he observes that at present “Israel [after the flesh]” is largely blinded. They are “enemies of the Gospel” (11:28). But this spiritual insensitivity will go

on “until the times of the Gentiles are complete and thus all Israel will be saved” (11:25-26). The word “until” of course means “up to the time when.” When that time is over then “all Israel [the ones now blinded] will be saved” in Christ.

Paul, it is important to understand, uses the term “Israel” in two senses. There is an international body of Christ *now* whom he calls “the Israel of God” (Gal. 6:16). They are to walk according to the standard of “love” and “freedom.” These are the believers in Messiah who walk in the freedom of Christ and within the Torah of Messiah which is *not the same as* the Torah of Moses (see 1 Cor. 9:21)! This liberty implies freedom amongst other things from a necessity for physical circumcision (commanded for all under the old system, Gen. 17:9-14). The **Israel of God** (Gal. 6:16) is also not bound by any obligations of the Mosaic calendar system of feasts and Sabbath and New Moons (Col. 2:16-17). Issues of food and drink are not relevant under this new covenant arrangement. Paul is able to say, “I am convinced that nothing is unclean of itself — only if you think it is unclean...All things are clean” (Rom. 14:14, 20). Paul was a Jew but, as a Christian in Christ, he was not under the temporary law of Moses. The sign of the Old Covenant, the weekly Sabbath (Exod. 31:13-17) was inappropriate as the sign of the New Covenant (Col. 2:16-17).

The true Israel of the spirit, the international body of believers in the true God of Israel and of the Church, and in the Messiah as the virginally begotten Son of God (Luke 1:35), cling to the central creedal confession of Jesus and the whole Hebrew Bible. That is the stupendous fact that God is one Person and not two or three, or more! Jesus provided a rock-solid confirmation that the One God of Israel’s creed was equally the One God of the creed of Jesus and thus of his followers and of biblical Christianity. John the apostle issued a formal warning to us all: “If any one comes to you and does not bring the teaching of the Messiah, he does not have a relationship with God...Little children, avoid idols,” false ideas about God (2 John 9; 1 John 5:21).

This stern exhortation to avoid wrong **metal** or **mental** images of God is one of John’s final warnings — and the churches have been lured away from accepting the words of the apostle John (1 John 5:20-21). Here is how this has happened. Jesus was the supreme and final prophet like Moses (Deut. 18:15-18; Acts 3:22; 7:37). God, his Father, commands us, “Listen to him,” “listen to My Son” (Luke 9:35).

Jesus spoke of listening to the right proposition about *who God is* when he recited the *Shema* (“Listen, Israel”) of Deuteronomy 6:4. As God’s Israel (Gal. 6:16) and the true circumcision who worship in the spirit (Phil. 3:3), we Christians are to pay attention to what Jesus termed the most important commandment of all: “Listen, Israel, The LORD your God is only one, single [*echad* in Hebrew, *eis* in Greek] LORD” (Mark 12:29). That one God is to be loved with every fiber of our being, including the mind, and especially the mind. And our neighbor is to be loved as ourselves. This double command of Jesus is for us Christians the sensitive heart of the Christian faith, the very first and most significant truth which guides us into a right relationship with the one God and His Son, the Lord Messiah.

To worship God, as we must, “in spirit and truth” we must understand who He is: the single Lord of the Jewish heritage of Jesus and confirmed by him as the same single Lord of Christian faith as modeled by Jesus.

The creed of Jesus has tragically become perverted by a Gentile tendency to multiply gods. A battle raged for centuries after Bible times about who Jesus is in relation to the One God, his Father. Some said Jesus was a super-angelic being who left heaven to enter the womb of his mother to be born as a man, or rather to put on a human covering over his angel-self.

Others insisted that the Son of God had no beginning in time, but was coeternal with God. They said that that “God the Son” one day decided to assume human nature and be born as the God-man.

Both of these options promoted a departure from the central, commanded creed of Jesus, the second option even more blatantly than the first. Christians must not risk misdefining God. Talk of *more* than one who is God is talk of more than one God!

As one of the great historians of the Trinity wrote: If there is a God in heaven who remains in heaven and then a God who becomes man on earth, that clearly adds up to two Gods. It does, and no amount of verbal jugglery will avoid this problem. If you say “Jesus is God and the Father is God” or “Jesus is Deity” and of course “the Father is Deity” you are committed to more than One God, and this flies in the face of the commanded creed of Jesus and his Hebrew heritage. The results of our loss of Jesus’ teaching in Mark 12:28-34 are monumental. Jews are appalled at the notion that the promised Son of God *is* GOD.

Happily, prominent theologians like the professor of Systematic Theology at Fuller Seminary, Dr. Colin Brown, clarifies this tragically muddled state of affairs for us, cutting through centuries of confusion, when he writes, “To be called Son of God in the Bible *means you are not God.*” That statement is easily confirmed in the Bible. Angels are called “sons of God,” but they are obviously not God! Adam is called “son of God” and so

was the nation of Israel. Christians are called sons of God too.

It is not hard to grasp the simple fact that the term “Son of God,” a central title for Jesus in the New Testament (following the prophecy of his coming in 2 Sam. 7:14), indicates that the Son of God is *not* God. (Of course, as we noted, if Jesus is God and his Father is God, that would make two gods, which is one too many.)

“The key to Israel’s understanding of creation and creatureliness is its trust in God the Creator.” Jesus shared that trust when he spoke of God (not himself, but God his Father) as “the one who made them male and female” (Mark 10:6). “This trust is expressed centrally in the words of Israel’s ‘confession of faith,’ the *Shema*: ‘Hear, O Israel, the LORD our God is one LORD’ (Deut 6:4). One, alone, unique: the LORD by Himself and so in a unique way, is God. Thus Israel testifies to the lordship, the sovereignty of the One God. But His sovereignty is not empty. It is sovereignty over the world. The world is His as His possession.

“Israel’s trust in the present sovereignty of God has corollaries in both directions, past and future. He is the Creator of the world, and he will be its Redeemer. As the world is His possession by right of Creation, so its future is also His. His above all is the present. Israel’s trust in the world’s Creator is therefore at the same time trust in the redeemer and Lord, for God is one. Who else could redeem it and bring it to its completion but the One who created it ‘in the beginning.’ Israel gives this witness on the basis of having learned of the One God of Sinai in the context of having been created a people and sent to obey God’s commandments in the land of promise.

“Because God is one, Israel trusts in a redemption of God’s one creation. Israel does not hope for another world than this one. It hopes for God’s future for *this* world, the one God created [i.e. this planet earth transformed by the coming Kingdom of God]. There is no other world because there is no other God. It is the world in which God is to be served.

“Israel hopes not only for the coming of the Messianic age for this world, it hopes also for the OLAM HABA, the age to come. (From rabbinic times, these have usually been spoken of as two distinct and successive ages, the latter being final.) OLAM HABA could be translated ‘the world to come,’ but that is misleading, unless we make it clear that we mean ‘the world as it will come to be.’ The age to come, or the coming age (or era) is a better translation; the expression can therefore be replaced simple with ‘the Future.’ A new order, which is new ordering of the world, and not some other world, is Israel’s hope...

“Israel stands by this: the recitation of the *Shema* is every faithful Jew’s first word in the morning of each

day but also the last word Israel can and does say when pushed to the limit. With these words Rabbi Akiva sanctified God's name in the hour of death, and so have all Israel's martyrs. This witness to the unique God is the root of Israel's understanding that everything other than God is His and His alone. 'For thus says the LORD, who created the heavens (He is God!), who formed the earth and made it (He established it; he did not make it a chaos, he formed it to be inhabited!): I am the LORD and there is no other' (Isa. 45:18)."<sup>1</sup> ✧

## Where Was the Promised Kingdom?

Barrie Wilson's recent book *How Jesus Became Christian* shows us why Jesus' real Christian Gospel of the (future) Kingdom has become so hazy in the minds of many churchgoers. When Jesus did not appear as expected, what was to be done? The Church reinvented the Gospel without any future Kingdom at its center. Replacing Jesus' Kingdom Gospel we find 1) The Kingdom really means a Kingdom in the heart of a believer or 2) We go to heaven individually at death. Both alternatives were ruinous to the New Testament teaching. Both undermined Jesus' core concept about repentance, that we are firstly to "Repent and believe [not replace!] the Gospel about the Kingdom" (Mark 1:14-15).

"Christians advanced differing strategies for dealing with the delay of the promised Messianic era. Probably some quit the movement, as failing to live up to its promises...

"Some second-century Christians continued to say that, eventually, Jesus would return to bring about the Kingdom of God on earth. That is, after all, what he talked about and promised, and they clung to this hope. This represents a 'this-worldly' or literal interpretation of the expectation. As the decades passed, enthusiasm for this approach withered. What is the length of a promise that does not materialize? How long can an unmet promise be sustained as a legitimate hope without its eventually being perceived as false?

"But there were other ways of coping with the problem of the delayed reappearance of Christ. Some began to *spiritualize* the concept, maintaining that the promised messianic era was not a political entity — not a transformed world after all. On this view, the Kingdom of God came to be located within the hearts and minds of believing Christians. The Kingdom message became reinterpreted as something spiritual — something available to everybody, in the here and now. This meant abandoning the expectation that *the world* would be changed in favor of the view that *people* would be changed. In this view, the Kingdom was a present reality that all could access. There was no need to wait for

Jesus to return. Gnostics — the ancient 'New Agers' — veered in this direction, contending that 'the living Jesus' was available everywhere, for all who search sincerely for insight. For them the Kingdom of God was a present reality. It was just there, waiting for insightful people to discover it.

"Others, however, adopted a *supernatural* interpretation. On this view, the Kingdom of God was attainable in an afterlife, in a place or state called heaven, not on earth. Christians would be rewarded with eternal life in heaven, a supernatural realm, after death. Nonbelievers would be relegated to a hell, either a place of punishment or nonexistence. Thus there was no need for Jesus to return. A supernatural interpretation meant that the dream of a transformed world was abandoned. This was not, however, the biblical expectation at all. The world to come is depicted as a transformation of this earth and resurrection as a coming back to life on this planet. The supernatural heaven-hell reinterpretation of the Kingdom message *spatialized* the message that was originally temporal in nature.

"This original concept of resurrection, whether from the Pharisaic or Christian camp, viewed redemption as something that would happen *on earth* at some *time* in the future, at a point in history when God will make good on his promises to restore the world to its original pristine form, without sin and without evil. Those righteous people who are alive when this happens will automatically be transformed, to suit conditions in the new terrestrial environment. Those who had died — and were righteous — would come back to life, transformed, again to suit the circumstances of the newly created world. Paul set forth this view of resurrection, for instance, toward the end of his letter 1 Corinthians, and, in this, he builds on the traditional Jewish view. Thus, in its inception, the idea of redemption was a temporal one: **the righteous will inherit the earth**, at some point *in the future*, when God decides to re-create the world. The dead are truly dead, 'waiting' for resuscitation by God at some point at the end of the age.

"The heaven-hell reinterpretation represented a new concept on the Christian scene, one that is not typically found within the biblical narrative. It is a *spatial* concept, locating the afterlife in another dimension, place, or state, which we enter immediately upon death. **The origin of this approach lies within Greek philosophy** — the works of Plato, Orphism, and the neo-Platonists in particular — or within ancient Egyptian religion, the religion of the pharaoh with its examination and judgment upon the individual soul at death. According to the Egyptian *Book of the Dead*, Osiris and forty-two judges weigh the human soul in accordance with forty-two criteria for admission into the afterlife. This *otherworldly* view is often tied in with a view of human personality as involving an immortal

<sup>1</sup> Paul M. Van Buren, *A Theology of the Jewish Christian Reality*, 1983, pp. 92-93.

soul, an indestructible soul substance. According to this view, judgment occurs at the time of death, and then the immortal soul is sentenced to a future eternity, either in heaven or hell (or, in some theologies, in an intermediate state called purgatory).

“These otherworldly interpretations of the expectation preserved the emphasis on transformation, either spiritually in this life or supernaturally after death. Both reinterpretations, however, **abandoned the need for a return of Jesus to transform the world.** Thus there was no waiting for Jesus to return and so the problem of the delay was solved. **This was not, however, the original biblical expectation.** These otherworldly interpretations represented creative solutions to an immense pastoral problem faced by early Christian leaders.”<sup>2</sup>

This analysis tells us how and why the original Kingdom *Gospel* of Jesus was lost. It was replaced either by a “go to heaven when I die” approach, which would make the second coming superfluous. Or, secondly, the Kingdom of God was replaced with a “present” “Kingdom in the heart” teaching, usually with the appeal to a likely mistranslation in Luke 17:21, KJV: “The Kingdom of God is within you.” If that is the case who wants to bother with a Second Coming to bring the Kingdom worldwide, which is the original Christian truth, based on Jesus’ Gospel preaching?

The fundamental problem which led to the substitution of Jesus’ Gospel with a different hope is candidly expressed in the work of a former President of the Methodist Church, a PhD specialist in the Hebrew Bible. We remind you of his enormously significant words. The problem is a sell-out to paganism in the interests of conforming to the world and its “wisdom.”

Dr. Snaith wrote in 1964: “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. There have been Christians from the beginning who have sought to do this. Often it has been done unconsciously, but whether consciously or unconsciously, 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 **Greek philosophers** has been both *widespread* throughout the centuries and everywhere *destructive to the essence of the Christian faith*...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...Are we to continue to regard Plato and Aristotle with their pagan

<sup>2</sup> Barrie Wilson, *How Jesus Became Christian*, New York: St. Martin’s Press, 2008, pp. 216-217.

successors as contributing the norm and the main ideas of Greek philosophy as the determining factors in Christian theology?...There can be no answer to the question ‘What is Christianity?’...until we have come to a clear view of the distinctive ideas of both Old and New Testaments and their difference from *the pagan ideas which so largely have dominated ‘Christian’ thought.*”<sup>3</sup>

Can Christians sit by quietly knowing that the faith has been poisoned by Greek philosophy?✧

## What Does the Bible Mean by the Term “worship”?

by Carlos Jimenez, Australia

“Ancient Mediterranean societies tended to be very hierarchical. It was a world where everyone knew their place in relation to countless superiors and inferiors. Those who neglected or forgot this stratification of rank would be readily reminded by those around. In the highest place stood God or the gods. Below that in the Roman Empire ranked the emperor, followed by senators, governors, and a very complex system of local officials, priests, and landowners. The very bottom was occupied by slaves who might be owned by the lowliest of peasants.

“Social convention dictated gestures of deference and respect from inferior to superior at every point along this hierarchy. In the presence of someone of high rank, low bows or prostrations were expected. The Greek verb that expresses making such a prostration was *proskuneo*. In the modern world the best example of a prostration can be seen in the prayers of Muslims. Dropping to your knees, you bend forward and lower your head to the ground.

“In the time of Jesus, prostrations were common throughout the eastern Roman Empire, both in official circles and in the less formal daily dealings of people of widely different rank. *Proskuneo* gradually expanded its meaning to include a wide variety of formal gestures of respect. It even came to be used colloquially with the meaning ‘kiss’ or offer a welcoming embrace.”<sup>4</sup>

The point we are making is this: Some older versions of the Bible, notably the King James Version, are now highly misleading when they present you with the view that Jesus was “worshiped,” i.e. that Jesus is GOD, equal to the Father in Deity. Dr. BeDuhn, whom we quoted, goes on to make the point that “worship,” in its Old English sense, still retained the “range of meaning” that was closest to that of the ancient world. But today those meanings have been lost to the extent

<sup>3</sup> *Distinctive Ideas of the Old Testament*, pp. 187-188.

<sup>4</sup> Jason D. BeDuhn, *Truth in Translation: Accuracy and Bias in English Translations of the New Testament*, University Press of America, 2003, pp. 41-49.

that they do not cover the same function as they once did. He argues for better, modern translations of the Bible which reflect this social and cultural change since translators “mislead their readers into thinking that every greeting, kiss or prostration in the Bible is an act of worship directed to a god.”

What is meant by the KJV when Jesus is said to be “worshiped”? Not necessarily that he *is* God! “They are gestures of respect made to a superior, in either the spiritual, social or political sense.” With this in mind “we can see how theological bias has been the determining context for the choices made by [translators of today].”

### General “worship”

In the Bible “worship” was offered to both God (YHWH) and human beings. This is reflected in the OT Hebrew words: *shachah* (Gen. 37:7; 47:31; Josh. 23:7; Jdg 7:15; 1 Kings 1:47; 1 Chron. 29:20; Zeph. 2:11); *qadad* (Gen. 24:26; 43:28); and the Aramaic verb *segeed*, corresponding to the Hebrew *saḡad* (Dan. 2:46; 3:28; cf. Rom. 12:1). The NT uses the Greek *proskuneo* for angels (Rev. 19:10; 22:8), human beings (Matt. 20:20; Acts 10:25), and false gods or idols (Acts 7:43; Rev. 13:8; 16:2; 19:20; 20:4). In Revelation 3:9 human beings are to be worshiped! They are not God.

A leading authority on the Bible is most helpful: “Some indefiniteness attaches to this subject [of “worship”], partly owing to the two senses in which the Greek word *proskuneo* is used, and partly owing to the ambiguous usage of the word *kurios* [lord]. But it cannot be proven that in any of these cases more than an act of homage and humble obeisance is intended. Josephus uses the word *proskuneo* of the high priests. The physical act of prostration in profound humility, and as rendering great honor, is all that can be meant. The homage offered to Christ would vary in its significance from the simple prostration of the leper before the Great Healer to the adoration of Mary Magdalene and Thomas in presence of the risen Christ, its significance depending wholly on the idea of His nature that had been attained, and therefore not to be determined by the mere statements of the outward acts which we find in the Gospels.”<sup>5</sup>

Thus “worship” of Jesus tells us nothing about his precise status or nature. “The examples of *proskuneo* which have been discussed do not greatly strengthen the evidence for the worship of Christ [i.e. as God]. The ambiguity of the word *proskuneo*, which can be used of oriental obeisance, as well as actual worship, makes it impossible to draw certain conclusions from the evidence.”<sup>6</sup>

### “Divine” service and worship

The Bible uses other words to indicate the exclusive “worship” and external or official *divine* service to the one God of Israel, YHWH. The OT uses the Aramaic *palach*, found in Daniel (7:14, 27; cp. 6:16-17, 20-21; 3:28; 7:24) and describes the activity of “servants” of the Jewish Temple (Ezra 7:24). In the Greek Septuagint this is translated as *latreuo* (*worship*; cp. *latreai*=*service worship*, Ex. 3:12; 7:16; Deut. 4:28; Jdg 2:11, 13), the version most in use during the 2<sup>nd</sup> Temple period.

This word is also used in the same context in the NT, reserved for God alone:

- in a religious sense to worship God (Mat 4:10; Luke 1:74; 2:37; 4:8; Acts 7:7; 24:14; 27:23; Rom 1:9; Phil. 3:3; 2Ti 1:3; Heb. 9:14; 12:28; Rev. 22:3);
- used in an *absolute* sense (Act 26:7; Sept.: Deut. 6:13; 10:12; Josh. 24:15);
- “worshipping creatures [other] than the Creator” (Rom 1:25; Sept.: Deut. 4:28; Jdg 2:11, 13);
- particularly the performing of the Levitical service (Heb. 8:5; 9:9; 10:2; 13:10);
- of the celestial temple (Rev. 7:15)
- to offer sacrifice, to worship (Heb. 9:9; 10:2; cf. Sept.: Ex 3:12; 7:16).

A key question would then be, Does anyone in the NT “*latreuo*” — offer divine worship — to Jesus?

“There is no instance of *latreuo* [to do religious service to] which has Christ as its object.”<sup>7</sup> And no one worships the holy spirit in the NT. The spirit is not a third Person but the operational presence of God and Jesus.

“It is equally notable that [the Apostle Paul applies] the normal prayer terms (*deomai, deesis*) to God and never to Christ. [He] is neither simply the content of the thanksgiving. *Such uniformity in Paul’s usage should certainly make us hesitate before asserting that Paul ‘worshipped’ Christ, since the evidence more clearly indicates otherwise.*”<sup>8</sup>

### Conclusion

It is presumptuous to suggest that early Christians were under some kind of “obligation” to render the *same* type of worship to the Son as to the Father. I say this in view of the conclusion by some modern scholars (N.T. Wright, *Challenge of Jesus*; Larry Hurtado, *Lord Jesus Christ*; J.D.G. Dunn, *The Theology of Paul*) that a “stunning adaptation” (“mutation,” Dunn) of the Jewish *Shema* (1 Cor. 8:1-6; Phil. 2:5-11; Gal. 4:1-7; Col. 1:15-20; cp. Deut 6:4) somehow took place. This alleged moving away from Jewish monotheism cannot be justified in view of Jesus’ own affirmation of the *Shema* in the NT (where it remains *consistent* with the *unchanging* and *unitarian* monotheistic, Jewish belief he

<sup>5</sup> *Hastings Dictionary of the Bible*, 4:943

<sup>6</sup> Wainwright, *The Trinity and the New Testament*, p. 104.

<sup>7</sup> Wainwright, *The Trinity in the New Testament*, p. 103.

<sup>8</sup> Dunn, *The Theology of Paul the Apostle*, pp. 257-260.

expressed) and cultural, social and functional meaning of “worship” throughout the Bible:

“In the Christian understanding of Christ as being one with the Father, there is a constant possibility that faith in God will be absorbed in a ‘monochristicism’ *i.e.*, that the figure of the Son in the life of faith will overshadow the figure of the Father and thus cause it to disappear and that the figure of the Creator and Sustainer of the world will recede behind the figure of the Redeemer.”<sup>9</sup> ✧

## Comments

“As to the FOTK magazine, I can’t wait for the next one. I read each and every one, often over and over. I have given some away. Some are thrown away in short order by those who can’t accept an honest challenge to their tradition. Others read them and argue a bit or take them to their pastors, who summarily throw them out and say we are a cult. Those who are closer friends are ‘nice’ about it. They read a bit and shelve it. A couple of friends only will even tolerate me mentioning these subjects. Some say, ‘We accept you have a different view on many things and that you are a Christian, but obviously so are we, so it’s not important to salvation and therefore should not be argued.’ This form of ‘logic’ stuns me. I allow them to drop it and when they *do* come to me to ask what the real differences are, I try my best to show them the Kingdom-Gospel Message of Jesus. I try to point to the gaping holes in the ‘truths’ they have been taught...What is so wrong with pointing them to the rabbi Jesus?

“I cannot tell you enough how much peace I have in understanding that GOD is GOD, the One Yahweh, and that Jesus is my *human*, now immortalized King, elder Brother, agent of GOD, final prophet (Acts 3:22; 7:27), Savior, Example, High Priest, Mentor and Friend. Yet the Father is my GOD. He is my True, absolute Savior and Master, ‘the only wise God.’ My Healer, Forgiver, builder, supporter, Creator, Doctor and Father. I think most Christians are unaware of the confusion in their own head — the verbal game they have to play in order to pray to a nebulous ‘three-fold Person.’ Now I know who I am praying to and who is answering me. No more ‘three God’ games when I pray. Just one God whose spirit and mind rests upon us, and ‘one mediator, the man Messiah Jesus’ (I Tim 2:5).

“I have always felt something wrong with the Trinity. And now that I have the answer my heart is singing and is at peace. It changes how I view the universe! It joins the Old to the New and highlights the promises He made to us and solves a hundred problems. Thank you for being so faithful to add your efforts to those noble searchers for truth down the ages. How

costly that has been! How cruel ‘believers’ have sometimes been to denounce anyone who ‘suggests a different view.’ The ‘cult’ word is alive and well as a weapon of condemnation.” — *California*

“Had I never been given a reason to search out the truth of Christ’s nature and the Trinity from God’s Scripture, I don’t believe I ever would have done so. I would have swum right along with the current. If there were a local church here which shared my beliefs, I would join in an instant. However, there is not (to the very best of my knowledge). Nor is there one within a great number of miles. Perhaps I should view Trinitarian belief in a harsher light than I do, but my view is only love. Paul is fully able to eat meat which has been sacrificed to idols, because he knows the idols hold no power. I, likewise, am certainly capable of worshiping in the midst of those who believe Jesus to be their Creator. Should a song mention the Trinity, or Jesus being God, I bow my head and remain silent. I am not, however, offended. I am merely pained that so many have never been given strong reason to question their beliefs from Scripture. Why is church often such a mindless operation?

“Four years ago, I was sitting in an AP US History class. The teacher was speaking of the Unitarian movement in the 1800s. I remember nothing of what he said. I remember only my harsh prejudice and sick disgust. I remember my prideful view, my arrogant frustration that these blasphemers were even being called Christians in this secular history book. Such people who deny the Trinity: They were the ones who wanted to take all mystery out of Scripture, who would reject in an instant the clear testimony of Truth to satisfy their own fleshly desires for a God they could fit in a box. I know the disgust and feelings of anger. I also know the frustration and confusion that come in searching — to the depths of tears and weeping so intense they led to vomiting and curling up in a ball and clenching my fists on the floor of a public shower, after my brain felt as though it had been reduced to nothingness — after I felt as though I had no way of knowing how God would be working this for my good, although I continued to trust.

“I know the blinding power of this error, and what saddens me most is its efficiency at so nearly mimicking truth that it effectively prevents its adherents from delving into Scripture, delving deeper than ‘orthodoxy,’ deeper than the surface-level of out-of-context ‘proof-texts.’ My heart and passion is to ask questions they cannot answer, but more than that — my passion is to show them my heart. Fellowship with them, show them the fruits in my life borne of the spirit, show them that my cup is full to overflowing with the grace of God and the peace of truly knowing His Son. Everyone wants to ask questions. Everyone wants to get others to hear their

<sup>9</sup> *The New Encyclopedia Britannica*, vol. 16, *Christianity* Macropaedia article, p. 274.

beliefs. It is only through them witnessing a restored life within me that they will be given a desire to search for truth. I can say anything I want, and it can pass in one ear and out the other. When I have worshiped with and fellowshiped with, prayed with and spoken with, Trinitarian brothers and sisters, then their shock at learning of my beliefs is all the more profound. It carries the force of the 'hospital pass' [ref. to Greg Deuble's *They Never Told Me This in Church*, p. 16] which would otherwise have entirely missed them. My desire is not at all to compromise my beliefs to attain fellowship. It is to attain fellowship such that I may proclaim my beliefs, that I may be tested and tried in the fire of their inquisition, that perhaps one will seek and find." — *Kentucky*

"I would like to thank you for your patience with me and the work that God is doing through you. I have a Bible study at work with one other person. (Group used to be bigger but not many people seemingly want to openly study the Bible.) Because of your work and those that support you, I have been able to share with my friend at work your clear understanding from the Bible and he has taken the same understanding to his study; with the people that meet at his house to openly study the Bible. They have changed their view on several topics, specifically the Trinity, and have opened up greater discussion on many others. I do not consider myself an expert and know that I have much more training to complete prior to fully understanding the word of God, but I still trying to work hard at it. I just wanted you to know that you are influencing others though you may not know it. I appreciate your work and the work of others that help spread the word of God and the Gospel of Jesus." — *Oregon*

New website: [www.biblicaltruthseekers.co.uk](http://www.biblicaltruthseekers.co.uk)

## Two New Books from Authorhouse.com

### ***Project Apostasy: The Development and Propagation of the Trinitarian Doctrine*** by Jesse Acuff

*Project Apostasy: The Development and Propagation of the Trinitarian Doctrine* is Satan's story. Spurred by his inordinate beauty and consummate pride, he rebelled against his Creator. Undeterred by his categorical defeat, he launched the most blasphemous doctrine to ever invade the Christian Church. Through his evil minions, the Babylonian king Nimrod and his mother-wife Semiramis, Satan developed the Trinitarian doctrine which was spread worldwide by the Babylonian mysteries, taken up by the Romish Church, who has been its most ardent disseminator since the 4th century AD.

Through the ages this doctrine has become the darling of orthodox Christianity and is taught as fact

when there is no evidence of it in the Scriptures. Nevertheless, it has affected millions by keeping them in abject spiritual darkness. A.W. Tozer, in his book *The Knowledge of the Holy*, observes, "The essence of idolatry is the entertainment of thoughts about God that are unworthy of Him." He further states, "Wrong ideas about God are not only the fountain from which the polluted waters of idolatry flow; they are themselves idolatrous."

*Project Apostasy* challenges the reader to search out the truth behind the development of the Trinitarian doctrine. We should emulate the Bereans who searched the Scriptures daily seeking the truth. It is time that we returned to the Gospel the Apostles first delivered. Jesus quoted the Shema as his creed. "Hear, O Israel, the Lord our God is one God." And in John 17: 3 he declared his Father as "the only true God." This is pure monotheism as opposed to the orthodox Trinitarian concept of three-in-one.

### ***The Tyranny of the Trinity*** ***The Orthodox Cover-Up*** by P.R. Lackey

For 1700 years the Trinity has been considered the cornerstone of Christianity by all mainstream churches. But the Bible's words for God, appearing thousands of times, never mean a triune God. The concept of the Trinity has been taught to churchgoers based solely on implication and inference. The truth is, the Scriptures don't support the doctrine of the Trinity, but it has been indoctrinated into the minds of otherwise intelligent and well-educated Christians, and perpetuated as a "mystery" not to be understood. The majority of Christians have not bothered to investigate the doctrine for themselves, and consequently have been duped. Ms. Lackey suggests that too many Christians attend church with the attitude: "Tell me, pastor, what do I believe today?"

Ms. Lackey expresses her resentment at being accused of being a heretic, non-Christian and condemned to hell because of her belief in the human Jesus, the Messiah, Son of God rather than the One True God. She sees the Trinity as a blight on the true Christianity taught by Jesus Christ for the benefit of humanity, and feels Trinitarian Christians have traded Hebrew theology for Greek mythology with barely a question asked. Ms. Lackey invites churchgoers everywhere to consider that they may have been drawn into a thinly veiled polytheism — a belief in more than one God.

## **2009 Theological Conference**

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