

Focus on the Kingdom

Vol. 24 No. 2

Anthony Buzzard, editor

November, 2021

Our One Hope in Christ A Refutation of the Jehovah's Witnesses' "Two Hope" Doctrine by Michael Gillespie

There is only one hope; the same hope that unites us all (Eph. 4:4) — just as there is one God, one lord, one faith, and one baptism. We, as followers of Christ, all share the belief and life in each.

As we read through the Greek Scriptures, the same hope is again and again reiterated to build up the various congregations, to encourage them to continue walking with God. The hope, as we find in study, is the hope of the life of the age to come in the Kingdom, to attain the promised inheritance of the earth with Jesus and the rest of the anointed ones. This is a shared goal, the long-awaited expectation of every believer.

If we take the view that we do not belong to this hope, that we are not “born again” or “anointed of God,” we lose out on the many beautiful promises of Scripture. We distance ourselves from many passages of Scripture; we distance ourselves from others who are “called”; and we deny that we are God’s children, thereby denying that He is truly our Father. By denying these promises, we also deny the spirit, we deny Christ as our mediator, and most integrally, we deny our salvation, God’s grace, His undeserved gift offered to us.

My proof of this will begin with Romans 8:14-17: “For **all** who are led by the spirit of God are the children of God. [In Romans 8:9 we read that we are in harmony, not with the flesh, but with the spirit, if God’s spirit truly dwells in us. But if anyone does not have Christ’s spirit, this person does not belong to him.] For you did not receive a spirit of slavery to fall back into fear, but you have received a spirit of adoption. When we cry, ‘Abba! Father!’ it is that very Spirit bearing witness with our spirit that we are the children of God. And if children, then heirs, heirs **of God** and joint heirs **with Christ** — if, in fact, we suffer with him so that we may also be glorified with him.”

1 Peter 5:9-10 speaks of suffering being experienced together with the entire association of brothers in the world: “But after you have suffered a little while, the God of all grace, **who called you** to His everlasting glory [the hope] in Christ, will finish your training [perfect you, establish you, strengthen you].” This beautifully corresponds with the end of Romans 8:17; see also Hebrews 12:6.

This is one of the most beautiful truths that we personally can put our faith in; we are called to be God’s

own sons and daughters. At the beginning of almost every epistle, the Apostles greet their respective sharers of the faith by the loving words such as: “to the holy ones,” “to all those who are God’s beloved ones, called to be holy,” “to you who have been sanctified called to be holy ones.” This is true unity, the shared brotherhood of a single eternal Father. There is no doubt in the Apostles’ minds that those whom the letters are being written to are called by God, God’s chosen, and in union with Christ for the simple fact that they share the unifying bond of common faith.

When we get to Ephesians, written by Paul, we see this concept laid out coherently and exhaustively.

Ephesians 1:4-13: “As He [God] chose us to be in union with him [Christ] before the founding of the world, that we should be holy and unblemished before Him in love. For He foreordained (predestined) us to be adopted as His own sons through Jesus Christ, according to His own good pleasure and will, in praise of His glorious undeserved kindness that He kindly bestowed on us by means of His beloved one. By means of Him we have the release by ransom through the blood of that one (the beloved one), yes, the forgiveness of our trespasses, according to the riches of His grace. This grace He caused to abound toward us in all wisdom and understanding by making known to us the sacred secret of His will. It is according to his good pleasure that He himself purposed for an administration at the full limit of appointed times, to gather all things together in the Messiah, the things in the heavens and the things on the earth. Yes, in him with whom we are in union and were assigned as **heirs**, having been foreordained according to the purpose of the one who accomplishes all things as he decides according to his will, so that we who have been first to hope in the Christ should serve for the praise of his glory. But also you hoped in him after you heard the word of truth, the good news about your salvation. After you believed, you were sealed by means of him with the promised holy spirit.”

We are given this spirit as a token of what is to come (2 Cor. 5:5). What is to come is the promised inheritance of the Kingdom of God, when the powers of the spirit will be made fully manifest, when paradise will be restored on earth, where death will be no more, and when the earth will be filled with the knowledge of God.

All have sinned and deserve to die. But our hope is the gift of a new birth to a hope of life, living in an incorruptible and undefiled and unfading inheritance; life forever on earth in the Kingdom. “It is reserved, stored

up in the heavens for you,” and it will never be forgotten, stolen, or corrupted, for it is in God’s perfect plan for us who are called (1 Pet. 1:3-4). Even if the world turns against us, and our bodies are slain, we know this hope is kept safe in the heavens with God, and will come to us in the age to come (see John 1:4, 12; 20:31).

How do we know if we are God’s children? If we believe Jesus is the Christ and in his Gospel of the Kingdom, we have been born from God (1 John 5:1). **All** who believe that Jesus is indeed the promised Messiah are children of God. **Everyone**. But, of course, we must put away sin (1 John 3:9; Heb. 10:26), continue in learning (John 17:3; 1 Tim. 2:4; 2 Pet. 1:3; Acts 17:11) and disown ourselves and follow Jesus, our King (Mark 10:30; Matt. 10:37; 16:24).

John in his first epistle speaks of love. If we are indeed God’s children, we then love our brothers and sisters. What could unite us more than the bond of blood? But our blood is not the blood of flesh, but the blood of Christ. It is the bond of spirit, which guarantees us the hope of eternal life together.

It is this hope, this faith in the promise of God through His Messiah, that signifies our being born from God (1 John 5:4). The promise of God goes back to the time of Abraham, before the Law. Now, because of Christ, we may be justified by our faith in him and the promise of the Kingdom. And then, as we read in Galatians 3:26-29, “So in Christ Jesus you are all children of God through faith, for all of you who were baptized into Christ have clothed yourselves with Christ. There is neither Jew nor Gentile, neither slave nor free, nor is there male and female, for you are all one in Christ Jesus. If you belong to Christ, then you are Abraham’s seed, and heirs according to the promise.”

The promises were made “to Abraham and his seed” — the promise of Genesis 12:7; 17:7; 22:18; see Romans 4:13. We are his seed, if we belong to Christ and believe his Gospel.

This promise was an oath by God, made before the Law, and not by a mediator (Gal. 3:19-20). This oath by God was a guarantee, greater than any sworn statement of men, any contract drawn by men. Jesus and his anointed ones, we who believe, will sit with Christ at the banquet table and feast with him and Abraham in the coming Kingdom (Matt. 8:11; Luke 13:28-29).

Christ, Our Mediator

“Because God wanted to make the unchanging nature of His purpose very clear to the heirs of what was promised, He confirmed it with an oath. God did this so that, by two unchangeable things in which it is impossible for God to lie, we who have fled to take hold of the hope set before us may be greatly encouraged. We have this hope as an anchor for the soul, firm and secure. It enters the inner sanctuary behind the curtain, where our forerunner, Jesus, has entered on our behalf. He has

become a high priest forever, in the order of Melchizedek” (Heb. 6:16-20).

Hebrews 9:11-28 explains how Christ is the mediator of the New Covenant, thereby a greater sacrifice than what was needed for the first covenant. Specifically we read in verse 15, “For this reason Christ is the mediator of a new covenant, that those who are called may receive the promised eternal inheritance — now that he has died as a ransom to set them free from the sins committed under the first covenant.”

If we are not called to receive the promised eternal inheritance, we are not set free from the sins committed under the first covenant. Christ died for those who believe in him, as it says in verse 28: “Christ was sacrificed once to take away the sins of many; and he will appear a second time, not to bear sin, but to bring salvation to those who are waiting for him.”

More importantly, “he entered heaven itself, now to appear for us in God’s presence” (Heb. 9:24). This “us” is those who are called, those who come to God through Jesus. “Therefore he is able to save completely those who come to God through him, because he always lives to intercede for them” (Heb. 7:25).

Our Lord Messiah is now in heaven, and serves in the sanctuary not built by human hands, acting as priest for us as he intercedes for us before God. But if we deny that Jesus is *our* mediator of this new covenant, we deny the salvation offered to us. “How much more, then, will the blood of Christ, who through the eternal Spirit offered himself unblemished to God, cleanse our consciences from acts that lead to death?” (Heb. 9:14).

In Hebrews chapter 11 we read of the great heroes of the faith, namely Abel, Enoch, Noah, Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, Joseph, Moses, and many more. Yet the writer solemnly declares, “they were all commended for their faith, yet not one of them received what had been promised.” This is because “God planned something better for us so that only together with us will they be made perfect” (11:39-40).

We share this same hope with these heroes of faith. As Jesus himself says, “I say to you that many will come from the east and the west, and will take their places at the feast with Abraham, Isaac and Jacob in the kingdom of God” (Matt. 8:11). And “There will be weeping there, and gnashing of teeth, when you see Abraham, Isaac and Jacob and all the prophets in the kingdom of God, but you yourselves thrown out” (Luke 13:28).

He says, “Truly I tell you, I will not drink again from the fruit of the vine until that day when I drink it new with you in the kingdom of God” (Matt. 26:29).

We have this same hope with Abraham, as we are his seed. We are promised the same inheritance of land and eternal life, and to sit down at the feast with Christ and all the heroes of faith, and our brothers who believe in him together as children of the Father.

“See what great love the Father has lavished on us, that we should be called children of God! And that is what we are!” (1 John 3:1). ✧

God Is Not a Trinity

A recent debate between Carlos and Matt Slick on the Trinity revealed the most fundamental point to be made: If any Bible writer believed that God is triune, would he not somewhere write or speak of God and clearly indicate that he meant a Trinity?

In Scripture there are some 4,000 occurrences of the word “**God**” (*Elohim* in the Hebrew and *o theos* in the Greek). So any writer of Scripture had 4,000 chances to express the idea that he meant a Trinitarian God when he wrote “God.” The supporter of the Trinity in the debate conceded that in the Bible, the word God never once means the Trinity! That ought to turn an investigator against belief in the Trinity.

Humorously we might say: How many times did Paul mention the word “software” referring to his computer? How many times does Paul tell us the color of his car? We know the answer! But in the same way, why did no Bible writer when writing “God” ever mean a triune God?

The answer should be obvious: the writers of Scripture never imagined that God was a Trinity! They never wrote about the triune God, because they did not believe in a triune God! Paul never wrote about his computer!

Christians claim to be following Jesus. Jesus modeled his own belief in how many God is when he enthusiastically agreed with (on this occasion) a friendly Jewish scholar in Mark 12:29-34 that “the Lord our God is one Lord.” The Shema (“Hear, O Israel”) is the superlatively greatest commandment, Jesus said.

The word “God” is used of Jesus in Scripture twice for certain. That is to say that .05% of the appearances of the word “God” are for Jesus. Does this not teach us that the Bible when it gives us “God” means not a Trinity but the one God, the Father?

We cannot afford to disregard the unitary, *non-Trinitarian* understanding of God asserted and promoted by Jesus. We cannot risk the awful prospect of being rejected by Jesus because “you call me ‘lord, lord,’ but refuse to do what I teach” (Luke 6:46). ✧

On Creeds, Intolerance and Exclusion William Ellery Channing, 1837

Creeds such as the Nicene and Athanasian:

“It is not the object of a creed to express the simple truths of our religion...but to embody and decree those mysteries about which Christians have been contending. I use the word ‘mysteries’ not in the scriptural but popular sense, as meaning doctrines which give a **shock to the reason** and seem to contradict some acknowledged truth. **Such mysteries are the staples of creeds...** Doctrines which from their **darkness or unintelligibleness** have provoked controversy, and which owe their importance very much to the circumstance of having been fought for or fought against for ages, these are thrown by the creed-makers into the foremost ranks of the religion...Christianity as set forth in creeds is a propounder of **dark sayings**, of riddles, of knotty propositions, of **apparent contradictions**...And what is the result? Christianity becoming identified, by means of creeds, with so many **dark doctrines** is looked on by many as a subject for theologians to quarrel about, but too thorny or perplexed for common minds, while it is spurned by many more as an **insult on human reason**, as a triumph of fanaticism over common sense...

“Our adversaries...are fallible, imperfect men, possessing no higher means, and no stronger motives for studying the word of God than their Unitarian brethren. And yet their language to them is virtually this: ‘We pronounce you to be in error, and in most dangerous error. We know that we are right, and you are wrong, in regard to the fundamental doctrines of the gospel. You are unworthy the Christian name, and unworthy to sit with us at the table of Christ. We offer you the truth, and you reject it at the peril of your souls’...

“Some persons seem to think that persecution consists in pursuing error with fire and sword; and that therefore it has ceased to exist...because no class of Christians among us is armed with these terrible weapons. But no. **The form is changed, but the spirit lives.** Persecution has given up its halter [noose] and fagot, but **it breathes venom from its lips, and secretly blasts what it cannot openly destroy...**

“Another important consideration is that this system of excluding men of apparent sincerity for their opinions, entirely subverts free inquiry into the Scriptures. When once a particular system is surrounded by this bulwark, when once its defenders have brought the majority to believe that the rejection of it is a mark of depravity and perdition...the obstacles to inquiry are as real, and may be as powerful, as in the neighborhood of the Inquisition. **The multitude dare not think, and the thinking dare not speak...** It is true that men are sent to the Scriptures; **but they are told before they go that they will be driven from the church on earth and in heaven, unless they find in the Scriptures the doctrines which are**

embodied in the popular creed. They are told, indeed, to inquire for themselves; **but they are also told at what points inquiry must arrive;** and the **sentence of exclusion hangs over them** if they happen to stray, with some of the best and wisest men, into forbidden paths. Now this ‘Protestant liberty’ is, in one respect, more irritating than Papal bondage. It mocks as well as enslaves us. It talks to us courteously as friends and brethren, while it rivets our chains. **It invites and even charges us to look with our own eyes, but with the same breath warns us against seeing any thing which Orthodox eyes have not seen before us.** Is this a state of things favorable to serious inquiry into the truths of the Gospel? Yet how long has the church been groaning under this cruel yoke!”

— William Ellery Channing, *Remarks on Creeds, Intolerance, and Exclusion*, 1837, p. 9, 11, 16, 20

“The Athanasian Creed is a very instructive document, for it shows that, when an attempt was made to state the Christian faith in terms of the metaphysic of the time, **all that could be done was to set down a series of contradictions and say that you would be damned if you didn’t believe them**” (!)

Leonard Hodgson, *Christian Faith and Practice*, 1965, p. 78

A New Legislation

by Carlos Xavier

Hebrews 8:6 declares that Jesus “has obtained a ministry that is as much more excellent than the old as the covenant he mediates is better, since it is **enacted** on better promises.” The Greek word translated “enacted” literally means *a new legislation, a new Law/Torah enacted* during the ministry/teaching of Jesus.

In other words, this new covenant, obtained by the work of Christ, has become a ministry far superior to the first covenant at Sinai. That’s why the covenant Jesus currently mediates is better.

But more than that, this new covenant has been given to us Christians **as Torah** on the basis of better promises. As Meyer’s NT Commentary notes: “The [Greek] expression is chosen...in order to oppose to the Mosaic law...the New Covenant as in some sense a new law now come into force.”

Hence, the “first” covenant (Heb 8:7), with its “former” commandments (Heb 7:18), has now become a “shadow” (Heb 10:1), “old, worn out, soon to be made obsolete” (Heb 8:13). As a result, Jesus, Paul and Christians in general have been qualified as ministers of that new covenant law of God (2 Cor 3.6).

Like the new covenant itself, this new law of God is not like the old one, as OT prophets like Jeremiah foresaw: “This covenant will **not be like** the one I made

with their ancestors when I took them by the hand and brought them out of the land of Egypt” (Jer. 31:32a). ✧

From the Recent Online Missions Conference (kogmissions.com)

What are you and I doing to bring clarity to a world and church that is confused about what Jesus meant by “Gospel”? I remind us all that missions are 24 hours a day wherever you are. No need to cross borders. We are always training and always on a mission.

What you have to do is to help people to think, to ask questions, because most people do not do this instinctively and must be prodded or challenged. I have learned almost everything from those who have taken the time to challenge what I thought was true! How little did I know about Hosea’s statement that “my people are destroyed for lack of knowledge” (Hos. 4:6).

If I look back at my own confused past I see that Herbert W. Armstrong simply pointed me to the 10 Commandments and asked me why I was not observing the fourth one correctly. He also said that only he was smart enough to understand “3 days and 3 nights”!

This was largely wrong as it turns out. But I was taken in. Seeing that obedience (Matt. 7:21; Luke 6:46; Heb. 5:9) was the necessary response to what God had revealed, I became a devoted Sabbath keeper. My parents were always long-suffering, though they had to accept my refusal to attend a wedding on Saturday, and of course pork was out! I began to go off to London every Sabbath to attend a small meeting of Armstrongites.

Meeting Barbara at Ambassador College, we finally left when the serial adultery (no exaggeration) of the leadership became public, and then we said “Now what?” It became perfectly obvious that no group in England (we tried them all!) could tolerate us, unless we kept our mouths shut and asked no questions. When we said we thought the dead were in the grave sleeping, we were invited to leave and given the infamous left foot of fellowship, a painful but invaluable experience.

God has used a number of key people in my life to question what I believed. A kind Christadelphian asked me why I thought that Jesus pre-existed his birth. I learned that the “rock that followed them” was a type — not to be taken literally. He then told me that we were all the Devil, and I had to become an expert on that subject!

The Billy Graham quotes I show you now encapsulate the core problem facing us all. When I met Clyde Randall of the Church of God in 1981 he said this to me: “I advise you, Anthony, never to link arms with the popular evangelical system. I tried it and I repent of that and am very sorry for the damage I caused. I want to be remembered on my gravestone as a preacher of the Gospel of the Kingdom.” He was preaching on that point to the converted, but I felt his words were of the highest significance.

Billy Graham: “The gospel message doesn’t have to be understood by the seeking soul, only to be received in simple faith. It isn’t fully understanding the gospel that gives me the blessing, but simply believing and receiving it.

“First you must recognize what God did: that He loved you so much He gave His Son to die on the cross (John 3:16)...Second, you must repent or you will perish (Luke 13:3). Jesus said “**repent and believe**” (Mark 1:15). It’s not enough to be sorry. Repentance is that turnabout from sin that is emphasized.”¹ Note how he quotes half a verse and leaves out the Kingdom of God!

The world of church and Bible study is a veritable minefield and a chaotic one. I refer to Ellen White and Isaiah 24:6, which says, “The inhabitants of the earth are burned, and few people are left.” But she writes, “The inhabitants of the earth are burned . . .”! She did not care for the rest of the verse, so she just left it out!

And there is Augustine who butchered John 17:3 and Revelation 20 — the millennium — and Luther who said that John’s Gospel is the only Gospel which really counts, and Calvin who went into a kind of frenzy on Acts 1:6! He said, “There are as many errors in this question as words”!

I warn against false prophets, as Jesus did constantly. Jesus was not so much against the atheists and agnostics as he was against those claiming to be Christians, falsely so-called. Nothing is more dangerous than a watered down form of the faith. It is untrue that “Jesus came to do three days’ work” (Billy Graham). Jesus came rather to fulfill his own mission statement which is found in Luke 4:43. Is that your mission statement? To say that Jesus did three days’ work effectively cancels the entire Gospel message of Jesus.

The mistake is to want to be like everyone else. It was established religion in the time of Jesus which urged the state to kill him. A half-truth is likely to be a whole lie. Jesus wondered in Luke 18:8 whether the faith would even be alive when he returned.

We must either fight or surrender. The right course is to struggle as Paul said in Ephesians 6 against the “**cosmocratic**” supernatural powers. Error and lies are aggressive and must be opposed with an equal “love of the truth in order to be saved” — not “in order to be clever!” (2 Thess. 2:10). We must be constantly “abounding in the work of God” as Paul put it in 1 Corinthians 15:58: “So then, brothers and sisters, don’t let anyone move you off the foundation of your faith. Always excel in the work you do for the Lord. You know that the hard work you do for the Lord is not pointless.”

Some Key Points

Here are some of the key things I have learned from a mass of discussion with lots of people, on Bible issues. The internet has made this possible.

1. Unitarians are often disoriented when it comes to understanding the two covenants. Some have regrettably consigned Jesus to the old, now defunct covenant. A debater with Carlos recently said that he did not know what the Torah/Law of Messiah was! The simple fact is that the Torah of Messiah is the teaching of Jesus, and the teaching of Jesus is the non-negotiable barrier and safeguard against being rejected at the resurrection (1 **Timothy 6:3** and 2 **John 9**). These should be refrigerator verses. According to 1 Corinthians 1:10 we are all to speak the same thing and be perfectly united in one mind. We are far from that ideal. Of the seven churches of Revelation only two escaped severe criticism from Jesus. Luke 16:16 and John 1:17 solve the covenant question easily! Note too that the Kingdom is **covenanted** (so the Greek says) to us by Jesus (Luke 22:29). “Fear not, little flock: it is your Father’s good pleasure to give you the Kingdom” (Luke 12:32). The meaning is: “Fear not, little flock: the world is going to be under new management with you as managers, along with Jesus.”

2. On the issue of the Devil and his existence, I suggest that Mark 3:23 (also Rev. 12:7; 20:2) presents “Satan” as the proper name of the person: “How can **Satan** cast out **Satan**?” You cannot have a conversation as God and Jesus do (Matt. 4; Job 2), with a personification.

3. I suggest too that Daniel 12:1-2 locates the great tribulation as a short time of intense suffering just prior to the Parousia. The first resurrection, including some who had been beheaded, cannot remotely have happened already! Mark **13:14** and Revelation **13:14** can be easily remembered, showing the Abomination to be a “**he**” and the Beast to be a person, a “**who**.” Daniel 12:1-2 should prevent anyone from imagining that the great tribulation is already some 2000 years long. It is instead a brief period of intense suffering just prior to the second coming. Daniel 12:11 cannot possibly refer to a period of 1290 *years*, as taught by “historicism.” If that were so, one could calculate the date of the second coming 1290 years ahead!

4. Daniel 9:26b should be rendered as “**his** end.” This shows that Titus is not mentioned there. He did not come to “his end” in AD 70. Daniel 9:27 should read “he will come” not “one will come.” It is the same abomination, the antichrist (a proper noun in 1 John 2:18) who will fulfill the prophecy.

5. The key to Matthew 24 (Mark 13, Luke 21) has eluded many. Jesus and the disciples obviously thought of the Parousia and end of the age (24:3) as closely linked

¹ *How to be Born Again*, pp. 148-149, 168. One chapter is titled “The Man Who Is God”!

to trouble in the Temple. As it turns out — and Jesus himself did not know the day and hour (24:36) — the 70 AD temple was not the temple in question, because the Parousia did **not** follow “immediately after” (24:29) the trouble in that Temple.

6. Unitarians of adventist persuasion would do well to say much more about what Christian destiny in the future Kingdom is. Otherwise our future is not much better than the vague heaven-going and “polishing rainbows and preparing heavenly dishes” (Billy Graham), accepted uncritically by the public. Psalm 149 does not get much attention! Nor Luke 19:27! The parable of the nobleman should get maximum coverage, as also the parable of the sower, as Jesus said: If this parable is not understood, none of the parables will be understood (Mark 4:13). And Jesus made sure that his students had understood: “Have you understood all these things?” They replied, “Yes” (Matt. 13:51).

7. We must not forget that the King James Version is disastrously misleading in Luke 17:21 when it speaks of the Kingdom of God “within you.” The Kingdom in that chapter will not be localized: “here it is or there it is.” It will be, when it comes, visible from east to west.

This will help us to see that the task of re-educating the public is a huge one, but as Christians we are committed to that task, our mission, 24 hours a day. ✧

“Name” in the Bible

“To us the *name* is to a large extent nothing more than a personal label. This was hardly, if at all, the case in the Bible... The biblical teaching can be stated in three propositions: **the name is the person**; the name is the person revealed; and the name is the person actively present... One regular idiom used in connection with baptism is ‘to baptize into the Name’ (e.g. Matt. 28:19; Acts 8:16; 1 Cor. 1:13, 15), signifying designation for **union, the passing into new ownership, and loyalty, and fellowship** (cf. James 2:7).” (*Bible Dictionary*, ed. Douglas, Bruce, Packer, Tasker, Wiseman, p. 861-862).

“Hallowed be Your Name”

“We look on a **name** almost as an accidental appendage by which a person is designated, but in its true idea it is the designation of a person which exactly answers to his nature and qualities. Hence the full Name of God is properly that description of him which embraces **all that he really is**... The prayer is that God’s manifestation of himself may be acknowledged and revered as the one supreme standard of truth...”

“**Thy Kingdom come.** Dr. C. Taylor points out that the **coming of the kingdom and the sanctifying of the Name are brought together** in Zech. 14:9: ‘The Lord will then be king of the whole earth. In that day the Lord will be seen as one with a single name’” (*Pulpit Commentary*, Vol. 7).

“Head Knowledge” vs. “Heart Knowledge”?

“Long before the neo-orthodox theologians thought of saying that faith is an encounter with a divine person rather than assent to a proposition, **preachers who ought to have known better taught that faith is trust in a person**, not belief in a creed. Years later, this writer, when a teenager, was told that some people would miss heaven [sic!] by twelve inches — the distance between the head and the heart — because they believed the Gospel with their heads but not with their hearts. Today it is easier for a camel to pass through the eye of a needle than it is to find a minister — a conservative minister — who does not believe and teach that one must have a ‘personal’ relationship with Christ in order to be saved. But what that ‘personal’ relationship consists of is either not made explicit or, when made explicit, contradicts what the Bible teaches about saving faith...”

“There is no distance between the head and the heart: ‘As a man thinks in his heart, so is he.’ The head/heart contrast is a figment of modern secular psychology, not a doctrine of divine revelation...”

“As for having a ‘personal’ relationship with Christ, if the phrase means something more than assenting to true propositions about Jesus, what is that something more?... Surely ‘personal’ relationship does not mean what we mean when we say that we know someone personally: Perhaps we have shaken his hand, visited his home or he ours, or eaten with him. John had a ‘personal’ relationship with Christ in that sense, as did all the disciples, including Judas. But millions of Christians have not, and Jesus called them blessed: They have not seen and yet have believed...”

“Saving faith is neither an indescribable encounter with a divine person, nor heart knowledge as opposed to head knowledge... **Truth is propositional, and one is saved and sanctified only through believing true statements**...”

“The anti-intellectual cast of virtually all modern thought, from the university chair to the barroom stool, controls the pulpits as well. It is this pious anti-intellectualism that emphasizes encounter rather than information, emotion instead of understanding, ‘personal’ relationship rather than knowledge. But Christians, Paul wrote, have the mind of Christ. Our relationship to him is intellectual. And **since Christ is his mind and we are ours**, no relationship could be more intimate than that... This recognition of the primacy of the intellect, **the primacy of truth**, is totally missing from contemporary theology.”

John W. Robbins, foreword to *Faith and Saving Faith* by Gordon Clark, 1983

The Good Time Coming

“Without the belief in the Good Time Coming I do not see how we can be Christians at all. The belief in the Good Time Coming as the most important thing in the world, and therewith the duty of preparing ourselves and our fellow-men to be ready as the first duty and privilege of humanity — **this is the foundation of the Gospel**. It has always carried with it the corollary that only with much tribulation we may hope to enter the Kingdom of God.”

F.C. Burkitt, “The Eschatological Idea in the Gospel,” in *Essays on Some Biblical Questions of the Day by Members of the University of Cambridge*, 1909, p. 209-210

Comments

• “Thank you so much for sending me *Focus on the Kingdom* monthly. I really love reading and studying them, having had the eyes of my spiritual understanding opened to the truth concerning the one God of Israel, His Kingdom, and Jesus Christ being His only begotten Son! I am happy to inform you that I am using them to preach and teach the truth concerning one God the Father and the Kingdom of God to the brethren here in Kenya. May you be richly blessed in Jesus’ mighty name.” — *Kenya*

• “Thank you very much for this newsletter. Our youth will be using the *Focus on the Kingdom* newsletter for their Bible studies.” — *Philippines*

• “I have finally finished the translation of the New Testament with your commentary into my native language, into Czech, from which I hope to spread the unitarian concept of monotheism more quickly in the local environment, a concept that is practically completely unknown here. Thank you all, you and your collaborators, for the tremendous work you do in creating such spiritually nourishing programs.” — *Czech Republic*

• “I grew up with Eastern Orthodoxy, was baptized in this church at one year old, however I had no faith. I learned the hard way that this world does not bring happiness, and in my search for it I found the Creator. Digging deeper I found Christ. I started reading the Scripture; however I saw problems with this ‘trinity’ thing that was taught to me, as well as other things taught by the Eastern Orthodox Church. Got into research, and unpacked centuries of lies that try to pull us away from our Father. Now I am here, with the truth.” — *Montenegro*

• “Thank you for your tireless advocacy for baptism. I made up my mind and I was recently baptized in Switzerland. Now I have been baptized three times — as a baby in the Lutheran Church, in a Trinitarian way in a Free Church, and now finally to Yahweh our Father and our sinless brother Jesus, the Messiah.” — *Germany*

• “When I was about 15 or 16 my Grandad started doing Bible study with me every Sunday. I didn’t always pay attention very well, and would normally end up falling asleep on him. In saying that by the grace of God some of it did sink in as I have always known that God is one and that Jesus wasn’t God and that he was fully human. Also that you don’t go to heaven when you die and that when you’re dead you’re dead until the resurrection, and that our future was always on the earth and not somewhere else. I have always believed it’s wrong to keep Christmas and Easter and I have always known that we don’t have to keep the laws of Moses. I do believe that God is working with me through Jesus our Messiah, and that He hasn’t just allowed me to come to a knowledge of the truth for no reason. I know and truly believe that He has an amazing future set out before me and although I don’t know what that future is yet, I know that I won’t be disappointed. I want to truly start seeking to do His will and good pleasure in all areas of my life. Which leads me to wanting to truly repent, be baptised and take up my cross and follow Jesus my Messiah and seek to do our Father’s will.” — *England*

• “I am of Serbian background and traditionally we are Orthodox Christians, but we stopped with all that when I was around 8 years old or so. We stopped celebrating Christmas from way back then, as my father when he read the Bible worked out that it was pure paganism and nothing to do with Jesus Christ. But growing up my father stopped reading the Bible and my parents never pushed any religious beliefs on me; there was no Bible study or Bible teaching either. So I always believed there was a God, but no research, no study, no reading done on my part. Yet somehow I always knew that when we die we don’t go to heaven as my dad told me when I was young that in the Bible when we die we enter the sleep of death. Somehow that idea was very easy for me to grasp and accept. I always knew dying and going to heaven as disembodied souls wasn’t true, but I had no idea about Greek philosophy like Gnosticism and Platonism and the detrimental effects it’s had on Christianity. I always knew God was one single Person and that only the Father was God. As I got older, it didn’t matter what anyone told me — no one could ever convince me that Jesus was God, as Jesus died and God is immortal and God cannot die!” — *Australia*

The One God, the Father, One Man Messiah Translation: New Testament with Commentary is now available free at onegodtranslation.com

If you would like to receive *Focus on the Kingdom* on email and save us postage, please go to focusonthe kingdom.org and scroll down to the subscription form at the bottom of the page. Fill out the form and check the box: “**I would like to receive this by email.**” Thank you!