

# Focus on the Kingdom

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Anthony Buzzard, editor

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## 28th Theological Conference

April 11-14, 2019

Calvin Center, Hampton, GA

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<b>Hotel-style room</b> (2 beds with private bath, sheets/towels)	\$425	\$265
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1. Online at [theologicalconference.org](http://theologicalconference.org)
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**REGISTRATION DEADLINE: March 22, 2019**

### Airport Transportation

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 11	2:00 pm	4:00 pm
Calvin Center to Airport		
Sun. April 14	1:00 pm	

Please arrange your arrival time on Thursday early enough to catch one of the two shuttle runs. On Sunday, May 6 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](http://calvincenter.org). The address is 13550 Woolsey Rd., Hampton, GA 30228.

## Where the Real Power Lies

by Barbara Buzzard

If honest, we would all like to have more power than we think we have. Some are pretty blatant in their pursuit of power. To some it is their food and drink; they thrive on the possession of supposed power or influence. Some politicians seem to crave it as an addiction. To the really serious power-hungry brigade, it is their drug of choice. Television evangelists seem to be in a category all by themselves. Some wield an imagined power of healing over a captive and rapt audience; some intimidate; some seem to mesmerize audiences by their power (or even by their yelling).

On the other hand, elderly people or young children might well think they have little or no power at all. They have no authority over anyone but themselves and might perceive themselves as powerless. An idea so profound and so beautiful was mentioned to me by a precious friend. It certainly produced an “Aha” moment for me. Frankly, it stunned me. It is this: the idea that we could make God happy or pleased — that the One who created the galaxies could smile because of an action of ours — is totally beautiful. I found this to be a jewel of a thought and it seemed to pierce me through and through, because it is sitting there right in front of us and yet remains mostly unacknowledged. I fear that it is perception like this that we are at risk of losing, when all other influences take prominence over and pervade and steal our time, leaving no room for meditation.

### Energizing Truth

We know that there is behavior that God does not condone or approve of. (At least, this used to be true in “the old days” before the rewriting of Scripture by modern society!) If God can disapprove of us, He can also approve of us! This is so beautiful!

And to think that we seek power in so many other ways — when we actually *have* the power to please and delight the Creator of the Universe. I am reminded of the children’s chorus: “This little light of mine; I’m going to let it shine.” I firmly believe that the shine will not go unnoticed but will have the power to make God happy. Is that not awesome?! This is an energizing truth, a penetrating and totally different motivator.

Teenagers are a group who possess incredible power, not, of course, in the way they imagine. Not because of brain or beauty or degree of nakedness. (Do we not remember that it is God who strips us bare as a *punishment*?) Rather, their power lies in these sage

diamonds of wisdom: “Listen to your father who gave you life, and don’t despise your mother’s experience when she is old...So give your parents joy! May she who gave you birth be happy” (Prov. 23:22, 25). How interesting that this parallels what should be our attitude to our heavenly Father. Youth have the power to grieve or to cheer, to stab or to support, to rectify or to deceive, to enliven conscience or to deaden it.

On an even more serious note, as my friend put it, the recognition of this power could even “eviscerate the monster of despair.” As so many are saying, the world seems to be crumbling around us. We are crashing. The speed of the change and the unrelenting pace seem to be like that of a building exploding or burning, and the momentum of destruction increases with each second. And yet this sacred relationship we have with our Father, because of Jesus, remains intact, solid as a rock, and cannot be broken.

I find it moving to remember that God has always desired an intimate relationship with us, from walking in the garden with Adam and Eve, to dwelling in the temple, to supplying us with holy spirit whereby we can interact with Him. Jesus spoke on multiple occasions of a relationship with his Father. “He is intimate with the upright” (Prov. 3:32).

It is essential that we not lose the art of marveling at our God’s creation, or become complacent with regard to His handiwork. I receive from various sources emails with some of the most gorgeous and truly awesome photographs of nature, of animals, of human ingenuity and cleverness. I forward quite a few but I find myself unable to delete them. They represent the very best this world has to offer, a kind of “Cliff’s Notes” of what is to come, of the future Kingdom. We desperately need beauty and we also need to give in to genuine awe of God’s creation. With the exception of the angels, humans are God’s only creation who can actually stand in awe of Him. And again with the exception of angels, we are the only creatures who can admire what He has created. So let us take advantage of that unique ability (God-given, of course) and be truly awed by His handiwork.

### **This Is Awesome!**

It is an awesome idea that we can have an intimate relationship with the God who is “the eternal, independent, and self-existent Being; the Being whose purposes and actions spring from Himself, without foreign motive or influence; He who is absolute in dominion; the most pure, the most simple, the most spiritual of all essences; infinitely perfect; and eternally self-sufficient, needing nothing that He has made; illimitable in His immensity, inconceivable in His mode of existence...a Being who, from His infinite wisdom, cannot err or be deceived, and from His infinite

goodness, can do nothing but what is eternally just and right, and kind.”<sup>1</sup>

It is a measure of the caring of God that the One who separated the light from the dark, who gathered the waters into one place, who only had to speak “and so it was,” esteems us so highly that He is interested in us even in the midst of the great glories of creation. That we might please the One who “set” the stars in the heavens, who ordained the days and months and the seasons, who brought about the miracle of spring: such a thing is remarkable. Perhaps even more remarkable is that our God is personal with His creation. Yes, He requires obedience of us (also patience and endurance as well as a myriad of other qualities), but He wants a *willing* heart, one whose fondest desire is to please Him. We can *give things to God* that are of value to Him!

### **Your Testimony of Who He Is Could Be Important to Him**

The idea of pleasing God could not be more critical than in the beliefs we have *about* God and His Son and His Plans for us. Just imagine the lengths to which you would go if your name were misrepresented, maligned, dishonored, disrespected, confused with another’s. Tragically, our world does not have a history of accurately representing what God said of Himself or what His Son said of Him. His patience is unimaginable, but as He warns, it will not last forever.

God speaks of people and behaviors which please Him. (“Let the words of my mouth and the meditation of my heart be acceptable in Your sight...” Ps. 19:14). We also know that there are seven things which God detests (Prov. 6:16-19). Let us concentrate on those behaviors which delight Him. He *delights* in those who keep His word (Prov. 12:22). He *delights* in the prayers of the upright (Prov. 15:8). He *approves* those who are attempting to do right (Prov. 12:2). He *delights* in honesty (Prov. 11:1). He *delights* in those who have integrity (Prov. 11:20). He speaks of talking with His people. He offers to give us wisdom (Prov. 1:23). He promises peace and safety in return for our *listening* to Him (Prov. 1:33). Can you imagine any better deal ever?! He gives us the formula for success and He *so* wants us not to fail that He desperately tries to steer us away from disaster.

### **And So Where Does the Real Power Lie?**

The power of God accomplished the creation of the earth and its people. God says: “By My great power I have made the earth and all its people...I can give these things to anyone I choose” (Jer. 27:5).

God desires a contrite heart and a broken spirit (Ps. 51:17), the exact opposite of the haughty self-sufficient

<sup>1</sup> Adam Clarke, *Commentary on the Bible*.

model that is dangled before our eyes in commercials, in TV programming, and in magazines, etc. How characteristic of God to incorporate a reversal in the usual pattern: Instead of the talented, the ambitious-to-succeed, the driven, *He gives the real power to the meek*. What a beautiful picture we are presented with. It is the very giving up of our self-sufficiency that pleases God. Paul explains this seeming paradox: “For when I am weak, then I am strong” (2 Cor. 12:10b).

This is a goldmine — the key to success and even riches. God says, “I will bless those who have humble and contrite hearts, who tremble at my word” (Isa. 66:2b).

### “Come now and let us...”

One of the most amazing ways that God shows His love to us is that as our Maker, He chooses to *reason* with us, rather than to compel us: “Come now, and let us reason together, says the LORD” (Isa. 1:18). I cannot imagine the degree of patience this would entail! Paul used the same principle in “reasoning and persuading them about the Kingdom of God” (Acts 19:8b. And on every Sabbath Jesus *reasoned* with the Jews.)

Psalms 149:4 tells us where God finds pleasure — His people, of course! Philippians 2:13 casts further light on this: “for it is God who is at work in you, enabling you both to will and to work for His good pleasure.” Our elder brother in the faith serves as a perfect role model for us: “for I always do what is pleasing to Him” (John 8:29b). And Paul adds to that: “So whether we are at home or away, we make it our aim to please him” (2 Cor. 5:9). We are not left without advice in this matter: “Try to find out what is pleasing to the Lord” (Eph. 5:10).

### The Second Son

I also see God’s surprising innovation in the “second son syndrome” (if I may call it that). I am describing the scriptural pattern in which the one who by society’s norms should inherit blessing, title, wealth, etc. does not, and instead these things pass to the second son (e.g. Cain and Abel, Jacob and Esau, Ephraim and Manasseh). It has to be the case that these second sons pleased the Father more than the first.

The Way of the Cross is little valued as a motif in Christianity. “*Doing* Jesus” or *doing* his words is often a lonely enterprise. This does not sell well. It is not a part of the American Dream. But the Way of the Cross holds the promise of great, unusual comfort. Choosing the Way of the Cross pleases God. The power of pleasing God is something that should capture our hearts — because it’s *His* idea. And because it is *His* idea, it is perfect, holy, and, miraculously, *possible*.

I am so grateful to my friend for the impetus to “think on these things” and for the inspiration itself. She

says this: “How to please Him and *why* to please Him? This is moving from sterile, fearful deeds toward friendship based on trust and validated truths. We are expected to be bold not only *for* God but *with* Him — and trust is bold.”

Chambers echoes this thought with this excellent question: “Is my primary goal in life to please Him and to be acceptable to Him or is it something less, no matter how lofty it may sound?”<sup>2</sup>

“Do not be afraid, little flock, for it is your Father’s good pleasure to give you the Kingdom” (Luke 12:32). He takes pleasure in giving to us! He wishes us good, and not ill, all the days of our lives. “The Kingdom of God is God’s own dream, His project for the world and for humanity. He makes us dreamers and He wants us to be seduced by his dream. It is not we who dream but God who dreams in us.”<sup>3</sup> ✧

## Who Is Jesus? God or Unique Man?

### ***What’s in a Vowel Point? The Difference Between God and Man***

#### ***Adonai and adoni***

“*Adonai* and *adoni* are variations of Massoretic pointing to **distinguish divine reference from human.**”<sup>4</sup>

“The form *adoni* (‘my lord’), a royal title (1 Sam. 29:8 [etc.]), is to be **carefully distinguished** from the divine title *Adonai*, used over 130 times of Yahweh.”<sup>5</sup>

“Lord. This term in OT is used to translate *ADONAI* when applied to the Divine Being. The [Hebrew] word is...with suffix with [special pointing], presumably for the sake of distinction...between a divine or a human appellative.”<sup>6</sup>

“Hebrew *Adonai* exclusively denotes the God of Israel. It is attested about 450 times in the OT...*Adoni* [is] addressed to human beings (Gen. 44:7, Num. 32:25, 2 Kings 2:19 [etc.]). We have to assume that the word *Adonai* received its special form to distinguish it from the secular use of *adon* [i.e., *adoni*]...The reason why this is written *Adonai* instead of the normal *adon*, *adoni*...may have been to distinguish Yahweh from other gods and from human lords.”<sup>7</sup>

<sup>2</sup> Chambers, *My Utmost for His Highest*.

<sup>3</sup> Mortimer Arias, *Announcing the Reign of God*.

<sup>4</sup> Brown, Driver, Briggs, *Hebrew and English Lexicon of the Old Testament*, under *adon* (lord).

<sup>5</sup> “Lord,” *International Standard Bible Encyclopedia*, Vol. 3, p. 157.

<sup>6</sup> “Lord,” *Hastings Dictionary of the Bible*, Vol. 3, p. 137.

<sup>7</sup> “Lord,” *Dictionary of Deities and Demons in the Bible*, p. 531-32.

“The extension [lengthening] of the ā [on *Adonai*, the Lord God] may be traced to the concern of the Massorettes to mark the word as sacred by a small outward sign.”<sup>8</sup>

Please consider how language works. In English you have no difficulty in recognizing the difference between “he” and “she.” One letter “s” makes a big difference. You recognize also a big difference between god (lower-case g) and God (upper-case G). What about “employer” and “employee”? One letter makes all the difference. In Hebrew the words for “he” and “she” contain only a difference in the vowel sound — *hoo* (“he”) and *hee* (“she”). Few questions could be of greater importance than knowing who in the Bible is entitled to be called God (capital G) and who is not.

In Hebrew there is a word for “lord.” It is *ADON*. This word refers 300 times to human lords (superiors) and 30 times to the LORD, i.e. God Himself.

There are two very special forms of this word *ADON*. Sometimes the letters **-AI** are added to the end, giving you the word *ADONAI* (sometimes written *ADONAY*). This word is known to the public because it rhymes with “El Shaddai” in the well-known song.<sup>9</sup> El Shaddai is another name for the One God. *ADONAI* means “the supreme Lord.”

The word *ADON* may also have the letter “I” added to it, giving the form *ADONI* (pronounced *adonee*).

Now in Psalm 110:1 we have a uniquely important verse. This verse appears in the New Testament 23 times. (Ps. 110:4 is quoted or alluded to another 10 times.) Many verses are cited once or twice in the New Testament. But these verses — Psalm 110:1, 4 — are mentioned **33 times!** Psalm 110:1 is a key to the identity of God and Jesus, and to the coming Kingdom (the heart of the Gospel: Luke 4:43, Acts 8:12, etc.). Psalm 110:1 will yet have an explosive effect and put to an end all current arguments about who God and Jesus are.

Jesus quoted this verse (as reported by Matthew, Mark and Luke) to put an end to the counter-arguments of the religious authorities of his day, the Pharisees (see Matt. 22:41-46). Jesus as master rabbi settled all disputes with Psalm 110:1.

**Psalm 110:1** is quoted in the NT as follows:

**Jesus:** Matt. 22:44; 26:64; Mark 12:36; 14:62; 16:19; Luke 20:42-43; 22:69.

**Peter (Luke):** Acts 2:33; 2:34-35 (in this passage Peter introduces Christianity to the crowd at Pentecost

<sup>8</sup> *Theological Dictionary of the NT*, Vol. 3, p. 1060-61.

<sup>9</sup> “El Shaddai” by Amy Grant: “El Shaddai, El Shaddai, El-Elyon na Adonai...”

and tells us that Jesus has been made “lord” on the basis of Ps. 110:1; Acts 5:31; 7:55-56.

**Paul:** Rom. 8:34; 1 Cor. 15:25; Eph 1:20; 2:6; Col. 3:1; Heb 1:3; 1:13; 8:1; 10:12-13; 12:2.

**Peter:** 1 Pet. 3:22.

**Jesus (John):** Rev. 3:21.

This Psalm covers the whole range of the New Testament and Jesus is recorded as quoting it no less than seven times. It is a favorite “proof-text” of the NT Christians, but it has been abused and suppressed by some commentaries and even Bible translations.

The Psalm is a special divine oracle. The text reads “**The oracle of YHWH (LORD) to my lord: ‘Sit at My right hand until I put your enemies under your feet’**” (Ps. 110:1).

The first “Lord” is the word YHWH which appears in many English versions as “LORD” (all capitals).

The second lord is *adoni* (**my lord**). We have already noted that the Hebrew word *ADON* (lord) has a special ending on it when it refers to the One God — *ADONAI* (449 times in the OT). But when the word has the ending ‘i,’ i.e. *adoni*, it never refers to God but always to a human superior (occasionally an angel). So we know that the Messiah Jesus is carefully distinguished from *ADONAI* (God). Jesus is the human superior of David, David’s lord, *adoni*. It is misleading for translators to capitalize that second lord, giving the impression that Jesus is the Lord God, which in the Bible he never is!

This Psalm was believed to be a Messianic oracle both by Jesus and by the rabbis of his day. Jesus knew that he, the Messiah, was David’s lord as well as David’s son. The Pharisees were not prepared to recognize Jesus as the lord of David, though they knew he was a descendant of David.

The Hebrew language is precise and the rabbis always held the name of the One God in the highest reverence. That is why they reserved the form *ADONAI* for the Lord God alone. (Jews to this day read the word *ADONAI* when they come to the personal name for God — YHWH. No one knows with complete certainty how that word YHWH is to be pronounced. The Jews gave up saying it about 300 BC.)

### Another Example

The OT has little ways of distinguishing words, which have **momentous** importance in terms of their meaning. Let me give you another example: the word *AVEER* means strong or powerful. From the *New International Dictionary of OT Theology and Exegesis*: “It is widely believed that the reason why the OT has two forms of the adjective [*AVEER*] is because the Massorettes wished to distinguish the use of the word

when applied to Yahweh from its use in other contexts” (Vol. 1, p. 232).

When *not* used of the One God, the form has an extra dot inside the “V” and is then pronounced *ABEER*. *ABEER* (with the dot) often refers to a mighty man, sometimes to the “stout of heart,” once to an angel and sometimes to a bull or a mighty steed.

The lack of a dot makes a *huge* difference. *AVEER* refers to God. *ABEER* is a non-divine reference.

So it is with the forms of Lord, *ADONAI* and *ADONI*. *ADONAI* is reserved for the One God alone. No human is addressed as *ADONAI*. On the other hand *ADONI* is reserved for *human* superiors. The Messiah is called *ADONI*, the lord of David, but never *ADONAI*, the One God.

Now note this interesting fact. The KJV always translated *ADONAI* as “Lord” (with initial capital “L”). It translated YHWH as “LORD” (all capitals).

On 193 occasions it translated *ADONI* as “lord” (lower-case “l”), “sir,” or “master.” But on **two occasions only** it broke its own rule and put a capital on “Lord” — in Psalm 110:1 and Daniel 12:8 (an angel). But the word is not *ADONAI*, but *ADONI*. The RV and RSV and the NEB corrected the error and wrote “lord” (lower-case letters), preserving the correct title for Jesus, who is the supreme human being.

Jesus is *ADONI* the Messiah, not *ADONAI*, the One God. The one God is one Person only. How do we know this (apart from Ps. 110:1)? The One God of Hebrew monotheism (the monotheism of Jesus, Mark 12:29) is described by personal pronouns in *the singular* (I, Me, Him, Thou, Thee, Thy, My, His) thousands upon thousands of times. Singular pronouns tell you that a person is one individual, not more. They describe a being who is one *Person*, not three. God is one singular and single Person. There are thus thousands of testimonies in the Bible to the unity of God, what scholars would call “unitary monotheism.”

The One God is distinguished as *ADONAI* (449 times) from *adoni*, a human lord (195 times). This gives you 644 opportunities to see the difference between God and man, based on the word “lord”! **The Messiah, Son of God, is designated as *adoni*, not *Adonai*.**

“There is **one God**, the Father” (Paul, 1 Cor. 8:6). There are **two Lords** (Ps. 110:1). The Father is the one Lord God and Jesus is the lord **Messiah**, the Son of God (Matt. 16:16). Belief that Jesus is **the Messiah, the Son of God** is the whole point of John’s Gospel (John 20:31). It is also the whole point of the whole Bible. Note how Luke introduced Jesus as the **lord Messiah**, literally “the Messiah lord” (Luke 2:11). Mary is the mother of “my lord” (Luke 1:43), certainly not the mother of God!

Jesus describes the one God, his Father, as “the only one who is true God” (John 17:3) and “the one who

alone is God” (John 5:44). “The one who alone is God” is another way of saying “the only one who is God.” Jesus was talking about the Father. If the Father is “the only one who is God,” and Jesus is a different person, Jesus is distinguished from the one God. If the Father is “the only one who is true God,” no one else can be! These are the universally accepted laws of language with which we all agree.

Do you believe with Jesus that the Father is “the only one who is God” (John 5:44)? The Father is called God 1320 times in the NT. The word “God” is used of Jesus twice for certain. But don’t forget that in the first century AD elevated humans were sometimes called “God.” This is also true in the Bible. The judges of Israel were called “gods” (Ps. 82:6). Jesus used that verse to demonstrate that he was claiming to be the Son of God, not God Himself (John 10:34-36). The Roman emperor was also called “God.” This is a use of “God” to which we are not accustomed. But the Bible must be understood in its own context, not ours. Without that basic key to interpretation we are likely to misread the Bible at the most fundamental level.

Psalm 2 is a perfect parallel to Psalm 110:1. In that psalm the One God YHWH speaks to **My Son** (Ps. 2:7). That person, who is as distinct from YHWH as any son is distinct from his father, is also called “the LORD’s Messiah” (2:2; cp. Luke 2:26). (Note the valuable key provided by equivalent phrases: the one defines the other to tell us who Jesus is.) That King/Son/Messiah is the Jesus of the Bible: the Son of the One God, “the lord Messiah” (Luke 2:11), “the Lord’s Messiah” (Luke 2:26).

Note that in the NT God is called “the **God of our lord Jesus Christ**” (Eph. 1:17). That should tell you that they are not coequal! There is one Lord God and one lord *Messiah*. In Scripture they are separate individuals, working in the closest harmony. The Messiah is the obedient Son of his Father. The Father is the only one who is God. The Messiah functions as the perfectly obedient agent of his Father who “begat” him. To be “begotten,” of course, is to have a beginning *in time*, quite contrary to popular theories, dating from the “church fathers,” that the Son had no beginning. Or as some said, the Son had a “beginningless beginning.” If he had no beginning he could not, by simple definition of words, be “begotten” by his Father, God.

Should anyone be tempted to deny the validity of the vowel points, there is a way to demonstrate that the difference between “the Lord” (*Adonai*) and “my lord” (*adoni*) existed in the time of Jesus and before. The New Testament when it quotes Psalm 110:1 renders *l’adoni* as “to my lord” (*to kurio mou*). But it renders *Adonai* (Ps. 110:5 and very often elsewhere) as “the Lord” (*kurios*). This proves that the difference between *Adonai* and *adoni* was recognized and reported in Greek long

before the Masoretic vowel points fixed the ancient, oral tradition permanently in writing. The authoritative Greek of the NT demonstrates that the second lord of Psalm was in fact *l'adoni*, rendered in both the LXX and in the NT as “to my lord.” The New Testament merely confirms authoritatively that the pointing *l'adoni* was the authoritative reading of the OT.

Don't forget, too, the prodigious accuracy of the Masoretes who copied the text. Between 600 and 1000 AD they “hedged in” the consonantal text with minute attention to accuracy and detail. “They added vowel points above and below the consonants to preserve as perfectly as possible the accompanying tradition of pronunciation.”<sup>10</sup> Rabbi Ishmael cautioned: “My son, be careful, because your work is the work of heaven; should you omit (even) one letter or add (even) one letter, the whole world would be destroyed.”<sup>11</sup> ✧

## Psalm 110:1 Made Simple

by Etienne Curnow, France

I spy, with my little eye,  
 Something that ends with an “ai”  
 When “adon” ends with “ai”  
 Then that tells you and I,  
 It's the upper case Lord God on high.  
 It's the only one called El Shaddai.  
 I see, in good commentary,  
 Something that ends with an “ee”  
 When “adon” ends with “ee”  
 Then that tells you and me,  
 It's a lord of a lesser degree.  
 It's a lower case non-Deity,  
 Whether king in his lordly attire,  
 Or lord husband, or landowning squire,  
 Or the prophesied man, lord Messiah.

## The “Only True God” Dilemma

by Carlos Xavier, Georgia

For historical, classical Trinitarians, Jesus' declaration that the Father is “the only true God” in John 17:3 was certainly a problem — not, it seems, for modern-day apologists.

The noted German Protestant Heinrich Meyer in his New Testament Commentary notes that Augustine, Aquinas, Ambrose, Hilary, Beda, Thomas, Aretius, and several others forged the phrase “You [Father], the only true God” as “You [Father] and Jesus Christ, Whom you have sent, as the only true God.” To his credit Meyer calls this “a perversion of the passage, and running

<sup>10</sup> *New International Dictionary of Old Testament Theology and Exegesis*, Vol. I, p. 60.

<sup>11</sup> *Ibid.*

counter to the strict monotheism of John. Only One, the Father, can absolutely be termed the ‘the only true God’ (comp. ‘the one being over all God,’ Rom. 9:5), not at the same time Christ (who is not even in 1 John 5:20 the ‘only true God’).”

Yet, somehow, many Trinitarian apologists today think they have gotten around the problem posed by Jesus' clear, strict unitary monotheism.

For example, Rob Bowman tries to get around the problem by asking Jehovah's Witnesses if Jesus is a true god or a false god. His answer: “He can't be a false god, can he, since that would mean the apostle John was guilty of falsely honoring Jesus as a god? Therefore he must be a true God. But Jehovah is the only true God. Therefore, Jesus must be Jehovah.”<sup>12</sup> Bowman offers us here the logical fallacy of **false dichotomy** or **false dilemma**. Jesus is neither “the only true God” nor “a false god.” The third option is simply to declare what Scripture makes repeatedly clear: “Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God” (John 20:31). “To be a ‘Son of God’ one has to be a being who is *not* God!”<sup>13</sup> Furthermore, Bowman creates one Jehovah too many, according to the Shema.

Another well-known argument is to say that Jesus in John 17:3 “is simply saying that the Father is the ‘only true God’ — the only real or genuine God — as opposed to the many false gods and idols.”<sup>14</sup> This is a tactic often employed when Trinitarians try to counter the numerical truth of “the one LORD,” YHWH, of the Shema. But it's self-evident that the God of the Bible is set over and against “the gods of the nations.” As Paul states in 1 Corinthians 8:4-6, although there are many gods, for us Christians there is one God, the Father!

Finally, the Messianic Michael Brown in his debate with Dale Tuggy said that John 17:3 “doesn't say the Son is not” true God. As if just stating this makes it true! The word “only,” as we all know from early childhood, excludes all others, in this case from the category of “true God.” So no matter how many times and in how many ways modern-day Trinitarians try to subvert John 17:3, it's impossible to circumvent the clear, unambiguous meaning of the text. These are indisputable facts whether you resort to corrupting the text, as the classical Trinitarians did, or continue to propagate illogical arguments. ✧

<sup>12</sup> Cited in Ron Rhodes, *Reasoning from the Scriptures with the Jehovah's Witnesses*, 2009, p. 228.

<sup>13</sup> “Trinity and Incarnation: In Search of Contemporary Orthodoxy,” *Ex Auditu* 7, 1991, p. 88.

<sup>14</sup> *Reasoning from the Scriptures*, p 225.

## Comments

“I am an ex Jehovah’s Witness. After years of doubts that caused angst, I left them 32 years ago. I loved the individuals that I knew (I still do; they were good people), but I didn’t agree with all the teachings and found the organization, led by the Governing Body, emotionally damaging. I never left God or Jesus and have continued to read and study the Bible. Nothing is more important to me than my relationship with God, based on *His* spirit and truth. I am new to your writings, which God directed me to because I have recently been called upon to defend my non-Trinitarian beliefs to a Baptist minister. Even before my mother involved our tiny family in the Witnesses when I was 12, I didn’t believe in the Trinity. To me just the fact that God defined Himself as one, and Jesus never called himself God has always been the only proof I needed. But I must be able to answer others’ questions and your book is a wonderful source of good sense that keeps all the explanations in the context of the entire Bible. I am poring through the information in your book and on your website as fast as I am able, which isn’t fast enough for me. I am starving to further my understanding in a more accurate way. I love learning and am grateful for the information you and others are providing. Just today, while searching your website I thought I would check out the January, 2019 edition of *Focus on the Kingdom*. I noticed there were a few comments left by other ex-JW’s. I have much in common with them, especially the couple from Croatia. But I want to encourage the person who wrote the last comment about being lost and nearly losing their faith. My experience of the Witnesses left me, to this day, struggling to trust that I, as an individual, matter to God. As the couple from Croatia wrote, the Witnesses excelled in burdening us with guilt. Even though I have a lifetime of proof, I still fight not to fall into what I call the ‘default mode’ of feeling grossly unworthy. Thank you again for all the information. I am infinitely grateful to have found your writings and eagerly look forward to reading more.” — *Illinois*

“Hello from Slovakia. I’m glad that I can watch your videos in which you preach the Gospel about the Kingdom of God and about biblical truths. I found you a few months ago. I was looking for non-Trinitarian biblical Christian churches or movements. I was raised as a Catholic believer. Now I’m 18 and the biblical truths have changed my mind and my beliefs. I thank you for your ministry and your fire for the gospel. God bless you all.” — *Slovakia*

“Anthony Buzzard opened the door to biblical unitarianism (BU) for me. In my attempts to buttress my Trinitarian apologetic, I kept seeing this Buzzard guy on YouTube, and his arguments — against the Trinity and for BU — just wouldn’t go away no matter how I tried.

Dale Tuggy pushed me right inside BU. When I ran across Dale’s works I began to — seriously, honestly and prayerfully — question the Trinity and consider BU. As I got deeper into the weeds, I have realized that, among others, the Trinity or ‘trinities’ (i.e. Trinity theories) and theories on the so-called ‘incarnation of Christ’ are nothing but straws to shore up the edifice of the idea that ‘God became a man.’ That edifice shattered into little pieces, never to be put back together. Dale’s presentation of the BU stance — by way of inductive reasoning through the use of church history, biblical data, tight logic, and good reasoning — was enough for me to finally let go of the Trinity and embrace the Biblical Unitarian view of God. I cried with all of my heart, ‘Please God! Show me the truth.’ And He showed me.” — *Florida*

“I have watched your debate about the Trinity with the Trinity scholars. I am a Persian Canadian. It has taken me 22 years to find out that these Trinity Bibles are not teaching the right stuff. The 22 years is a long time for research like this and looks like so much time has been wasted, but God’s spirit finally directed me to find out I was not alone. You know, the Persians are naturally attracted to find who the real God is, and the history of God choosing Cyrus and Darius to carry out God’s command also has something to do with it. I think I must be the only Persian who has come to the truth of Bible. I now have this calling that I should help other Persians to know about the truth of Jesus. I feel so bad that these people who have the clean heart to see the difference are easily trapped in the confusion of Trinity.” — *Canada*

“I grew up as a Jehovah’s Witness. I have a very recent deep desire to please God, and His Son Jesus Christ. I am new to the Bible or faith as I never felt that the JW organization was wholesomely true or accurate; there were speculations in areas and I disagreed with disfellowshipping. I’ve looked into many different religions including Messianic Judaism, 7<sup>th</sup>-Day Adventists, and born-again Christians. However, I recently found videos and channels on YouTube including 21st Century Reformation, Restoration Fellowship and the Human Jesus website. I am deeply interested in unitarianism and I have this gut feeling that Jesus was not God, was not part of a Trinity, and was not Archangel Michael.” — *Canada*

“Our hope remains in the promised perfect government under the hand of our Lord Jesus Christ — when all nations of the earth will have peace, prosperity and righteousness everywhere. May that day come soon and may we all be worthy citizens approved by the Lord’s mercy and grace.” — *Nigeria*

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