

Focus on the Kingdom

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Why Not Trinity and Incarnation?

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I do not affirm the catholic doctrines of the Trinity and Incarnation as understood by the Nicene-Chalcedonian tradition. The doctrine of the Trinity teaches that the one God is one “being” or “nature” (*ousia*) subsistent in three “persons” (*hypostases*). The doctrine of the Incarnation teaches that Jesus Christ is one “person” (*hypostasis, prosopon*) in two “natures” (*ousia, physeis*). These are essential dogmas of the catholic tradition of Christian theology, but I do not accept these doctrines, and I don’t think that anyone else has to accept them, either. I think they rather enjoy the status of *theologoumena*: debatable opinions about which Christians are free to disagree. In this respect, I am on a very different wavelength than most other Christians in the world, or at least those whom I run into most often in my life, whether online or in reality.

Why do I not accept these doctrines? I have written a book on this topic and am in the process of trying to get it published, so you may have to wait until later to hear the whole story. In a sense, there are many reasons. For example, there are problems reconciling the Trinitarian formula of one *ousia* (being) in three *hypostases* (persons) with the idea that there is only one God and with divine simplicity. There are also problems reconciling the Incarnational formula of one *prosopon* (person) in two *physeis* (natures) with the idea that God is immutable and exists independently of the created order. As anyone who has studied these issues in any detail knows, it is very difficult to provide a concrete interpretation of the verbal formulas of one *ousia* in three *hypostases* or one *prosopon* in two *physeis* that does not run into problems somewhere or other. As far as I am concerned, that is because the whole complex and framework of catholic theology, of which the doctrines of Trinity and Incarnation are only two parts, is fundamentally an assemblage of mutually inconsistent ideas and ways of speaking. In other words, catholic theology considered as a whole is incoherent.

In another sense, there is one simple, eminent reason not to accept the doctrines of Trinity and Incarnation. One does not need them to make sense of

what the New Testament teaches about Jesus and his relation to God. Of course, Christian theology historically has always begun with the New Testament and presented itself as the formal interpretation of what is found in the pages of the apostolic writings. It just so happens that I think there is a far simpler framework which makes sense of the relevant data and does not raise any of the philosophical problems of the catholic trinitarian and dyophysite [two natures] paradigm.

My basic paradigm for understanding the New Testament’s discourse can be summarized in the simple narrative one finds presented in the synoptic gospels and the Acts of the Apostles. Jesus was told that he is God’s Son and filled with the Holy Spirit when he was baptized in the river by John; he went about teaching, healing, and performing miracles fully convinced of his identity as the man to whom God had granted authority over all things (cf. Dan. 7:13–14); he entered into conflict with the Pharisees and scribes because of the presumption he showed in healing on the Sabbath, in disregarding the traditions of the elders, and in critiquing them as teachers of the people of Israel; he was executed for blasphemy by some of the religious authorities through the help of the Romans, though he made of his death an offering of obedience to God as a ransom for the sins of many; and he was raised from the dead and exalted to God’s right hand, whence it is believed he presently rules as the God-appointed king of the cosmos as a whole.

As far as I am concerned, everything the New Testament says about Jesus in relation to God can be easily made sense of through the elements of this basic framework. There is no need to introduce the complications of the ontological language of Nicene-Chalcedonian theology. Everything about Jesus that is suggestive of divinity in his earthly ministry is to be understood in light of the fact that he has been given God’s Spirit. So also, all “incarnational” language (e.g., John 1:1–14; Phil. 2:5–11) is to be understood with reference to the experience of his baptism. The Word of God, a personified reference to the wisdom and power by which God created all things, “becomes flesh” (John 1:14) in a figurative sense when Jesus receives the Spirit at his baptism. Christ humbles himself instead of taking advantage of the equality with God he possesses as his Son (cf. Ps. 2:7–8), as the one to whom God promises the whole earth as his inheritance, choosing to serve rather than to be served (Mark 10:45). Jesus can even be called the “creator of

all things” (cf. Col. 1:16) in the sense that he accomplishes a new creation (2 Cor. 5:17) through the transformation of human beings in communion with himself (Eph. 2:10, 15). Of course, the exegetical battles on this topic are numerous and exhausting, and people are hardly ever convinced of the other side’s arguments. But my point is that there is nothing implausible or impossible about the non-trinitarian readings, and they do not raise any obvious philosophical or theological problems or introduce a thousand mysteries into our theology.

In brief, then, in my opinion at least, one of the best reasons not to accept the catholic doctrines of Trinity and Incarnation is that they are entirely unnecessary for making sense of the New Testament’s testimony to Jesus and God his Father. Once more, as far as I can tell, there are no significant philosophical or theological problems of coherence introduced by the simpler, non-trinitarian framework that I described above. Rather, the whole picture is very clean and parsimonious.

This kind of talk will not sit well with some people. They insist that God is mysterious, and from this they infer that (at least apparent) incoherence in theology is not a bad thing but rather to be expected. Yet I wonder about this. I don’t claim to be able to know everything about God, just as I don’t claim to know everything about my wife or about any finite created thing that is found in the world. But I don’t see what connection there is between God’s mysteriousness and the apparently intractable incoherencies of the catholic doctrines of Trinity and Incarnation. I don’t think that because God is mysterious, therefore true doctrines about him must or even just likely will seem to us contradictory.

In my less charitable moments, I think there is something pathological about the way some people speak about mystery in religion. It’s almost as if they find nothing worthwhile in a Christianity that they can make sense of. They prefer to throw themselves headlong into the night of the understanding and to contemplate and to affirm as absolutely necessary doctrines that they admit surpass human comprehension. But why? Where does this impulse come from? Why would anyone prefer to walk into the dark? Perhaps they prefer their religion to be mysterious so as to place it beyond the possibility of refutation or falsification. If it can hardly be understood, it surely can’t be proven wrong. But for my part, I am happy to be able to understand the things I believe and to explain them to those who raise questions about them. I feel at home in the light of reason, so to speak, and do not have an impulse to turn toward the dark. ✧

What Happens to Us When We Die? What Is Our Hope When Life Has Ended? by Pastor Richard Eldred, Michigan

The following is an excerpt from his booklet *Resurrecting Major Biblical Truths Buried for Centuries by Satan*.

As already stated, Jesus is coming to be seated on the throne of David and rule over the Kingdom of God. The earth will be restored to its original beauty. That leads naturally into another misunderstood doctrine of what happens at or after death. Our reward of eternal life is not at the time of death, as most teach, but at the return of Christ when he raises his faithful followers from their graves. As I stated earlier, the immortality of the soul came into Christianity through pagan beliefs and has been taught as truth for thousands of years.

Revelation 12:9: “Satan is the deceiver of the whole world.” His deception is worldwide, seen in many cultures and false pagan religions. Satan’s greatest deception is the doctrine of man having an immortal spirit or an immortal soul that continues to live when man dies. Most, if not all, religious systems have been infected by this Platonic false doctrine. I will mention a few:

- Islam: Death is a natural threshold to the next stage of existence in paradise.
- Buddhism: Reincarnation — a new beginning in another life.
- Hinduism: Soul gets reborn into a new body.
- Baha’i: The soul separates from the body at death.
- Christianity: Much of Christianity has adopted the false Platonic immortal soul theory as well. It is seldom questioned by anyone, pastors included.

Yes, it has impacted the “whole world.” Many believe and teach that the soul lives on and goes straight to heaven to be with God, watching over us as we suffer here on earth. That doesn’t sound like paradise to me — watching my loved ones suffer while I am powerless to help them.

Satan has very successfully blinded the minds of a multitude of people. His confusing and false message comes in many forms: funeral services with a false hope, music lyrics, movies, even churches filled with people who hear a distorted message. This false teaching is coming from well-meaning pastors. Satan has blinded their eyes to the simple truth that the **dead are dead**. Again, the message of Scripture is so simple. Jesus is the Christ (Messiah — the anointed leader and savior of the true church) and is coming again to this earth to raise his faithful followers from their graves to rule and reign with him as he establishes the Kingdom

of God here on earth (Rev. 2:26; 5:10; 20:1-6). The return of Christ is our blessed hope (**Titus 2:13**).

To understand death we must first understand the creation of man himself.

Genesis 2:7: “God formed man from the dust of the ground and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life, and the man became a living being.” Notice that God did not put an immortal soul in the man; He simply started him breathing. It is quite easy to understand that when we quit breathing we are dead. Do you know of anyone who is walking around without breathing?

Job 34:14-15: “If He should determine to do so, if He should gather to Himself his spirit and his breath, all flesh would perish together and man would return to dust.” Again, without the breath of life man is dead.

Much of the distortion that continues in Christian churches today is confusion over the Greek word *pneuma* which is translated “spirit.” It can also mean “breath” or “wind.” From this word we get the English words “pneumatic” and “pneumonia” — both having to do with air or breathing. Matthew says that when Jesus died, “He cried out with a loud voice and yielded up his spirit” (Matt. 27:50). Many believe that this means his immortal spirit, but it simply means his “breath.” In Mark’s account of Jesus’ death he says, “He uttered a loud cry and **breathed his last**... When the centurion saw the way **he breathed his last**, he said, ‘Truly this man was the Son of God’” (Mark 15: 37-39). God breathed the breath of life into man; when he quits breathing he is dead. Simple, isn’t it?

Most people, perhaps some pastors too, do not realize the Christian movement started with Abraham. Consider the promises God made to Abraham (formerly called Abram) and his descendants. He called him out of a pagan world and made a covenant with him: “The Lord said to Abraham. ‘Leave your country, your people and your father’s household and go to the land which I will show you. I will make you a great nation and I will bless you. I will make your name great and you will be a blessing. I will bless those who bless you and whoever curses you I will curse, and all peoples on the earth will be blessed through you’” (Gen. 12:1-3). “The Lord appeared to Abram and said, ‘To your offspring I will give this land’” (Gen. 12:7). “Lift up your eyes from where you are and look north and south, east and west. All the land that you see I will give to you and your descendants forever” (Gen. 13:14-15). In Romans 4:13 Abraham and his spiritual descendants are destined to possess and supervise the whole world!

God made the same promise to Abraham’s son Isaac: “For to you and your descendants I will give these lands and will confirm the oath I swore to your father Abraham. I will make your descendants as

numerous as the stars in the sky. and I will give them all these lands” (Gen. 26:3-4).

Note that God did not promise Abraham and his descendants a place in heaven for their faithfulness, but all the land he could see as a never-ending possession. Abraham has yet to receive the land that was promised, as is recorded in Acts: “And He gave him no inheritance in it, not even a foot of ground; and yet, even when he had no child, He promised that He would give it to him as a possession and to his offspring after him” (Acts 7:5).

The book of Hebrews speaks of the faithful, including Abraham: “All these died in faith without receiving the promises” (Heb. 11:13). “All these, having gained approval through their faith, did not receive what was promised, because God had provided something better for us, so that apart from us they should not be made perfect” (Heb. 11:39-40).

We are the spiritual descendants of Abraham, purchased by the blood of Christ; we now share the promises God made to Abraham: “If you belong to Christ, then you are Abraham’s offspring, heirs according to the promise” (Gal. 3:29). The Christian Gospel was “preached ahead of time to Abraham” (Gal. 3:8).

Together we will receive the promise of the land at the resurrection of the righteous. The Bible is very clear that the dead are now asleep and awaiting resurrection to life. Read the following verses carefully and please mark them in your Bible.

Psalms 17:15: King David says, “As for me, I will behold Your face in righteousness; I will be satisfied with Your likeness **when I awake**.” King David is clearly waiting to be awakened from death.

In Peter’s first sermon he says, “Brothers, I may confidently say to you regarding the patriarch David that he both died and was buried. and his tomb is with us today” (Acts 2:29). He was responding to the fact that Jesus did not remain in the grave. David is in his grave awaiting the resurrection to life.

Job 14:14-15: “If a man dies, will he live again? All the days of my struggle I will wait until my change comes. You will call, and I will answer You.”

Isaiah 26:19: “Your dead will live; their corpses will rise. You who lie in the dust, awake and shout for joy. For your dew is as the dew of the dawn, and the earth will give birth to the departed spirits.”

Daniel 12:2: “Many of those who **are sleeping in the dust of the ground will awake**, some to everlasting life, but the others to disgrace and everlasting contempt.” Jesus says the same thing: “Truly, truly, I say to you, an hour is coming and now is when the dead will hear the voice of the Son of God and those who hear will live...Do not marvel at this, for an hour is coming in which all who are in their tombs

shall hear his voice and shall come forth, those who did good deeds to a **resurrection of life**, those who committed evil deeds to a **resurrection of judgement**" (John 5:25-29). Daniel and Jesus agree: the dead are in their graves awaiting resurrection. **Notice that Jesus says the judgment comes at resurrection, not at the moment of death.**

Daniel 12:13: God's final words to Daniel: "But as for you, go your way to the end; then you will enter into rest and arise for your allotted portion at the end of the age." The end of the age is at the return of Christ (Messiah), when the thousand-year reign begins (Matt. 24:3). Daniel will be in the resurrection of the faithful when Christ appears.

Acts 24:14-15 "I do serve the God of our fathers, believing everything that is in accordance with the law and that is written in the prophets; having a hope in God that these men cherish themselves, that there shall certainly be a resurrection of both the righteous and the wicked."

The writing that Moses and the prophets cherished was the hope of the resurrection of both the righteous and the wicked. If the wicked are now burning in hell, as most teach, why would they be raised from the grave? To be thrown into a different fire? It doesn't make sense. It also doesn't make any sense that a loving God would burn anyone consciously for eternity. They will simply be destroyed, annihilated in the lake of fire — a true and final, eternal death.

There is a series of trumpet blasts that will announce the return of Jesus and the resurrection of those who are asleep in the grave:

Matthew 24:31: "He (Jesus) will send forth his angels with a great trumpet blast, and they will gather together his elect from one end of the sky to the other."

1 Corinthians 15:22-23: "For as in Adam all die, so also in Christ **all shall be made alive**. But each in his own order: Christ the first fruits, after that those who are Christ's **at his coming**." There is no mention of a trumpet here, but at Christ's return, his faithful will be made alive.

1 Corinthians 15:51-54: "Behold, I tell you a mystery: we shall not all sleep, but we shall all be changed, in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last **trumpet**, for the trumpet will sound and the dead will be raised imperishable, and we shall be changed. For this perishable must put on the imperishable, and this mortal must put on immortality. Then will come about the saying that is written, 'Death has been swallowed up in victory.'"

Notice that our victory over death is not at the moment of our death, as most people teach, but at the sound of the trumpet when the dead are raised out of their sleep to eternal life. *That* is when death is swallowed up in victory.

1 Thessalonians 4:13-16: "We do not want you to be uninformed, brethren, about those who are asleep...For if we believe that Jesus died and rose again, even so God will bring with him those who have fallen asleep...For the Lord himself will descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of the archangel, and with the **trumpet** of God, and the dead in Christ will rise first. Then we who are alive and remain will be caught up together with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air, and thus we will always be with the Lord." Notice that Paul says the dead are asleep, awaiting the sound of the trumpet. Those in the grave and those who are alive will meet Christ at the sametime.

Revelation 11:15: "And the seventh angel sounded [the seventh **trumpet**], and there arose loud voices in heaven saying, 'The kingdom of the world has become the kingdom of our Lord and of His Christ, and he will reign forever and ever.'" At the last trumpet, the seventh trumpet, all the faithful dead will be raised to life to rule and reign with Christ as he establishes the Kingdom, world government here on the earth.

As stated above, there will be a resurrection of both the righteous and the wicked. The faithful will be raised to life, and the wicked will be raised and destroyed.

Revelation 20:4: "And I saw thrones and they sat upon them and judgment was given to them. And I saw the souls of those who had been beheaded because of the testimony of Jesus and because of the word of God, and those who had not worshiped the beast or his image and had not received the mark upon their forehead and upon their hand; and **they came to life** and began to reign with Christ for a thousand years."

Revelation 20:5-6: "The rest of the dead did not **come to life** until the thousand years were completed. This is the first resurrection. Blessed and holy is the one who has part in the first resurrection, over these the **second death** has no power, but they will be priests of God and of Christ and will reign with him for a thousand years." Those in the first resurrection will reign with Christ for a thousand years. The wicked will not be raised until the end of the thousand years.

Revelation 20:14a-15: "This is the second death: the lake of fire. If anyone's name was not found written in the book of life, he was thrown into the lake of fire."

Notice that the wicked are not burning in hell from the moment of death; they do not have an immortal soul that burns forever. Because their names have not been recorded in the book of life, they are cast into the lake of fire which is the **second death**. They are destroyed. "Narrow is the gate that leads to life...broad is the way that leads to **destruction**" (Matt. 7:13-14). Jesus does

not speak of eternal torment and burning in hell forever, as has been taught for centuries and is so widely taught and accepted today.

Take a look at what Paul wrote to Timothy shortly before the end of his life:

2 Timothy 4:7-8: “I have fought the good fight, I have finished the course, I have kept the faith. **In the future** there is laid up for me the crown of righteousness which the Lord, the righteous judge, will award to me **on that day**, and not only to me, but to all who have loved his appearing.”

Paul said he would receive the crown of life **in the future**, not at the time of death. He said it would be **on that day**, the day that the Lord Jesus appears. The day Christ returns with the blast of the trumpet is the day that Paul will receive his crown of life.

The Bible is clear: the faithful are asleep in the grave, awaiting the return of Christ and the sound of the last trumpet, to inherit the Kingdom of God. ✧

A Jewish and Gentile Problem

by Carlos Xavier

In his letters to the Galatians and Colossians Paul addresses a problem that concerns both Jewish and Gentile Christians. This problem involves an unusual mixing of Gnostic-Gentile pagan ideas and Old Covenant Jewish Torah observance. Paul calls these *stoicheia tou kosmou*, variously translated as the “spirit forces,” “elemental” or “elementary principles of this world”:

Galatians 4:3, 9: “We, when we were minors, were enslaved under **the elementary principles of this world**...So now that you know God (or now that God knows you), why do you want to go back again and become slaves once more to the weak and useless **elementary principles of this world**? You observe days and months and seasons and years!”

Colossians 2:20: “Therefore, if you died with Christ to the **elementary principles of this world**, why do you keep on following the rules of the world, such as ‘Do not handle! Do not taste! Do not touch!’?”

For both Jewish and Gentile Christians, this heresy took the form of insistence on adherence to the food laws and Jewish calendar. So in Colossians 2:16 Paul warns, “Let no one disturb you about what you eat, drink or in respect of a feast day, new moon or a sabbath day.” That trio of observances is a single *shadow* now replaced by the *reality*, the risen Messiah.

Note that throughout these letters Paul repeatedly warns against Torah-keeping and includes *himself* by saying “**we**”! For example, Galatians 3: “Before faith

came, **we** were kept in custody under the Law, imprisoned until the faith which was to come would be revealed. The Law was our guardian until Messiah, so that **we** could then be made right by faith. But now that faith has come, **we** are no longer under a guardian” (Gal. 3:23-25).

The *Theological Dictionary of the New Testament* says, “It’s thus impossible [for the Christian] to desire to keep the laws and demands of these elements....so that the Christian community is definitively freed from the Sabbath commandment — no matter whether this is based on the supposed necessity of the Law to salvation or on the **controlling power of cosmic forces**,” i.e., the **elemental principles** of this dark world.

Clinton Arnold writes in “Returning to the Domain of the Powers”: “For Paul, the *stoicheia* [elemental forces] were an integral part of the present evil age and used a variety of means to hold humanity in bondage and blind people to the revelation of Jesus Christ as proclaimed in the gospel. For Gentiles, they accomplished their objective through posing as gods and goddesses and soliciting cultic worship. For Jews, they were associated with the law in the same way as the power of sin and were **agents of slavery under the old covenant**. Now, in spite of the fact that the Galatian Gentiles know Christ, Paul fears that by acceding to the demands of the Judaizing opponents they would **return to the domain of the powers**. **By embracing Torah, the Galatians were returning to the powers** of the old aeon which would bring them under a yoke of slavery once again and cause them to forfeit their freedom in Christ.”¹ ✧

The Trinity...

“There is unity and trinity...which is perceived and adored by faith...not by inquiry, nor by searching out, nor by visible manifestation; for **the more He is sought out, the more He is unknown**, and the more He is investigated, the more He is hidden. And so, let the faithful adore God with a mind that is not overcurious. And believe that He is God in three hypostases, although the manner in which He is so is beyond manner, for God is incomprehensible. Do not ask how the Trinity is Trinity, for the Trinity is inscrutable” (John of Damascus, c. 675-749 AD).

...Versus the Bible

“You will seek Me and find Me when you search for Me with all your heart. I will let Myself be found by you” (Jer. 29:13-14).

¹ Clinton E. Arnold, “Returning to the Domain of the Powers: *Stoicheia* as Evil Spirits in Galatians 4:3,9,” *Novum Testamentum*, Jan. 1996, p. 75.

The Begetting of the Son — When?

A prodigious amount of scholarly ingenuity and energy has been dedicated to maintaining the amazingly problematic concept of the “eternal generation of the Son of God.” That the Son of God is Deity without beginning of existence is an essential prop of the Trinitarian system.

At the simplest level, however, the Bible is in direct contradiction of the idea that the Son has no beginning. Matthew devotes an entire chapter to the **origin** of Jesus Christ. In 1:18, in the best manuscripts, it is the “genesis” of Jesus he describes, not just his birth, but his origin or creation. If Matthew had been aware of a Son of God already in existence, and from eternity, he could not have written as he did. He is at pains to document not only the generating of some 40 of Jesus’ ancestors but the unique miracle which accounts for the beginning — the genesis — of the Messiah (1:18). Matthew 1:1 also introduces the “genesis” of Jesus Christ, the son of David. By that we are to understand the Messiah’s coming into existence. That is what both the Greek and the English mean.

Supporters of the traditional concept of an already eternally existing second member of the Godhead are embarrassed at information producing the opposing impression, that the Son was begotten in time. The angel who visited Joseph knew nothing of the bewilderingly complicated, post-biblical arguments about the eternity of the Son. He announced to Joseph: “What is begotten in her [Mary] is from holy spirit” (Matt. 1:20). Her son, in other words, is a divine creation, but not a person already in existence before conception and giving up one form of life for another. The holy spirit is the source and cause of the divine miracle in Mary. By that creative act the Son is begotten. He comes into existence, as all babies do, in his mother’s womb.

Translations have veiled the truth here, by rendering *to gennethen* — “what was begotten” — as “that which is conceived” (Matt. 1:20). This mistranslation of the verb *gennaō*, to beget of the father or to bear of the mother, avoids the unwanted association of the begetting of the Son of God by the Father, in time, in the womb of his mother.

Psalm 2:7 is the classic Old Testament source for the origin of the Son: “You are My Son; today I have begotten you.” Today, indeed. But Origen took the whole church off into the wildest “left field” by proposing, as by fiat, that “today with God means eternity.” Even the stalwart evangelical commentator

Henry Alford, who clung to the plain sense of the text so often and so well, became unhinged when dealing with the quotation of Psalm 2:7 in Hebrews 1:5: “In applying [Ps. 2:7] to our Lord we want another and a higher sense in which both words, ‘I have begotten’ and ‘today’ may be applicable to Him: a sense in which I should be disposed to say that the words must in their fullness of meaning be taken, to the neglect and almost the obliteration of their supposed lower reference.”² So we must obliterate the proper sense of the words in order to find the right meaning to describe the Son! Henry Alford lost his balance when trying to deal with Psalm 2!

Psalm 2:7 presents an insuperable barrier to the idea of an eternally generated Son. The biblical Son of God is a creature begotten in time, “today.” Paul sees the date of that begetting as the beginning of the Son, not his resurrection. F.F. Bruce observes of Acts 13:33, “The promise of Acts 13:23, the fulfillment of which is here described [Acts 13:33] has to do with the sending of the Messiah, not his resurrection, for which see v. 34.”³ It should be obvious that the resurrection does not mark the coming into existence, the begetting, of the Son, though it is at his resurrection that Jesus is shown to be the Son of God “in power.” Romans 1:4 announces the Gospel “concerning God’s Son, who came into existence [*genomenou*] from the seed of David as to his human descent.” But as the descendant of David he was at the same time also the Son of God according to Paul (1:3). His appointment to a new position of power as Son happened at the resurrection. The origin of his Sonship is not said to be the resurrection here or in Acts 13:33.

Paul and Luke were traveling companions. Their common understanding of the origin of Jesus should be assumed. It is confirmed by the definitive statement of Gabriel as reported by Luke in 1:35: “For that reason precisely [*dio kai*, i.e. because of the miracle to be performed in Mary] the holy child to be begotten will be called the Son of God.” Here, surely, the divine Sonship of the Messiah is firmly grounded not in eternity but in the historical intervention of God six months later than the remarkable conception of John the Baptist (Luke 1:26).

Commentators who are persuaded that Luke and Paul should have been orthodox like themselves have employed a battery of techniques to evade the obvious in Luke 1:35. It has been argued that Gabriel gave only one reason for the child being the Son of God. This would allow for the addition of another reason, his eternal Sonship. Others have decided that “Son of God” is only what the baby would be called, while in reality

² *Greek Testament*, 1862, Vol. 4, p. 16, emphasis added.

³ F.F. Bruce, *The Acts of the Apostles*, 1951, p. 269.

he is something much more. But “to be called” in the New Testament announces what you are (cp. Matt. 5:9; Luke 6:35). Raymond Brown was right: “We are dealing with the begetting of God’s Son in the womb of Mary through God’s creative spirit.”⁴

The battle over the definition of the Son continues. Meanwhile the simplicity of the biblical Christology is lost in the fog of complicated argument and counter-argument. If Psalm 110:1 had been taken, as the New Testament takes it, as the master key to Christology, perhaps the problem and argument could have been resolved long ago. In that Psalm David under inspiration says that the Lord God addresses the Messiah, *adoni*, “my [David’s] lord.” *Adoni* in all of its 195 occurrences *never* designates a figure who is Deity. Rather it describes a supremely elevated, unique human being. That is who Jesus is. How well Dr. Colin Brown spoke when in an illuminating article on Christology he stated: “Indeed, to be a ‘Son of God’ one has to be a being who is *not* God! It is a designation for a creature indicating a special relationship with God.”⁵

The sooner churches abandon the erroneous idea that the Son of God is coequally Deity with his Father, the better will be the prospect of fruitful dialogue between three world religions, Christianity, Islam and Judaism. At present the astonishing dogma that the Son of God was begotten and yet had no beginning — an abuse of language by any standards! — divides and confuses. The average churchgoer has no idea of what this central tenet means, yet is threatened with expulsion and damnation if he does not believe it. Such a terrorizing atmosphere cannot generate reasoned discussion from Scripture.

Professor William Sanday of Oxford, writing the article on the Son of God in the *Hastings Bible Dictionary*, found that “there is not a single reference in the Synoptic Gospels to Jesus having been the Son of God before his birth.” If we examine John’s Gospel “we have to look about somewhat for expressions that are free from ambiguity. Perhaps there are not any.”⁶ This was a welcome invitation to abandon the unscriptural notion that Jesus, Messiah and Son of God, had an origin other than by divine miracle performed in Mary. His origin in history adequately accounts for the biblical data and tells of the amazing destiny of man as pioneered in Jesus.

The apostle John fought hard to preserve the identity of the Son of God and complained urgently about any deviation from the historical Messiah Jesus (see Luke 2:11) who came on the scene as a human being with a mission (1 John 4:2; 2 John 7), not God assuming an “impersonal human nature,” as traditional

views propose. Opposing any notion of a timeless “begetting,” John insisted on a point of time for the event by which the Son of God was begotten. “He who was begotten by God preserves [the believer]” (1 John 5:18, not KJV). Belief in the miraculously generated Son of God remains the basis of biblical faith, along with belief in that unique Son’s Gospel of the Kingdom of God (Luke 4:43). Note also Luke 8:12, which shows us where the Devil concentrates his efforts — to prevent us from believing in the Christian Gospel of the Kingdom. Believing the right Gospel is a matter of salvation. ✧

“Mystery” in the Bible...

“In the NT ‘mystery’ (*mysterion*) refers to a **divine secret previously undisclosed**” (NET Bible on Eph. 1:9).

“The **mystery [divine secret]** that has been kept hidden from ages and generations, but **has now been revealed** to His saints” (Col. 1:26-27; see also Rom. 11:25; 16:25-26; Eph. 1:9; 3:3, 4, 9).

...Versus “Mystery” in Trinitarianism:

“The dogma of the Trinity is an absolute mystery **which we do not understand even after it has been revealed**”! (Karl Rahner, *The Trinity*, p. 50).

Comments

- “Recently I heard testimony regarding your teaching. I believe that something is wrong with what we’re taught in mainstream churches, so I’m seeking the truth.” — *Florida*

- “I have desired to tell you how much we appreciate your dedication to follow and serve Jesus. Even though we, as well as you, were caught up in the ‘wide gate and broad way’ (Matt. 7:13) of the Worldwide Church of God that didn’t follow Jesus, I thank and praise God for moving us on to Jesus who is the ‘narrow gate that leads to life, and few find it’ (Matt. 7:14).” — *Idaho*

- “You are a Kingdom gospel preacher. God is orchestrating an enormous program that goes well beyond our individual borders and concerns!” — *Florida*

- “I would like to thank you for helping me to understand the Bible and to build my faith in the Messiah. I am coming from a JW background, and a few years ago I almost lost my faith. I’m glad I found your YouTube channel. Your videos helped me to understand the Bible and to find a genuine, true faith in the Messiah.” — *Europe*

⁴ *The Birth of the Messiah*, 1977, p. 312

⁵ “Trinity and Incarnation,” *Ex Auditu*, 7, 1991, p. 88

⁶ *Hastings Dictionary of the Bible*, 1911, Vol. 4, p. 576, emphasis added

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