

# Focus on the Kingdom

Vol. 12 No. 5

Anthony Buzzard, editor

February, 2010

## 2010 Theological Conference

### Y'all Come!

The 19th annual "Theological Conference" sponsored by Atlanta Bible College and Restoration Fellowship will be held in Atlanta at Simpsonwood Retreat Center from **April 25-28th, 2010**.

We are hoping to bring together a sizeable group of keen students of the Bible who are impassioned about the Kingdom of God Gospel and the great issues of the identity of God and Jesus. Christians obviously want to take fellowship seriously as part of our mutual responsibility to each other. All are welcome, and interaction with the speakers by way of questions and comments is a feature of our meetings.

These three days together in a beautiful Georgia setting are invigorating and life-changing. Believers in the human Jesus are often scattered and isolated. Do please seriously consider spending these precious days with believers of like mind. Your presence there will be an enormous encouragement and blessing to others. You may want to give your own faith story, a brief account of your faith journey so far. These "stories" are often amongst the most gripping and memorable parts of our time together. Participants report on their (often long) search for good biblical sense and thus a closer knowledge of God and Jesus.

The power of the internet, websites and publication and week by week distribution via Amazon, etc, of existing and brand new books about Jesus and his relationship to the One God have vastly widened the availability of truth. Within a few years, multitudes of the nearly seven billion people on earth will be reachable via the Internet. Already more than 1 1/2 billion are! Do come and celebrate these advances and the vital importance of truth with us, and learn of the recent appearance of very significant biblical unitarian sites. The impact on the world for the Gospel of the Kingdom is becoming limitless (Matt. 24:14). The world of communication is unlike anything our forebears would have imagined. We are all part of the Great Commission, as servants of Jesus the Messiah. We hope that some of the leaders of the One God movement will speak and exhort us to faithful and instructed discipleship.

To register please call Atlanta Bible College at 800-347-4261 or 678-833-1839 or mail the form on the back page by **April 2**. The minimum deposit is \$50 per room.

**Registration deadline: April 2**

### Conference Cost

Includes 3 nights, all meals, snacks, conf. fee, and tax

Single	Double (per person)	Triple (per person)	Quad (per person)
\$322	\$247	\$234	\$218

### Transportation

We will provide transportation between Atlanta airport and Simpsonwood for \$25 round-trip or \$15 one-way, at the following times:

Airport to Simpsonwood		
Sunday, April 25	1:00 pm	3:30 pm
Simpsonwood to Airport		
Wed., April 28	1:00 pm	

Please arrange your arrival time on Sunday early enough to catch one of the two shuttle runs. On Wednesday, April 28, we will provide one (1) shuttle run. In order to allow you enough time to catch your return flight, we suggest you not book your return flight prior to 3:30 p.m.

The conference begins with registration at 4 pm on Sunday and ends with lunch on Wednesday. Driving directions to Simpsonwood Conference Center are at [www.simpsonwood.org](http://www.simpsonwood.org) The address is 4511 Jones Bridge Circle NW, Norcross, GA 30092.

### Post-conference Class

Anthony Buzzard will teach "Valiant for Truth (Jer. 9:3): Persuading Others to Believe" from Wednesday afternoon, April 28 to Friday, April 30. The cost for the class is \$350 for credit or \$175 for continuing education. The total cost for room/meals at Simpsonwood for Wed. and Thurs. nights is \$201 single, \$151 double (per person). Please call Atlanta Bible College at 800-347-4261 or 678-833-1839 before **April 2** to register.

### 21<sup>st</sup> Century Reformation Website

#### New Features Each Month

[www.21stcr.org](http://www.21stcr.org)

21st Century Reformation online brings together some of the best in videos, audios and writings focused on the pursuit of original Christianity in our time.

*Focus on the Kingdom* is now available in **Spanish!** Please email us at [anthonybuzzard@mindspring.com](mailto:anthonybuzzard@mindspring.com) if you would like to receive the Spanish edition.

## Equipping Ourselves to Teach

The question of the Trinity is looming large “out there” in internet land. I will be “debating” (discussing is a kinder word) the prominent apologist for the Trinity Michael Brown, who is a Messianic Jew, on February 8<sup>th</sup> at 3 pm EST (show will be archived at <http://lineoffire.askdrbrown.org>). Then there is popular debater James White, author of a small and very readable paperback *The Forgotten Trinity*. The site for that discussion is [www.premier.org.uk/unbelievable](http://www.premier.org.uk/unbelievable)

After years of involvement with these important matters about who God is and how many God is, it is clear to me that the biblical issues are quite simple. They became fearfully complex when the post-biblical Church attempted to define God using Greek philosophical terminology — imposing an alien language on the Bible. Trinitarians are left trying to harmonize “one” and “three.”

Leading exponent of the Trinity Millard Erickson is candid enough to say: “This doctrine in many ways presents strange paradoxes...It was the very first doctrine dealt with systematically by the church, yet is still one of the most misunderstood and disputed doctrines. Further, **it is not clearly or explicitly taught anywhere in Scripture**, yet it is widely regarded as a central doctrine, indispensable to the Christian faith.”

Another prominent writer, Professor Shirley C. Guthrie, a Trinitarian scholar, says in his book *Christian Doctrine*:

**“The Bible does not teach the doctrine of the Trinity.** Neither the word ‘trinity’ itself nor such language as ‘one-in-three,’ ‘three-in-one,’ one ‘essence’ (or ‘substance’) and three ‘persons’ is biblical language. The language of the doctrine is the language of the ancient church **taken from classical Greek philosophy**” (p. 76-77).

Professor Loofs, a German professor of systematic theology, wrote and lectured early in the 1900s:

“I wish at the outset to state quite openly that I cannot hold this old [Trinitarian] Christology. 1) To rational logic it is quite untenable. 2) It does not agree with the NT. 3) We can show that it was influenced by antiquated conceptions of Greek philosophy...Reason cannot approve such thoughts as hopelessly contradict themselves.”

This reminds me of Trinitarian Erickson who writes, “I have sometimes said of the Trinity, ‘He are three’ or ‘they is one’” (*God in Three Persons*, p. 270).

Biblical unitarians point out that the Bible defines God as a single Divine Person thousands and thousands of times. The word “I” is not a complicated word! Single personal pronouns, everyone ought to know — and really does! — define a single person. These statistics are not popular with Trinitarians, but the Greek *o theos*,

“the God,” refers to the Father over 1300 times in the Greek New Testament. Tell your friends this when they maintain that “Jesus is God.” There is one unambiguous passage in the New Testament in which Jesus is given the title “God.” That is Hebrews 1:8, quoting Psalm 45:6: “Your throne, O God, is forever and ever.”

This verse appears in Hebrews chapter one in a cluster of verses to prove that Jesus is the Messiah, Son of God. It is interesting to me that the New American Bible notes on Psalm 45:6 sense that “god,” as an exceptional title for the Messiah, does not mean the absolute and single Deity, the God of Israel. The NAB translates with a lower-case “g” on the title in Psalm 45:6: “Your throne, O god...” and notes that this is a courtly title for the Messiah.

So the evidence is strongly stacked in favor of God being the Father of Jesus. Every time you read God in the New Testament reflect on the fact that the word does not mean Jesus! (Ps. 45:6 in Heb. 1:8 being the one certain exception.) It means the Father. These are overwhelming “proof texts” which identify God as the Father of Jesus. The New Testament even has a special “God, the Father” title, *theos pater* in the Greek. But “God the Son” is completely absent from the New Testament. John 1:18 is much too uncertain in the manuscripts to base anything for certain on. Perhaps the original was just “the begotten one” (*monogenes*). But the NIV translation goes far beyond what is certain with its “God the One and Only.” Hort defined the title here as indicating the “highest form of *derived* being”— not God, therefore.

Why is it so hard for readers to grasp the power of the statistics that God = the Father some 1300 times in the New Testament? And if the New Testament was presenting a triune God, why does it not say this clearly? It never does. In fact it makes it clear that the confession required of us is always that “Jesus is the Christ and the Son of God.” On that rock foundation Jesus promised to found his whole church (Matt. 16:18). Why did the Savior not say “I will found my church on the belief that I, Jesus, am God”?! This was utterly impossible, since the Jews of his day knew that God was one Person. They learned that from their Scriptures. They read there of a single-Person God who used every form of language to instill the idea that He is one single Personage. He referred to Himself (note one “self,” sometimes one “soul”) as I, Me, and Myself. He was addressed as Thou and Thee (singular personal pronouns) and others referred to Him as HE, HIM, and Himself. He was “alone.” There was no one beside Him. He alone was God. He alone was YAHWEH. There were no other Yahweh’s.

And yet, by a miracle of misinterpretation, today you must assert that God’s Son is *equally* Yahweh, equally an uncreated, eternal Person. Churchgoers are

thoroughly schooled by their creeds and liturgies to believe that Jesus is also Yahweh, making two Yahweh's. This is astonishing in view of Jesus' immortal words in confirmation of and in agreement with a Jewish scribe who asked about the most important of all commandments. Jesus said "the Lord our God is one Lord" (so the Greek reads in Mark 12:29). Do your neighbors and friends know that their Messiah declared himself thus to be a fine and committed unitarian believer? He believed with the Jews of all times that God is a single Person. Jesus claimed over and over again to be the *Son* of God. By repeatedly referring to God as his Father, he repeatedly said that he was the Son of that one God.

I anticipate an objection. Did Jesus really say "I am the Son of God" often? He did. In John's gospel alone he called God his Father many times. Each is a claim to be the Son of God. Son of God was early in the New Testament (read it from the beginning) explained as the fitting title of the one who was uniquely begotten and who had no human father. Gabriel had said (show this to your friends) that "*because* of the virginal begetting he will be called [and thus be] the Son of God" (Luke 1:35). How simple and straightforward this is. How different from the complicated and abstruse arguments presented to try to turn this "Son of God" into God the Son.

No one in New Testament times thought that the Christ *was* the God of Israel. That would have seemed ridiculous. After all, the "Christ" simply means the anointed one. God was not the anointed one. Not ever! God was the one who through His spirit anointed various priests, kings and even the pagan ruler Cyrus. God was the one who called the patriarchs messiahs, anointed ones, "christs"! (Ps. 105:15).

It is simply amazing that one contemporary author writing in defense of the Trinity could say that monotheism pervades the whole New Testament but the Shema of Israel is never quoted in the New Testament!<sup>1</sup> But it is. Look it up in Mark 12:29 and rejoice in the simple fact that there is only one Yahweh, one Lord.

Luke 2:11 declares that the Lord *Christ* (not the Lord God!) was born and a few verses later in 2:26 Luke gives us the precious information that this Christ is the **Lord's** Christ. Note the difference. Jesus is the Lord Christ, the Lord who is the Messiah, and he is equally the Lord's (with apostrophe "s") Messiah, Yahweh's Messiah. There is only one Yahweh and only one ultimate Christ, the Messiah. The word Christ, the anointed one, appears well over 600 times in the New Testament. Is that not sufficient to identify Jesus?

Yet astonishingly, a whole school of American evangelicalism will not recognize you as a Christian

unless you are prepared to say "Jesus *is* Yahweh," the Lord God — making of course two Yahweh's which is one too many!

Meanwhile, in all the confusion, the Jews who have been well trained to refuse any creed which does not reflect the "Shema" are rightly repelled at the interference with their hallowed doctrine that God is a single divine Person. Their creed declares that there is only "one Yahweh" (Deut. 6:4; see also the LXX and the Greek of Mark 12:29). The Hebrew Bible even writes the last letter of the word for "hear" and the last letter of the word "one" in extra big letters. These two letters E and D (*ayeen* and *dalet* in Hebrew) spell the word for "witness." The lesson to be learned is that this great creedal statement that Yahweh is a single Person is a witness to us all, and that we should not fail to make it the center of all our devotion. Otherwise — heaven forbid! — we might be held guilty of imagining more than one Yahweh.

The angel of the Lord who appears in Old Testament times is not the Son of God! Hebrews 1:1-2 should have prevented any such idea from getting off the ground. God in past times spoke in different ways. But only in these last days, or it may be "at the end of those days," did God speak in a Son. Thus it would contradict the text of Hebrews to say that in fact the Son of God spoke freely in the Old Testament as an angel. This would produce the bizarre notion that the Son of God who was predicted to be a biological descendant of David (2 Sam. 7:14) was alive and well before he was born! David's son would thus be much older than his father. Such complexities and puzzles have rendered a great deal of the biblical story incomprehensible and the subject of endless wrangles. It was in the fullness of time that God sent forth His uniquely begotten Son.

God "raised up Jesus," i.e. brought him onto the human scene, and then "sent him" — in that order (Acts 3:26). That son was by biological miracle the Son of God, of Mary and of course of David. This is the straightforward account of the origin, the *genesis* (Matt. 1:18, see the Greek) of the Messiah as presented by Matthew and even more clearly by Luke who records that what will be "brought into existence" in Mary is the Son of God (see Luke 1:35). It is expressly because of the miracle in the Jewess Mariam (her name in Luke's account) that Jesus is constituted Son of God (Luke 1:35). Indeed God had predicted in Psalm 2:7 that the Messiah would be begotten "today."

In an extraordinary feat of obfuscation of plain language, the Church, after Bible times, managed to foist on the public the notion that the begetting of the Son was timeless. "Today" (Ps 2:7), the theologians argued, does not with God mean today. It means in eternity! Search this out on the internet and you will find amazing dogmatic statements to the effect that "today"

<sup>1</sup> Calvin Beisner, *God in Three Persons*, p. 26.

with God means eternity! I suppose then that when God told Moses “*Today...*” and gave various instructions, that simple information could have meant “in eternity.”

It is little known (the information is readily available on the internet) that celebrated commentators have strongly objected to this abuse of language. Albert Barnes, Adam Clarke, Dake’s *Annotated Bible* and the well-known author of *The Kingdom of the Cults*, Walter Martin, insisted rightly that there was no Son of God before his coming into existence (begetting) in Mary, by miracle. Thus a main pillar of classical Trinitarianism is removed.

God promised to become the father of the Messiah in the celebrated fascinating prophecy in 2 Samuel 7:14. The tense of the verb is future: “I will become his Father.” This of course means “I will beget him.” It happened some 2000 years ago, and the New Testament account of the fulfillment of this prophecy, the begetting of the Messiah, Son of God, is detailed for us in the marvelous opening chapters of Matthew and Luke. Here we find a concentration of the begetting/Son of God language: Matthew 1:1, 18, 20 and Luke 1:32-35. Psalm 2:7 is the basis for the expectation that God would one day beget the Messiah, and even in the Dead Sea Scrolls Jews expected that the Messiah would be begotten.

In Acts 13:33 the precious “I have begotten you” text appears as confirming the *coming on the scene* of the Messiah. The KJV obscures the point by trying to force Acts 13:33 to refer to the resurrection, by wrongly adding the word “again.” As F.F. Bruce pointed out in a most important statement, Acts 13:33, quoting Psalm 2:7, refers to the beginning of the Messiah, his begetting and beginning in Mary. Verse 34 refers to the resurrection of Jesus.

Hebrews 1 gives us three corroborating texts to describe how the Son of God came into existence. Again Psalm 2:7 is prominent as the prediction of the origin and begetting of the Messianic Son.

F.F. Bruce was hesitant to say that Paul believed that the Son was alive before his birth! In correspondence with me, he expressed his doubt that Paul believed in a preexisting Son, while he thought John perhaps did. But even in the case of John’s gospel Bruce was willing to consider that the word in John 1:1 was God’s wisdom and not the Son of God until the birth of Jesus. Bruce wrote “the word *which* (who?)...”

What an immense amount of grief and dispute would have been avoided had Christians been prepared to follow the words of Jesus when he quoted and affirmed the greatest of all commandments which begins with these words (in the Greek NT): “Hear O Israel, the Lord our God is one Lord.” How many Lords? One. Not two and not three. This marvelous teaching of Jesus was not able to prevent the addition of two other “Persons” to the Godhead. There is no justification at all for

revising the Bible’s realistic language about God and replacing it with impossibly complex terms like “essence,” “hypostatic union,” “subsistencies,” etc. The tragedy is that the Church hurled (and sometimes still hurls) anathemas at any who will not accept that philosophical terminology!

There was no need for this. It was in violation of the “Hear O Israel” of Deuteronomy 6:4 and Mark 12:29. Jesus is presented in the New Testament not as God Himself but as God’s unique **agent**, who speaks for God and is to be honored, as agents should be, as His perfect Sponsor who is the One God, the Father. Thus finally Thomas got the point. In John 14 Thomas and Philip had been slow to see the marvelous Jewish agency principle at work. If you have seen Jesus you have seen God. The agent, said the Jews, was “as his sponsor’s person.” Jesus’ equality with God is the equality of an agent with his sender. Jesus acts in perfect obedience to his sponsor, God, his Father. Jesus speaks the words of God and performs the works of God, but never did he claim to *be* the eternal God. When accused by hostile and thus misunderstanding Jews, who could not, Jesus said, grasp his message *because of their hostility*, Jesus immediately resisted the idea that he was God! He said that he was only doing what God told him to do and only relaying the words of God for our enlightenment and benefit (see John 5:18, 19ff).

One celebrated commentator on John, C.K. Barrett, remarked wisely, “It is intolerable to imagine that Jesus was saying ‘I am God and as such I do what am told!’” The great clue to the understanding of the relationship of God and the Son is **agency**, the authority invested by God in Jesus in a unique way. Jesus is no average man! He is an absolutely sinless man in whose mouth the words of God, his sponsor, were continually found. Jesus is indeed the exact fulfillment of the prophecy given by Moses that God would raise up a prophet like Moses but superior to Moses (Deut 18:15-18). That prophet would be an Israelite and thus a brother genetically to Israel. Woe betide anyone who refused to listen to that prophet. So Peter preached in Acts 3:23.

As it has turned out we have not listened well to Jesus. Rather the Church made him into a second Yahweh! This advance on the Bible, Jesus would have been the first to condemn as an insult to the God of Heaven and earth. Jesus was a model unitarian believer in the God of his Jewish heritage. As was well said by my cousin at Cambridge, Dr. J.A.T. Robinson, John was “as undeviating a witness to the unitary monotheism of Judaism as any of the New Testament writers.”

The key to this issue is to start by looking at the Hebrew Bible’s predictions as to *who* the Messiah will be. He is first and foremost to be the blood descendant of David, of the tribe of Judah. He is the offspring and shoot of David as we read in Revelation 22:16. He is the

prophet like Moses (Deut 18:15-18), but bearer of God's *final* words to the world. God **did not speak in a Son** in the Old Testament times (Heb. 1:1-2). He waited until a date some 2000 years ago. Then the Messiah, Son of the Highest God, was begotten (= brought into existence) by miracle as the second Adam, the head of a new race of human beings and the pioneer of their salvation.

Jesus the Messiah (so named as "anointed one" over 600 times in the New Testament) is given the title God once for certain (in Heb. 1:8). When Thomas finally understood he was able to say to Jesus "my lord [*adoni* in the Hebrew translations of the Greek NT] and my God." He saw the One God in Jesus, just as Jesus had in chapter 14 urged him and Philip to do. As the agent of the One God Jesus is to be honored as if he were God. All are to honor the Son as they honor the Father. But there are not two Gods, and there are not two Yahweh's. The one Yahweh is the one God, and this concept is not difficult, provided one understands the numeral "one."

Indeed this is not hard unless one has been fed a strong dose of church tradition which long ago went beyond the bounds of Hebrew thinking and swallowed a strong draft of Greek philosophy. Dr. Snaith is worth quoting again for your consideration:

"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 rightly sees in the Catholic system a conception of salvation conceived in Aristotelian terms and 'an idea of Beatitude...closely related to the Neo-Platonic idea of the Vision of the One and bearing little relationship to the Beatitudes of the Gospel.' Equally rightly he sees a marked tendency in contemporary Protestantism 'to lay emphasis on the development of personality and a human movement towards the realization of ethical ideals. The KG is regarded as something achieved by human effort.'

"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.'**

This magazine, now in its 12<sup>th</sup> year, aims to make some contribution to the return of Christians to their Hebrew roots, certainly not in terms of a return to the Jewish food laws or calendar, but to the Hebrew Messiah and his relation to the One God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob. In this venture, as we attempt to play our part, we are heartened by the words of distinguished commentators such as A.T. Hanson, Professor of Theology at the University of Hull:

"No responsible NT scholar would claim that the doctrine of the Trinity was taught by Jesus, or preached by the earliest Christians, or consciously held by any writer of the NT. It was in fact slowly worked out in the course of the first few centuries in an attempt to give an intelligible doctrine of God" (*The Image of the Invisible God*).

A writer of a column in a leading London newspaper warned us with this sharp observation:

"It must be admitted by everyone who has the rudiments of an historical sense that the doctrine of the Trinity formed no part of the original message. St. Paul did not know it, and would have been unable to understand the meaning of the terms used in the theological formula on which the Church ultimately agreed."<sup>2</sup>

### **The Gospel as Defined and Preached by Jesus**

Jesus came preaching and heralding the Kingdom of God. This is the Gospel as Jesus defined it (later adding the material about his death and resurrection, of course). He claimed to be the Messiah; he came first to die and rise and will come again to rule in a renewed earth, the Kingdom of God, the fulfillment of the great land promise made to Abraham and his seed (Gen. 12, 15, 17, etc.). The church is now reckoned as the seed of Abraham as Paul stated lucidly in that classic verse in Galatians 3:29: "If you are a Christian then you count as the seed of Abraham and you are heirs of the promise," i.e. the promise to Abraham that he would be "heir of the world" (Rom. 4:13). The Abrahamic promises of land, progeny and prosperity are the rock-solid basis of the saving Christian Gospel of the Kingdom, announced by Jesus as the model Gospel preacher (Heb. 2:3).

Christians have tended to give away their heritage to unconverted Jews! They have thus denied the teachings of Jesus that the meek, his followers, "will inherit the

<sup>2</sup> Dr. W.R. Matthews, Dean of St. Paul's, *God in Christian Experience*, p. 180.

land” (Matt. 5:5, quoting Ps. 37). Jesus’ objection to his own countrymen was that they were in the grip of the deceit that they could be part of the promise made to Abraham *without accepting, trusting and obeying the Messiah Jesus*. It is not sufficient to have Jewish blood in your veins. One must believe and obey Jesus the Messiah who has come and is coming again. But this is not to say that belief in Messiah *as the eternal God Himself* was part of New Testament theology! Such a proposition multiplies God and makes Jesus essentially non-human and thus not the descendant of David.

All this is not to deny that in prophecy a great restoration and conversion of a collective group of Jews is yet expected. This will be at the time of the future return of Jesus (which was not in AD 70!). Paul speaks of this future recovery of a remnant of Israel in Romans 9-11. At present however Paul characterizes Israel as enemies of the Gospel. Individually some will join the international “Israel of God” (Gal. 6:16), all believers who are now fully members of the commonwealth of Israel by rebirth and believing the Gospel of the Kingdom as Jesus commanded in Mark 1:14-15 (cp. the wonderful text in Acts 8:12).

Paul spoke of ethnic Israel as “Israel of the flesh” (1 Cor 10:18). He clearly distinguished those unconverted Jews from the church, which he calls the “Israel of God” in Galatians 6:16. There he blesses those in Galatia who follow the rule of love and the wider church of God, all the true believers. Jesus described the believers as those who believe and obey his words, his Gospel of the Kingdom (John 3:36; Matt. 13:19; see Heb. 5:9). These he urged to accept the grace of God. The Gospel of the grace of God is exactly the same as the Gospel of the Kingdom (as is beautifully said by Acts 20:24, 25).

Christianity requires work! Jesus spoke about “striving” to enter the Kingdom (Luke 13:24), i.e. be saved. The work required is faith and obedience directed to Jesus (Heb. 5:9). Paul called this “the obedience of faith” at the beginning and end of Romans (1:5; 16:26). It is ludicrous to think that grace relieves us of energetic activity for Jesus and his cause. “Strive, agonize to enter the Kingdom!” Jesus said. This takes effort, a cooperative effort between the believer and God and His one mediator, the man Christ Jesus (1 Tim. 2:5).

It is a grand delusion to imagine that salvation is gained initially without further perseverance. Paul told the Roman believers in no uncertain terms that they would be cut off if they turned back from faithful obedience (Rom. 11:22). Hebrews 6 and 10 threaten dire consequences for those who believe for a while (Luke 8:13) and then turn away. Jesus addressed the converts in Laodicea with these threatening words: “I will vomit you out of my mouth” (Rev. 3:16). He who perseveres to the end will be saved and “salvation is now nearer than

when we first believed” (Rom. 13:11). Paul worked hard at self control “lest he should be a castaway.”

Some receive the saving word of the Kingdom (the Gospel, Matt 13:19) “in a good and honest heart” and thus bring forth fruit. Others resist God’s will for themselves (Luke 7:30), showing how fearfully mistaken is the awful doctrine of Calvin, who was responsible with others for the murder of the anti-Trinitarian Michael Servetus. Calvin suffered a severe blindness as to the Gospel of the Kingdom. He accused the trained disciples of Jesus of blindness when they asked the right question: “Is this the time you are going to restore the Kingdom to Israel?” (Acts 1:6). Calvin coldly remarked that “there are more errors in that question than words.” The fault and blindness lay with Calvin, and his successors should avoid following him in respect of the Kingdom, which is the core of the Gospel along, of course, with the death and resurrection of Messiah. ✧

## Where’s the Love?

by Carlos Xavier

Love, as it is popularly known, can be deceptive. We experience a sensation which we equate with love. But looking back we realize that it wasn’t love at all. In other words, love can also be faked, fabricated.

“That love is a natural insanity, a *temporary delusion* which the individual is compelled to suffer for the sake of the race, is indeed an explanation that has suggested itself to many who have been baffled by its mystery...It must be remembered that *in the lower sense of deception*, love may be, and frequently is, a *delusion*. A man may *deceive himself*, or be deceived *by the object of his attraction*...In first love, occurring in youth, such deception is perhaps *entirely normal*.”<sup>3</sup>

Yet, at some point in “the race,” God’s unique brand of love (*agape*) must come to us. We regain our sight, and most importantly, our perception of where we are and who we are, and what our destiny is, according to the words of Jesus.

The spiritual growth of many has been stunted because of the way certain religions successfully manufacture and sell a type of *delusional* love. In the process they captivate a large part of humanity who *naturally* crave the love that can only come from the one true God and Father of the Lord Jesus Christ. Many quote Paul’s “love chapter” (1 Cor. 13), explaining that ultimately this is what Christianity is all about. But what is often overlooked is this: Love is strongly related to our desire for and appreciation of *truth*!

“Love does not delight in evil  
but **rejoices with the truth**” (1 Cor. 13:6).

<sup>3</sup> Havelock Ellis, *Studies in the Psychology of Sex*, 2007, Vol. 6, p 124, emphasis added.

There it is, concise and compact, yet so beautifully true! As Jesus himself famously attests, “You *will know* [future tense] the truth and it will set you *free*” (John 8:31-32). In order for us to reflect God’s love and truly walk in the sandals of our Lord Jesus we must love in a way that is *in step* with what the Bible defines as love, something that “*rejoices with the truth.*” Truth, that real, all-consuming, life-changing, encompassing truth cannot be a partner with *error* which is *evil*.

Not to have a passion for truth, Paul announced, is tantamount to unrighteousness (2 Thess. 2:10-12). “They are perishing,” the great apostle wrote, “because *the love of the truth* they refused to welcome in order to be *saved*! Therefore God gave them over to a delusion, so that they would wind up believing falsehood.”

Now, how do we know we are in the truth? The Bible calls on all who profess to love God (not just church leaders) to keep *searching and examining*. Along with this we are *commanded* to constantly *test* (1 John 4:1) so we can *reprove* (2 Tim. 4:2) and *teach* “the sound [*health-giving*] doctrine, in order to prove ourselves sound *in faith*, and *in love*” (Titus 2:2).

I urge you, as a fellow searcher for *truth in love*, to test everything this magazine claims. Don’t just believe it because you don’t have either the time or the patience or (as you imagine) the ability to examine it, but because you love God and His word. And you fear delusion. “We know that for those who love God all things work together for good” (Rom. 8:28); the “good” here is not *belief that rejoices with error (evil)*, but the truth that permits us to “walk in love” (2 John 4; 3 John 3-4) and loving the truth enables us to be saved (2 Thess. 2:10).

Luke 8:12 and Acts 8:12 (easily remembered) speak volumes. The reception of the gospel of the Kingdom is the key and the Devil knows this, better than some churchgoers. He is dead against your reception of the saving Gospel of the Kingdom. “Whenever someone hears the word [Gospel] of the Kingdom, the Devil comes and snatches away the message which has been sown in his heart, so that he may not believe it and be saved” (Luke 8:12). Then in Acts 8:12 we have a very useful summary of what it means to become a believer. Only when the Kingdom of God Gospel, the key to God’s and Jesus’ energy working in us (1 Thess. 2:13), is grasped are we ready to be baptized in water as the outward and public sign of our obedience to Jesus’ mandate for baptism in the Great Commission (Matt. 28:19-20).✧

## New Developments in Western U.S.

**R**obin and Marisa Todd of Lacey, Washington have started a new work for biblical unitarian believers in the western U.S. It is called the Scattered Brethren Network. There are two groups, one for the \*northwestern states and another for the \*southwest. This is a way that *those who are too far away from an*

*established congregation* can have some fellowship. It was born out of Robin and Marisa’s desire to reach out to others who share their own geographical limitations for fellowship.

This work is in its infancy and its methods simple for now. Robin sends out a group email every couple of weeks to keep in touch with fellow believers and to provide news, information, and prayer requests. From his website ([www.kingdomheart.org](http://www.kingdomheart.org)) he posts a list of those cities and towns where members live, so that others can view the list and request further contact with fellow believers in their area. From the website you can access articles written by the members as well as information about biblical unitarian ministries offered in the region. In addition, Robin intends to bring up a discussion board very soon. There has been a lot of enthusiasm and growth in these groups so far, and if the work continues to grow there may be plans for regional Scattered Brethren Conferences.

The beliefs that are held in common by those in the group are fairly straightforward: 1) There is only One Person who is God, that is Yahweh, the Father; 2) Jesus is the Son of God, not God the Son; 3) the gospel is primarily the good news of the future Kingdom of God on this earth which will be ushered in at the return of Jesus when he raises the faithful dead from their graves; and 4) issues of food and calendar are not prerequisites of salvation or fellowship.

Jesus prayed to the Father that his followers might be one just as he and the Father are one. The \*NW and \*SW Scattered Brethren Networks are efforts to contribute to this end. It is an essential part of the Kingdom commission.

If you would like to be a part of either of these networks, just contact Robin by email or phone. Phone is (360) 701-9219. Email is [robinsings4u@comcast.net](mailto:robinsings4u@comcast.net)

\*Note: NW Scattered Brethren Network includes states of Alaska, Washington, Oregon, Idaho, Montana, Wyoming, and British Columbia, Canada.

SW Scattered Brethren Network includes states of Texas, New Mexico, Arizona, Nevada, California, Colorado, and Utah.✧

## Comments

“The one thing I love about what you say is: You bring clarity to issues. Thank you.” — *Pennsylvania*

“In recent times the Lord has been revealing to my heart what I have come to regard as the wonderful truth of the Godhead — God the Father is One and Jesus Christ is the Son of God. He has brought wonderful testimonies to confirm this glorious truth through other men — yourself being one of them (through your website and articles). It has been a joy to be encouraged from your teachings and to confirm that indeed there are other brethren in the world who have not simply ‘eaten’ what the Trinitarians would like us to believe.” *Australia*

Atlanta Bible College  
PO Box 2950  
McDonough, GA 30253  
USA

**Focus on the Kingdom**  
February, 2010

NONPROFIT  
ORGANIZATION  
US POSTAGE  
PAID  
PERMIT NO. 46  
MCDONOUGH, GA

ADDRESS SERVICE REQUESTED

**Theological Conference • April 25-28, 2010 • Simpsonwood Conference Center, Norcross, Georgia**

Name \_\_\_\_\_

Address \_\_\_\_\_

City, State, Zip \_\_\_\_\_

Phone-Home \_\_\_\_\_ Cell \_\_\_\_\_

E-mail \_\_\_\_\_

**Conference rates per person** (includes room, meals, snacks, conf. fee, tax):  
**Single: \$322 Double: \$247 Triple: \$234 Quad: \$218**

Room type: Single\_\_\_ Double\_\_\_ Triple\_\_\_ Quad\_\_\_

Roommate's name(s) \_\_\_\_\_

Transportation to/from Atlanta airport? Round-trip (\$25) \_\_\_ One-way (\$15) From airport \_\_\_ To airport \_\_\_

If so, Date & Time of Arrival \_\_\_\_\_ Departure \_\_\_\_\_

Airline & Flight Number \_\_\_\_\_

Shuttle on Sun. to Simpsonwood (Circle one) 1:00 pm 3:30 pm

Are you taking the after-conference class? \_\_\_\_\_

Send with minimum deposit of \$50 per room by **April 2** to:  
Atlanta Bible College, PO Box 2950, McDonough, GA 30253