

Focus on the Kingdom

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Anthony Buzzard, editor

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2015 Theological Conference

April 30-May 3, 2015

Calvin Center, Hampton, GA

Please join us for our annual gathering of passionate Kingdom and biblical unitarian believers. We will have a full schedule of speakers, as well as your “faith stories.” We really need you to be there as a blessing for us all. The Abrahamic promise is that the seed of Abraham would not only be blessed but be a blessing. With the new venue this year, prices are even more reasonable:

Per person rates — includes 3 nights, all meals, snacks

	Single	Double (per person)	Triple (per person)
Hotel-style room	\$405	\$250	\$200
Bunkbed room (6 per room with bath) <i>We can assign roommates</i>	\$180 per person +\$15 for sheets and towels or bring your own		

Please note: **All 24 hotel-style rooms are full.** Bunkbeds are still available, or see the list of nearby hotels at theologicalconference.org

Three ways to register:

1. Online at theologicalconference.org
2. Mail the form on the back page
3. Call Atlanta Bible College at 800-347-4261

Registration deadline: April 10, 2015

Airport Transportation (Judy: 678-485-8492)

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

Airport to Calvin Center		
Thurs. April 30	2:00 pm	4:00 pm
Calvin Center to Airport		
Sun. May 3	1:00 pm	

Please arrange your arrival time on Thursday early enough to catch one of the two shuttle runs. On Sunday, May 3 we will provide **only 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 pm.

The conference begins with registration at 4 pm on Thursday and ends with lunch on Sunday. Driving directions to Calvin Center are at calvincenter.org The address is 13550 Woolsey Rd., Hampton, GA 30228.

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Jesus instructed his disciples to “go into all the world, and preach the Gospel [of the Kingdom] to all creation” (Mark 16:15). The converts to belief in the Gospel of the Kingdom, as God would later educate Peter, should never be called “unholy or unclean”: “God has shown me that I should not call anyone unholy or unclean” (Acts 10:28). These Gentiles were referred to by Jesus as “dogs” (“It is not good to take the children’s bread, and throw it to the dogs,” Matt 15:26) because they were “strangers to the covenants of promise” and were “without God in the world” (Eph. 2:12).

The New Covenant is hugely different in its scope from the Old Covenant under Moses.

Many of these Gentiles, because the disciples obeyed the Lord’s command to go to them and teach them, were added to the church as the Gospel was taken firstly to the Jews and then to everyone else, “Jerusalem, Judea, Samaria and all the world” (Acts 1:8). “And the Lord was adding to their number day by day those who were **being saved**” (Acts 2:47). By Acts 4:4 the number of the believers had risen to about 5,000. “And all the more believers in the Lord, multitudes of men and women, were constantly added to their number” (Acts 5:14). As Jesus had said, “Upon this rock I will build my church” (Matt 16:18). The faith was in Jesus as the Messiah, certainly not as GOD!

Peter visited, at the Lord’s command, a Roman centurion named Cornelius, who called together his family and good friends to join him to hear the words which Peter the Apostle communicated to them: By listening and responding they received holy spirit, and they were then **baptized in water**, thus becoming officially members of the church (Acts 10). At this point,

there was a mixture of Jewish and Gentile converts in the newly formed body of Christ.

Then a Jew named Saul appears. “Saul, who was known as Paul,” a persecutor of the church, was converted and baptized in water by a disciple of the Lord named Ananias. Saul began his ministry among the Jews (Acts 9:20), but would later turn his full attention to the Gentiles, when Jews refused his Gospel preaching. “We are now turning to the Gentiles” (Acts 13:46). The Lord had told Saul that he had chosen him to bear his name (his Gospel, authority and agenda) before the Gentiles (Acts 9:15).

Warnings of a Fall from the Truth

Are there any indications as to what this church might look like in the next 300 years, following its initial foundation? Yes, indeed, warnings were issued by Jesus, Peter, Paul, and John:

Jesus cautioned that “many will come in my name, saying, ‘I am the Christ,’ and mislead many.” He warned them strictly, “See that no one misleads you” (Matt. 24:4-5).

Paul predicted: “I know that after my departure savage wolves will come in among you, not sparing the flock; and from among your own selves men will arise, **speaking perverse things**, to draw away the disciples after them. Therefore be on the alert, remembering that night and day for a period of three years I did not cease to admonish each one of you with tears” (Acts 20:29-31). Perverted teaching had its beginning in the church itself. How could that be?

Paul alerted Timothy that “the time will come when they will not endure sound doctrine; but wanting to have their ears tickled, they will accumulate for themselves teachers in accordance to their own desires” (2 Tim. 4:3-4). Where did those false, twisted versions of the faith come from?

Peter’s tribute to the prophets for speaking as “moved by the Holy Spirit” contained also the observation that there had been false prophets even in the days of the prophets who penned the Scriptures. He alerted the newly formed church to expect and identify the same *false teachers* among them. They would bring in *destructive heresies* which would in effect deny the very Lord who had purchased their salvation (2 Pet. 1:21-2:1).

In his day John informed believers that false prophets had already “gone out into the world” — men who were not confessing **the genuinely human Jesus**. John linked them to the antichrist predicted by Daniel and to the prophecy which Jesus gave in Matthew 24. “Children, it is the last hour; and just as you heard that antichrist [the one individual] is coming, even now many antichrists have appeared. From this we know that it is the last hour. They went out from us, but they were not really of us; for

if they had been of us, they would have remained with us; but they went out, so that it would be shown that they all are not of us” (1 John 2:18-19).

This certainly does not speak positively of the “progress” of the church, which had appeared so promising in the book of Acts. Far from progress, the expectation, relevant to us today, was of apostasy, a defection from saving Truth.

Some Positive Greek Influence

Let’s observe a quick view of the Greek society into which Paul as well as others of the Apostles had to operate, as they went out into the world to preach the Good News. On the positive side: “Greek society inspired achievements that shaped the foundation of Western civilization. The Greeks were intelligent, daring, energetic and sensible, accomplishing great feats in the arts, philosophy, architecture and more. The Greeks introduced our cherished concepts of citizens’ rights, democracy, and freedom of speech and religion. They excelled in mathematics, physics and astronomy...Aristotle, a Greek philosopher-scientist who lived in the fourth century B.C., laid the foundation of empirical science.

“Eratosthenes, who lived in the third century B.C., used principles of mathematics and physics to arrive at a rough but pretty accurate measurement of the earth’s circumference. Around the same time, Archimedes discovered that submerging a solid object will displace an amount of liquid that matches the object’s weight. And if you think the Greeks don’t still play a role in modern science and mathematics, just check out the symbols often used in physics and higher math equations; many of them are derived from the Greek alphabet.”¹

Eric Chang wrote in his excellent book *The Only True God*, “There was an interval of 300 years from the time of Christ to the time of the Nicene Creed. During those three centuries a fundamental change had slowly but surely taken place in the church: it had moved from monotheism to polytheism. The historical reason for the change is not difficult to understand. Many believers who came into the church **did not leave their polytheistic way of thinking entirely behind them**. With the growth of the church throughout the world, Gentiles came to predominate in the churches, until finally the Jews constituted only a minority in most churches outside Palestine. By the middle of the second century, when Christianity parted from Judaism, **the break with Biblical monotheism became a reality** in fact if not in name.”²

¹<http://curiosity.discovery.com/question/ancient-greeks-impact-western-society>

²*The Only True God*, www.theonlytruegod.org, p. 31.

Chang concludes that “by the early third century AD it was hard to find a single Jewish name among the regional leaders (then called ‘bishops’) of the church. The church was now firmly under Gentile leadership. These leaders had grown up in a religious and cultural environment where there were ‘many gods and many lords’ (1 Cor. 8:5), and the ‘gods’ and ‘lords’ of the Greek and Roman religions were basically deified human beings” (p. 31).

Chang then observes: **“Little wonder that the Greek, or Greek educated, Gentile church leaders could come up with this notion of the union of a divine and a human nature in the one person of Jesus Christ.** They were simply reformulating biblical teaching in terms of Greek cultural ideas in which they were habituated to think and to express themselves. It seems that most of them were not yet sufficiently steeped in Biblical teaching to breathe in its spirit and think in its terms, in contrast to the early Jewish believers...But as the church became more and more filled with Gentiles as a result of the effective expansion of the Gospel into the world, the world also expanded into the church, and by the time of the Council of Nicaea in AD 325 **the world (notably in the form of the emperor Constantine) began to take effective control of the church”** (p. 115).

Further Greek Influence on Church Doctrine

Greek influence was not limited to the perversion of monotheism or the nature of the Son of God. It reached out to the formulation of other doctrines — the teaching about the nature of man and his eternal destiny. “Origen (ca. 185-254) was an admirer of Plato and believed in **the immortality of the soul and that it would depart to an everlasting reward or everlasting punishment at death.** In *De Principiis* Origen wrote: ‘The soul, having a substance and life of its own, shall after its departure from the world, be rewarded according to its deserts, being destined to obtain either an inheritance of eternal life and blessedness, if its actions shall have procured this for it, or to be delivered up to eternal fire and punishments, if the guilt of its crimes shall have brought it down to this.’”³

Later Augustine (354-430) tackled the problem of **the immortality of the soul** and death. For Augustine death meant the destruction of the body. But he taught that the conscious “soul” would continue to live in either a blissful state with God or an agonizing state of separation from God. In *The City of God* he wrote that the soul “is therefore called immortal, because in a sense, it does not cease to live and to feel; while the body is called mortal because it can be forsaken of all life, and cannot by itself live at all. The death, then, of the soul,

takes place when God forsakes it, as the death of the body when the soul forsakes it.”⁴

The influence of pagan Platonic philosophy on Origen and Augustine is profound. **It should be deeply unsettling.** Richard Tarnas, in his best-seller *The Passion of the Western Mind*, describes this influence: “It was Augustine’s formulation of Christian Platonism that was to permeate virtually **all of medieval Christian thought in the West.** So enthusiastic was the Christian integration of the Greek spirit that Socrates and Plato were frequently regarded as divinely inspired pre-Christian saints. Centuries later Thomas Aquinas (ca. 1225-1274) crystallized the doctrine of the immortal soul in his *Summa Theologica*. He taught that the soul is a conscious intellect and will and cannot be destroyed. A few centuries later the leaders of the Protestant Reformation generally accepted these traditional views, so they became entrenched in traditional Protestant teaching” (p. 103).

Paul’s Vigorous Opposition to the Poison of Greek Influence

Not only did Greek philosophy work its insidious damage on the doctrine about the One God and His Son, it also had a devastating influence on church leaders’ understanding of the nature of man and death. Paul addressed this very issue in his first letter to the Thessalonians: “But we do not want you to be uninformed, brethren, about those who are asleep, so that you will not grieve as do the rest who have no hope” (1 Thess. 4:13). It appears that the Thessalonians needed to be better informed and corrected on the issue of death. A good example of someone who needed to be better instructed was a Jew named Apollos. He was eloquent in the scriptures but needed the assistance of Priscilla and Aquila, “who explained the way of God more accurately” to him (Acts 18:24-26).

It would be beneficial to note Luke’s comments as he compared the attitudes of the people in the church at Berea and the people of the church of Thessalonica as recorded by Luke in Acts 17:10-11. By comparison, the church at Berea seemed to outdo the Thessalonians in at least two areas. “Now these were more noble-minded [a royal and commendable approach] than those in Thessalonica, for they received the word with great eagerness, examining the Scriptures daily *to see* whether these things were so.” This could be connected to the Thessalonians’ “ignorance about those who are asleep.” Their Greek background made it difficult for them to place the correct importance on the future *resurrection of the dead* rather than on a pagan “immortal soul” concept fostered by the Greek mindset. But as Eric Chang said,

³*Ante-Nicene Fathers*, Vol. 4, 1995, p. 240.

⁴*Ante-Nicene Fathers*, Vol. 2, p. 245.

“as the church became more and more filled with Gentiles as a result of the effective expansion of the Gospel into the world, the world also expanded into the church” (p. 31).

This brought poison into the church. What the Thessalonians needed urgently to know was that the launching pad for hope begins with our belief in the death and resurrection of Jesus (1 Thess. 4:14), and the proper understanding about “those who are asleep.” They are actually *asleep* in death — not more alive than ever before! The real and true hope, the hope contained in the words with which *we must comfort one another*, is in the return of Jesus to the earth and the dead in Christ rising from their sleep. The real hope lies in our being joined with this Savior who died, rose from the dead, and is coming again to the earth to resurrect the sleeping dead so that they can be with him forever. That hope the Greek mind knew nothing about. Some Greek converts had difficulty “receiving the word with great eagerness, examining the Scriptures daily to see whether these things were so” (Acts 17:11), a commendable model for us.

Paul ran into the same mindset in Corinth. There was a question among the Corinthians: “How are the dead raised? And with what kind of body do they come?” (1 Cor. 15:35.) Paul’s response, bluntly, was “That’s a foolish question.” The first thing to grasp was that there will be a **resurrection of the whole person** (the false Greek mindset was against this). This means that death is really death! (v. 36). There cannot be a resurrection unless and until there has been a total death. **The immortality of the soul** leaves no room for genuine death, and so destroys the truth of real resurrection, since according to the Greek falsehood, death cannot really be the cessation of life! In the rest of the chapter Paul proceeds to convince the Corinthians of their serious error, the failure to believe in a biblical resurrection of the dead — the resurrection of actually dead people from a deep unconscious sleep, in a real grave, to **the Life of the Age to Come** (the real meaning of “eternal life,” which is a poor translation of the original).

It must have been difficult for the pagan Greek mind to embrace the idea of “putting on immortality” (v. 53), since they thought that men are all immortal by nature! Their Greek paganism prevented them from believing Truth, or seeing any need for a resurrection. That same paganism, masquerading as Christian truth, prevails in many churches to this day. It was the same question that Paul proposed to King Agrippa: “Why is it considered incredible among you people if God does raise the dead?” (Acts 26:8). Following Jesus’ resurrection, the disciples would clearly grasp Jesus’ comment: “because I live, you will live also” (John 14:19). Jesus raised Lazarus from the dead as well as the widow’s son. However, as he said, “Do not marvel at this; for an hour is coming, in which

all who are in the tombs will hear his voice, and will come forth” (John 5:28-29).

Jesus Sets the Record Straight

Jesus spoke the truth, to which as Christians we must be equally committed, when he said, “An hour is coming and now is, when the dead will hear the voice of the Son of God, and those who hear will live” (John 5:25). When Jesus raised Lazarus from the dead, *which is a sample of the great future resurrection event*, “He cried out with a loud voice, ‘Lazarus come forth,’ and the man who had died came forth” (John 11:43-44). Jesus certainly did not command Lazarus to come down from heaven! He told him to *come forth from the grave where he had been since death*. We must make a conscious decision to develop the understanding given us by Jesus in Revelation: “They came to life and began to reign with Christ for a thousand years. The rest of the dead did not come to life until the thousand years were completed. This is the first resurrection. Blessed and holy is the one who has a part in the first resurrection; over these the second death has no power, but they will be priests of God and of Christ and will reign with him for a thousand years” (Rev. 20:4-6; the function of the true international Israel, Exod. 19:5-6; 1 Pet. 2:9-10).

Jesus’ activity for the future revolves around the resurrection of the dead. When Jesus told Martha, “Your brother will rise again,” her response displays a grasp of precious truth: “**I know that he will rise again in the resurrection on the last day**” (John 11:23-24). We are reminded of what Paul meant when he said “We have the mind of Christ” (1 Cor. 2:16). This is a basic essential for true faith, since the mind and the spirit of God are the same. We need to think like Jesus, sound like Jesus, be totally saturated with what Jesus taught as the true faith, as well as the rest of inspired Scripture. We need to throw off and repent of being enslaved by the shackles of Greek philosophical speculation. We have been misinformed by previous teachers! Let the Son set us free. “So if the Son makes you free, you will be free indeed” (John 8:36). Then we can say, “I am free, free indeed.”✧

The Words of Jesus Christ Announcing the Destruction of the Temple and the End of the Age (Matt. 24)

Matthew 24:1-44, translated into English from *The Living Bible in German (Die Gute Nachricht, Die Bibel in heutigem Deutsch)*:

As Jesus was about to leave the Temple, his disciples came up and pointed to the Temple buildings. But Jesus said: “You are admiring these buildings. Let me tell you, on this site no stone will remain on another. The whole thing will be torn down.”

About the End of the Age

Then Jesus went up the Mount of Olives and sat down. His disciples came and asked him, “When is this going to happen; and what sign will there be to announce your arrival and **the end** of the age?” [Note that Mark and Luke word the same question by speaking only of the fall of the temple and implying, as does Matthew equally, that the end of the age happens then also.]

Jesus replied, “Be on your guard and don’t allow anyone to lead you astray. Many will appear with the claim that they are the Messiah [or represent the Messiah], and they will deceive many. Don’t be alarmed when you hear of wars far and near. These have to happen, but **the end will not come yet**. Nation will fight with nation and state with state. There will be famines and earthquakes everywhere. All this is just the beginning of the end — rather like a pregnant woman’s first contractions.

“Next they will deliver you to the authorities, torture and kill you. The entire world will hate you, because you confess belief in me. When things get this bad, many will give up the Faith, betray each other and hate each other. Numerous false preachers will appear and lead many of you astray. Because evil will have the upper hand, the love of most of you will grow cold. But the ones who remain faithful to the very end will be saved. First this Good News [Gospel] about the Kingdom has to be announced throughout the world, so that every human being will hear the invitation to God’s new world. **And then the end will come.**

Events at the Very End

“Now the Prophet Daniel predicts that the ‘HORRIBLE IDOL’ will stand in the Holy Place [Dan. 9:27; 11:31; 12:11; 8:13]. (Whoever reads this must pay careful attention to the meaning.) When you see the IDOL there, all inhabitants of Judea are to flee into the mountains. Whoever happens to be on the roof of his house should not even go down into the house to get his things. If anyone is working in the fields, he must not go back to the house to get his coat. It is going to be particularly hard for pregnant and nursing mothers. Pray to God that you don’t have to flee on the Sabbath or in winter. For this period of trial will be far worse than anything that has ever happened since the beginning of the world. Nothing like it will ever happen again [= Dan. 12:1]. If God had not decided to shorten this terrible time, no one would survive. But He has planned to cut it short for the sake of His chosen ones.

“Then if anyone says to you, ‘Look, Christ is here!’ or ‘There he is!’ do not believe him. Many false prophets will appear on the scene. They will perform amazing miracles so that even God’s chosen ones might be deceived if such a thing were possible. I am warning you

in advance. So if people say, ‘He’s out here in the desert,’ don’t follow them. Or if they say, ‘He is over here hidden in a house,’ don’t believe it. The Messiah will arrive suddenly and visibly, like lightning flashing across the sky from east to west. Wherever the carcass is that’s where the eagles gather.

“**Immediately after** those terrible days of tribulation [v. 21], the sun will grow dark and the moon will stop shining, the stars will begin to fall from the sky, and the heavenly bodies will collapse. Then the Messiah’s sign will appear in the sky. The peoples of the entire world will weep and wail when they see the Messiah coming on the clouds with divine power and majesty. At the blast of the trumpet [cp. the seventh trumpet of Revelation 11 and last trumpet of 1 Cor. 15:52] he will send his angels out in all directions to gather in one place all the people he has selected.

“Learn a lesson from the fig tree. When the sap appears and its leaves grow, you know that summer is coming soon. So when you see all these things happening, you can be sure that **the end** is very near. Let me tell you, evil human societies [of the present age] will not come to an end until all these events happen. Heaven and earth will eventually pass away, but **my words** never.

“But the exact day and hour of my coming is known to no one, not even to the angels in heaven, nor the Son himself. Only the Father knows. When the Messiah arrives it will be very much like at the time of Noah. You remember how before the flood they were eating and drinking and marrying as usual right up to the day when Noah entered the Ark. They had no idea of what was coming until the flood crashed in on them and swept them all away. That’s what it is going to be like when the Messiah comes. If there are two men working in the field one will be rescued and the other left. If two women are grinding corn, one will be taken and one left.

“So you must always be on the watch because you do not know what day your King is going to come. Be sure of this: If a house owner knew in advance at what hour of the night the thief was going to break in, he would stay up all night to prevent the burglary. So always be watching. Otherwise the Messiah will come when you are not expecting him.”

Are you prepared? Are you actively involved in the Great Commission, propagating the truth of the Gospel of the Kingdom with all the means at your disposal? Paul urges us to be “always abounding in the work of the Lord” with the marvelous confidence that “your labor is never pointless or in vain in the Lord” (1 Cor. 15:58). ✧

Alarm Bells Are Ringing, but Is Anyone Listening? Are You?

Dr. Don Cupitt sounded the alarm when he wrote: “The mainstream churches are committed to a certain doctrine about Jesus [**preexistence and Trinity**], but specialists in early Christian thought are questioning the arguments by which that doctrine was reached. New Testament scholars are asking if the New Testament teaches it at all, and historians wonder at **the gulf between Jesus himself and fully-developed Christianity**. These questions are very unsettling, for they **imply that Christianity may be in worse condition than was thought**. Christianity is perhaps not a basically sound structure that needs only to be modernized, but may be in need of **radical reconstruction**...The New Testament never suggests that the phrase ‘Son of God’ just means ‘God.’”⁵

Yet evangelicalism insists on that equation if one is to be considered a Christian! The degree of deception about who Jesus is may thus be far, far greater than is imagined by churchgoers, who all too uncritically accept what they are being told by their leaders. It does not seem to occur to them that diametrically opposite views are being expressed to other congregations! Where is the TRUTH? is the only question really needing our urgent attention. Paul warned that the failure “to love the truth” is the fatal element in loss of salvation (2 Thess. 2:10). We must never forget that the Savior Jesus, the Servant, saves us not only by his death and resurrection, but also by “his knowledge,” imparted to us as we listen to and obey his words (Isa. 53:11; Heb. 5:9). As John wrote too, Jesus came to **give us an understanding** so that we could come to know God (1 John 5:20).

John provided a yardstick to measure whether the Jesus you have been taught is the actual historical figure or a dangerously deceptive counterpart (1 John 4:1-6). **The spirit of the truth** as opposed to the spirit of error can be discerned as follows: “He who says that Jesus ‘came in the flesh’ speaks the truth and proclaims the real Jesus.” To come in the flesh does not mean “to come *into* the flesh” from a previous existence as God the Son. It means to originate and thus **to be** a full member of the human race, as genuine man. Did you know that both Calvin and Luther mistranslated John’s words here to make them conform to a non-biblical tradition about Incarnation and Trinity! Luther wrote “*into* the flesh” instead of “*in* the flesh.” The difference is huge, and the error in the Luther Bible was corrected in all later versions. Watch for the elephant at the crime scene!✧

Comments

“I am a 63-year-old woman. My faith journey has been long and complicated. Three years ago purely by accident I stumbled across a biblical unitarian site. It was here that I first heard of your book about the Trinity being Christianity’s self-inflicted wound. I found your website which has helped me so much. My journey into monotheism has been slow. At first, it really frightened me. I was afraid I was lost. I even put it down for a while, but I knew that my prayer to know the truth was being answered. My husband studies with me. We are both so excited about the Kingdom of God — the Gospel taught by our lord Jesus. I have continued to attend my church, but I am a fish out of water. It is not my desire to cause division or confusion. My husband and I intend to speak with our pastor, but based on comments made during sermons as well as comments made by teachers in the church, this won’t be received well. These are sincere people, but I am sure they will be praying for the salvation of our souls after this. I would love to find a study group in our area. This is a lonely journey, but so worth it.” — *Virginia*

“I was delighted to receive a copy of your translation of the Christian Greek scriptures and commenced immediately to devour the introduction. I wish to take this opportunity to say how timely this spiritual boon is, especially all the accompanying footnotes and references. This tool will be useful in defending the truth of God’s word both to the glory of the Father and His Son Jesus. I would like you to know that your preaching is reaching the hearts of many in my immediate family. Both my father and my two older brothers have ordered your Bible and are very interested. Especially my father, he too has read the entire introduction and has now come to understand that Christ Jesus had no pre-human existence. All this to tell you not to tire in your efforts, for your words are reaching an audience hungering and thirsting for truth. My prayers are with you and yours. Please convey my love to all the brothers associated with you.” — *Australia*

“I just finished reading your introduction to *The One God*... translation. As always, well done, common (really uncommon) sense, exciting and succinct. The read is a wonderful journey to the opening doors of the New Covenant writers’ minds, that after all these centuries continue to call us into the Kingdom and to have a walk worthy of our future inheritance. Thank you for your 60 years of faithfulness and undeterred determination to ‘set things in order.’” — *Louisiana*

“I am enjoying your translation so much. I’ve just been reading Revelation 12 and understanding it for the first time, though I have read it numerous times before. This is a translation that every Jehovah’s Witness should

⁵ *The Debate about Christ*, SCM Press, 1979, p. vii, 4.

read. I am sure many would enjoy it so much.” — *Scotland*

“The Sabbath is one of the most important commandments, because how can one possibly draw close to their creator without a period of reflection? How can one grow in character or learn from their mistakes without it? It is for this very purpose that we were given reason, so we might examine and reflect on God and His work. What I say here is contrary to my previous reading of the commandment which was ‘remember not to work Friday sunset to Saturday sunset.’ I now see that it cannot be reasonably or consciously justified why the 4th commandment *taken literally in the New Covenant* would be an essential command from God. I am sincerely sorry for being so adamant, and I think at times arrogant. You were right, but I just could not hear it at the time. I also should tell you that I purchased your translation of the New Testament. It is really great work that you have done. I wish you all the best for the future and hope we can keep in contact.” — *email*

“After years of the Catholic church, Catholic schools, eleven years in the US air force and then 10 years as a JW (never baptized — I asked too many questions!), I must say, I was at the ‘end of my rope.’ After leaving the JWs with my adult, baptized son, I reached out to the only true God to lead me to someone who understood or at least studied Hebrew and Greek languages to continue my quest for truth! I know you are too humble of a man to take compliments, so I will avoid them and get right to the point of publicly thanking my Heavenly Father I ‘stumbled’ upon your website!” — *New Jersey*

“I want to thank you from the bottom of my heart for your beautiful version of the New Testament with commentary.” — *Colorado*

“I have just read through the article on ‘Why I No Longer Believe in the Doctrine of the Trinity’ (Oct. 2014) and found it very encouraging. I have been brought up in a unitarian household and have always considered that God, Jesus and the holy spirit are all separate from each other. Throughout Scripture God has used the people of Israel as an example of His judgments and mercy. At the burning bush God gave instruction to Moses to remove his shoes because he was standing on holy ground. God has said that we must have reverence and humility towards Him. The doctrine of the Trinity removes that reverence. It has brought God down to the level of man and his standards.

“I found an article by Cher-El L. Hagensick titled ‘The Origin of the Trinity: From Paganism to Constantine.’ Her conclusion is this:

The evolution of the Trinity can be well seen in the words of the Apostles’ Creed, Nicene Creed, and the Athanasian Creed. As each of the creeds became more

wordy and convoluted, the simple, pure faith of the Apostolic church became lost in a haze. Even more interesting is the fact that as the creeds became more specific (and less scriptural) the adherence to them became stricter, and the penalty for disbelief harsher.

In summary, the common culture of the day was one filled with triune gods. From ancient Sumeria’s Anu, Enlil, and Enki, and Egypt’s dual trinities of Amun-Re-Ptah and Isis, Osiris, and Horus to Rome’s Jupiter, Juno, and Minerva, the whole concept of paganism revolved around the magic number of three. In Greek philosophy, also, we have seen how the number three was used as an unspecified trinity of intelligence, mind, and reason.

In stark contrast is the simple oneness of the Hebrew God. Jesus was a Jew from the tribe of Judah. He claimed to be sent to the ‘lost sheep of the house of Israel’ (Matt. 15:24). His apostles were all Jews. His god was the Jewish God. He called himself the Son of God and acknowledged his role as the Christ (Matt. 16:15-17) and the Messiah (John 4:25-26). His message was one of love, righteousness, and salvation, and he despised the religious dogma of tradition. What a contrast from the proceedings of the Council of Nicea and the murders that followed! He gave the good news of his coming kingdom to the poor and meek, the lowly of this world. He did not require dogmatic creeds that had to be believed to the letter, but rather said, ‘Follow me’ (Matt. 9:9).

There can be no doubt: Jesus was a stranger to all sides of the political proceedings at Nicea. He never claimed to be God, but was content to be God’s Son. His creed was not of words that must be followed to the letter, but rather of spirit: ‘Blessed are the pure in heart, for they shall see God’ (Matt. 5:8). He did not require wealthy and learned bishops to mingle philosophy and pagan polytheism with his simple truth, but blessed the ‘poor’ and the ‘meek.’ No, it was not from Jesus that the dogma of the Trinity came.

Is this positive proof that the Trinity owes its origins to paganism and philosophy? The evidence of history leaves little doubt. The concept of the Trinity finds its roots in pagan theology and Greek philosophy; it is a stranger to the Jewish Jesus and the Hebrew people from which he sprang.

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