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Psalm 110:1 — The Most Catastrophic Mistranslation in many Bible Versions, and the Key to Understanding God and Jesus

Lindeed it would be amazing not to see this point clearly. There is complete agreement that **Psalm 110:1** is "the most important Old Testament proof passage for the development of Christology [who is Jesus], and it acquired a quite decisive role...Psalm 110:1 should also be taken into account as the biblical basis for the earliest Christian and Pauline doctrine of the heavenly lord and for its origin and development" (Martin Hengel, *Son of God*, p. 80).

Psalm 110:1 is quoted or alluded to in the NT far, far more than any other verse from the OT. Psalm 110:1 was a key teaching tool of the Apostles and of all NT Scripture. So should it be for us today. It should be taken as the solution to all the present squabbles and quarrels about the identity of God and of Jesus. Psalm 110:1 reads, "The LORD [YHVH, *Kurios*] speaks in an oracle to my [David's] lord: 'Sit at my right hand until I make your enemies your footstool."

Why is this verse so dramatically important for our understanding? Because it names the two major players in the divine drama, God's plan, and it tells us that the Messiah Jesus, the Son of God, is finally to have all his enemies subjected to him. Until that time comes, the Messiah is to sit at the right hand (the key position) of the Father who is YHVH. The Son of God is God's "right-hand man" (Ps. 80:17). The Son of God is also the "associate" of the one God (Zech 13:7). This same person is the Son of Man, the Human Being, whom Stephen saw at the right hand of God (Acts 7:56). He is "the righteous one" predicted by the OT (Acts 7:52).

The first vital fact to be stated and then relayed to all whom we teach is that the second lord of Psalm 110:1 is not a second YHVH, which would make *two* YHVHs, and shatter the whole structure of biblical theology. The second lord is in the Hebrew *adoni* ("adonee"), which occurs 195 times in the Hebrew Bible and is never once the title of Deity!

Everyone reading the Hebrew knew that *adoni* ("my lord," not "my Lord") announced the staggering fact that a human person was to be exalted to be the right-hand MAN, next to the One God, YHVH. Psalm 80:17, as we saw, described the Messiah as exactly this "man of God's

right hand." The staggering biblical fact is that God has promoted to the second position in the universe a sinless *human being*!

The teaching of Psalm 110:1 informs the entire theological structure of the NT and leads Paul to instruct us in the most fundamental of all truths: "There is one God and one mediator between God and man, who is the man Messiah Jesus" (1 Tim. 2:5). This restates exactly the creed announced in Psalm 110:1. How very far all this is from the brain-breakingly complex creeds devised by post-biblical church fathers, based on an alien Greek philosophy, and foisted on the whole church, on pain of excommunication and sometimes death!

The catastrophic mistranslation found in most versions of Scripture is the placing of a capital letter on the second lord! Once that second lord is read as Lord (as opposed to lord) the reader is misled into thinking that there is a second person who is Lord GOD at the right hand of the one God. Lord, with capital, is the standard translation of the Hebrew *Adonai*, Lord God. The false capital deceives the reader immediately into believing in the existence of *two* who are equally GOD. The first and great commandment is thus violated.

When the second lord is properly translated as lord, not Lord, the reader knows that this second lord is a **human being**, *adoni*, "my lord." *Adoni* is the regular title for a superior who is *not* God. In further *Focus on the Kingdom* magazines we need to go through all of the occurrences of *adoni*, my lord, to instill once and for all the easy fact that the Messiah is a human being, the Son of Man, and not another who is GOD!

New Translation of the New Testament

We offer you here the first chapter of John in my forthcoming *One God, One Messiah, One Gospel of the Kingdom Translation of the NT.* The footnotes are deliberately rather extensive on certain crucial passages, such as John 1 and Colossians 1 and Philippians 2. Our purpose is to help readers to affirm belief in One God, the Father and in Jesus as the human Messiah. This after all is the clear creed of Jesus in Mark 12:29 and John 17:3, and we ought to define God as Jesus did. The Trinity represents a serious departure from the original faith of Jesus and the Apostles. This is well known to lots of scholars. But the public is largely unaware of their writing. Jesus was a Jew, and one of the

most obvious and easy facts about his teaching is that he defined the true God in the same way as his contemporary Jews. Mark 12:29 established this plain fact beyond all argument, as does John 17:3.

My version of John 1: "In the beginning there was God's grand design, the declaration of His intention and

¹John provided his own commentary on these opening words of his Gospel, in 1 John 1:1-2. He explains there that "what [not 'he who'] was from the beginning was the word, promise of eternal life," and that "life was with [pros as in John 1:1] the Father." The word is thus understood by John in the Gospel not as the SON, who was not yet born, not yet in existence, but the promise of the Life of the Age to come, the essence of the Christian Gospel of the Kingdom - the promise of immortality for man if he obeys God and Jesus (Heb. 5:9; John 3:36; Rom. 1:5; 16:26, etc.). This Life in the Age to Come is said to be pros ton patera, "with the Father" (1 John 1:2, the same preposition as in pros ton theon, "with God," Jn. 1:1 and in Rom. 8:31: "concerning," "about these things"). It (not He) was manifested in Jesus the Son when Jesus began to exist, miraculously begotten in Mary (Luke 1:35). 1 John 5:18 (not KJV) carefully describes the Son as the "the one who was brought into existence, begotten." (The NT says nothing at all about an "eternal generation" of the Son.) John himself in I John 5:18 speaks of a beginning in time for the Son, exactly as does Matt. 1:20, where the Son was "the one begotten, brought into existence, in her [Mary]." There was no Son of God prior to the beginning of the life, the procreation of the Son by miracle in Mary. Luke 1:35 declares explicitly that "Son of God" is the title for Jesus "precisely because of" (dio kai) his origin in Mary by biological miracle. God's word is in its Jewish background God's mighty command, reminding us of the first creation in Genesis, where God spoke things into existence. Here, like Matthew (1:1; 1:18, 20), John is describing the new Creation, which is the procreation of the unique Son of God, Jesus (from John 1:14). There is no "God the Son" in Scripture. Dr. Caird at Oxford makes our point about "word" succinctly: "How is John 1:1 to be translated? The solution is that logos for John primarily means 'purpose.' 'In the beginning was the purpose, the purpose in the mind of God, the purpose which was God's own being.' It is surely a conceivable thought that God is wholly identified with His purpose of love and that this purpose took human form in Jesus of Nazareth" (G.B. Caird, New Testament Theology, p. 332). "The Apostles did not identify Jesus with Yahweh. There were passages which made this impossible, for example Ps. 110:1" (Charles Bigg, DD, Regius Prof. of Ecclesiastical History, University of Oxford, in International Critical Commentary on I Peter, 1910, pp. 99, 127). He writes also: "It would be rash to conclude that St. Peter identified Jehovah with Christ" (citing Prof. Hort, Dissertations).

The Free Bible Online says of logos: "It is the divine mind, the expression of God, the active aspect of divinity that speaks into existence as in Genesis 1:1." F.F Bruce, in correspondence with me (1981), raised exactly the same question with this remark: "On the preexistence question, one

can at least accept the preexistence of the eternal Word or Wisdom of God, which (who?) became incarnate in Jesus." Bruce went on to say that on balance he thought John was in favor of the Son's preexistence but that he was very uncertain about Paul's believing in a preexisting Son. For 50 translations which did not assume that *logos* was a second Person, see *Focus on the Kingdom* of July, 2004, at restorationfellowship.org. These translations give us the pronoun "it," not "he" for "word." Note the important words of the leading Christologist Dr. James Dunn on Paul in 1 Cor. 8:6 and John 1: "Christ is being identified here not with a pre-existent being but with the creative power and action of God...There is no indication that Jesus thought or spoke of himself as having pre-existed with God prior to his birth" (*Christology in the Making*, p. 182, 254).

Dr. James Dunn, Unity and Diversity in the NT: "Jesus thought of himself as Wisdom's messenger, a selfunderstanding reflected particularly in Matt. 11:25-27; Luke 7:31-35; 11:49-51. Now here we must recall that within Judaism Wisdom was only a way of speaking about God's action in creation, revelation and redemption without actually speaking about God. Wisdom, like the name of God, the spirit of God and logos (word), etc. denotes the immanent activity of God, without detracting from God's wholly other transcendence. For pre-Christian Judaism Wisdom was neither an inferior heavenly being (one of the heavenly council) nor a divine hypostasis (as in the later Trinitarian conception of God). Such a development would have been (and in the event was) unacceptable to Judaism's [and Jesus'] strict monotheism. Wisdom is no more than a personification of God's immanence, no more to be regarded as a distinct person within the Godhead than the rabbinic concept or talk of pre-existing Torah...Paul never uses the name Jesus for the preexistent one...Jesus was the man that preexistent Wisdom became" (p. 221). "Even in John here as with Paul, Jesus is to be thought of as the man which preexistent Logos became, that is the man who brings God to expression more than any other man" (p. 223). "There is no good evidence that Jesus thought of himself as a preexistent being" (p. 225). "The importance of Ps. 110:1 lies in the double use of kurios. The one is clearly YHVH, but who is the other? Clearly not YHVH, but an exalted being whom the writer calls lord" ['my YHVH' is impossible]...1 Cor. 8:5-6; Eph 4:5-6: "Here Christianity shows itself as a developed form of Judaism, with its monotheistic confession as one of the most important parts of its Jewish inheritance. For in Judaism the most fundamental confession is 'God is one.' There is only one God (Deut. 6:4; hence also Rom. 3:30; Gal 3:20; I Tim 2:5; cf. James 2:19). Within Palestine and the Jewish nation such an affirmation would have been unnecessary - Jew and Christian shared a belief in God's oneness. But in the Gentile mission this Jewish presupposition within Christianity would have emerged to prominence, in face of the wider belief in 'gods many.' The point for us to note is that Paul can hail Jesus as lord not in order to identify him with God, but rather if anything to distinguish him from God (cp. particularly 1 Cor. 15:24-28)" (p. 53). "For Paul even the title 'lord' becomes a way of distinguishing Jesus from God

rather than identifying him with God (Rom. 15:6; 1 Cor. 8:6; 15:24-28; 2 Cor. 1:3; 11:31; Eph. 1:3, 17; Phil 2:11; Col. 1:3). Paul was and remained a monotheist" (p. 226). Thus also Karl Heinz Ohlig on the later development of the Trinity: "No matter how one interprets the individual steps, it is certain the doctrine of the Trinity, as it in the end became 'dogma,' both in the East and even more so in the West, possesses no biblical foundation whatsoever and also has no 'continuous succession' [i.e. a link back to the NT]" (*One or Three? From the Father of Jesus to the Trinity*, p. 130). TDNT: "John attributes divine generation to Jesus (1 John 5:18; John 1:13)" (Vol. 1, p. 671). This state of the art document recognizes that John 1:13 refers to the virgin birth, thus harmonizing John beautifully and easily with Matthew and Luke.

Dr. Dunn gives us a fair warning: "To speak of Christ as himself preexistent, coming down from heaven, and so forth, has to be seen as metaphorical; otherwise it leads inevitably to some kind of polytheism...Even to speak of the incarnation of the Son of God can be misleading, unless the Son Christology of John is seen as it was probably intended, as an expression of the same Wisdom/Word Christology; otherwise, there is the danger of a too literal translation of Father-Son language once again into a form of polytheism — that very abandoning of the oneness of God of which Jews and Muslims accuse Christians. The incarnation doctrine which comes to expression in the New Testament is properly understood only if it is understood as the incarnation of God's self-revelation [logos, word, not Word]. The issue which caused the breach with Jewish thought and with Judaism is the charge against the Johannine Jesus that 'you being a man, make yourself God' (John 10:33)" (Dunn, The Christ and the Spirit, p 47). Jesus is in 1 Cor. 1:30 the wisdom which came from God. Jesus is the human being who expresses the wisdom of God, as well as "righteousness, sanctification and redemption." Jesus is not a "God the Son" who came from God. Jesus is what wisdom/word became. If Matthew and Luke had been believed, none of the arguments over the Trinity would have arisen. The key is not to make John contradict Matthew and Luke (and Peter and Paul, of course).

²The NET Bible commentary remarks on the meaning of "word" in Ps. 33:6-11: "The LORD's 'word' refers to the decrees whereby he governs his dominion." Only when *logos* in John 1:1 is made into a second Person, the Son, do all the problems arise. Jesus defined God in Mark 12:29: "The Lord our God is one Lord," not two or three! It would be a fatal contradiction to introduce a second "God, Person" in John 1. In John 17:3 Jesus was a strict monotheist declaring the Father to be "the only one who is true God." This is unitary not Trinitarian monotheism. Note Schonfield, Authentic New Testament: "In the beginning was the expressed concept." If we read "In the beginning was the SON" we make two who are GOD and this breaks the fundamental and easy monotheism of Jesus (Mk. 12:29) and the whole of the Bible. John himself presents us with an easy, plain, unequivocal unitary monotheistic definition of God from the lips of Jesus: "You, Father, are the only one who is true God." That is final, decisive, and definitive. Sadly John 1:1 has been used to Purpose, and that declaration was with³ God, related to Him as His project,⁴ and it was fully expressive of God Himself. This was with God in the beginning. Everything came into existence through it, and without it nothing of what came into being existed.⁵ In it there was life and that life was the light of men. And the light shines in the darkness and the darkness did not overwhelm it.⁶ There came on the scene of history a man sent from God.⁷ His

contradict Jesus in John 17:3 and the detailed birth narratives of Matthew and Luke, and the more than 1300 NT references to GOD as the Father. There are thousands of references to God in Scripture as a single Person, defined by singular personal pronouns

³The same Greek word *pros* occurs in the phrase "the things concerning God," *ta pros ton theon*. Thus the word reflects the heart of God's thinking, His concern. The Aramaic word *memra* (word) was used by Jews as expressing likewise the activity and wisdom of God. John naturally reflects his Jewish background, as does the whole NT.

⁴As for example the Gospel remains "with" (pros as in John 1:1) the disciples, Gal. 2:5, that is, in their minds. Philo speaks of things pros theon as things pertaining to God, belonging to Him. John does not speak here of person to person, for which he uses the prepositions para or meta. "Elsewhere John uses para to express the idea of proximity of one person to another (John 1:39; 4:40; 8:38; 14:17, 23, 25; 19:25; cp. 14:23...never pros" (see Dictionary of New Testament Theology, Vol. 3, p. 1205). Dan. 2:22 tells us that "light dwells with God," or "light is with Him" (LXX). No one imagined light to be a second Divine Person, making two GODs! Jesus, the SON of GOD, is not a second GOD, destroying the first commandment and the Shema! (Deut. 6:4-5; Mark 12:29). The Bible knows of no "God the Son." Ps. 36:9 similarly says that "the fountain of life is with You. In your light we see light" (cp. Jer. 2:13). As Dr. Colin Brown of Fuller Seminary wisely said: "To read John 1:1 as if it said 'In the beginning was the Son' is patently wrong" (Ex Auditu 7, 1991, p. 89).

⁵There is an obvious parallel to John 1:1-3 in the Dead Sea Scrolls, I QS 11.11: "By his knowledge everything has been brought into being. And everything that is, He established by His purpose and apart from Him nothing is done." If we look for parallels in the Hebrew OT, we find "the word of God was with him" (2 Kings 3:12), or "with whom is a dream" (Jer. 23:28). In no case does "word" mean a person in the OT. The word or a dream can be "with" a person, meaning that a person has the word in his mind, or that he experiences a dream.

⁶The light here is neuter, "it," not yet a person. In v. 10 the historical Jesus is in the world and the light is then given a masculine gender (*auton*) "him." "The true light which comes into the world" (John 1:9) is fully expressed in the man Messiah. The impersonal light became a person only when Jesus was born.

⁷"Sent from God" has nothing to do with so-called "preexistence"! John the Baptist was sent from God, i.e. commissioned, as was Jesus. Literally, "sent from beside

name was John. This man came as a witness⁸ so that he might bear witness to the Light and that everyone might believe through him. He was not the Light himself, but he witnessed concerning the Light. This was the genuine Light which enlightens every man coming into the world.

He was in the world and the world came into existence through him, and the world did not recognize him,⁹ the Light. He came to his own land and his own people did not accept him. As many, however, as did accept him, to these he gave the right to become children of God — namely the ones believing in his Gospel revelation. These were born not from blood, nor from the desire of the flesh nor from the desire of a male, but from God.¹⁰ And the word came into existence, a human being, and tabernacled among us, and we beheld his glory, the glory as of a uniquely begotten¹¹ Son from a Father, full of grace and truth.

John gave his witness concerning him and cried out with these words, "This was the one of whom I said, 'The one coming after me has now moved ahead of me, because he always was my superior." Because from his

God."

⁸Preacher of the Gospel of the Kingdom, Matt. 3:2.

⁹Now that Jesus is on the scene the light which was "it" in v. 5 has been given personality and is described appropriately in the Greek as "him" (*auton*).

¹⁰The earliest quotations of this verse in the church fathers, earlier than any of our Greek manuscripts of the NT. give a reading which applies this statement to Jesus, not to believers: "He [Jesus] was born..." not "these were born..." It would then be a clear statement of the virginal begetting of Jesus. The Jerusalem Bible puts that reading into the text and others have supported it strongly. It seems very labored to say that the spiritual rebirth of Christians is "not from the flesh or the desire of the male." A much more natural and easy understanding is that it is a reference to the supernatural beginning/begetting of Jesus in Mary's womb. John thus believed in the virginal begetting of the Son (cp. 1 John 5:18: the Son was begotten in time, caused to come into existence. The idea of "eternal generation" makes nonsense of all this!) John would thus be deliberately in agreement with Matthew and Luke and the rest of the NT on the supernatural origin of the Son as the beginning of the New Creation. Trinitarianism makes all this impossibly confused, and in the course of the post-biblical councils suppressed the easy accounts of the origin of the Son in Matthew and Luke.

¹¹This is exactly the teaching of Luke 1:35. Jesus is uniquely the Son of God, because of the miracle which procreated him, as the second Adam who was also Son of God (Luke 3:38).

¹²Protos mou means here "my superior," but many translations force a meaning on it which would contradict the rest of Scripture, i.e., "he was before me," or "he existed before me." If we translate in harmony with the creed of Jesus in Mark 12:29 and John 17:3 we must understand: "A follower of mine has taken precedence of me for he (always)

fullness all of us have received grace and more grace.¹³ Because the law was given by God through Moses, but grace and truth came through Jesus Christ. No one has seen God at any time. A uniquely begotten Son,¹⁴ one who is in the bosom¹⁵ of the Father — he has explained God.¹⁶

And this is the witness of John, when the Jews sent a delegation of priests and Levites to him from Jerusalem to ask him, "Who are you?" And he confessed and did not deny, "I am not the Christ." And they asked him, "Who are you? Are you Elijah?" And he said, "I am not." "Are you the expected prophet?" And he answered, "No." And they said to him, "Who are you? So that we can give an answer to those who sent us. What do you say about yourself?" He said, "I am the voice of one crying out in the wilderness, 'Make straight the way of the Lord God,' as Isaiah the prophet spoke."

And the ones sent were from the Pharisees. And they asked him a further question, "Why do you baptize if you are not the Messiah, or Elijah or the prophet who was to come?" John answered them, "I am baptizing in water.

was my superior." Dr. Leon Morris in *New International Critical Commentary on John* suggests "he [Jesus] was my Chief' (see appendix). Schonfield, *Authentic New Testament*: "After me will come a man who ranks before me; for he is my superior."

¹³There was grace in the Old Covenant, but in Christ and the New Covenant there is a more intensive grace expressed in Jesus who is the second Adam, the head of a new type of human being. The whole point of Scripture is lost if Jesus is really God!

¹⁴Some manuscripts say "god." It is much disputed as to whether John wrote that word. If he did the text does not say that the Son was "God the Son" from eternity. A person who is begotten is brought into existence and this is not true of the One God. The Father in John 17:3 is in the plain words of Jesus "the only one who is true God." This is an explicitly unitarian proposition, quite unarguable. Dr. Hort says that if "an only begotten god" is right, it would point to "the highest derived being." This is certainly not GOD in the Trinitarian sense.

¹⁵Jesus was in the most intimate relationship to GOD. The present participle (being) indicates that this is nothing to do with a so-called preexistence.

¹⁶ "No one has seen God but we all saw Jesus who is God" would be incoherent! The word GOD means the Father some 170 times in the writings of John and 1300 times in the NT. This points to the massive evidence for unitary monotheism by which the Father is "the only one who is true GOD" (John 17:3). This verse is a sort of "crime scene," since Augustine, to justify the later Trinity, had to forge the text by moving the phrases to say "You, Father *and Jesus Christ* whom you sent, the only one who is true God" (see his *Homilies on John*).

¹⁷As predicted by the critically important text, defining the expected Messiah, in Deut. 18:15-18, cited by Peter in

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Among you there stands one whom you do not recognize — the one coming after me, the thongs of whose sandals I am not worthy to untie." These things happened in Bethany beyond the Jordan where John was baptizing.

The next day he saw Jesus coming towards him and he said, "This is the lamb of God, the one who removes the sin of the world.¹⁸ This is the one of whom I said, 'After me there comes a man who has now moved ahead of me, because he was always my superior.' And I did not recognize him, but so that he might be recognized by Israel, for that reason I came baptizing with water." And John witnessed with these words: "I saw the spirit descending as a dove out of heaven and remaining on him, and I did not recognize him. But the one who sent me to baptize in water spoke to me and said, 'The one on whom you see the spirit descending and remaining on him, he is the one who is baptizing with holy spirit.' And I saw this, and I have witnessed to the fact that this is the Son of the One God."

On the next day again John stood with two of his disciples, and seeing Jesus walking by, he said, "This is the Lamb of the One God." And the two disciples heard him speaking and followed Jesus. Jesus, turning round and seeing them following him, said, "What are you looking for?" They said, "Rabbi (which translated means Teacher), where are you staying?" And he said to them, "Come and see."

And so they went and saw where he was staying and remained with him that whole day. And it was about the tenth hour. This was Andrew, the brother of Simon Peter, one of the two who had heard from John and followed him. He first found his brother Simon and said to him,

Acts 3:22 and Stephen in Acts 7:37.

"We have found the Messiah" (which translated²¹ means the Christ). He brought him to Jesus, and Jesus looked at him and said, "You are Simon the son of John. You will be called Cephas, which translated²² means Peter."

The next day Jesus wanted to go to Galilee, and he found Philip and said to him, "Follow me." Now Philip was from Bethsaida, the city of Andrew and Peter. Philip then found Nathaniel and said to him, "The one about whom Moses wrote in the law²³ and whom the prophets predicted, we have found, Jesus, the son of Joseph from Nazareth." Nathaniel said to him, "Can anything good come from Nazareth?" Philip said, "Come and see."

Jesus saw Nathaniel coming towards him and remarked, "Behold a genuine Israelite in whom there is no guile." Nathaniel said to him, "How is it that you know me?" Jesus answered him, "Before Philip called you, I saw you under the fig tree." Nathaniel answered him, "Rabbi, you are the Son of God. You are the King of Israel." Jesus answered him with these words: "Because I told you that I saw you under the fig tree, you are a believer? You will see greater things than this." And he said to him, "I tell you on the authority of my Father, you will see heaven opened and the angels of God ascending and descending on the Son of Man."25 ❖

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¹⁸Jesus died for every human being (1 Tim. 2:4, etc.), contrary to the fearful doctrine that Jesus died only for some, predestined apart from any choice they might make.

¹⁹Since the words of Jesus "are spirit and life" (John 6:63), the whole of his ministry was a baptizing in spirit. At the ascension the spirit came in a new way from the resurrected, exalted Messiah (John 7:39).

²⁰Certainly not an imagined "God the Son" which would break the first principle of all true religion and the creed of Israel and of Jesus, that God is a single Divine Person (Mark 12:29: "The Lord our God is one Lord"). John wrote his whole Gospel for the purpose of convincing us that "Jesus is the Messiah, the Son of God" (John 20:31). No one imagined that the Messiah would threaten the monotheism of Hebrew Scripture! Everyone understood Messiah to be a unique human being. Thus Dr. Matthews: "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" (*God in Christian Experience*, p. 180).

²¹The Hebrew *Mashiach*, anointed one, applies to kings and also the patriarchs in Ps. 105. The Greek equivalent is *christos*, Christ. No reader of the NT would imagine that the Christ, as God's anointed one, was also fully GOD. They knew that GOD was one Person and that God cannot be born or die.

²²It is perfectly right, following the example of New Covenant Scripture, to translate names from one language to another. A vast amount of wasted energy has been spent by some disputing over the translation of proper names!

²³Moses in Deut. 18:15-18 had predicted the future Messiah as a human person, an Israelite like Moses, and God had warned that anyone who did not respond obediently to that Messiah would be cut off from the people. Peter quoted this key text in Acts 3:22 and Stephen in Acts 7:37. The Israelites had requested that God not speak directly to them any more. God responded to their request with the promise that He would use an ultimate Israelite human person as His agent and commissioner.

²⁴Possibly the location for school, when Nathaniel was younger.

²⁵Jesus is thus the unique bridge between heaven and earth, between God and man. Jesus enjoyed an intimate contact with God, his Father and spoke for the Father as His unique agent. In Jesus we see God uniquely at work. Jesus is the model of what a human being obedient to God can do. The whole point is lost if Jesus is really a preexisting God "dressed up" in human nature.

The cardinal principle of all good Bible understanding and translation is this: "The particular sense of any given word is necessarily conditioned by the context in which it is found" (R.V.G. Tasker, *Tyndale Commentary on Matthew*, p. 280).

If you think that "**generation**" means a period of 40 or 70 years in Matthew 24:34, then you will believe that Jesus predicted the Second Coming and made a mistake!

The Second Coming did not happen within 70 years of Jesus' statement. Jesus did not make mistakes, so think again. "Generation" in that context means "evil society" right up to the Second Coming. Jesus said, "This evil society will not pass until all these things [outlined in Matt. 24] have happened." Elsewhere in Luke 16:8 Jesus said, "The children of **this age** are wiser than the children of God in relation to their own **generation** [group, society with similar characteristics]." So then Jesus referred to the "present evil age" (cp. Gal. 1:4; Mark 8:38) and announced that all the events of Matthew 24 would have to be fulfilled before he returns to the earth to inaugurate the future Kingdom of God.

Jesus was certainly not referring to *a future* period of 40 or 70 years. He said "this generation," not "*that* future generation." The Jehovah's Witnesses did not understand Jesus in Matthew 24:34 and (along with many others who set dates) issued false prophecies about the time of the future coming of Jesus.

From Correspondence on Who Is God:

I wrote: Thanks for engaging the point. OK, then, what stage of revelation have we reached in John 17:3? ["You, Father, are the only one who is true God"] Is Jesus' definition of GOD here (along with 1300 occurrences of **God = Father** in the NT) the right and final definition? Or are we to risk not believing Jesus here? Are we to risk refusing the saving teachings of Jesus?

Please answer clearly without pivoting or dodging. Don't forget there are 11,000 occurrences of the various words for GOD in Scripture (*theos, Elohim, YHVH, Adonai*), none of which mean a TRIUNE GOD.

Note this from the famous commentaries. John 17:3 is a **plain and easy statement of unitarianism**: "YOU, Father, are the **only one** who is true GOD." "Only," as we all know, and have known since childhood, EXCLUDES all others.

The great commentaries agree of course that **this statement of Jesus excludes all others** (below you will see how they try also to rescue the Trinity against their own admission!). The point is perfectly obvious, if one understands ordinary language. "The Father is the ONLY ONE who is true GOD." I suggest we begin to celebrate God for who HE really is, "the ONLY ONE who is True

GOD." He is also a jealous God and gives His unique position as the "only one who is true God" to no other.

Barrett, Commentary on John:

"Knowledge of God is essential to life (salvation). Prov. 11:9 'Through knowledge the righteous will be delivered.' In the good age, 'the earth will be full of the knowledge of God' (Hab. 2:14). Hosea 4:6, 'My people are destroyed for lack of knowledge.' Prov. 3:6, 'Know Him and He will direct your paths.' Hosea. 4:6, 'Because you have rejected knowledge I will reject you.' Knowledge as the ground of salvation is very widespread. Knowing and believing are not set over against one another but correlated. This suggests that John's conception of knowledge is close to that of the Old Testament. Knowledge has also an objective, factual, side. It meant must know the only true God that 8:32, 'You will know the truth and the truth will make you free.' Knowledge of God cannot be separated from knowledge of his incarnate Son. This fact makes possible a unique use of the Greek and Hebrew conceptions of knowledge. Saving knowledge is rooted in knowledge of a historical person. It is therefore objective and at the same time a personal relation.

"Compare Philo, *Spec.* 1: 332, 'the one and genuine God.' 'The genuine God' (*Leg ad Gaium*, 336). 3 Macc. 6:18, 'The genuine God.' I Thess. 1:9. 'The genuine and living God.' The use of *monos* (only) helps to explain the meaning of *alethinos* (genuine). **The God whom to know is to have eternal life, is the only being who may properly be so described**. He, and it must follow, He alone, **is truly theos** (**God**). Real, genuine authentic. The genuine God is the true God over against idols. The genuine worshipers are in contrast to idolaters. Whatever is described as genuine corresponds to the truth."

Meyer, Commentary on John:

On John 14:9: "In the **absolute monotheism** of Jesus (17:3) and of the whole NT (see on Rom 9:5)...Jesus remains subordinate to the Father" [he then covers himself by speaking of 'same essence'!]. On John 17:3: "In this consists eternal life that they should recognize You as the only true God, as Him to whom alone belongs the reality of the idea of God. Compare I Cor. 8:4. 'And your sent one Jesus, as Messiah.' The knowledge of God here described is hence the believing, living, practical knowledge, as 'one ought to know,' I Cor. 8:2. It is the eternal life, in that it is its essential subjective principle, unfolding this life out of itself, its continual, ever self-developing germ and impulse. Compare Wisdom 15:1, 3. Even now in the temporal evolution of eternal life, and still yet after the establishment of the future Kingdom, in which faith, hope and love abide. The fundamental essence of which is in truth nothing else than that knowledge, which in the future age will be the perfected knowledge.

"The contents of the knowledge [in 17:3] is stated with the precision of a confession — a summary of faith in opposition to the polytheistic and Jewish cosmos, which latter rejected Jesus as Messiah, although in him assuredly was given the very highest revelation of the only true God, 'The only true God,' compare John 5:44, Deuteronomy 6:4; I Cor. 8:5; I Thess. 1:9. This is a confessional Lord...Jesus prayed in Hebrew and would have said Yeshua Hamashiach. From which expression a proper name could by no means be recognized. [Now Meyer contradicts himself!] Although the only true God refers solely to the Father, the true divine nature of Christ is not thereby excluded, against the Arians and Socinians who misused this passage, all the less so as this in accordance with his logos relationship as dependent on the Godhead of the Father forms the previous assumption in 'whom he sent.' [Now note how church leaders avoided Jesus' Unitarianism.] Hence it was unnecessary, no, even a perversion of the passage, and running counter to the strict monotheism of John when Augustine, Ambrose, Hilary, Beda, Thomas, Aretius, and several others explained it as if the language were: 'That they might know You and the one you sent, Jesus Christ, as the only true God.' Only one, the Father, can absolutely be termed the only true God, compare Romans 9:5, not at the same time Christ, who is not even in I John 5:20 the true God, since his divine entity stands in the relation of genetic subsistence to the Father, 1:18, although he in unity with the Father works as his Commissioner, 10:30 and is his representative, 14:9, 10" (p. 462). ♦

Comments

"I am a Filipino and the cult is called Iglesia ni Cristo (English: The Church of Christ). I have not yet formally emerged out of the church because I have not yet been excommunicated/cast out, but it will happen soon. My brother and I have been planning an exit strategy. However, I've searched for possible churches who share the same beliefs with what is taught from the Bible. I only found one group. They are unitarian monotheists. They believe in the coming Kingdom of God and the resurrection of the righteous; however, they do not give utmost seriousness to water baptism (as commanded by Jesus). Instead they give much more importance to the 'baptism of the Holy Spirit' and 'speaking in tongues' (uttering repetitive sounds). They are the group that has the closest set of beliefs with what the Bible teaches, but I fear that they have misunderstood much about water baptism and speaking in tongues." — Philippines

"I'm not ready to tell the world yet, but it is safe to say my belief in the doctrine of the Trinity is no more. We'll talk later, but just wanted to share that good news with you." — Facebook

"It's a fantastic feeling and a great experience to be confirmed in what you yourself really have had in you for a long time, and then hear someone else say almost exactly the same thing, but maybe more sophisticated and established in them. That person was you, Anthony! I became a believer in Jesus Christ in 1966. In 1995 I became so tired of all the strange beliefs and sayings of most of my Christian friends and what churches stood for, that I decided to take a big break from it all. About 2010 I was renewed again and took again up my Bible reading and prayer, as it had been 'put on the shelf' for some years. In 2012 I then decided to begin writing down what I believed and why:

- There is only one person in God, and that is the Father. There are therefore not three different persons in God.
- The man Jesus was supernaturally made (birthed) 2000 years ago, by Mary first getting pregnant by the holy spirit. From that moment he was therefore the Son of God. There is a man sitting at God's right hand. The Son has been existing now for 2000 years.
- The holy spirit is not a person, but the Father's own spirit, with all of the Father's personal character, and is manifested as God's presence and breath. The spirit proceeds out from the Father, was given to Jesus, who gave this gift to the Church.

This is how I saw God before I knew about unitarianism. Then you came and confirmed, at least much of it." — *Sweden*

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