

A Future for Monotheism

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“For a Jew the word God could mean One Person only...The use of the word God [for Jesus] would have seemed to be an infringement of monotheism, whereas by calling Jesus Lord they confessed that He was associated with His Father in the exercise of authority...Christ is Lord because He is God’s vice-gerent, exercising a power that belongs to God.”¹

“In my view Christianity should be much more tightly focused upon Jesus’ words than it has usually been in the past...The real Jesus is a much more interesting and religiously relevant figure than the **divine Christ** of later faith, and he has the advantage of having actually lived.”²

“In the teaching of Jesus Christ, God is preeminently the Father.”³

“Forget the pseudo-orthodox attempts to make Jesus of Nazareth conscious of being the second Person of the Trinity...Jesus believed he was Israel’s Messiah, the one through whom YHWH would restore the fortunes of his people. The word ‘Messiah’ had, of course, **nothing to do** with Trinitarian or incarnational theology.”⁴

The Original Jesus

The original Jesus, the Jesus who actually existed, was a Jew who recited and affirmed as the center of true theology the unitarian creed of Israel (Mark 12:29). Attempts to expand that creed, *on the basis of the Bible*, into a Trinitarian one have failed, as historians and many Bible experts recognize. The creed of Jesus must on no account be modified. To do so is to risk compromise with paganism. It is a fatal mistake to alter in any way the **first and most important** of all the commandments. To do so is to flirt with idolatry, and this is a major theological crime. Idolatry is the greatest of all theological crimes, as bad as prostitution. The original Jesus is not only a confirmed unitarian, underlining the creed of Israel. He himself is the one whose “genesis” or **origin** (Matt. 1:1, 18) is spelled out for us in the clearest terms in Matthew’s and Luke’s opening chapters. Jesus is the Son of God who

¹D.E.H. Whiteley, *The Theology of St. Paul*, 1980, p. 106.

²Don Cupitt, *The Debate About Christ*, p. 138.

³“God,” *International Standard Bible Encyclopedia*, 1983 ed., Vol. 2, p. 1261.

⁴N.T. Wright, “The Historical Jesus and Christian Theology,” *Sewanee Theological Review* 39, 1996.

is rooted in a miraculous **human history** (Luke 1:35) and specifically, by divine promise, in the history of Israel. He is the “Messiah Jesus” (Luke 2:11), who came “in the flesh” (not “*into* the flesh,” as badly mistranslated by Luther⁵), that is to say, as an **originally human, historical person**, a member of the human race. This is also John’s yardstick for our grasp of the true spirit (1 John 4:1-6).

Paul warned that we must have “a love of the truth” “in order to be **saved**” (2 Thess. 2:10), not in order to be “clever” or intellectual!

The original Jesus is not a *pre*-historical, non-fully human person. That would not fit the profile of the son of David promised as Messiah by the Hebrew Bible. Once Jesus’ history is moved out of history and outside time and space, the faith loses its anchor in history, and in fact. We are then inevitably left adrift on the stormy seas of speculation and fantasy.

The very same timelessness and spacelessness which in *later* theology was applied to Jesus’ **origin** has adversely and confusingly affected Jesus’ very Hebrew view of the future. Our destiny is not in Scripture to **disappear as souls to heaven**, but to govern and manage with Jesus a renewed society **on a renewed earth**, over which the returned Messiah will preside (Matt. 5:5; Rev. 5:10; Dan. 7:14, 18, 22, 27; 1 Cor. 6:2; Ps. 37, etc.).

The idea of the “end of the world” is not biblical, as if it were the end of space and time. It is (as properly translated from the Greek) “the end of the [present] age.” Jesus’ disciples asked him about this future end of the present era of history and the arrival of the future Kingdom of God in Matthew 24:3: “What will be the sign of your coming and end of the age?” Jesus announced that the age of the Kingdom of God would follow the end of this present age. The new age of the Kingdom is positively not beyond space and time! It has to do with the future earth. Jesus *loved* this idea and spoke of it in the Lord’s prayer. “May Your Kingdom come” was his impassioned plea!

Both the beginning of God’s story of salvation in the historical Messiah born in Bethlehem and the end of God’s story promising a restored earth, have become confused in the churchgoer’s mind, and the Bible becomes a difficult book to read with pleasure, because the traditional story about “passing away” or “going to heaven” is not that of the Bible writers.

“Orthodoxy” not only disturbs the biblical picture of Jesus as the human Messiah. It defines the Gospel in a way which excludes Jesus as the model

⁵“In das Fleisch gekommen” (1 John 4:2; 2 John 7). Other German versions corrected the mistake by translating the Greek *en sarki* “im Fleisch.”

evangelist, whose job and task was, as he said, to preach the Gospel about the Kingdom of God (Mark 1:14-15; Luke 4:43). In the Great Commission (Matt. 28:19-20) the task of taking the very same Gospel of the Kingdom to the world was conferred by Jesus on the Church until his return (see also Matt. 24:14). The clear commission is to “**preach everything** I taught you,” not just certain doctrines to the exclusion of others!

Astonishingly, leading evangelicals, while claiming the Bible as their authority, set themselves *in direct opposition* to Jesus’ commission to announce the Kingdom of God as the Gospel. In *1001 Bible Questions Answered* William Pettingill and R.A. Torrey wrote:

“This [Matthew 28:18-20] we would call the ‘The Kingdom Commission.’ Of course, we are well aware that it is often spoken of as ‘the Great Commission’ of the Church, but we are convinced that this is an error [*What?!*]. It would be a strange thing to find the Church’s commission in the Kingdom Gospel.”⁶

You see here an amazing assault on Scripture. The Messiah’s teaching is cancelled by this confident assertion, reflected widely in evangelical literature. The author goes on:

“I have long been convinced, and have taught that the Great Commission of Matthew 28:19, 20 is primarily applicable to the Kingdom *rather than to the Church*. If this were kept in mind we should not fall into confusion regarding our marching orders, which are found in Acts 1:8, with details in the Epistles to the Churches. The Matthew commission [i.e. the command to preach the Kingdom of God Gospel as Jesus always did] will come into force for the Jewish Remnant after the Church is caught away.”⁷

Then comes this staggering rejection of the teaching of Jesus:

“Mark’s gospel, like Matthew’s and Luke’s, is primarily a kingdom book, and I am satisfied that none of them contains the Church’s marching orders — not even the so-called ‘Great Commission’ of Matthew 28:18-20...To be sure, we are to preach the gospel to every creature, **but what gospel? The only gospel known to the synoptics**

⁶Pettingill and Torrey, *1001 Bible Questions Answered*, p. 120.

⁷*Ibid.*, p. 127.

was the gospel of the Kingdom. **Our** gospel of the grace of God is found among the four evangelists **only in John.**”⁸

This astonishing systematic error by leading evangelicals must be exposed and corrected! Note that for Paul the Gospel of grace **is precisely synonymous with the Gospel of the Kingdom (Acts 20:24-25)**, and the whole notion of *two* saving gospels is utterly foreign to the New Testament. The loss of the Gospel as the Jewish Jesus preached it (Heb. 2:3), the Gospel about the Kingdom, goes hand in hand with the Church’s rejection of Jesus’ unitarian creed.

A recent book by Michael Vlach, *He will Reign Forever* (2020), is clear about the Kingdom of God as a real theocracy of the future, but it then makes the typical, shocking error and blunder of so-called dispensationalism, i.e. Vlach does nothing with Acts 28:28 which expressly states the truth that **the very same Gospel of the Kingdom**, preached by Paul to Jews, “**this** Gospel of the Kingdom” (cp. Matt. 24:14), is to go equally to Jews *and Gentiles!* (Acts 28:28).

According to the prophets of Israel, one day, thankfully, the whole world will indeed recognize **the God of Israel** as the one true God: “And the Lord will be king over all the earth; in that day there will be one Lord and His name one” (Zech. 14:9). Jesus will be correctly acknowledged too, not as Almighty God (a Second God!), but as the unique servant and agent (*shaliach*) of that one God. Jesus will be recognized for who he truly is, “the Son of God, the Messiah” (Matt. 16:16, Luke 2:11) and “the man Messiah Jesus” (1 Tim. 2:5), the mediator between the one God and mankind to whom all judgment has been delegated: “The Father judges no one, but has given all judgment to the Son” (John 5:22). Jesus, the Son, is the unique agent (Hebrew, *shaliach*: “someone sent”), **delegate** of the One God of the Bible. If Jesus is not that, then he cannot be the model man whom we are to imitate.

1 Timothy 2:5, defining the one God as the Father, distinct from *the man* Messiah Jesus, if believed, could in an instant revolutionize two thousand years of distorted theology, and enable us to return to our Jewish roots in the Jewish Jesus. No other testimony is really needed, when once the words of Paul’s creed (and Jesus’ creed) are grasped: “There is one God and one mediator between God and men, **the man Messiah** Jesus.” Could not this creed of Jesus and Paul provide a rallying point, at least a center of intense

⁸Ibid., p. 113. For a similar systematic departure from the Gospel as Jesus preached it, see the article “Gospel” in *Unger’s Bible Dictionary*, and in scores of evangelical tracts which *do not* invite the convert to obey Jesus’ command in Mark 1:14-15 to repent and believe the Gospel of the Kingdom.

conversation, between millions of Jews and more than two billion Christians, and of course two billion Muslims?

Liberal Christians are very much aware of the early loss of the Jewish monotheistic creed from the faith, but they do not regard this defection from the Bible as very serious, holding a low view of Scripture. Evangelicals however regard the Bible as authoritative, and have so far been unwilling to face the difference between their creed and that of the Jew Jesus. In fact, they are the ones who have shown a most tortured ingenuity in attempting the hopeless task of finding the Trinity in the Bible, even in the Old Testament. By cobbling together their case using a small number of verses, taken out of the overall biblical context, they try to turn the New Testament writers into Trinitarians, or at least struggling to become Trinitarians! It is Satan who promotes the Trinity, since he desires to be coequal with God!

Satan also loves the so-called “amillennial” idea — that the millennium is going on **now** and not in the future! The easy and obvious truth according to Revelation 20:1-4 is that in the *future* millennium the Devil is going to be removed entirely from the earth to the abyss and locked up there, “**so that he can no longer deceive people!**” The Devil tries to remove that stupendous truth, since he hates the idea of being no longer allowed to deceive! He hates the idea of his being locked away in the abyss.

In practice Trinitarian so-called proof texts are taken almost exclusively from John and Paul with some help from Hebrews. But the doctrine of God must be established across the whole range of Scripture, certainly not neglecting the Old Testament in which the New is rooted. The fact that Jesus’ creed was **not a Trinitarian creed** does not seem to disturb or deter evangelicals. This is because of the enormous emphasis they place on the death of Jesus rather than on his teaching. Many evangelicals seem to view Paul as the founder of the faith they recognize as Christian (cp. “the Roman Road”), and forget that **Jesus was the original preacher of the saving Gospel**. The Apostles describe as the greatest peril of all, the failure to hear and heed the **words of Jesus** (Heb. 2:3; 1 Tim. 6:3; 2 John 7-9; 1 John 5:20; Mark 8:35-38). Being Christ-like should surely include believing the same creed as Jesus! Did not Jesus say that the Shema was the most important commandment of all (Mark 12:29)? Do we not have **three** corroborating versions of the teaching of Jesus.

The problem requiring resolution is simply this: Jesus must be taken seriously in the matter of defining God. The sacred birth narratives of Matthew and Luke were designed as definitive and repeated accounts of the

supernatural **origin** (*genesis*) of Jesus as the human descendant of David and Son of God. That picture should have guaranteed that the **human Messiah** remain at the center of Christian faith.

However, under the distorting influence of a post-biblical philosophical theology from the Greek world, John and Paul were made to support that later creed. They were found to be the most susceptible of “interpretation” in support of that later “revised,” twisted view of God and Jesus. Paul and Jesus have been made to say what Scripture did not intend. The post-biblical creeds have simply been read into them and not out of them. They have thus been made to disturb the cardinal unitarian creed of Jesus (Mark 12:29), something he never imagined or intended. John and Paul have been turned into servants of a creed they did not recognize. Paul and Jesus should be read in harmony with the Hebrew Bible and the synoptic and Acts accounts of Jesus which preserve, as **the primary data** about his person, his descent from King David and his supernatural status as Son of God, not God Himself. Only then will the One God of Jesus be honored as the single unrivaled God of the universe.

I Thessalonians 1:9-10 makes our point. We have turned from idols to “serve the living and **true God**, and to wait for **His Son** from heaven.” Paul could see how that central truth was threatened, and he sought to prevent this. Paul in his later writings spoke of Messiah Jesus or Christ Jesus, in that order. John, seeing the dangers of a false non-human Jesus, wrote and repeated in his epistle “**that which,**” not “**he who**” was from the beginning”! (1 John 1:1).

The Saga of Psalm 110:1

This is the most frequently cited Psalm from the OT. Verse 1 is the 88th verse of the 5th book of the Psalms. It contains a staggeringly decisive definition of the one God in relation to the one man, Messiah Jesus. It has been the object of a subtle mistranslation, which prevents the public from understanding its superb truth.

The text gives us an inspired oracle from Yahweh, the one God, and the oracle is directed to “my lord.” Translations confuse the truth here by capitalizing the second “lord. as “Lord.” This misleads the reader into thinking that God is speaking to *Adonai*, which means “the Lord God.” However, the **second lord** in Psalm 110:1 is the Hebrew word *adoni* [pronounced adonee] translated correctly “my lord.” **Adoni**, in the Hebrew, in all of its 195 appearances, *never* means God, but rather “my **non-deity** lord.” The false capital letter on the second lord found in the KJV was corrected by the Revised

Version of 1881 to read, as it should, “my lord.” While there are 450 occurrences of *Adonai* = Lord, meaning God, the word *adoni* = **non-Deity lord** is found 195 times. So there are no less than 645 opportunities for seeing the huge difference between God and man! Psalm 110:1 defines the Messiah as a *non-Deity* lord (**adoni, not Adonai**).

Jesus, brilliant teacher that he was, had just finished saying that the most important command was the Shema defining God as “one” (*echad*) single Person. Who then, Jesus wanted his audience to learn and understand, is that second lord of Psalm 110:1, *adoni*? The correct and truthful answer is that it defines the Messiah as **someone who is not God**, but rather, non-Deity! Jesus the Messiah is obviously not a second God (heaven forbid!) but the genuine, highly exalted human agent of the one God. Jesus perfectly succeeded, as the perfect man, where Adam had failed so tragically and dramatically.

All this is not complicated. My point is that the future of monotheism and the Christian monotheism of Jesus will be secured when we all make known widely these straightforward facts, which will make the Bible a lucidly clear revelation of truth and its brilliant monotheism (John 17:3). God is one Person, and the Messiah is the unique **man** Messiah! (Luke 2:11). Jesus is the supremely exalted accredited **agent**, *shaliach*, of the One God, who is the Father. Cp. “Our Father who is in the heavens, may Your name be held in reverence.”