

Focus on the Kingdom

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The Prologue to John's Gospel

by Ray Faircloth

The following article goes in some depth into John's prologue. We think you will find it helpful in your explanation of what John really intended when he spoke of the word, not the "Word," as if the Word meant the Son in John 1:1. The Son is what the word became (v. 14), not one to one equivalent to the word. The Son came into existence when the word was made flesh. This will harmonize John beautifully with Matthew's and Luke's view of how the Son began to exist.

In recent decades a significant number of theologians have demonstrated that John 1:1 speaks of only one Person, namely the Father, and that "the Word" is not another Person, not Jesus Christ; but is, in fact, God's word that brought forth the Genesis creation as in Psalm 33:6: "By the **word** of Yahweh the heavens were made." The parallel between Genesis 1 and John 1 is obvious. God spoke the creation into existence by His word. The new creation was initiated in Jesus, the Son of God.

The Hebrew term for "word," *davar*, the Aramaic term *memra* and the Greek *logos* mean more than simply "word." They speak of God's self-revelation, His self-expression. The many lexicons show *logos* to mean: utterance, command, decree, plan, expression of mind, creative thought, purpose, promise, message, wisdom, or reason. "Word" is an inadequate translation of *logos* because *logos* encompasses "thought," "speech," and "action." So the phrases "**God's creative thoughts expressed into activity,**" "**God's expressed/decreed purpose or plan,**" "**God's purposeful command**" or similar phrases more adequately reflect the meaning of *logos*. So John, in typical *Jewish fashion*, spoke of God's **Grand Design** — His purpose and His mind, His immortality program.

A great help to our understanding is found in the prologue of John's *first letter* which provides a partial commentary on the prologue of his Gospel. From 1 John 1:1-3 we learn that "the word" is God's decreed purpose or *promise to give to humans eternal life* or "life of the coming age." So the **impersonal** promise, declared purpose or planned expressive activity is "**what** was from the beginning, **what** we have heard, **what** we have seen...*concerning* the word of life...and the life was manifested," becoming "visible" so that the disciples could see and touch it, that is when "the decreed purpose to bring about life of the coming age, became flesh." This

is parallel to God's self-expressed actions which brought about the original creation.

John in his first letter says: "the Life of the Age to Come was with God" (1 John 1:2). With that explanation he tells us that it was the promise of life which was with God in the beginning, not yet the Son of God. The Son began to exist only when he was begotten in Mary.

The prologue shows **no conversations between God and "the word."** After Jesus was born John recorded lots of communication between God and Jesus. This further demonstrates that "the word," though personal, as coming from God, is not a separate Person from God until Jesus is born.

Our understanding of the prologue is further helped when we examine its internal details. These give us clues as to how to understand its various parts. For instance John's reference to "those who were born of God" (1:12, 13) shows that it is God's declared purpose to make a New Creation, as the rest of the NT also says. And verse 18 shows that "No one has seen [got to know] God" and therefore "God's salvation plan" is sent in the form of a man (v. 14) to "explain," reveal or declare Him (v. 18). According to verse 17 such revealing was only partially accomplished by the Law, but grace and truth and a fuller knowledge of God were realized through Jesus Christ.

Interestingly the prologue shows striking parallels with Proverbs 8:22-30 where Wisdom is personified, but never hypostatized, i.e. never a real person. There is also a certain similarity between John 1:1 and the introduction to the letter to the Hebrews.

The New American Bible displays the poetry and prose layout which makes up the prologue of John. A slightly different poetic form of the prologue is set out by Catholic theologian Raymond Brown as:

1st strophe, verses 1 and 2 3rd strophe verses 10 to 12b
2nd strophe, verses 3 to 5 4th strophe verses 14, 16

Because this poetic factor was not recognized in earlier times, the prologue was taken literally. This has resulted in *hypostatization of the word in verses 1-5* (that is, turning the word into a Person separate from God). This led to a misunderstanding of John's intent. When a literary piece is poetic in form it more naturally contains metaphorical language, which in this case is the figurative language of **personification**.

Roger Haight, Jesuit scholar, explains: "Hypostatization means making an idea or a concept into a real thing...the symbols Wisdom, Word, and Spirit, which are found in the Jewish scriptures and refer to God,

are not hypostatizations but personifications...A major development occurred when a **personification** became transformed into hypostatization.”¹

That major development led to a twisting of John’s intention and creating a Second Person in the Godhead. Monotheism was undermined. God was made into two Persons and that was a disaster.

Personification in John’s prologue is appropriate because John’s sources were Hebrew/Aramaic literature where personification was freely used. For instance, the Hebrew term *dabar* translated “word” is often personified in the Hebrew Scriptures (“With speed his word runs,” Ps. 147:15). “Word” is treated as if it were a person, but it is not literally a person.

So a personified *logos* was not a new idea to John or his readers. The fact that *logos* is grammatically masculine in gender in Greek does not mean that it is sexually masculine when translated into English. So, for example, in French a table is feminine but not “she” in English! A word is an “it.” “All things were made through it” (the word, v. 3).

The Greek word *logos* appears in the LXX (the Greek version of the OT) some 1500 times. It never describes a literal person. It also appears over 300 times in the Christian Scriptures and is only capitalized (wrongly) as a person in John 1. The capital is an editorial addition of translators. (“Word” is legitimately capitalized in Rev. 19:13, where the returning Jesus, by then a Person, is the Word.) As Dr. Colin Brown of Fuller Seminary comments: “To read John 1:1 as if it means ‘In the beginning was **the Son**’ is patently wrong.”

Professor of Theology at Heidelberg H.H. Wendt says: “We should not argue from Philo’s meaning of ‘word’ as a...**pre-existing personality**.” In other words we do not have to follow the Jewish philosopher Philo and think of the word as a distinct personality.

Professor of Divinity James Dunn says, “In the earlier stages of the poem [John 1] we are still dealing with Wisdom...not as a *personal being*, but as the wise utterance of God **personified**.”

And again Roger Haight says: “One thing is certain, the Prologue of John does not represent direct descriptive knowledge of a divine *entity or being* called Word, who descended and became a human being. To read a **metaphor** as literal speech is misinterpretation.”

Our understanding was shared by some of the early church fathers. Origen’s commentary on John says: “*logos* — only in the sense of the utterance of the Father which came to expression in a Son when Jesus was conceived.” Tertullian (155-230) translates *logos* as “speech” and states: “It is the simple use of our people to say [of John 1] that the word of revelation was with

God.” This view survived in Spain and southern Gaul until at least the 7th century.

Regarding translations prior to the 1611 KJV, seven major translations used a lower-case “w” for word and there are numerous translations since 1611 that reflect the fact that there is no second Person spoken about in John 1:1 (e.g. Concordant, Diaglott, the 1985 translation by the Jewish historian Hugh J. Schonfield and the 1993 translation by Robert W. Funk).

Modern English examples are:

“At the beginning God expressed Himself. **That personal expression**, that word, was with God and was God” (J.B. Philips).

“In the beginning was the purpose, **the purpose in the mind of God**, the purpose which was God’s own being...this purpose took human form in Jesus” (G.B. Caird, *New Testament Theology*).

“In the beginning there was **the divine word and wisdom**. The divine word and wisdom were there with God. **It** was there with God from the beginning. Everything came to be by means of it” (Robert Funk).

From the above it seems that an appropriate rendering of verse 1a could be: “**In the beginning was the decreed purpose and the purpose was with God.**”

Noteworthy is the fact that the poem is arranged in what is called “staircase parallelism” form, in which the last word of one phrase becomes the first word of the next finally rising to the climax.

Below are further translation comments on verse 1.

Verse 1b: “and the decreed purpose was characteristic of God”

Grammatically this can be translated “**the word was god**” or “**the word was godlike**” (of the very nature and character of God or “divine”). “Lack of a definite article signifies *predication rather than identification*” (NAB notes). This means that the word had the *quality* of God. It was not identical to God.

Philip Harner’s article entitled “Qualitative Anarthrous Predicate Nouns” states that “anarthrous predicate nouns preceding the verb [of which the second occurrence of *theos* in John 1:1 is an example] may function primarily to express **the nature or character of the subject**...The **qualitative force** of the predicate is so prominent that the noun cannot be regarded as definite.” Dana and Manty’s *Manual Grammar of the Greek New Testament* makes the same point, as does the UBS Handbook Series which says: “Since ‘God’ does not have the article preceding it, ‘God’ is clearly the predicate and ‘the Word’ is the subject. This means that ‘God’ here is the equivalent of an adjective, and this justifies the rendering ‘the Word was the same as God.’” The following translations reflect this grammatical point:

“The Word was with God and shared his nature” (The Translator’s Translation).

¹ *Jesus: Symbol of God*, p. 257.

“And what God was, the Word was” (Revised English Bible).

“The nature of the Word was the same as the nature of God” (Barclay).

“The Word was divine” (Moffatt, also Smith and Goodspeed).

There is no justification for capitalizing “word” in the phrase “the Word was God” as if “word” meant a second *person*. A one-to-one identity with God is incorrect because it destroys the unitary monotheism (God is one Person) of the Scriptures. “For us there is but one God, the Father” (1 Cor. 8:6. Also John 17:1, 3 and I Tim. 2:5).

Also, the translation “a god” (the Jehovah’s Witness translation) is grammatically incorrect and fails to bring out the qualitative aspect of the phrase. “Such a rendering is a frightful mistranslation” (Bruce Metzger). It is also incorrect theologically because Deuteronomy 32:39 says: “there are no gods together with me.” If John had wanted to say “divine” he could have used the Greek word *theios*. Yet “divine” does express the meaning, though rather weakly.

John’s Intent

John writes his prologue to show that God has had a purpose from the beginning. John then shows the forward movement of this purpose until the climax when the purpose is enfleshed (John 1:14). The purpose became the man Jesus.

“The prologue intrinsically has a dynamic movement and determines its own focal point. It begins universally and ends in a concrete way” (Kuschel).

This forward movement seems to push toward verse 14 which is the climactic point of the prologue. So “the word” is portrayed at the beginning with only slight personification coming into play.

The personification strengthens through verses 10-12 as the poem drives toward the appearance of the actual person of Jesus in verse 14. It also steadily narrows its focus from universality: “In the beginning” (v. 1, 2, 3a) narrowing to “the human race...that did not know him” (v. 3b-5, 10), further narrowing to “his own people who did not accept him” (v. 11), narrowing again to “those who did accept him” (v. 12, 13). Finally the focus narrows onto “the word became flesh” (v. 14a). Verses 14b, 16 and 17 show the superiority of the final stage of God’s plan spoken into existence in the uniquely begotten Son. This stage is superior to the previous stage through Moses (the Torah). Verse 18 shows that only through this unique Son is God fully revealed. With this background we can now demonstrate our understanding of the prologue to the Gospel of John.

The Impersonal Word Is Personified

Verses 1 and 2: 1st Strophe of the Poem

“In the beginning was the decreed purpose, and the purpose was with God, and the purpose was characteristic of God. This was in the beginning with God.”

“In the beginning” refers not directly to the Genesis creation, but to a time prior to that creation when God formed a purpose to produce humans as potential candidates for immortality. “In the beginning” also has overtones of salvation in the New Creation (v. 13).

The phrase “**was with God**” means it (the word) originates with Him as in Job 27:11: “That [knowledge] which is **with** the Almighty I shall not hide.”

Verses 3-5: 2nd Strophe

“All things [the universe] came to be through **it**, and without **it** nothing came to be. What has come to be in **it** was **life** [of the coming age, immortality] and **the life** was the light **of men**. The light [truth of God’s purpose] shines in the darkness [lies from Satan beginning in Eden], and the darkness did not overpower it [Gen 3:15 and onward].”

Prior to the 1611 KJV² and also in some modern translations *dia autou* in verses 3, 4 is translated “through *it*,” not “through *him*.” The use of the pronoun **it** for “the word” is appropriate because the poem moves forward with an ever strengthening personification. Finally the word becomes the person Jesus. In the 1st and 2nd strophes “the non-personal word” is a close synonym of “the light” which also takes the neuter pronoun *it*.

Note: Raymond Brown comments, “The Greek word *zoe* (life) never means natural life in John’s writings” and “The prologue is speaking of eternal life.” That is “life in the age to come,” life in the future Kingdom which can be tasted now through the spirit.

The First Prose Section

It may be that verses 6-9, 12c, 13 and 15, 17 and 18 are the original prose into which an already structured poem was inserted.

Verse 6: “There came a man sent from God whose name was John”

Verse 8: “He was not the Light, but he came to testify about the Light”

Verse 9: “There was the true light [God’s self-revelation through Jesus] which is enlightening *every man coming into the world*” (a common phrase among Jews according to the *Word Biblical Commentary*).

The Personification of the Word Becomes Stronger

3rd Strophe

Verse 10: “**He** [the word, God’s purpose personified] was in the world [of mankind, *kosmos*], and the world

²An exception is Wycliffe’s translation, which was from the Latin and not the Greek.

came to be through **him**, but the world did not know **him**.”

Verse 11: “He [God’s purpose personified, but the enfleshed ‘purpose’ is now coming into view] came [through the Law] to what was his own [Israel], but his own people did not accept him.”

The poem moves to another stage toward this climax by further strengthening the personification with the revelation that God’s purpose in the form of the Torah was previously rejected by Israel. However, because of his introduction of “the true light” in verse 9 it may well be John’s intention to show that Jesus, as God’s enfleshed purpose, came to Israel and was not accepted. John is thereby preparing us for the climactic announcement in verse 14.

Verse 12 a, b: “But to those [enlightened men], who did accept him [by keeping the Torah which was their tutor leading to Messiah] he [God’s purpose personified] gave power [so that they would accept the Messiah] to become children of God.”

The Second Prose Section

Verse 12c: “to those who believe in his name” (meaning to believe in him, the enfleshed “purpose”)

Verse 13: “who were born not by natural generation nor by human choice nor by a man’s decision but of God” (“born from above,” NAB).

“It is only with verse 14 that we can speak of the *personal* Logos. Prior to verse 14 we are in the same realm as pre-Christian talk of Wisdom and Logos...dealing with personifications rather than persons, personified actions of God rather than an individual divine being as such.”³

Kuschel agrees: “Only from verse 10 on may one speak of the Logos *ensarkos* [i.e. the human being, Jesus]. But it is verse 14 which first makes unmistakably clear in ‘Christian’ terms that ‘the word became flesh’ and thus identifies the Logos *asarkos* with a *specific person*.”

The Climactic Statement about the Enfleshed Word 4th and Final Strophe

Verse 14: “And God’s decreed purpose became mortal man and tabernacled [as the new mode of God’s presence among His people] among us, and we saw his [God’s purpose now enfleshed] glory, glory as of an only-begotten from a father, full of grace and truth.”

Verse 16: “From his fullness we have all received, grace [verse 17 shows this to be truth through Jesus leading to the New Covenant] **in place of** grace [the Torah which fades after it is fulfilled]” (or NIV has “one blessing after another” or NJB has “one gift replacing another”).

The Final Prose Section

Verse 17, 18: “because while **the law** was given through Moses, grace and **truth** came through Jesus Christ. No one has ever seen [revealed] God. The unique Son, who is close to the Father’s heart [NJB and NRSV] has explained Him.”

In Summary

Perhaps the most helpful points are the understanding that the term “word” is inadequate to express the meaning of *logos* and that the larger part of the prologue is poetry which indicates a strong likelihood of metaphorical meaning for “word,” as in the parallel passage, Proverbs 8 (“wisdom”). Also, as Kuschel says, “The prologue intrinsically has a dynamic movement and determines its own focal point. It begins universally and ends in a concrete way.” This really makes it difficult to jump back to any earlier stage of the prologue. Such forward movement in the poem strongly indicates that *Jesus is what the word became only from verse 14* and, in our opinion, no earlier than verse 11 — making it impossible for there to have been a pre-existent Person in John 1:1. A second Person who is actually God would contradict the whole of the rest of Scripture and contradict Jesus in John 17:3 “You, Father, are *the only one who is truly God*.”

Distinguished professor of NT T.W. Manson makes our point beautifully: “I very much doubt whether John thought of the *Logos* as a personality. The only personality on the scene is Jesus the son of Joseph from Nazareth. That personality embodies the *Logos* so completely that Jesus becomes a complete revelation of God. But in what sense are we using the word ‘embodies’?...For John every word of Jesus is a word of the Lord.”⁴

Recommended reading:

Christology in the Making, James D.G. Dunn

Born Before All Time, Karl-Josef Kuschel

Jesus Symbol of God, Roger Haight

Translation of John Chapter 4

Now when Jesus learned that the Pharisees had heard that Jesus was making and baptizing more disciples than John (although Jesus himself was not actually doing the baptisms, but his disciples were), he left Judea and went back to Galilee. But he had to go through Samaria. So he came to a town in Samaria called Sychar, near the plot of ground Jacob had given to his son Joseph. Jacob’s well was there, and Jesus, tired from the journey, sat down by the well. It was about noon. A Samaritan woman came to draw water and Jesus said to her, “Give me a drink.” His disciples had gone into the town to buy food. The Samaritan woman said to him, “How can you, a Jew, ask

³ James Dunn, *Christology in the Making*, p. 243.

⁴ *On Paul and John*, p. 156.

me, a Samaritan woman, for a drink?" (For Jews have no dealings with Samaritans.)

Jesus answered her, "If you knew the gift of God and who it is that asks you for a drink, you would have asked him and he would have given you living water." The woman said to him, "Sir, you do not even have a bucket and the cistern is deep; where then can you get this living water? Are you a greater man than our father Jacob, who gave us this well and drank from it himself with his sons and his cattle?" Jesus replied, "Everyone who drinks this water will be thirsty again. But whoever drinks the water I will give will never thirst⁵: the water I will give him will become in him a spring of water welling up to the life of the age to come." The woman said to him, "Sir, give me this water so that I won't get thirsty and have to keep coming here to draw water."

"Go and get your husband," Jesus told her. The woman answered, "I have no husband." Jesus said to her, "The fact is, you have had five husbands, and the man you are now living with is not your husband. What you have just said is true." The woman said to him, "Sir, I see that you are a prophet. Our ancestors worshiped on this mountain, but you say that the place where people must worship is in Jerusalem." Jesus said, "Believe me, woman, the hour is coming when you will worship the Father neither on this mountain nor in Jerusalem. You people worship what you do not understand; we worship what we understand, because salvation comes from the Jews. Yet a time is coming, and has now come, when the true worshippers will worship the Father in spirit and truth, for the Father is looking for such people to worship Him. God communicates through spirit, and those who worship him must worship in spirit and truth."⁶

The woman said, "I know that the Messiah (called Christ) is coming. When *he* comes, he will tell us everything." Jesus replied "I am⁷ [he, the Messiah], the one speaking to you." At this point his disciples returned and were surprised to find him speaking to a woman, but none of them asked, What do you want from her? Or, What are you talking to her about? The woman left her water jar and went into the town and said to the men, "Come and meet a man who told me everything I ever did! Could this be the Messiah?"

They left the city and were on their way to him. Meanwhile the disciples were urging him, "Rabbi, eat something." But he said, "I have food to eat that you do

⁵Possibly, "not thirst even during the coming age."

⁶John appropriately calls the holy spirit, the "spirit of the truth." Hence the enormous importance of truth.

⁷Note that Jesus said "I am." The meaning of the words "I am" is clearly "I am the Messiah." "I am the one in question." The same "I am" statements of Jesus found later in the Gospel do not mean "I am God," but "I am the Messiah," as this first example shows.

not know about." So the disciples said to one another, "Could someone have brought him something to eat?" "My food," Jesus said, "is to do the will of Him who sent me and to complete His work. Do you not have a saying: Four months and then the harvest? Well, I tell you, look around you, look at the fields; they are white, ready for harvest! Already the reaper is being paid his wage; already he is bringing in fruit for the life of the age to come, so that sower and reaper can rejoice together. You know the saying, 'One sows and another reaps.'⁸ I sent you to reap a harvest you have not labored for. Others have labored for it; and you have shared the rewards of their labor." And many of the Samaritans of that city believed in him because of the words of the woman who testified, "He told me everything I ever did." When the Samaritans came to him, they invited him to stay with them; and he stayed there two days. Many more believed because of his word [i.e., Gospel]. and they said to the woman, "We no longer believe because of *your* word; for we have heard for ourselves, and we are convinced that this is truly the Savior of the world."

When the two days were over Jesus left for Galilee. For Jesus himself testified that a prophet has no honor in his own country. So when he came to Galilee, the Galileans welcomed him, having seen all the things that he did in Jerusalem at the feast; for they themselves also went to the feast.

Once more Jesus visited Cana in Galilee, where he had turned the water into wine. And there was a certain royal official whose son lay sick at Capernaum. When he heard that Jesus had arrived in Galilee from Judea, he went to him and asked him to come down and heal his son, who was close to death. Jesus said to him, "Unless you people see signs and wonders, you will not believe." The royal official said, "Sir, come down before my child dies." Jesus said to him, "You may go; your son will live." The man believed what Jesus said to him and departed. While he was on his way home, his slaves met him and told him that his boy was going to live. He asked them when he began to recover. They told him, "The fever left him yesterday, about one in the afternoon." Then the father realized that this was the exact moment at which Jesus had said to him, "Your son is going to live." So he and all his household believed.

This was the second miraculous sign that Jesus performed, on his return from Judea to Galilee. ✧

⁸Note the obvious connection to the parable of the sower, where the seed is the saving Gospel of the Kingdom (Matt. 13:19).

They Never Told Me This in Church!

Book Reviews (available at 800 347 4261)

Many books confirm and restate what we believe. Some deepen and develop our understanding further. Occasionally a book may seriously confront and challenge. But rarely will a book revolutionize our beliefs, re-orientate our Biblical interpretation and turn our theological world upside down. Greg Deuble has written such a book — the most disturbing I've ever read!

How can the author take divine inspiration of the Scriptures seriously, apply sound hermeneutic, draw upon wide Biblical scholarship, present clear and compelling arguments, and yet arrive at totally different conclusions to the ones currently taught in conservative evangelical churches? He does so by calling us to a paradigm shift away from the Greek philosophical mindset that has influenced Christian thinking throughout the centuries, to the Hebrew cultural worldview of the Bible.

This book presents a strong Biblical case for rethinking such traditional doctrines as the Deity of Christ, the Trinity, the immortality of the soul, the Gospel and the Kingdom of God. But it's not just iconoclastic. The author demonstrates that a rethink of all these issues actually increases the clarity of the Scriptures and enriches Christian life and faith. Here is nourishment for the heart as well as illumination for the mind from one who has a deep passion for God, and reverence for His word and will and ways.

If my response is indicative, I expect that even those who don't "enjoy" this book will find it difficult to dismiss. Highly recommended. ✧

Greg Deuble has written a bracing and fresh appeal to open-minded Bible students in his new book with the above title. From a restorationist theological standpoint and with a straightforward appeal to Biblical exegesis, he has tackled some of the thorniest areas where orthodox and evangelical Christian theology has departed from a historical reading of both the Hebrew Scriptures and the New Testament. Writing for the non-specialist, yet liberally footnoting his work with top Biblical scholars, this Aussie, a former Church of Christ minister turned paramedic, ably launches with clarity and humor into his thesis.

Content. This he introduces by reference to the fascination with Dan Brown's provocative and best-selling novel *The Da Vinci Code* in which the official Christian account of Jesus fostered by the church is really "another" story used to cover up what actually happened. Deuble in his turn asks who really was Jesus of Nazareth? And what did he actually have to say? The chapters follow a logical progression under the rubric that

Christianity has forgotten its roots and adopted "another" storyline since the 1st century CE.

"Another cover-up" (ch. 1) describes the free-wheeling diversity of beliefs about Jesus during the first three centuries of Christianity as has been recognized by important recent scholarship, especially in light of the discovery of the Gnostic Nag Hammadi manuscripts in 1945. **With the declining Jewish influence on Christianity and a growth of certain impulses of Hellenistic acculturation and Roman imperial favor, the traditional doctrine of the Deity of Christ at the council of Nicea (325 CE) and an incipient doctrine of the Trinity in Constantinople (381 CE) was ossified by the council of Chalcedon (451 CE).** All these developments were foreign to the New Testament. In "Another world" (ch. 2, we are introduced to the problem and necessity of understanding the culture, language, and idiom of the ancient Near East in order to grasp the meaning of Scripture, e.g., in understanding the way "god" is used in Biblical Hebrew and Greek, and the Hebrew notion of agency, and so on. "Another God," "Another Lord," and "Another Jesus" (ch. 3-5) unpeel the layers of misconceived tradition under Greek neo-platonic influence to argue for the Hebrew and Biblical view that God is one Being, i.e., one Person, who is the only true God. In the NT, the one God of heaven is the Father of Jesus. Jesus is referred to as God's anointed king, the second Adam, the only-begotten Son, a human being uniquely conceived and exalted to Lordship as Messiah or Christ, whose authority is derived from God his Father.

In "Another God" (ch. 3), the arguments for a Trinity or any plurality in God are carefully dismantled — fallacies such as appealing to a "compound unity" for the Hebrew word "one" (*echad*), misunderstanding the Hebrew usage of occasional plural nouns and pronouns about God, or an appeal to divine "mystery" as an "argument." The case for the unity of God is further built by reference to Jesus' own appeal to the *shema Israel* (Deut. 6:4), the usage of "worship" in the testimony of the NT, as well as the connection between belief about God and the ethical consequences through history. "Another Lord" (ch. 4) further points out the ubiquitous distinction in Hebrew between Lord as applied to God (*Adonai*) and as applied to others (*adoni*), especially in the Messianic Psalm 110 which is so central to the NT argument about Jesus as Messiah. It is in this Messianic sense that Lord is applied to Jesus as Messiah as a genuine human being, not because he is "God the Son" or even less a "God-man." As Deuble knows, such a realization will require jettisoning the encrustations on Christian theology of Hellenistic Platonic thought, including notions of personal pre-existence before his birth, or of a dual God-nature and a human nature (ch. 5). In "Another Spirit" (ch. 6), we find that in Hebrew

thought just as God's word is not another "person" but God's self-expression in nature and in prophecy, so the Holy Spirit is not "another" besides God, but rather God's presence and power in the world, working on human hearts, expressed in the delegated authority of Jesus Christ, in the fellowship of the church, and equivalent to God's truth. Deuble further points out that just as the Biblical concept of God is unitary, so also humans (and animals) *are* living souls or "breathing beings," not immortal spirits inhabiting temporary bodies ("Another Hope," ch. 7). The hope of Scripture is resurrection at the last day when Messiah returns to set up God's kingdom upon earth, not a disembodied spirit flying at death to the realms of bliss. In his final full chapter Deuble finds that Christianity has fallen for "Another Gospel" (ch. 8) in place of the "gospel of the kingdom" which Jesus as Messiah-designate heralded, i.e., that God will ultimately set up a kingdom when peace and justice will finally be established on earth, as foretold by the prophets.

Comment. Deuble has daringly and quite successfully attempted much in one book — a recovery of Jesus as Messiah, rather than the neo-platonic figure of the creeds, and also the recovery of the gospel about God's messianic kingdom. He has done so very comprehensively. Since so much has been attempted, one is tempted to wish for more, perhaps a chapter entitled "Another Ethic" about how Christians have not only abandoned the real Jesus, the real "kingdom" gospel, but also the real ethics of Jesus. If Christians should recover and hold that God's kingdom will ultimately bring real, tangible peace and justice to earth, can they avoid becoming advocates and champions of that peace and justice now? Of course, Greg Deuble's book deserves to be perpetuated in future editions, and some such discussion could be added.

We encourage readers to post their own customer reviews of Greg Deuble's book and the other books published by the Restoration Fellowship (see list on back page) at Amazon.com

Passion for the Truth

by Dave Hixon

My wife and I took a journey down to Georgia to attend the 2006 Theological Conference. I highly recommend it. There were like believers from all over the world. It was truly an uplifting and enjoyable time.

Of all the speakers we heard over the course of three days, one stuck with me more than the others. His name was Greg Deuble. He was from "Down Under" in Australia. His passion and desire for the truth of God was evident to say the very least. I know many who attended really enjoyed his accent but the words he was speaking were really amazing. He told how he came to the knowledge of the truth with his life story. He gave a

wonderful presentation. Then, he said something I believe we all need to hear. He said, "You people in the church of God of the Abrahamic Faith are sitting on a gold mine." That statement really stuck with me — not so much the gold mine, but the sitting part. WE ARE SITTING! Instead of trying to hide what we believe we need to be STANDING UP AND SHOUTING IT!

We ran into people from all over the world — England, Australia, Africa as well as all over the United States. Many did not have a church within hundreds or perhaps even thousands of miles of them. These people all longed for what we have right here in our laps, a place to fellowship with like-minded believers. I think too often we forget just how blessed we are.

When I look today at some of our churches right here in the Abrahamic Faith, it reminds me of the second letter that Paul sent to the church in Thessalonica. 2 Thessalonians 2:13-15: "But we ought always to thank God for you, brothers loved by the Lord, because from the beginning God chose you to be saved through the sanctifying work of the Spirit and through belief in the truth. He called you to this through our gospel, that you might share in the glory of our Lord Jesus Christ. So then, brothers, *stand* firm and hold to the teachings we passed on to you, whether by word of mouth or by letter." What does Paul command us to do here? He commands us to STAND FIRM!

We have been given something of more value than any silver or gold. We have been given the knowledge of salvation from God Himself. Don't you think it's time to stop "sitting on a gold mine" and start standing firm? As the time grows nearer for the return of our Lord and Savior, I pray that we will stop being ashamed of the truth and stand firm for Jesus Christ. ✧

Comments

"I've recently discovered your enlightened teachings. I've often wondered why no preachers talked much about the Kingdom of God or its principles since I started to study the Scriptures on my own in 1995. Now I know from your teachings and others how and why the Kingdom is hidden. What a revelation! I am now teaching the Kingdom in my small Bible class at home. I think sometimes it is easier for a person to know nothing about the popular 'Christian' doctrine and to start with a blank slate than to erase false doctrine previously learned, and start over with a new perspective." — *California*

"We are so appreciative of your new book *The Amazing Aims and Claims of Jesus*. We love the way you told the story — the most meaningful of all stories — in such a simple, easy-to-follow manner." — *Colorado*

16th Theological Conference

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