

Focus on the Kingdom

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Is Christianity the Only World Religion Which Begins by Discarding its Founder's Creed?

"To wrench Jesus out of his Jewish world destroys Jesus and destroys Christianity, the religion that grew out of his teachings. Even Jesus' most familiar role as Christ is a Jewish role. If Christians leave the concrete realities of Jesus' life and of the history of Israel in favor of a mythic, universal, spiritual Jesus and an otherworldly kingdom of God, they deny their origins in Israel, their history, and the God who has loved and protected Israel and the church. They cease to interpret the actual Jesus sent by God and remake him in their own image and likeness. The dangers are obvious."¹

"No responsible New Testament scholar would claim that the doctrine of the Trinity was taught by Jesus, or preached by the earliest Christians, or consciously held by any writer in the New Testament. It was in fact slowly worked out in the course of the first few centuries in an attempt to give an intelligible doctrine of God."²

Does It Matter What God We Worship?

"The God of the OT is not a force, not even a personalized force. He is a full-orbed **personality** interacting in depth with persons."³

So much for Dr. James White's understanding that God is one Essence, "one WHAT in three WHO'S."

"Offer yourselves to God as a consecrated, living sacrifice which will delight God's heart, for this is the worship which is your Gospel (*logikos*) service" (Rom. 12:1).

A prominent spokesman for the traditional view that God is three Persons in one writes: "Our Lord Jesus Christ is God manifest in the flesh, God tabernacling in human form. When I say that I believe in the full Deity of Christ, that is what I affirm. At his birth our Lord Jesus Christ **did not begin to exist**" (Rev. Iain Paisley). So much for Matthew and Luke and John!

"As the Son to the Father He is derived by eternal generation in a birth that never took place because it always was."⁴

¹Anthony Saldarini, "What Price the Uniqueness of Jesus?" *Bible Review*, June 1999.

²A.T. Hanson, *The Image of the Invisible God*, 1982, p. 87.

³Oswalt, *The Book of Isaiah 1-39*, p. 346. Note that God is always a single Divine "soul" or "self." Thousands of singular personal pronouns describe Him.

"We must remind ourselves that Christian theology does not believe God to be a person. It believes Him to be such that in Him a trinity of persons is consistent with a unity of Deity."⁵

"Interpreters of Christian persuasion have ordinarily not been especially interested in what Jesus intended and did in his own lifetime."⁶

"Therefore it cannot be the best expression of the unity of God to declare that God is a single person."⁷ (The Bible is canceled!)

"Christendom has **done away** with Christianity, without being quite aware of it."⁸

"Jesus' affirmation of the Shema is neither remarkable nor specifically Christian."⁹

The world is divided into many religions, but the three who claim to be monotheistic cannot agree at all about what monotheism means! This calls for urgent evangelism, to do something to relieve this gigantic ecclesiastical muddle and the poisonous effects it has on the millions trying to find the true God, the God of Jesus, and the true Gospel. We live in a toxic, theologically contaminated world. Jesus in Mark 12:29 could unravel the mess, if anyone really believed it and preached it.

Let us unpack the process by which people must be moved from confusion to clarity, darkness to light. In evangelicalism, well-known for its claim to get people "saved" by "accepting Jesus into their heart," people are led by a Trinitarian system which is on record as saying that one *cannot* be saved outside of the Trinity. But as Kermit Zarley says: "The Church doctrine of the Trinity is contradictory and nonsensical, and lacks biblical support."¹⁰

Scot McKnight talks about "**The Jesus Creed**," telling us how fundamentally essential the Shema of Deuteronomy 6:4 and Mark 12:29 was to Jesus. But just when we expect him to urge us to follow the unitarian creed of Jesus, he falls strangely silent and makes no attempt to explain how it is that evangelicals do *not* affirm the Shema as Jesus did. Apparently he does not

⁴Wuest's *Word Studies from the Greek NT*, p. 182.

⁵C.S. Lewis, *Christian Reflections*, p. 98.

⁶Dr. Richard Hiers, *Jesus and the Future*

⁷Dr. Oliver Quick, *Doctrines of the Creed*, 1938, p. 139.

⁸Soren Kierkegaard, *Training in Christianity*, 1952, p. 39.

⁹Craig Evans, *Word Biblical Commentary on Mark*, 34b, p. 261.

¹⁰*Restitution of Jesus Christ*, p. 124.

want us to be aware of the difference between one and three.

So the teaching of Jesus is not Christianity! But it ought to be. It *must* be if we are to be saved.

A Hybrid Jesus

The Jesus of orthodox Trinitarianism is such a bizarre and improbable person that it is a wonder that church members everywhere do not march out on him. The trouble is that they do not know nor apparently care to know what “their church” actually believes. But is woolly or sloppy thinking pleasing to God and Jesus on this vital topic?

A recent visitor to our garden tour, in a brief conversation, stated that his Jesus was schizophrenic. That was the best description of Jesus he knew, given the creed he was supposed to believe in the Baptist Church. We can understand his perplexity. What are we, all of us, going to do to help him out of it? The Jesus of official orthodoxy looks like this:

“Now the Christian doctrine of the Incarnation is that in Christ the place of a human personality is **replaced** by the divine personality of God the Son, the second person of the Most Holy Trinity. Christ possesses a complete human nature **without a human personality**. Uncreated and eternal Divine Personality **replaces a created human personality in him**. The Incarnation, if it is a reality, if it really means the Word-made-flesh, cannot mean anything else. The eternal Word of God has **joined to Himself** a human body and a human soul and is henceforth both God and man.”¹¹

I want to rub this point in:

“Jesus was ‘the only son of God,’ man’s true representative, perfect God and perfect man, with ‘two natures in One Person, without confusion, change, division or severance.’ Jesus was man **but not a man**. His ego, personality, was divine, preexistent, clothing itself and operating in a human body; he came into history and **not out of it**. He was God working in and through man, not a man raised to the divine level...even if subject to the limitations of a Jew of his age and place.”¹²

Even *after* the New Testament when things were still on track, not off-base, the “word” (logos) in John 1:1 had not yet become “Word,” a God the Son preexisting his own birth. 1 Clement seems to give us a purely unitarian God and human Jesus.

But by Irenaeus and Justin Martyr in the 2nd century AD, things are drifting into belief in a strange “other Jesus.” Irenaeus writes of “the Word **who** existed in the beginning with God.”¹³ From there it is all downhill. Clement of Alexandria wrote, “Our Instructor is the holy **God Jesus**, the Word, who is the guide of all

humanity.”¹⁴ Origen wrote, “He whom we regard and believe to have been from the beginning **God**, and the **Son of God**, is the very Logos, and the very Wisdom, and the very Truth.”¹⁵

Yes, but from what beginning? Matthew, Mark and Luke were gradually being dismissed and discarded by “the church fathers,” and John was later twisted in chapter 1, when “word” becomes “Word.” And so it is to this day. John 1:13 is *originally* almost certainly a beautiful description of the virginal begetting of the Son. Did you ever wonder why John would leave out any reference to the virgin birth? Almost certainly he did not, and it is there in John 1:13 as the oldest records of that verse show.¹⁶

Once the birth of Jesus was **antedated**, the following contradictions were inevitable: If Jesus was the human prophet King, he could not be the preexisting, divine Son of the Father. If he was a descendant of David, he could not be the preexistent Son who existed in heaven from the beginning of time, or before. If he was the Son of Man who will help God set up His Kingdom on a rejuvenated earth, he could not also be fully GOD without beginning. The reconciling of the Incarnation with the virgin birth was logically impossible, but some enterprising church fathers tackled it as early as the second century. The apology of Aristides: “Jesus the Messiah is called the Son of God Most High, and it is said that God **came down from heaven** and from a Hebrew virgin assumed and clothed himself with flesh, and the Son of God lived in a daughter of man.”

This imaginative and tabloid Jesus was given space in the apocryphal NT writings. The amazing portrait arose of a Jesus who engineered his own conception in Mary. He came **through** the womb of Mary, not from it. (It was Gnostic heretics, Tertullian said, who taught that “the Son came **through** the womb of Mary like water through a tube.”)

Epistola Apostolorum: “On that day when I [Jesus] took the form of the angel Gabriel, I appeared to Mary and spoke with her. Her heart accepted me, and she

¹⁴*The Instructor*, 1. 7.

¹⁵*Against Celsus*, 3. 41.

¹⁶See Metzger, Textual Commentary, Latin MS Itb, Irenaeus, Tertullian, Origen, Ambrose. Athanasius read the singular: “he [the Son] was begotten not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, not of the will of a man, but of God.” Curetonian Syriac and 6 MSS of the Peshitta Syriac read the plural “those” and the singular verb “was born” (suggests some fiddling). A number of modern scholars (inc. the Jerusalem Bible), Zahn, Resch, Blaas, Loisy, Seeburg, Burney, Buchsel, Boismard, Dupont, Braun have argued for the originality of the singular — **a ref. to the virginal begetting of the Son**. The aorist for the Messiah’s birth is found too in Isa. 9:6, Matt. 1:20, Luke 1:35 and 1John 5:18, cp. v. 1, where God is the “generator.” All based on Ps. 2:7, cp. Ps.110:3, LXX.

¹¹Simmons, *What Think Ye of Christ?* p. 45.

¹²Bevan, *Steps to Christian Understanding*, p. 140.

¹³*Against Heresies*, 3. 18. 1.

believed, and I formed myself **and entered into** her body. I became flesh” (14).

But we find the same thing in the so-called “orthodox fathers”!

Irenaeus, Bishop of Lyons: “As it has been clearly demonstrated that the Word, who existed in the beginning with God, by whom all things were made, who was also always present with mankind, was in these last days, according to the time appointed by the Father, united to His own workmanship, inasmuch as He became a man liable to suffering, [it follows] that every objection is set aside of those who say, ‘*If our Lord was born at that time, Christ had therefore no previous existence.*’ For I have shown that **the Son of God did not then begin to exist**, being with the Father from the beginning; but when He became incarnate, and was made man, He commenced afresh the long line of human beings, and furnished us, in a brief, comprehensive manner, with salvation.”¹⁷

The different Christologies, i.e. different “Jesuses,” created an interesting but incompatible variety of journeys of the Christ. Son of David (good): earth to heaven to earth. Son of Man (good): earth to heaven to earth. God the Son (*not* good): heaven to earth to heaven to earth.

In the *Psalms of Solomon* (50 BC), which are Jewish and not Christian,¹⁸ we are still on solid ground as to a genuinely human Messiah. These make excellent reading as Jewish background to the NT.

The Real Messiah

The son of David would have the spirit of the Lord resting upon him according to Isaiah 11. Jesus is the prophet of Deuteronomy 18:15-19 who is coming into the world, i.e. to be born (John 6:14). The Lord says, “I will raise up a prophet from among their countrymen like you, and I will put My words in his mouth, and he will speak to them all that I command him. Whoever will not listen to My words which he will speak in My name, I myself will require it of him.” (Peter says that the one who **refuses this Messiah** will be cut off from the people.) The Samaritans believed that the Messiah would be a prophet like Moses promised in the Deuteronomy 18 passage. The Samaritans considered this to be so important that they included it in their Ten Commandments.

A portion of the Moses prophecy is quoted again in Stephen’s speech in Acts 7:37. That God will “raise him up” means that God will cause him to be born. Psalm 2:7 and 110:3 in the LXX,¹⁹ and some Hebrew manuscripts too, spoke of the “today” on which God would **beget**,

¹⁷*Against Heresies*, 3.18

¹⁸Though the connection is obvious between these Psalms and Luke, showing how Jewish Luke is in his Messianism.

¹⁹It is easy to repoint YeLiDeTiCHa, “I have begotten you” to read the odd “YaLDuTeCHa,” your youth.”

bring into existence His Son. The church fathers had to turn “today” into a timeless today, i.e. reduce “today” to nonsense. And dissolve the real Jesus into a pre-human, non-human person.

From Light to Darkness

That is how the real Son of God, you explain to your friends, became a supernatural preexistent being who has existed in the heavens from the beginning of time, or before. In the *Shepherd of Hermas* Jesus is supernatural and pre-existing, and is called the Son of God. “The Son of God is older than all his creatures, so that He was a fellow-counselor with the Father in His work of creation...The name of the Son of God is great, and cannot be contained, and supports the whole world.”²⁰

From this time onwards Genesis 1:26 is being summoned as a proof of the Trinity. “Let us make man...” Happily scholarship and even the NIV Study Bible now recognize that the 4 “us texts” have **nothing to do with a Trinity**. The *Word Biblical Commentary* on Genesis 1:26 admits, “It is now universally admitted that the plural does not refer to Christ” (p. 27).

Ignatius, Bishop of Antioch (early 2nd century, although some of his letters are forgeries), also regarded Jesus as **God’s preexistent Son**. These facts are significant and are evidence of a process that was well under way at the end of the first century and beginning of the second — namely a **reinterpretation of Jesus in terms of Hellenistic mysticism**. Philo the Alexandrian Jew had reinterpreted Judaism in those terms, and apparently some Alexandrian Gentiles created some philosophy and the Hermetic cult along similar lines.²¹

This rewriting of the Jesus story in terms of paganism and mysticism is the Devil’s major trick. Here is a parallel: Today you can buy the lectures of Thomas Merton, famous Christian mystic. The advertisement for his lectures sounds alluring. The appeal goes like this:

“Just as the Church Fathers used Greek philosophical wisdom and tools to develop Christian theology, Thomas Merton, one of Christianity’s great mystics, explored the contemplative wisdom of Sufism (mystical Islam) to enhance our Christian understanding of mysticism and of spiritual practice.”

The result of antedating Jesus’ **origin** (Matt. 1:18; 1 John 5:18) to a time before Genesis, and with Origen to an “eternal generation,” was beautifully summed up by Professor Loofs, a pupil of Harnack who lectured at Oberlin College, Ohio in 1922.²² This statement can be an eye-opener for people searching out the true Jesus:

“While Hellenistic Gnosticism generated **an acute Hellenizing** [turning into Greek ways of thinking] of

²⁰Similitude 9.12; 9.14.

²¹See Teeple, *How Did Christianity Really Begin?* p. 186

²²Those lectures translated into English as *The Truth about Jesus Christ* are a must for anyone researching this topic.

Christianity in those circles which were excluded from the ‘catholic church,’ the decisive beginnings of the **gradual** [and thus much more subtle and harder to detect] Hellenizing of ecclesiastical Christianity are to be found in the Greek apologists of the second century. By this we mean the Christianized philosophers, Aristides (*Apology*, not long before 150 AD), Justin Martyr (d. about 165 AD, 1st and 2nd Apologies, c. 150 AD, *Dialogue with the Jew Trypho*, 155-160, *On the Resurrection*), Tatian (*To the Greeks*, 150 AD), Athenagoras (133-190 AD), Theophilus of Antioch (181 AD). These men, whose apologetic literature we have available, represent indeed only a part of the apologetic literature of the second century. Yet the character of the apologetic conception of Christianity in these apologetic works is extensively recognizable. Doubtless this conception of Christianity is conditioned by the apologetic aims of this literature. It is probable that the personal Christianity of the Apologists is richer and deeper than their apologetics. And they theologized only as apologists and only their *theology*, not their personal Christianity, influenced the historical development of dogma.

“**Their theology however** receives its character from the fact that **their Christianity stepped into the place occupied earlier by their pre-conversion philosophy**. So their Christianity was **dragged down** to the level of **that philosophy** and grew into a whole, influenced by fragments of their minor speculative viewpoint. What the religious, moralistic **popular philosophy** of the time strove for, that is what the Apologists found in Christianity: the assurance of **immortality** and a strongly moral world-view. In that sense Christianity seemed to them as the ‘only sure and healthy **philosophy**, as the dogma of truth.’”

Professor Loofs further described the process of the early **corruption** of biblical Christianity, brilliantly. This is the corrupted form inherited by churches:

“The Apologists [‘church fathers’ like Justin Martyr, mid-2nd century] laid the foundation for the **perversion/corruption** (*Verkehrung*) of Christianity into a revealed [philosophical] teaching. Specifically, their Christology affected the later development **disastrously**. By taking for granted the transfer of the concept of **Son of God onto the preexisting Christ**, they were the cause of the Christological **problem**²³ of the fourth century. They caused a **shift** in the point of departure of Christological thinking — **away from the historical Christ** and onto the issue of preexistence. **They thus shifted attention away from the historical life of Jesus, putting it into the shadow and promoting instead the Incarnation [i.e. of a**

²³We should not forget that this “problem” led to ultimate confusion and even the death of noble souls who refused to accept philosophy in place of Jesus (cp. the murder of Servetus by Calvin on the issue of unitarianism).

preexistent Son]. They tied Christology to cosmology [pushed the Son back into Genesis] and could not tie it to soteriology [salvation]. The Logos teaching is not a ‘higher’²⁴ Christology than the customary one. It lags in fact far behind the genuine appreciation of Christ. According to their teaching it is no longer God who reveals Himself in Christ, but the Logos, the inferior God, a God who as God is subordinated to the Highest God (inferiorism or subordinationism)...In addition, the suppression of economic-trinitarian ideas by **metaphysical-pluralistic** concepts of the divine triad (*trias*) can be traced to the Apologists.”²⁵

The Results Have Led to Denominational Confusion

Paul had urged us all: “I want you, brothers and sisters, **above all things** to say the same thing, that there be no divisions [no denominations!] among you, that you be perfectly united in one mind and one judgment” (1 Cor. 1:10). Jesus had likewise spoken of the unity of the true followers. He prayed for this unity in John 17. There are now thousands of disagreeing divisions and denominations.

The resulting disaster, once the creed of Jesus (Mark 12:29) was discarded and replaced by a philosophical crypto-gnostic one, despite **Jesus’ emphasis on Psalm 110:1**, where the second lord (*adoni*) is not GOD, and his constant claim to be the **man**, i.e. the Son of Man — this disaster was rightly lamented by Canon Goudge. Canon H. L. Goudge was Regius Professor of Divinity, Christ Church, Oxford:

“The great people of God’s choice [the Jews] were soon the least adequately represented in the Catholic Church. That was a **disaster** to the Church itself. It meant that the Church as a whole failed to understand the Old Testament, and that the Greek mind and the Roman mind [pagan minds] in turn, instead of the Hebrew mind, came to dominate its outlook [the church became paganized]: from that **disaster the Church has never recovered**, either in doctrine or in practice. If today we are again coming rightly to understand the Old Testament, and thus far better than before the New Testament also, it is to our modern Hebrew scholars and in part to Jewish scholars themselves that we owe it.”²⁶

And by Dr. Martin Werner of the University of Bern:

“The Church found itself in a dilemma as soon as it tried to harmonize the doctrine of the Deity of Jesus and the Deity of the Father with **monotheism**. For according

²⁴False systems advertised themselves by using the term “higher” or “deeper.” It all sounds impressive.

²⁵Friedrich Loofs, *Leitfaden zum Studium des Dogmengeschichte* (*Manual for the Study of the History of Dogma*), 1890, part 1 ch. 2, section 18: “Christianity as a Revealed Philosophy. The Greek Apologists,” Niemeyer Verlag, 1951, p. 97, translation mine.

²⁶“The Calling of the Jews,” 1939.

to the NT witnesses, in the teaching of Jesus relative to the monotheism of the OT and Judaism, there had been no element of change whatsoever. Mark 12:29ff recorded the confirmation by Jesus himself, without any reservation, of the supreme monotheistic confession of faith of Israelite religion in its complete form...The means by which the Church sought to demonstrate the agreement of its dogma of the Deity of both Father and Son with monotheism, remained seriously **uncertain and contradictory**.²⁷

And it was not long before the original system was being suppressed by the philosophical notion that Jesus was “**first spirit** and then flesh.” That **shift**, documented by 2 Clement 9:5, meant that the historical Jesus was being swallowed up by a different Jesus. As Martin Werner lamented, “the historical Jesus completely disappeared” behind a Gnostic counterfeit figure (p. 298).

Paul taught the opposite of 2 Clement 9:5. Paul said that the physical Adam, Son of God came first and the Son of God, Jesus came later. 2 Clement 9:5 reversed the order given by Paul in 1 Corinthians 15:46. Christianity was beginning to lose its footing in the Bible.

The same decline into darkness is described by the celebrated Jurgen Moltmann in his *Spirit of Life*:

“**The Gnostic misunderstanding of the apocalyptic conflict** [i.e. future Messianic Kingdom on earth to be introduced at the Second Coming]. In the degree to which Christianity cut itself off from its Hebrew roots [including the Shema which church fathers denounced as “Jewish”!] and acquired Hellenistic and Roman form, it lost its eschatological hope and surrendered its apocalyptic alternative [Kingdom of God to come] to ‘this world’ of violence and death. It merged into late antiquity’s **Gnostic religion of redemption**. From Justin [Martyr] onwards, most of the [church] Fathers revered Plato as a ‘Christian before Christ’ and extolled his feeling for the divine transcendence and for the values of the spiritual world. God’s eternity now took the place of God’s future, **heaven replaced the coming kingdom**, the spirit that redeems the soul from the body supplanted the Spirit as ‘the well of life,’ the **immortality of the soul** displaced the resurrection of the body, and the yearning for another world became a substitute for changing this one. As redemption was spiritualized, the ‘realm of the flesh’ was correspondingly reduced to the body and its earthly drives and needs. People ceased to hope for ‘the redemption of the body’ (Rom. 8:23) in ‘the resurrection of the flesh’ (the down-to-earth phrase used in the German version of the Apostles Creed). They now hoped instead for the **soul’s final deliverance** from the body, with what [Gnostic] Marcion described as its ‘toilsome’ nourishment, its ‘painful’ reproduction

system, and its ‘miserable’ death. It was now no longer the raising of life that was celebrated as the festival of redemption; it was death.

“In the world of late antiquity, Christianity encountered the **Platonic dualism of soul and body** [the beautiful teaching about ‘the sleep of the dead’ got lost, Ps. 13:3; Ecc. 5:9-10] in the form of the Gnostic contempt for the body, and its other-worldly longing for redemption [**going to heaven**]. The soul, condemned to lifelong incarceration in the body, yearns to be freed from this prison. It does not long for the prison to be changed into a home in which it likes to live. In this **Gnostic form, the Christian hope** no longer gazes forward to a future when everything will be created anew. It looks upwards, to the soul’s **escape from the body** and from this earth, into the heaven of blessed spirits.

“All the Greek and Latin fathers had to fight against this contemporary **Gnostic religiosity, and most of them succumbed to it**, developing a Christian spirituality which went halfway to meet these religious requirements. Right down to our own time, the Platonic time-eternity dualism has pushed out the apocalyptic conflict between past and future, and put it out of commission. As a result, the **dualism of body and soul** has continually repressed and abolished the conflict between the death-drive and the drive for life. This is so even today. But the consequence is that a spirituality more or less mildly hostile to the body, a spirituality non-sensuous, unworldly and non-political — a **Gnostic spirituality**, in fact — replaces the original Jewish and Christian vitality of life reborn out of the creative God...

“It is in **Augustine** that we find the theological and anthropological basis for Western spirituality. The concentration of his theology on ‘God and **the soul**’ led to a devaluation of the body and nature, to a preference for **inward**, direct self-experience as a way to God, and to a neglect of sensuous experiences of sociality and nature. Knowledge of the self is a more certain affair than knowledge of the world [and God’s plan]. ‘Close the gateways of thy senses and seek God **deep within**,’ wrote Gerhard Tersteegan...The **medieval mysticism** that followed Augustine’s anthropological theology drew on his psychology in delineating the soul’s ways of meditation on the path to God...Western mysticism of the soul takes its stamp from **Augustine**, and has in its turn put its own impress on the western psyche and western psychology...It generated western individualism, for which the values of the human person take precedence over the values of human sociality. If in tracing the theological premises for western mysticism and spirituality we go back to their biblical roots — and that means their roots in Old Testament and Hebrew thinking too — what difference will this make to spirituality? How will it change?” (p. 89-93). ✧

²⁷ *Formation of Christian Dogma*, 1957, p. 241.

Restoration Fellowship Travel Update

by Barbara Buzzard

Anthony spoke in Virginia in September for their annual state conference. While the “home team” were more than gracious and hospitable, we were also thrilled that an equal number of guests came as a result of the internet. Meeting new One God believers is always a thrill and we had some invigorating discussions. We pray that the “new” people will be blessed as they continue their search for Truth (never-ending!).

Following that, we attended and spoke at a Missions Conference organized by Tracy Zhykhovich in Tennessee. It was decidedly moving to hear of the faith stories Tracy presented from her 7-week missionary trip to Denmark, England, Slovakia, Switzerland, Hungary, and Belarus. People are embracing One God beliefs even with loss of family and friendships. What profound examples these brave people are for us. It is essential that we are faced with true life experiences when one comes in collision with Truth.

We were recently in England for the funeral of Anthony’s brother. But some good things happened as well. Namely, the group there organized at very short notice a meeting and a meal where 14 of us gathered together. This is a fairly new gathering of biblical unitarians. Their testimonies were riveting and left us feeling not only very encouraged but quite convinced that a move of God was happening among them. What we found so wonderful was their determination to spread these amazing Truths. And this, of course, comes from realizing how great and rare (pearls of great price) they are. Please know that one of these individuals was a former enemy who made videos condemning Anthony for non-belief in pre-existence. Now his videos are *for* us. Change can happen!

The next day at another location eight of us gathered together and rejoiced over two baptisms in a hotel pool. Then we spent several hours fellowshiping before our flight back to the U.S. the next morning. It’s terribly exciting to watch and to hear how people come to an understanding of the One True God. All our stories are different; we become “woke” by different catalysts.

And our rejoicing with these people came at just the right time because we had become saddened by the secular nature of England — quite a contrast to the “Bible Belt” we live in, with both its pluses and its minuses (please see next article).

God willing, when you read this we will be in Australia to speak at a conference in Melbourne and hold Bible studies in Sydney. Thanks to the organizers and hosts for their excellent work. ✧

Why Being Green Makes Me Blue

by Barbara Buzzard

I must begin by saying that I was “green” before we knew what that term meant, organic before it was fashionable. I have composted for more years than I can remember (and I say these things only so I won’t be misunderstood). I have enormous respect for the natural resources God has given us, and I have done and will do my utmost not to deplete them. I acknowledge readily that Christians have done very poorly in keeping up their piece of the planet. In a recent article I stressed the link between stewardship and faith.²⁸ Now I am on the other tack, as it were, because being green or going green seems to have become a new religion. And it has a new gospel.

To explain myself, I have just come from a brief trip to the U.K. where this new gospel was in evidence as not only *the in thing* but also *the only thing*. I am, of course, aware of it here in the U.S. but I sensed it to be more extreme there. It was the stance by which one was measured; in fact, the measure of the man. The more green one is, the more worthy one is. It almost seems to have reached a fever pitch where bragging rights now sound like: “My borough is taking the lead in recycling doormats.” The gospel: how we can save ourselves and the planet by going green.

Why did we find this so disturbing? Because, I think, it is being done without any reference to the Master and Sustainer of the universe. It is frustrating in the extreme because it seems to be disengaged from the One whose it is (and remember please that I am *for* most of these measures.)²⁹ Can one’s merit really be determined by his carbon footprint? This breeds a kind of superiority complex and a blame game. Worse than that, and pivotal to our distress about the green emphasis, this appears to have taken pride of place in people’s hearts instead of love of God and our Messiah.

One writer speaks of this as “religious climate hysteria.” This new “church” uses shaming to bring people into line. It blacklists those who do not agree and demonizes dissent. It implies only an evolutionary genesis and leaves us with an uninvolved and absent God. The moral high ground has been hijacked to mean one’s carbon footprint. Atonement is seen as reducing that carbon footprint to a level dictated by those in power. And the powerful emotion of guilt factors in here, causing one to want to “obey.” Green “prophets” are foretelling the disastrous future of our world unless we do exactly as they say. That brings about obedience

²⁸ “Eden: The Link Between Faith and Stewardship,” *Focus on the Kingdom*, August, 2019.

²⁹ I believe in doing all we can do to preserve and protect this precious earth. I abhor the idea that our oceans are filled with plastic and other garbage.

and perhaps even an altar call so as to worship at the altar of “green.”

I find this perspective interesting: “Those in power create a problem or crisis that is real or imagined. They sell this ‘problem’ to the people using thousands of reports and articles — cleverly contrived propaganda. The public reacts to this problem by begging for a solution, which is then provided handily by the people in power. Because global warming is a worldwide ‘problem,’ the ‘solution’ is too difficult for nation states by themselves to handle. Thus the solution to this particular ‘problem’ is nothing short of totalitarianism on a global scale.”³⁰

We spoke with several about the art of *getting to the point* of a particular subject. And this was where I found a great divide. One environmentalist said about his work in Africa that we must *stop them from cutting down the trees*. (This is a good point and one with which I agree.) However, as many of you know, I am passionate about NOT killing unborn children. Why not start there? Surely, one would want to start there?! Surely one would begin by *stopping them from tearing off the limbs of unborn babies*. Why is this not even more important?

I believe and I fear that the answer is denial — denial that the horrors of abortion happen in their own beloved country. One hears and learns a lot as a pro-life advocate. I have at least twice been told by people from different countries that “I am sure we don’t do that here.” And of course, the practice I have just referred to is happening on a huge scale there.

I hope that I haven’t offended my U.K. friends. Please know that in the U.S. we seem to have a gospel revolving around food. How it saves us I have never understood! ✧

Comments

• “My family and I spent six years in a Messianic synagogue and we never once heard anything about unitarian monotheism. I saw Sir Anthony debate Dr. Michael Brown, and Sir Anthony made so much sense that I had to dig in more. I thought the Trinity was a settled belief and there was no reason to question it. I was so wrong. It is so refreshing to read the Bible without the Trinitarian lenses, taking Yeshua’s words as they are written. I’m taking it slow and absorbing as much as I can. Thank you so much for teaching on this position.” — *North Carolina*

• “I am a former Jehovah’s Witness, but left over doubts surrounding the inerrant nature of the Governing Body well before the failed/changed 1914 prophecy controversy. For the past 25 years I have been researching the Bible alone in my search for truth. I maintained my non-Trinitarian belief that Jesus is the

Son of God, not God. Over time, I have diverged from JW teaching that Jesus pre-existed as an angel, and come to understand the critical importance that he had to simply be a man; albeit a perfect one. I have also always maintained my belief in the resurrection and the return to a restored earth. I firmly believe that the Kingdom of God is the central theme of the whole Bible. Reading Anthony Buzzard’s books and listening to Sean Finnegan’s podcasts have helped my understanding about the Kingdom and restored earth. I am contemplating the new information I am encountering about the promises to Abraham and his yet to be realized inheritance.” — *Malaysia*

• “All Jehovah’s Witnesses should read the excellent book by the ex-governing body member Ray Franz (nephew to JW president Fred Franz) called *Crisis of Conscience* (and the follow-up book *In Search of Christian Freedom*) which really debunks the whole organisation from inside out. I am working hard to completely drain any remnants of Jehovah’s Witness doctrines and refill with truth, life-giving waters; a mindset of being chosen as the elect if it is God’s great pleasure to bestow that honour upon us. With your help we can pick ourselves up from the lowly position of hanging on the coat tails of the elect for salvation, as JWs have taught, and see the real promise in store for us (‘Navy Seals’ in training as you put it), with all due humility of course.” — *England*

• “I’ve believed in one God and one mediator ever since I was a child at 9 as I remember. Though there were ups and downs in my faith, now I am sure that Jesus Christ was my shepherd. Now I am 36 and I would like to be baptized, so I am looking for a unitarian to baptize me.” — *Philippines*

• “I very much appreciate the book you wrote called *The Amazing Aims and Claims of Jesus*. No words can describe how immensely helpful it has been in establishing real Christian faith. I have not been able to put it down — even reading sections over again! There is so much highlighting! I can now see the trees from the forest — truly! I now have a deep understanding of how essential it is that I have the Gospel of the coming Kingdom in mind at all times when studying Scripture and Jesus’ teaching and preaching. A massive gap has been filled in my understanding of my Christian faith. It’s all about a glorious future to come — so exciting. I’m so thankful to God for His amazing love, so thankful He gave Jesus to be our teacher, example and door to His wonderful rescue promises. Wow!” — *Florida*

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³⁰ *The Green New Deal and Climate Change, What You Need to Know*, Lynne Balzer, p. 57