

Focus on the Kingdom

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Back from Malawi and Mozambique

The travel is arduous, with two doses of 9-plus hours sitting in a plane (to London and then another night to Johannesburg), but the rewards are great. I was privileged to accompany Joe and Rebekah Martin to Africa's fertile soil for the Gospel of the Kingdom and the things concerning Jesus (Acts 8:12). Both countries, Malawi and Mozambique, suffer from extremes of poverty. The audiences we taught Bible to will mostly never switch on a light, flush a toilet or have a job. They will likely die young from malnutrition. But they are impassioned about the hope of a better world when the Messiah returns to take over the reins of world government (the heart of the Christian Gospel). They are delighted to learn about the Kingdom of God, the sleep of the dead, the coming Kingdom of God on earth, and the challenge of preparing to rule with Jesus (Dan. 7:18, 22, 27). With this framework in place and detailed warnings about mistranslation of some verses in John (promoting the non-biblical Trinity), these Africans are more than ready to spread the Good News.

I went there alone first in 1993 and one dear gentleman greeted me this time as "Founder." The continuing work has been done by the Martins and many others, notably Jim Mattison, whose granddaughter Michelle was with us on the recent trip. Linda Limbe, Maxwell and Daud were our tireless interpreters into Chichewa, and we spent hours with Bibles in hand instructing the leaders who gathered for such "seminars." We cautioned them also against the false claims of groups promoting Jesus as Michael the archangel, and others trying to impose on them the Mosaic Sabbath, which Paul calls "a shadow" and not the reality of the Christ who has come (Col. 2:16-17). Christians in the New Covenant should not take on themselves the sign of the *Old Covenant*, the weekly Sabbath (Exod. 31:12ff with the caution supplied by Deut. 5:3: the covenant with the *Israelites* "was not made with the fathers"). It is theologically wrongheaded to move back from Christ to Moses.

The Jewish threat plagued Paul too, and nothing much has changed. Whereas Paul cautioned his new converts not to let anyone "correct you in eating and drinking or in the matter of holy days [annual], new moons [monthly] or the Sabbath day¹ [weekly]," many

¹Note the grammatical plural has a singular meaning, as often with this word: see for example the plural form in Exod.

who are not deeply involved in Scripture are taken in by those who claim that the fourth commandment (resting from Friday to Saturday evening) is binding on us as New Covenant Christians. The book of Galatians falls on deaf ears in this matter of our freedom from those distinctive Jewish practices which formed God's arrangement *not* with the present international "Israel of God" (Gal. 6:16) but with the ancient nation of Israel whom Paul calls the "Israel of the flesh" (1 Cor. 10:18).

We certainly recommend any who raise their fare to Africa to experience this mind-opening encounter with the third world. You will never be the same. You will marvel at the simple joy of people who are largely uncluttered with the physical "things" we all expect in the West. Their singing is as charming and heartfelt as it is rhythmically subtle. And they never took formal music lessons! Most engaging of all is the rapturous musical welcome they give us when we arrive at their churches.

Perhaps some of you would like to raise a few dollars to provide toys for the ten or more Abrahamic orphanages organized under the supervision of Linda Limbe. These children are "baby-sat" during the day by volunteers, and with a very few dollars they could be supplied with toys to ease the burden of their "guardians-teachers," and supply an added element to the development of these little ones who have been bereaved of parents. Email us at anthonybuzzard@mindspring.com if this is of interest. ✧

When Jesus Gets Lost in Church

Critics of popular Christianity in its various forms focus often on the more external issues of church. They don't like the music, the excessive salaries of some leaders, or the liberal view of sexual ethics, etc. But few it seems take a long and constructively critical look at the very substance of what we call Christianity. There is nothing of course wrong with Christianity, if by that term we mean the religion (and relationship with God should be a religion, which means a "linking up with God") taught and modeled by its founding preacher and teacher (Heb. 2:3), Jesus of Nazareth.

The root problem with churches is that they seem not to listen to Jesus much at all! If that sounds preposterous, give it some further thought. "People of Christian persuasion seem generally not to be very interested in what Jesus did in his time," said a learned professor of

20:8, referring to a single Sabbath day. The claim that Matt. 28:1 reads "after the Sabbaths" is thus false.

theology. There is a good basis for this criticism. But it seems to point to absurdity in our approach to Jesus! Let me suggest why.

When Jesus was asked about the greatest and most important commandment, on which all else depends — can you get more basic than that? — he replied that the one indispensable consideration for us all is our response to the so-called Shema, the “Hear O Israel.” Imagine my shock then when opening the learned *Word Biblical Commentary* on Mark. I read that Mark’s quotation of the Shema by Jesus is “**neither remarkable nor specifically Christian.**”

I hope this statement will give you food for some protracted meditation. “Wait a minute,” I hope you are saying. “I thought Jesus is the one we as Christian churchgoers believe and obey.” If he said that the definition of God as a single Lord (not two or three lords) is the most important of the commands of God to us humans, then can we blithely dismiss Jesus’ words and substitute our own “improved” version of the creed?

Can one strike at Jesus’ own definition of God without dismantling the very center of true Christian faith? How much do we love Jesus? Enough to pay attention to his teaching?

Chances are that if you are a churchgoer you have in fact adopted a creedal statement quite different from the one announced as so vitally important by Jesus. You have in all probability submitted yourself to a creed defining the one God as a Trinity of Father, Son and Holy Spirit, a so-called triune God — a God “existing eternally as three Persons.”

Jesus did not recognize that creed. Indeed he made no attempt to alter in any way the “Jewish” creed of his Old Testament heritage. Read it for yourself (Mark 12:28-34). And then reflect on the sobering words of Jesus in his final discourse in John, that we are to be judged by the words of Jesus, the words which he promised are life-imparting and spiritually enlightening (John 12:48; 6:63).

How well will that triune confession match up to the declared confession of Jesus that God is a single Lord (Mark 12:29), the Father of Jesus, who is the unique Son, procreated and fathered as defined in Luke 1:35?

It strikes us as astonishing and amazing that people seem quite unconcerned about the chasm of difference between Jesus and Church, on this the most important issue of defining which God we are serving. Jesus is the one we are to listen to, to be saved. The Father pointed to His Son and said “Listen to him.” Jesus protested over and over again that salvation is to be found in an intelligent reception of his words/teachings. It would fill the rest of the magazine to quote texts to that effect. Anyone who espouses any teaching other than the “health-giving words of our Lord Jesus Christ” is an ignoramus, Paul asserted (1 Tim. 6:3). “If anyone comes

to you and does not bring the teaching of the Messiah,” be warned, John the apostle said! (2 John 7-9). You are flirting with danger. More specifically, here is how you conduct a test for authenticity: “Every spirit which confesses Jesus Christ as the one who came as a human being is from God and every spirit which does not confess THAT Jesus is not from God...Here is how you know the spirit of truth from the spirit of error” (see 1 John 4:1-6).

Did you know that the Trinitarian creed demands as a consequence that Jesus is “man,” but not “a man”? Did you know that this is the theory of official Christianity? According to that well entrenched creed the Person of Jesus is the eternally existing “God the Son” who united to himself “generic human nature.” The result is that one cannot and must not say “Jesus was a man,” because that would make him “two Persons,” a God Person plus an individual man. So the official view is that Jesus is “man,” but not “a man.”

Is the churchgoing public demanding explanations for these amazing (yet often hidden) facts? Did you know that to conform to the creed “on the books” of your church you must be able to say of God that “He are one” and “They is three”? Read all about it in evangelicals’ leading Trinitarian scholar’s book: *God in Three Persons* by Millard Erickson.

Christianity, it appears, is the only religion which expressly discards its own founder’s creed and puts in its place the very philosophical and abstract creed of Nicea. Mark 12:29 has had to give way to Nicea 3:25. Is no one perturbed about this? Is it not the failure of whistle blowers to sound the alarm which is the cause of such legitimate public concern in so many fields? Is it only the church which is beyond criticism?

Let all Bible teachers, especially, be sure that they can explain and justify to the rabbi Jesus, when he comes, their allegiance to a creedal definition of God which is *not* that of Jesus. Was Jesus a Trinitarian? Was the scribe with whom he agreed a Trinitarian? If not, is there not something of importance at stake here?

Defining God properly is only one of many issues in which Jesus can get lost in church. Jesus’ primary command to us all is “Repent and believe the Gospel about the Kingdom of God” (Mark 1:14-15). This is Jesus’ and Mark’s brilliant heading and caption over the whole of the Christian faith. But in church we have been told to believe only that Jesus died and rose. Jesus said little about these (also) vital truths, but he did speak extensively of the Kingdom of God as Gospel. (Paul echoed Jesus perfectly. For this, see the amazing parallel between Acts 28:30-31 and Luke 9:11.)

“Repent” means “rethink” and believe in a new way, and live a different sort of life. “Believe the Kingdom of God” means believe and get on board with God’s immortality program for you and yours, and everyone.

You and I lost our royal glory when in Adam we failed to listen to the royal Gospel that we are to be vice-regents of God. We “fell short of the glory of God” meant for us (Rom. 3:23). Jesus came on a mission to restore that lost destiny. He comes to invite us to regain our royal future and glory in the Kingdom of God, that revolutionary new world order which is to be introduced at the seventh trumpet (Rev. 11:11-14), the trumpet signaling the end of human chaotic rule and the beginning of the government of Jesus and the saints of all the ages (see Dan. 7:14, 18, 22, 27; 2:44 for a brief synopsis of the Kingdom Gospel hope, and share this with your friends on every occasion).

Jesus came planting the seeds of the future Kingdom of God on earth. He invited all to respond intelligently to his “seed message” (Luke 8:11) of the Kingdom (Matt. 13:19). The seed so planted is the creative energy of God to produce eventually immortal human persons. The word of the Kingdom Gospel is a vital and dynamic creative energy at work in the believers (Rom. 1:16; 1 Thess. 2:13). The Devil’s work is to snatch away that Kingdom word from the heart (understanding) so that “a person cannot believe it *and be saved*.” If you thought the Gospel is about Jesus’ death and resurrection *only*, please rethink. Luke 8:12 and Acts 8:12 should be consulted.

The Contaminated Spiritual Source

The degree of poison which entered the church from the beginning of the second century AD goes unnoticed by most. That poison from the world of Greek philosophy has led to a disastrous impurity in what we have accepted as “the faith.” The expert whistle blowers have been heeded as little as Jesus and Paul themselves, who warned over and over again that careless acceptance of unexamined tradition, a mindless faith, will not suffice when judgment comes. Only a passion to know and love truth will demonstrate our genuineness as lovers of the God of Israel (2 Thess. 2:10) and his miraculously procreated Son Jesus (Luke 1:35).

From the extensive literature on this topic, we conclude with these words from historian/theologian Jacques Ellul. He does not mince words as he exposes what is falsely called Christianity, a hodge-podge of philosophy and paganism parading as the faith of Jesus. At the core of traditional Christianity there is a glaring piece of pagan philosophy which controls the public’s understanding of the nature of a human being and conditions everything that is said in church about death. It is propagated at funeral sermons day after day. It is cherished, but not biblically founded. But who protests? It has become part of the fixed furniture of church, yet it has nothing to do with Jesus; it is derived from the poisonous philosophy of Plato. Ellul wrote:

“A familiar example of the mutation to which revelation [the Bible] was subjected is its contamination by the Greek idea of the immortality of the soul. I will

briefly recall it. In Jewish [biblical] thought death is total. There is no immortal soul, no division of body and soul. Paul’s [and Jesus’] thinking is Jewish in this regard. The soul belongs to the psychological realm and is part of the flesh. The body is the whole being [cp. “somebody” or “anybody” = “any person”]. In death there is no separation of body and soul. The soul is as mortal as the body. But there is a resurrection. Out of the nothingness that human life becomes, God creates anew the being that was dead. That is a creation by grace; there is no immortal soul intrinsic to us.

“Greek philosophy, however, introduces among theologians the idea of the immortal soul. The belief was widespread in popular religion and it was integrated into Christianity. But it is a total perversion [as Paul predicted, the original Christian faith was perverted and polluted by the poison of paganism]. [In view of the immortal soul] everything is not any more dependent on the grace of God and assurance of immortality comes to be evaluated by virtues and works. All Christian thinking is led astray by this initial mutation that comes through Greek philosophy and Near Eastern cults. An ardent work brings to light this sort of deformation. Louis Rougier in his *Astronomie et Religion en Occident* (Paris, 1980) shows how belief in the soul’s celestial immortality arose in the second half of the fifth century BC on the basis of astronomy. Pythagorean astronomy radically transformed the idea of the destiny of the soul held by Mediterranean peoples. For the notion of a vital breath that dissipates at death, for belief in the survival of shades wandering about in the subterranean realm of the dead [which is equally pagan!], it substitutes the notion of a soul of celestial substance exiled in this world. This idea [which is now accepted uncritically by most churches] completely contaminates biblical thinking, gradually replaces the affirmation of the resurrection [to occur when Jesus comes back] and transforms the kingdom of the dead into the kingdom of God” (*The Subversion of Christianity*, p. 25).

The only antidote to this poison of pagan philosophy is a careful listening to the word/s as preached as Gospel by Jesus Christ, his Gospel about the Kingdom which is the One God’s program and plan to confer immortality on us — an immortality which we do not have by birth! We need to begin to acquire it through believing the seed “word” Gospel of the Kingdom, which is the germ of rebirth and eventual immortality. Note how constantly and insistently Jesus called attention to his own Gospel teaching:

“Amen, amen, I say to you, whoever hears **my word** and believes in the one who sent me has eternal life [life in the future Kingdom, tasted now in the spirit] and will not come to condemnation, but has passed from death to life” (John 5:24). Jesus then said to those Jews who

believed him, “If you remain in **my word**, you will truly be my disciples” (John 8:31). “I know that you are descendants of Abraham. But you are trying to kill me, because **my word** has no room among you” (John 8:37). “Why do you not understand what I am saying? Because you cannot bear to hear **my word**” (John 8:43). “‘Amen, amen, I say to you, whoever keeps **my word** will never see death.’ So the Jews said to him, ‘Now we are sure that you are possessed. Abraham died, as did the prophets, yet you say, Whoever keeps **my word** will never taste death’” (John 8:51-52). “Whoever loves me will keep **my word**, and my Father will love him, and we will come to him and make our dwelling with him” (John 14:23). But if you do not believe Moses’ writings, how will you believe **my words**?” (John 5:47). “If anyone hears **my words** and does not observe them, I do not condemn him, for I did not come to condemn the world but to save the world. Whoever rejects me and does not accept **my words** has something to judge him: the **word** that I spoke, it will condemn him on the last day” (John 12:47-48). “Whoever does not love me does not keep **my words**; yet the **word** you hear is not mine but that of the Father who sent me” (John 14:24). “If you remain in me and **my words** remain in you, ask for whatever you want and it will be done for you” (John 15:7).

This impressive chain of sayings could not be overemphasized. We are to heed the word(s)/teaching(s)/Gospel as preached by Jesus. We are to be corrected by his sayings and we are to reject the falsehoods of pagan philosophy which run counter to the inspired words of Jesus.

Reflection might begin with a consideration of what Jesus termed the most crucial of all the words of God: “Hear, O Israel: the Lord our God is one Lord” (Mark 12:29). “One God in three Persons” is a very significant departure from the pure words of Jesus. Second only in importance is the proper definition of Jesus as coming into existence supernaturally in Mary (Luke 1:35; Matt. 1:18, 20 “begotten, fathered in her”). The shift to a pre-human Messiah, who cannot by definition be essentially human, hardly sounds like the Jesus who is strictly the descendant of Abraham, David, Judah and Eve. ✧

Torah, Wisdom and Word

from *A Theology of the Jewish-Christian Reality* by Paul van Buren, p. 79-83

“In the beginning was the Word; the Word was in God’s presence, and the Word was God. He was present to God in the beginning. Through Him all things came into being, and apart from him nothing came to be.”

“In the biblical view words underlie reality. With words God called the world into being; the capacity for using language from the start set man apart from the other creatures; in words each person reveals his

distinctive nature, his willingness to enter into binding compacts [promises] with men and God, his ability to control others, to deceive them, to feel for them, and to respond to them. Spoken language is the substratum of everything human and divine that happens in the Bible, and the Hebrew tendency to transpose what is preverbal or nonverbal into speech is finally a technique for getting at the essence of things.” (Robert Alter)

“By the word of the Lord were the heavens made” (Ps. 33:6). “For he spoke and it came to be [so the word, not Word, was made flesh]; He commanded, and it stood forth” (Ps. 33:9).

God is as good as his word, so the Word of God is as good as God. When God speaks, God himself is creatively active, in calling the world into being, in calling Israel into being, and in calling the church into being [and calling the Son, Jesus, into being]. “In many and various ways God spoke of old to our fathers by the prophets” (Heb. 1:1), the first of whom was Moses. God spoke in the Torah of Moses, and now “in these last days [but not before] he has spoken to us (the church) by a Son...through whom he created the world” (Heb. 1:2). What God said in the Torah of Moses concerning his word of creation “in the beginning” reached and created his people Israel as Torah; it reached and created his church as Jesus Christ. The word spoken in the person of Jesus Christ, therefore, is God’s confirmation of Torah (“all the promises [2 Sam 7:14, also] of God find their Yes in him” 2 Cor. 1:20) and together they are the one creative word from the beginning. What else can the church say coherently?

Israel’s witness to God’s creative activity through his word or through Torah could also be expressed by the use of the concept “the wisdom of God.” The author of Proverbs has Wisdom speak as follows:

“The Lord begot me, the firstborn of his ways...When he established the heavens I was there, when he marked out the vault over the face of the deep; when he made firm the skies above, when he fixed the foundations of the earth; when he set for the sea its limit, so that the waters should not transgress his command. Then was I beside him as his craftsman, and I was his delight by day, playing before him all the while, playing on the surface of his earth; and I found delight in the sons of men” (Prov. 8:22; 27-31).

God’s Word, Torah and Wisdom are all one, the creative, purposeful, and supremely good activity of the One God. The author of the Prologue of the Fourth Gospel could therefore say that the Word “came to his own [place],” for the world, and also Israel, belonged to him by right of Creation. But, the Prologue continues, “his own did not accept him” (Jn. 1:11). And then, following immediately, “Any who did accept him he empowered to become children of God” (1:12).

“Did not accept,” and then “did accept.” How are we to understand this contradiction? Clearly it reflects the conflict which the early Jesus-movement came to produce within the people Israel. Some, even “multitudes,” heard him gladly, and some, at least some of the Jerusalem “establishment,” rejected him, possibly for fear of how the Roman occupying forces would react to this movement. In any case and after the fact, we can certainly say of this positive and negative that God’s Word came once more to his created possession, and that his created own people received him in sufficient numbers to make it possible for many others to be able to accept him too.

“Him” means, in these verses, Jesus Christ [note the light is neuter in v. 5 and masculine in v. 10]. Does that mean the Jew Jesus of Nazareth? **Is it proper to say of this Jew that he was in some sense “preexistent”?** Here we must do some sorting out.

The term “preexistent” [cp. prenatal, which is clear] occurs nowhere in either the Scriptures or the Apostolic Writings, but there is no reason why the concept, properly qualified, could not be used to refer to the opening words of the Prologue to the Fourth Gospel and the verses cited from the eighth chapter of Proverbs. The idea certainly appears in the opening of *Genesis Rabbah*, where, commenting on those verses from Proverbs, the Rabbis argued, in their own inimitable way, **that Torah was with God when he began to create the world.** The thrust of their claim, however, appears to be not so much temporal as evaluative: Torah has a higher value even than creation. It is as if the Rabbis could have said **that creation is a product of Torah**, but would never have said the opposite, that Torah is a product of creation. We could put it in our own words by saying that “Torah produced history” is a claim prior in value and in reality to “History produced Torah.” The second claim is obviously but trivially true; theologically, however, it comes second. In like manner, although the Prologue of John claims that “the Word was made flesh” (v. 14), it gives priority to the claim that the Word made all flesh (v. 3). (The verb *egeneto* is identical in both verses, and I cannot demean the craftsmanship of the author by thinking that this is accidental). **The term “preexistent,” however, leads one to think primarily and misleadingly in temporal terms.** The concept of “priority” is therefore preferable...

This Jewish notion of the priority in value and in reality of God’s Word (or Torah, or Wisdom) to all else, appears in other apostolic texts as well, referring to “our Lord Jesus Christ,” or simply “Christ” (Eph. 1:3ff), or “Christ Jesus” (Phil. 2:5ff), or “a Son” who is clearly Jesus (Heb. 1:2). Especially interesting is the Adam-Christ argument of Romans 5, in which Christ is assigned a clear priority over Adam, **and yet there is no clear**

indication that this priority was intended in a temporal sense [Paul says that Christ was not the first! Adam was]. We may conclude that for the earliest church, Jesus was accorded the priority in reality that the Rabbis assigned to Torah.

If one were to make the claim of priority in a temporal sense, one would be claiming that Jesus of Nazareth, born of Mary, had existed with God before the creation of the world. **That claim would be worse than unintelligible; it would destroy all coherence in the essential Christian claim that Jesus was truly a human being, that the word *became* flesh [note that flesh=human being, 1 John 4:1-2]. The humanity could hardly be eternal in that sense and still be “like us in all things, excepting sin” (Council of Chalcedon; cf. Heb. 2:17). Jesus of Nazareth began his life, began to exist, at a definite time in history [cp. 2 Sam. 7:14]: the Word became *flesh*.**

The *Word* that began to be flesh at a definite time, however, the Word that is God’s own, **the divine purpose and intention that is God’s very own**, this Word is eternal as God is eternal. This Word is God’s own eternal activity. The issue is the personal identity of personal agency. This Word was God in the beginning and with God in the beginning, according to the Prologue. This is **the Word that has now moved onto the stage of history [the dream became true].** [Cp. the weather forecast with pictures of clouds became actual weather.]

The Word *became*, or *was made*, or *happened* as flesh [a created human being, the Son of God], just as the world and all that is became, was made, **happened as creation** [not literally preexisting]. As in Creation, and as at Sinai, so in the life of this Jew, the creative Word spoke, and as a result, behold: creation, Israel, Jesus of Nazareth!

The subject of the Prologue to the Gospel of John is the miracle of God’s involvement with his Creation in order to bring it nearer to its completion. **What** is preexistent, utterly one with God before the Creation of the world, is the divine **resolve** not simply to begin Creation but to bring it to its completion in a fully personal way...This **eternal personal resolve of God’s, which is with God and is God the Creator**, is that which was enacted [brought on to the human stage] in the personal existence of the man Jesus of Nazareth. ✧

Editor: The Son of God is what the logos, word of God, His wisdom, project and immortality program *became*. There was no Son of God before the begetting of Jesus. What “preexisted” was not the Son but the promise of God that He would one day send His unique Son. His Son now offers us all immortality, provided we believe and obey his teachings and those of his holy apostles, as recorded in the Greek Scriptures.

“Rewards in Heaven”

Both Jesus and Paul speak of the *future* rewards of believers as laid up in heaven *now*. The receiving of that reward awaits the future (Matt. 6:4, 6, 18). The inheritance is promised to us *now* when we believe the Gospel of the Kingdom, but we do not get our reward now. Jesus brings the reward with him when he comes back (Matt. 16:27). The certainty of this hope is reinforced by the statement that we “have” a reward with the Father now. In Matthew 6:1 Jesus spoke of having a reward “with the Father,” that is, laid up beside the Father (*para*). The same hope of inheriting the Kingdom is “laid away” in heaven (Col. 1:5) and it is “reserved” and preserved or kept in heaven, as 1 Peter 1:4 says. It is important to know that the present promise of reward is kept in store as treasure in heaven.

The reward itself is of course the future inheritance of the earth (Matt. 5:5; Rev. 5:10), the land renewed and purified, the promised land in which Abraham resided as a “green card person” (Heb. 11:8ff). It is the fatal result of a gnosticized faith which leads believers to confuse the present *promise* of reward with the actual receiving of the reward in the future. The reward will be to be with and rule with Jesus on earth when he comes back. Jesus will then no longer be in heaven and the reward of the faithful will be enjoyed on the new earth. They will inherit the Kingdom *prepared* from the foundation of the world (Matt. 25:34).

In the beginning, God made preparation, promised immortality, gave His word that he would fully carry out what He promised. Eventually He sent His unique Son to implement the promised immortality program (John 1:1-14). John 1:1 does not read “in the beginning was the Son of God.” What was in the beginning was the promise of the Son and the Kingdom plan. The divine scheme was confused when the “word” was turned into a separate Person before the beginning of the existence of the Son. This confusion is perpetuated by the capital W placed in translations on “word” (John 1:1) and by altering the pronoun from “it” (the word) to “him” (a person).

The reward now stored in heaven to be realized on earth was well explained by the Professor of Systematic Theology at the University of Jena in Germany, in 1892:

“According to the mode of speech and conception prevalent in the New Testament, a heavenly good, and so also a heavenly glory can be conceived and spoken of as existing with God and belonging to a person, not because that person already exists and is invested with glory, but because the glory is in some way deposited and preserved for this person in heaven. We remember how Jesus also speaks of the treasure (Matt. 6:20ff; Mark 10:21) or the reward (Matt. 5:12, 46; 6:1) which his disciples *have* in heaven with God...In Colossians 1:5 and 1 Peter 1:4 the

hope of salvation is represented as a blessing laid up in heaven for them. Therefore it is wholly unnecessary to find in John 17:5 the thought that Jesus himself had a [literal] preexistence in the possession of heavenly glory with God. The heavenly glory of John 17:5 had been laid up for Jesus with God in heaven as a reward destined for him from eternity” (Prof. H.H. Wendt, *The Teaching of Jesus*, Vol. 2, pp. 169, 170).

Note that the very same glory *has been given* in John 17:22 to Christians who were not even born when Jesus spoke these words. The glory of 17:5 is glory in promise and prospect. Otherwise Luke 1:35 is contradicted and Jesus ceases to be the real, biological descendant of David. ✧

News from Believers in Unitary Monotheism in Poland

The meeting of the Polish Brethren in Rakow has just finished. The meeting was unofficial and didn't have an organized conference formula. Because of that, and also because of the location of Rakow, only the brothers who were the most active in promoting unitarianism on the Internet were able to attend the rally.

Unfortunately, some of the brethren who are no less active failed to show up. It was a pleasant surprise when two supporters of the movement, brother Jan and brother Wiktor, joined us.

Those present included: Andrzej Wolynski, Andrzej Wrotnowski along with his son Albert, Leslaw Kawalec, Artur Olczykowski, Pawel Jurewicz, Cyprian Sajna with his wife Ola.

During the meeting we had lively discussions, we thought about our future plans, we studied the Word, prayed and had a good time thanks to the lovely meals and nice music played by one of us, Andrzej Wrotnowski.

I would say that the meeting, especially at the closing stage, was really fruitful and gave a great hope for reviving the Polish Brethren movement. We made several resolutions; during the discussions different ideas came up, but we all went home filled with high expectations for the future. I hope that soon our websites' readers, all who think of themselves as unitarians and identify with our movement, will see some changes and development of our work.

Just before the meeting finished we got this word from our Lord: “They continued steadfastly in the apostles teaching and fellowship, in the breaking of bread, and prayer. Fear came on every soul, and many wonders and signs were done through the apostles. All who believed were together, and had all things in common. They sold their possessions and goods, and distributed them to all, according as anyone had need. Day by day, continuing steadfastly with one accord in the temple, and breaking bread at home, they took their food

with gladness and singleness of heart, praising God, and having favor with all the people. The Lord added to the assembly day by day those who were being saved” (Acts 2:42-47).

How can one fail to see the bright future of our movement? Let’s hope it was a prophecy! ⇨

One God Conference – Europe

Fri. Oct. 29 – Sun. Oct. 31, 2010

Warmsroth, near Frankfurt, Germany

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Comments

“I just finished reading the May issue of *Focus*. I am surprised that you are called a ‘master Scripture twister’! © Whoever that critical Floridian is, he needs to get his heart right with Yahweh and pray that he will be forgiven for such a dastardly remark to you! I know you get much persecution and I can now sympathize with you. I was disinvited to Bible study with a congregation I have attended for 5 years. When I challenged the ‘pre-existence of Yeshua’ the words, tone and demeanor of the elder and others made it known that if I was to attend anymore I’d have to adopt their binitarian [two members in the Godhead] doctrine. Needless to say, I was joyed at the opportunity to suffer disbarment for the truth of Yahweh’s Word. As a matter of fact I felt relieved that I was finally ‘out of the closet,’ so to speak. Anyway, you are loved and appreciated by hundreds of thousands of us across the globe so keep up the excellent work!” — *Texas*

“Let me start off by saying thank you for publishing your book *Christianity’s Self-Inflicted Wound*. As we say in Ulster, it’s a cracker! The chapter on the real meaning of preexisting in the Scriptures has opened up a whole new world for me. Words cannot explain the doors this has opened up for me. I went to work a couple of weeks ago and took with me your book to read on my break, and on the train journey to work, hoping someone would ask questions about it. I deliberately left it facing up on the train table after reading some of it, hoping someone might glimpse at it, then ask questions concerning its contents, but sadly I got no questions. But when I pulled it out at work my work partner nearly choked! He said in an excited manner, ‘I’m reading his stuff online!’ Boy! did we have a conversation that tea break. He said he thought he would never find some one of the same opinion as himself.” — *Northern Ireland*

“It’s encouraging to see so many who have emerged from the old Worldwide Church of God moving in different, healthier directions. For the longest time I felt I was simply ‘damaged goods’ and would never be able to undo the damage or unlearn the doctrines I had absorbed from birth. It’s quite a struggle, but I am making progress and I can’t help but feel that God is leading me in the

right direction. I have repeatedly expressed to Him my sincere desire to know His truth — whatever it is — and have acknowledged that I need His help getting there. It was only recently that I first seriously considered the idea that Jesus began his existence at the point of his conception in Mary’s womb. I had heard of this theory before but I never gave it any serious thought because I believed the Bible was absolutely clear that Jesus pre-existed and that he was the Creator God himself (the gospel of John screamed it, I thought!). This was due, of course, to what I was raised to believe and to my ignorance of Hebraic ways of thinking about pre-existence which are quite different from the Greek (and this despite the fact that I have long recognized the importance of viewing the Bible through a Hebraic lens!). During a night of intense study about three weeks ago, with my wife and kids asleep and the house quiet, I was suddenly struck by the raw power and beauty of the view that Jesus began life at his conception — I simply cannot describe how wonderful it all seemed to me, how simple and profound the plan of God suddenly came across. Here for the first time I understood the absolute excitement of the disciples and apostles upon learning that Jesus was the promised Messiah — a *man* who had been sent right on schedule as God had promised, the second Adam who lived a life of complete obedience to his Father, who redeemed us from the first Adam’s failure, a man who would lay down his life for us and then be resurrected to glory and power. How awesome! The absolute sovereignty of God was impressed upon me like never before. Suddenly the idea that Jesus was God incarnate paled in comparison!” — *Texas*

“Jesus Is Still a Jew!” at Youtube

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=YQe7WBXpuff>

Our ten-minute video has been watched by a pleasing number of visitors, some 750 in two months. We make the point that the churches appear to have abandoned Jesus at the most fundamental level: they have replaced his unitarian creed (Mark 12:28-34) with a very strange triune Godhead. According to Trinitarianism Jesus was 100% God and 100% man. This of course makes 200%. If we then ask, Who died? Or can God die? we are told that 100% of Jesus (the man part) died, and the other 100% did not die because it was God! I hope you will invite your friends to think through the very odd teachings their church has bestowed on them.

The simplicity of belief in the One God and Father of Jesus, and in the man Messiah Jesus (1 Tim. 2:5) is far to be preferred and it will encourage intelligent reading of the Bible. And it will help to attract Muslims and Jews to faith in Jesus the Lord Messiah, not a second “God.”