

Focus on the Kingdom

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The Prophet Jesus

Jesus called himself a prophet. He observed that prophets, including himself, frequently were killed in Jerusalem (Luke 13:33). But the title “prophet” for Jesus is most unfamiliar to many churchgoers, who have been forced by popular creeds to insist that “Jesus is God.”

Here we have a direct reference to Jesus as known to the public in his time. He is “the **prophet Jesus from Nazareth**” (Matt. 21:11).

The major key to all sound Bible study and understanding is that each of us must pay close attention to *the words, teachings* of the prophet Jesus, the Christ (Messiah) and Son of God. The public has not been allowed to see this. They have been exposed to a truncated version of the Gospel. They have been misled into thinking that the Gospel means *only* the death of Jesus for sins and his resurrection. Against this disaster comes a fair warning from Jesus. The real and only Christians are those who pay attention to the students, disciples of Jesus as the true and final prophet. These are the blessed ones, Jesus said, who “receive you and listen to you” (Mark 6:11).

Thus, making the same point, the voice of God Himself thundered from heaven at the Transfiguration: “**Listen to My Son**” (Matt. 17:5). God was well pleased with His sinless, obedient Son.

Christianity is defined here as listening to and obeying the Son (cp. Heb. 5:9). The intelligent people in the days of Jesus “would get up very early in the morning to come to him in the temple to **listen** to him” (Luke 21:38). Luke 24:19 recalls that Jesus was “a prophet mighty in deed and word.” John the Baptist was also a prophet.

Our task today is to alert the public that all is *not well* with current versions of Christianity. The root cause is the failure of preaching to emphasize the *teachings* of Jesus.

A professor at Harvard, Andrews Norton, observed the core of the disaster astutely. He pointed out that from the second century the true faith as Jesus preached it began to be lost. “The Christianity of the Gospels is not that of the earliest Christian Fathers (I speak of the Fathers of the first three centuries). We find in their writings the doctrines of Christianity intimately blended with opinions derived from the philosophy of the age.”

He then observed that the “church fathers” began to confuse the identity of God and of Jesus — hence the most fundamental of all Bible teachings were corrupted.

“Orthodox theology seems to have been the peculiar region of **words without meaning**... When I am told that the same being is both God and man, I recognize, as I have before said, a very intelligible, though a very absurd proposition... When it is affirmed that ‘the Father is God, and the Son is God, and the Holy Ghost is God; and yet there are not three Gods, but one God’; no words can more clearly convey any meaning, than those propositions express the meaning, that there are three existences of whom the attributes of God may be predicated, and yet there is only one existence of whom the attributes of God may be predicated. But this is not an incomprehensible mystery: it is plain nonsense.”¹

What about you? What are you learning about Jesus in church?

Jesus the Prophet — The Ultimate Teacher

These opportunities give me just what I need to remind us all of the fixed and firm nonnegotiable basis of our Christian faith. I want to do this, because I think that some unitarians currently suffer from a degree of disorientation, failure to be clear about the Bible’s timetable in terms of **the two covenants**, which must always be clearly distinguished. This results from not paying proper attention to the words, teachings **of Jesus our prophet**. Not to know when the Old Covenant **Law of Moses in the letter** ended, and when the New Covenant in the spirit — the Torah of Messiah — began to be in force, presents the extreme danger of falling for the dreadful mistake of confusing the Christian faith. Losing Christianity means losing the **words, teachings of Jesus, the prophet**, as our one solid, indispensable rock foundation.

John 12:44-50 is so clear — as well as very threatening:

^{ESV} “And Jesus cried out [for special emphasis as he did also in Luke 8:8, the parable of the sower] and said, ‘Whoever believes in me, believes not in me but in Him who sent me... If anyone **hears my words** and does not keep them, I do not judge him; for I did not come to judge the world but to save the world. The one who **rejects me and does not receive my words** has a judge; the **word that I have spoken** will judge him on the last day. For I have not spoken on my own initiative, but the Father who

¹ *A Statement of Reasons for Not Believing the Doctrines of the Trinitarians*, 1873, p. 119-120, 125, 169-70.

sent me has given me a command, namely, **what to say and how to say it** [CJB]. I know that what He commands is eternal life [Life in the Age to Come]. Whatever I say is what the Father told me to say” (GWN).

The value of us all thinking of Jesus as the Prophet will also get the ear of millions of Muslims who are well schooled on the idea of their prophet. What they need is to grasp the meaning of the only real and true Prophet Jesus from Nazareth. That is the prophet Jesus as defined by Peter in Acts:

^{CSB} **Acts 3:22-23**: “Moses said: ‘The Lord your God will raise up for you **a prophet like me [Moses]** from among your brothers. You *must listen* to everything he says to you. Everyone who **fails to listen to that prophet will be removed from the people and destroyed**” (CJB). This is an ultimate threat and warning!

The New Testament’s Core Theme

Every system of learning, supremely the Bible, needs a clear, central, backbone core, theme and thesis. In the case of New Testament Christianity, I select the unmistakably clear statements of Paul and John. Let us see if we really believe the prophet Jesus and his servant spokesmen. **In 1 Timothy 6:3**, Paul gives us the precise litmus test for telling the difference between true and false. Paul states categorically that anybody who does not bring you **the teachings of Messiah** is ignorant and dangerous, and worse, and is to be firmly rejected.

Another Apostle in **2 John 7-9** makes the same dramatically interesting point. Our destiny depends on our hearing the **teachings** of Jesus. We might say that the Devil has only one master trick — that is, to detach and separate **the prophet Messiah Jesus** from his own teaching. In that way the clever impression is given to the public that Jesus is being “received or preached,” when the actual **teaching** of Jesus is cleverly **omitted and suppressed**. For our own salvation and safety, we must pay the closest attention to this threat.

I arrive at this point of view by thinking long about what is surely the most alarming of all of Jesus’ statements: “Why do you keep calling me ‘lord, lord,’ and you will not do **what I say?**” (Luke 6:46). What Jesus says is what he teaches. “Many will say to me in that future day, ‘lord, lord, don’t you see that we preached in your name, expelled demons in your name, and even did miracles in your name?’” Their protests will be greeted with these chilling words: “Depart from me; I never recognized you” (Matt. 7:21-23)

How could that ultimate, crushing disappointment come to be? The answer must be that the **sayings and teachings** of Jesus had been neglected, overlooked, disregarded, while the *name* “Jesus” had been offered to the public. This would be the essence of crafty, diabolical deception. It will be no less threatening of course to reject or twist the words of Paul, who spoke for the prophet Jesus.

The prophet Jesus says to us: “You call me rabbi and lord, and you do well to do so, for that is just what I am” (John 13:13). I suggest that current Christianity has lost much of this central thrust of rabbi Jesus’ teaching.

How well are we doing?

We need to reset our thinking and reestablish the NT timetable and program, fully grasping that the prophet Jesus is the minister and founder and High Priest of the New, not the Old Covenant (Heb. 12:24; 8:6; Luke 22:29-30; Heb. 9:15: “will,” CJB). Note that Jesus “**covenants** to give us the Kingdom as God **covenanted** to give it to” him. The loss of the **word covenant** in many translations is a serious mistake.

^{Rotherham} **Luke 22:29**: “And, I, **covenant** to you — as my Father hath **covenanted** to me — a kingdom”

Thus the Kingdom of God teaching of Jesus is the “whole deal.” It is the subject of the Gospel preached by Jesus and the whole New Testament. Let us take stock of the enormous fact that Jesus the Prophet is the minister and servant of the New, not Old, Covenant.

Listening as we all do these days to a mass of Bible opinion coming at us from all quarters, certain statements are emblazoned in my heart as being profoundly shocking. I refer to a conversation in which I was told that when Paul said “I [a Jew and a Pharisee] am not under the law” (1 Cor 9:20), that *really* means “I, Paul, am not under *the penalty of the law.*” The effort on the part of the speaker was to promote the very mistaken notion that **Jewish** Christians must remain as Christians under the Law of Moses in the letter, while non-Jewish Christians are under no such obligation.

I think we must reject that distinction as creating a divided New Testament church. There is in fact “one faith,” and only one faith. God is equally the God of the Jews and the Gentiles (Rom. 3:29). Circumcision in the flesh means nothing at all (1 Cor. 7:19). It means nothing even for Jews who have decided to follow Jesus and the Torah of Messiah. **The New Covenant in the spirit** is for all of us Christians, whatever nationality we may be. There is one faith only, and our practice as Christians is to be unified. We are to be the international Israel of God (Gal. 6:16; Phil. 3:3). Never of course must we forget the other, equally important definition of present ethnic Israel as the currently blinded ethnic Israelites or Jews. For these Jews (a remnant of them) a great future is promised as in Romans 9-11.

I want to advise all of us to pay careful attention to the backgrounds on which we may have been nurtured. We have all been there: in my case it was Armstrongism (Worldwide Church of God) with its heavy emphasis on clean foods, Sabbath and holy days, and “two Gods in the God family.” In the case of others, it was the heavy and very uneducated hand of the Way International which formed their way of thinking, in those earlier days of ignorance. Under that system the dread word

Dispensationalism appeared, learned unexamined and uncritically from the Bullinger Bible.

With my thesis that separating Jesus from his own teachings is the ultimate subtle and ruinous deception, it is very easy to see how for example the Bullinger Companion Bible achieved its dangerous results. **According to Bullinger the Gospel was not to be found in the Gospels!** The Gospel in the Gospels was said to be for Jews only, not the rest of us. But that sort of view is antichrist, pure and simple, since **it gets rid of the teaching of Jesus**, and pushes Jesus back into the Old Covenant, removing him from us who claim to be, *and must* be — his followers, and followers of his teaching. To say that the Gospel in the Gospels is really only for Jews is a not too subtle way of saying that the prophet Jesus does not really count! That is pure Antichristianity! The mistake is repeated in *One God and One Lord*: “Technically the ‘Four Gospels’ are part of what is called the ‘Old Testament’” (p. 99). That regrettable assertion gets rid of Jesus!

Another example: The NIV cleverly invites you to the same sort of error by telling us that Jesus preached “the Good News,” but Paul preached “the Gospel.” The distinction hinted at is very false. It gets rid of the saving Gospel of the Kingdom proclaimed by Jesus, the prophet Jesus (Mark 1:14, 15). Note too that the NIV very cleverly misled its readers to think that Jesus went “BACK” to heaven! (John 13:3; 16:28). Jesus was also made to “preexist” via the wrongly capitalized “Word” in John 1:1.

This Antichristian teaching is also what is so astonishingly stated in the following two quotations.

Dr. James Kennedy of Coral Ridge Ministries (he died in 2007):

“Many people today think that the essence of Christianity is the teachings of Jesus. That isn’t so. The teachings of Jesus are somewhat secondary to Christianity. If you read the epistles of the Apostle Paul, which make up about half of the New Testament, you’ll see almost nothing whatsoever said **about the teachings of Jesus**. Not one of his parables is mentioned. In fact, throughout the rest of the New Testament there’s little reference to the teachings of Jesus. In the Apostles’ creed, the most universally held Christian creed, there is no reference to **the teachings of Jesus** or to the example of Jesus. In fact, in recounting Christ’s earthly life, the creed states simply that He was ‘born of the virgin Mary, suffered under Pontius Pilate, was crucified, dead and was buried.’ It mentions only two days in Jesus’s life — that of His birth and that of His death. **Christianity**

² D. James Kennedy and Jerry Newcombe, *The Presence of a Hidden God*, 2008, chapter “How I Know Jesus Is God,” p. 82, emphasis added.

³ “*The Only Way*,” *Daily Truth* devotional, emphasis added.

centers not in the teachings of Jesus but in the person of Jesus as the incarnate God who came into the world to take upon himself our guilt and to die in our place.”²

Also from Kennedy:

“But Jesus says, ‘I am the way.’ **It is not the teachings of Jesus, it is not the preaching of Jesus**, it is not the example of Jesus, it is not the Sermon on the Mount, it is not the Beatitudes, or anything else that He taught or said that is the way. The way is Christ Himself, the divine second Person of the Trinity, the Creator of the galaxies that came into this world.”³

I trust that these quotes leave you gasping, or as Greg Deuble would say in Australia, “gobsmacked.”

These statements are a huge and glaring falsehood, since Paul preached exactly the same Gospel of the Kingdom as did Jesus, to all, Jews and Gentiles alike, in Acts (14:22; 19:8; 20:24-25; 28:23, 31).

Now this equally alarming statement from another top evangelical scholar, Dr. Harold O.J. Brown:

“Christianity takes its name from its founder, or rather from what he was called, the Christ. Buddhism is also named for its founder. And non-Muslims often call Islam Mohammedanism. But while Buddhism and Islam are based primarily on the *teaching* of the Buddha and Mohammed, respectively, **Christianity is based primarily on the person of Christ. The Christian faith is not belief in his teaching**, but in what is taught **about him**. The appeal of Protestant liberals to ‘believe as Jesus believed,’ rather than to believe in Jesus, is a dramatic transformation of the fundamental nature of Christianity.”⁴

Is that not a colossal lie? You cannot believe in Jesus and not believe his teaching!

Then also C.S. Lewis. Lewis denies Jesus while claiming to follow him! He wrote: “The **Gospels are not ‘the gospel,’** the statement of the Christian belief.”⁵ So then the words of Jesus are not the Gospel! This must be the ultimate falsehood, the ultimate deception. So Jesus has to be rescued from “church”!

Dr. James Dunn:

“Hurtado does not think it **necessary for Jesus to have thought and spoken of himself in the same terms as his followers thought and spoke of him** in the decades subsequent to his crucifixion, in order for the convictions of those followers to be treated as valid by Christians today; though he also notes that most Christians *probably think* that there was ‘some degree of continuity’ between what Jesus thought of himself and subsequent Christology.”⁶

Has Hurtado read the New Testament?!

⁴ *Heresies*, 1984, p. 13, emphasis added.

⁵ Introduction to J.B. Phillips’ *Letters to Young Churches*, p. 9-10, emphasis added.

⁶ *Did the First Christians Worship Jesus?* p. 93, fn. 2.

In all of these cases what this false teaching achieved was the removal of the teaching of Jesus, in the name of proclaiming **only his death and resurrection**. This appears to be also the core of the Billy Graham statement that “Jesus came to do three days’ work — to die, to be buried and to rise.” 1 Corinthians 15:1-3 and Romans 10 were then twisted to support that false notion. Paul did *not* say that 1 Corinthians 15:1-3 was an account of the **totality** of the Gospel, but only of some of its principal themes (*en protois*). In Romans 10 Paul said that we must “hear Jesus preaching” (v. 14), i.e. it is not sufficient to just hear *about* him, that he died and rose. That would contradict Jesus in Mark 1:14-15, etc.

It was I think the blessed revelation granted to the “Abrahamic Faith” Bible students of the 1850s to point out and found a whole denomination (not a small achievement!), re-establishing the centrally important Gospel preaching and teaching of Jesus concerning the Kingdom of God. Acts 8:12 was then very intelligently selected as the slogan of that rediscovered Christianity. Luke 4:43 was then also highlighted in all preaching to ensure that we **never, ever** lose track of Jesus’ own mission statement. If one has had the chance, as I have, to examine hundreds of books on evangelism — how to “get saved,” it is alarming to find Acts 8:12, Luke 4:43, and Mark 1:14-15, where Jesus **begins** his evangelism, completely absent from all presentations of what is called “the Gospel.”

The NT timetable can be reasserted and reset for us all very easily. John 1:17 is quite clear: **“The Law was given through Moses, but grace and truth came through Jesus Messiah.”**

Luke 16:16: “The Law and the Prophets were until John; **since then** the Gospel of the Kingdom of God is preached, and everyone forces his way into it” (ESV).

It could hardly be clearer than this: Mark 1:1, 14: The **beginning** of the Gospel of God. Repent and believe the **Gospel about the Kingdom**.

Acts 10:36-37: “The word which God sent to the children of Israel, preaching the Gospel of **peace through** Jesus Christ (he is Lord of all) — that saying you yourselves know, which was published throughout all Judaea, **beginning** from Galilee, after the baptism which John preached.”

^{NAB} **Hebrews 2:3:** “How shall we escape if we ignore so great a salvation? **Announced originally** [‘had its **beginning**’] **through the Lord**, it was confirmed for us by those who had heard.

Then Paul: ^{ESV} **Galatians 3:23:** “Now before faith came, we were held captive under the law, imprisoned until the coming faith would be revealed. So then, the law was our guardian **until** Christ came, in order that we might be justified by faith. But since that faith has come, **we are no longer under a guardian**” (CSB)

1 Corinthians 9:20: Paul speaks as a Jew, and for all believers, Jews or otherwise: We, including Paul, are *not* under the Torah of Moses.

I hope we all see how all the NT writers confirm the New Covenant which began when Jesus the High Priest showed up (Heb. 9:11). The beginning of Christianity is not the Ascension or Pentecost. It **begins** with the teaching, preaching of Jesus the Christian prophet and Messiah.

The claim by Armstrong that we are indeed still to be under the Law of Moses, was a not too well camouflaged invitation into Antichrist. Jesus was pushed back under the Old Covenant. The opposite error, just as insidious, happened when Bullinger’s ultra-dispensationalism relegated Jesus to the Old Covenant. The Devil’s trick persisted. The teaching of Jesus was disposed of.

Be it carefully noted that the historical Jesus before his death “cleansed all [unclean] foods” (Mark 7:19). He narrowed the rule on divorce given by Moses, putting the bar higher (Matt. 19:8-9): “But I say to you...” Jesus reduces the reason for divorce to one cause only. He also moved away from strict Sabbath keeping by showing that even in the Law those who work in the Temple are not subject to Sabbath keeping (Matt. 12:5).

Jesus illustrated a further wise policy of “compromise” and concession to others’ weakness when he told Peter that as Kingdom persons they did not *need* to pay the temple tax (Matt. 17:24-27). But in order not to offend the authorities, “let’s pay it anyway.”

Prominent in all our teaching and preaching there needs to be the easy fact that Matthew carefully structured his Gospel in five sections: “When Jesus had finished all these words” (Matt. 7:28; 11:1; 13:53; 19:1; 26:1) to show that the prophet Jesus was the new Moses (whose teaching was in five books). Jesus was not just repeating Moses, but “fulfilling” his teachings (Matt. 5:17), bringing it to its new Christian perfection. The antitheses are crystal clear: “You have heard that it was said, **but I say to you...**” Not to hear and understand this New Covenant is to fail to hear and understand Jesus. It is to promote antichristianity. I suggest that the current American “Bible atmosphere” suffers from this false idea.

As to the matter of believing in the right rather than wrong Jesus, note that Trinitarianism bypasses Jesus’ own insistence on the superlatively greatest command, the Shema, in Deuteronomy 6:4: “The Lord our God is one Lord,” repeated in Mark 12:29. Trinitarianism adds two more Gods and makes a fully human Jesus impossible. Your friends who attend Trinitarian churches will not be told that the official creed under which they assemble says that “Jesus was man but **not a man**” and that Jesus had “a beginningless beginning.”

We are up against this difficulty: “Because the sentence against an evil deed is not executed quickly, therefore the hearts of the sons of men among them are given fully to do evil” (Ecc. 8:11). A love of the truth

remains, however, the only way to salvation (2 Thess. 2:10). God Himself says that He has remained silent (Isa. 42:14), but the demands and teachings of the prophet Jesus remain the basis of our relationship with God and Jesus.

The key to Jesus being **the human Son** of God is this: Psalm 110:1 is massively quoted and alluded to in the NT. In that oracle the one God YHVH addresses the lord of David, i.e. *adoni*, “my lord” (not Lord). This “my lord,” *adoni*, is a *non-Deity*, human figure, in all 195 appearances of *adoni*.

Jesus as *adoni*, David’s and our lord, is now at the right hand of God. That “right hand man” is said to be “the man of Your right hand” (Ps. 80:15-17). This is “the Son of Man [the human being] whom you have made strong for Yourself” (v. 15). This fits too with Psalm 8 and gives us the destiny of Jesus and of us (vv. 3-8). Hebrews 2:6-8 quotes this destiny for the human, **Son of Man** Jesus, now at the right hand of God, as in Psalm 110:1. “We do **not yet** see all things subject to him” (Heb. 2:8). This gives complete clarity to the Messiah as human. Daniel 7:13, 14, 18, 22, 27 (“obey them, the people of God”) fills out the same information in relation to the coming Kingdom, which is the heart of the saving Gospel first preached by the prophet Jesus and the Christians (Mark 1:14-15; Luke 4:43; Acts 8:12). ✧

Some Thoughts on the History of the Trinity

by Greg Michaelson, Australia

Plato (c. 428-348 BC) believed that the myths about the Greek gods were false, immoral stories made up by men (he may have got that right!). He believed in a spiritual world of perfection (a world of ideas/forms). Basically, he believed that what we see in this world are imperfect copies of what is in the perfect, spiritual world. The false teaching of the immortal soul originated mainly with Plato. He started a Hellenistic “school of philosophy” which has had many students throughout the centuries — “Greek philosophy.” We in the West tend to think like Greeks — not like Hebrews.

Greek philosophy even influenced the Jews. One of these was the famous Philo (c. 20 BC-50 AD), the Jew who some believe influenced the Nicene Creed, even though he had been dead for 300 years. Some believe “Light from Light, true God from true God” in the Nicene Creed came from Philo’s writings. I looked that up and am satisfied it is most likely true.

According to famous church historian Jaroslav Pelikan, who read and commented on all 38 volumes of the church fathers’ writings, the Neo-Platonists of the third century followed in the steps of the Greek philosophers. They continued with old ideas and developed new ideas. One of these ideas was that in the metaphysical world/world of ideas, there are the three

elements — the One, the Intellect, and the Soul — and these three are ontologically one, one in essence. Sound familiar? This was the idea of Plotinus (c. 204-270 AD). He believed that the physical is evil and the spiritual is good, i.e., Gnostic thinking. Augustine of Hippo appears to have been influenced by this same type of thinking, and made sex almost a sin — even within marriage.

It is well known that some of the early Christian fathers, such as Justin Martyr, Tertullian, Clement of Alexandria and Theodosius, were influenced by Greek philosophy. I have read their writings and none of these men were Trinitarian. This is a false idea spread by Trinitarians who take quotes out of context and hope no one (like me) goes and reads the original writings for themselves! Justin Martyr was an Arian (believing the Son was created) who placed the beginning of the Logos (the Word) at the beginning of creation (not Trinitarian!). Tertullian believed the Son was subordinate to the Father, which of course the Church later rejected as heretical. Theophilus of Antioch spoke of God, His Word and His Wisdom (but that’s not the Trinity!). In fact, Jaroslav Pelikan says that many of the early church writers seemed to be more “modalist” (Oneness) than Trinitarian in their thinking.

The early church fathers were more interested in “Logos theory” than the Trinity, i.e. how God related to the Word. Almost all of them believed that the Son was subordinate to the Father, which is not what the Trinity teaches. Contrary to the Bible, the Trinity does not teach subordinationism. When Arius quoted the church fathers and the Bible to Emperor Constantine, Constantine changed his position and exiled Athanasius. He became an Arian himself and was baptized on his deathbed by an Arian bishop, Eusebius of Nicomedia.

Along came Origen (c. 184-253). He was heavily influenced by all this Greek philosophy. He believed in the preexistence of souls — that we were all immortal souls up in heaven before we became babies in the womb, and he also believed in universal salvation — everyone will be saved. No wonder he got excommunicated! At Origen’s school in Alexandria, all these Greek philosophical ideas were encouraged to be read. It is interesting that a man called Rufinus admits he changed Origen’s writing to help get Origen’s excommunication overturned after he had died. We can prove this is the case because manuscript fragments of Origen’s writings don’t match Rufinus’ book. Origen’s writings were burnt, but fragments remained. Origen was the first to use the words “timeless Son” — although he also used the word “created” in reference to the Son. He was all over the place.

Because of persecution, churches were not able to liaise very easily with each other until the end of the third century. There were a few councils held in the third century, because there were many ideas floating around:

Modalism/Monarchianism/Sabellianism, Unitarianism, Arianism, Adoptionism, Docetism, etc.

When Constantine was supposedly converted (c. 312), he found the Church in disarray, and the “great” period of the Church Councils began. At that time Arius was saying that the Son was created, and that was a problem to both Athanasius (who was a Trinitarian) and the semi-Arians in the East who believed the Son was begotten out of the Father, though not an eternal “God the Son” Person. The Semi-Arians counseled Arius and thought they had won him over, but I doubt that happened.

To try to unify the Church and help his empire, Constantine called for the council of Nicea in 325 AD. This was to decide the nature of Jesus the Son. It was decided that the Son was “*homoousios*” (the same essence as God) and not “*homoiousios*” (of similar essence as God). The decision was that Arianism was unorthodox. Only about three Arians voted against the council, and they were exiled. No decision was made on the Holy Spirit, and there still remained many ideas on who or what the Holy Spirit was even until 381 AD.

What the Trinitarians never mention is that the debate continued after Nicea. Arius got into the ear of the Emperor Constantine, and he and both his sons became Arians. Then in 357 AD another even larger council than Nicea was held that declared Arianism orthodox (Third Council of Sirmium).

This created more division, and men such as the “Cappadocian fathers” — Basil the Great, Gregory of Nyssa, and Gregory of Nazianzus — rose up to defend the Trinity. Basil and Gregory of Nyssa were brothers who were brought up in a Christian family. Their father (Basil the Elder) had been influenced by Greek philosophy. Basil the Great wrote a document on the Holy Spirit being the third co-equal, co-eternal God-person of the Trinity, which greatly influenced the Council of Constantinople in 381 AD. Thus the Holy Spirit officially became orthodoxy’s third co-eternal, co-equal God-Person of the Trinity.

All the Cappadocian fathers were readers of Greek philosophy. They tried to work out how three distinct Persons, each of whom is God, with separate minds and separate wills, could be one God and not three Gods. They never got there. They tried to work through all these issues using the thinking of Greek philosophers like Plotinus — the three principles: the One, the Intellect and the Soul, and these three are ontologically one. They even admitted that they couldn’t logically make three into one.

For centuries theologians have tried to understand how three Persons — each of whom is God — can be one God. They wrestle with questions like:

- Is God a social Trinity? An economic Trinity?

- Is the Nicene Creed correct when it says that God is one hypostasis or is the Creed of Constantinople correct when it says that God is three hypostases?
- Are the Roman Catholics right about their Trinity, or are the Eastern Orthodox correct?
- Are those who believe in the kenosis (emptying) theory correct or those who oppose it? How could God the Son remain God and empty Himself of the divine attributes that make Him “God”?

Enter into all this Augustine of Hippo (354-430). It appears he too was influenced by the Neo-Platonist thinkers of the third century. Through his writings and with the previous persecution by Emperor Theodosius, who made the Trinity mandatory after the Council of Constantinople in 381 AD, the Trinitarians won the day.

Personally, I believe the true church is a little flock that keeps popping up as footnotes in history. They didn’t have everything right, but they remained faithful with the little strength they had. I am not saying there aren’t any of God’s people in the larger churches, but His message to them is “Come out of her, My people.”

Thus ends the history lesson. A good book to read is *When Jesus Became God* by Richard E. Rubenstein, an unbiased Jewish professor who specializes in trying to understand and solve religious conflict. ✧

Truth That Hurts

by Carlos Xavier, Georgia

Former three-time Southern Baptist Convention president, Adrian Rogers, famously said, “It is better to be divided by truth than to be united in error. It is better to speak the truth that hurts and then heals, than falsehood that comforts and then kills.”

And clinical psychologist Dr. Jordan Peterson wrote, “The highest possible value is truth, a value much higher than kindness. For example, when you discipline children you often hurt their feelings in the short term so that they can learn to behave properly in the medium to long-term so their lives go well.”

You might think these are just simple ways to talk about “tough love.” But these quotes, from people who most of us might otherwise not agree with, are nonetheless echoing biblical truths.

Proverbs says that “Whoever refuses to **spank** his son hates him, but whoever loves his son **disciplines** him from early on” (NOG). The book of Hebrews says that it’s not enjoyable while we’re “being **punished** — it **hurts!** But afterwards we can see the result, a quiet **growth** in grace and character” (TLB).

We are commanded to “be ready **in season and out of season to reprove, rebuke, and exhort**” (2 Tim. 4:2). So how do we do this while “speaking the truth in **love**”? I suggest that a good start would be not **compromising** your “love for the truth.” After all Paul did say “Love

rejoices in the truth, but not in **evil**" (1 Cor. 13:6). This remains the case even if those you exhort at the time see it as **divisive**, **hurtful** or even **unloving**! Remember, "At the time, discipline isn't much fun."

Paul tells Timothy that a time will come "when people will not **tolerate** sound doctrine, but according to their own desires, will **multiply** teachers for themselves because they have an itch to hear what **they want** to hear." Now I know that this might sound corny or even worse, **prophet-like**, but I really believe *that* time is here!

For example, I always look at this stunning historical fact as a marker. Just within my own lifetime we've had the first ever government-backed same sex marriage legislation. If that wasn't bad enough, governments are now redefining what constitutes a biological male or female person. Actually they're even changing the language to redefine what a person is! Merriam-Webster announced late last year that it had chosen the word "they" as the "2019 word of the year." They wrote, "The singular *they* is a pronoun used to refer to **a single person** whose gender identity is **nonbinary**" ("neither entirely male nor entirely female"!).

These events have *never* happened in the history of recorded humanity. Think about that! This world has seen truly evil, immoral governments. We've had the bloodthirsty coliseums, public orgies of the Romans, the Mongol hordes that ravaged Europe, and even within recent memory the Holocaust camps of Nazi Germany.

Jesus said that he "didn't come to bring peace, but a sword," i.e., "conflict" (Matt. 10:34). He warned his followers that his words would divide people, even their own flesh and blood. Jesus was, in the best sense of the word, divisive. He knew that *his* truth, by its very nature, in this world divides. Now certainly most of us do not seek or want division. Who wants to be known as a "hostile separatist" who is always "sowing division"?

But *if* division occurs in the pursuit of doing and speaking truth, then you have to be prepared to live with *whatever* consequences that may bring. The fact is that the lukewarm condition within the Church has reached a point where it can no longer be hidden. Clear lines are being drawn not only in regard to moral, ethical issues but also other matters of doctrine. This is a result of a long-term de-emphasis of the truth, i.e., the Gospel about the Kingdom of God and the things regarding the procreated, human Son of God.

So let us keep examining and testing ourselves each and every day. Are we willing to sacrifice property, family, our very lives? Are we ready to stand behind the enemy lines? Let us not "fail the test" by remembering the words of the lord Jesus, recorded *throughout* all four Gospels: **If you love your life, you will lose it. But if you hate your life in this age, you'll gain the life of the coming age.**

Let us in our distress, like King David himself, pray that we may "fall into the hands of the Lord, because His mercies are great. I do not want to fall into human hands" (2 Sam 24:14). ✧

Preexistence Panel Online

Jan. 6, 2021, 7:30 pm EST

thehumanjesus.org/preexistencepanel

Correction

In my review of *Red Pill Gospel* in the September *Focus on the Kingdom*, I wrote: "The author details a fascinating journey from being a struggling atheist..." Actually the author was never an atheist but wrote that at one point he *imagined* himself to be a "struggling atheist trying to make sense of a fallen world."

— Barbara Buzzard

Comments

- "The Human Jesus online conference was very helpful and I'm enjoying the lessons on Sunday mornings as well. I am also enjoying the beginnings of Wiley Jones' book *The Gospel of the Kingdom*." — *Canada*

- "I have been reading and listening and sometimes watching and learning from you over the past couple of years. I felt it was time to express my appreciation for your fine work and deep insight into Scripture — particularly the LORD Adonai and the various ways it can be understood. I find your newsletters invigorating, stimulating. but most of all, encouraging." — *email*

- "I think the first time I heard Anthony was the Michael Brown and James White debate, and I didn't really buy anything Anthony said. I sort of laughed at it, and was on the Trinitarian side. But what happens is, the arguments and verses he used stick in your head, like Psalm 110. Then you continue to come across these verses in your reading or studying and they stick out and make you think — then you dig deeper. Roughly a year later I think I would watch the same debate and just wonder how I could have been on the Trinitarian side. Psalm 110:1 really helped me: 'The LORD said to my lord.' Only one of those is God/YHWH (the LORD). It takes time though, so we need to keep planting the seeds, and possibly people start to change months down the road. Whether we personally see the results or not, keep planting the seeds." — *Youtube*

- "It was through your work and others that I came to the faith of the 'one true God.' I would like to thank you for your tireless efforts in presenting the 'one true God' and the true gospel message, 'the gospel of the Kingdom,' to the world via your YouTube channel. On a personal note, I have no Christian family, no Christian friends and no place of worship to attend, so YouTube channels like yours are a blessing to people in my situation." — *Youtube*