

**RAISED UP FOR SUCH A TIME AS THIS**  
**Greg Deuble**

NEW PERSPECTIVES... 2 Kings 19:35-36 "And that night the angel of the Lord went forth and slew a hundred and eighty-five thousand in the camp of the Assyrians; and when men arose early in the morning, behold, these were all dead bodies. Then Sennacherib king of Assyria departed, and went home and dwelt at Nineveh."

It so happens that this is a piece of history of which we have two other (we would call them 'secular') accounts. The first is in the Greek historian Herodotus. He tells us that the King of Assyria retreated because mice gnawed the strings of the bows and the thongs of the shields of his army. The angel of the Lord or mice?

The third account is from a Chaldean historian called Berossus, who says Sennacherib was compelled to retreat because pestilence (plague) decimated his army. The angel of the Lord -- mice -- pestilence -- which was it? Which account is true? Surely, the answer is all of them. It was the plague brought by the rodents that caused the army to retreat ... Berossus is correct. Rats and mice carry bubonic plague. Rats and mice in plague proportions chew anything and everything in their path, including leather bow strings and thongs ... Herodotus is right. It was not the will of God that Sennacherib and his hosts conquer Jerusalem... so the Hebrew writer is right. The pagan historians fixed their attention on the secondary causes of Sennacherib's retreat. The Hebrew mind eliminated the secondary and went straight to God.

And therein lies our challenge today. We must read the Bible with Hebrew eyes if we are rightly interpret its message. Which is to say, we must try to hear what the original hearers would have heard ... not what later Gentile readers far removed from the social and religious context have read back in to the text. The starting place to understanding the Biblical revelation is historico-grammatical exegesis.

We here in the Restoration Fellowship (RF) believe we have at least begun to read the Bible with this Hebrew perspective. That at least is where my own journey of discovery began. I had been to theological seminar. I had seriously studied the Bible for decades and preached what I believed its central message with all my might and mein. But what a shock to discover I had been reading the Bible through my anachronistic Graeco-Western eyes. What a surprise to learn I had by and large missed the distinctive Hebrew perspectives so necessary.

Anglican Bishop of Durham, Tom Wright never wrote a truer observation when he said that "Plato [the Greek] remains the most influential thinker in the history of the western world." (*Surprised by Hope*, p. 100). You would think that such an erudite Christian authority would rather want to say that Jesus the Jew and the influence of Christianity holds the greatest influence. But no. As we shall soon see the Bishop will show that Christianity and the Jesus we have inherited today have been re-shaped by Plato as to be almost unrecognizable from their original and earliest Hebraic expression.

N.T. Wright on *You Tube* was having an open discussion with another great New Testament scholar James Dunn. Here is Tom Wright's bell-ringer (and bear in mind that he is the Anglican bishop of Durham, one of the fore-most New Testament historians and widely respected scholars on the contemporary scene)...

Speaking to Dunn he says, "You and I have considered it one of the chief aims of our work to give the New Testament back to the Church"!

N.H. Snaith "Throughout the centuries the Bible has been interpreted in a Greek context, and even the New Testament has been interpreted on the basis of Plato and Aristotle. This may be justifiable, but we hold that those who adopt this method of interpretation should realize what it is

that they are doing, and should cease to maintain that they are basing their theology on the Bible." And Snaith's bell-ringing conclusion is, "...neither Catholic nor Protestant theology is based on Biblical theology. In each case we have a domination of Christian theology by Greek thought ... We hold that there can be no right answer until we have come to a clear view of the distinctive ideas of both Old and New Testaments and their difference from pagan ideas which so largely have culminated 'Christian' thought." (*The Distinctive Ideas of the Old Testament*, p. 185 and 188)

We in RF are firmly convinced that if ever the church is to be God's powerful witness to this generation the Bible must be read with new eyes and its original message rediscovered.

My own UNCLE PETER "After reading your book *They Never Told Me This in Church!* 70 years of religious fog/confusion has blown away!"

"When the Son of Man comes, will He find (and here in the text is the definite article, literally, *the*) faith on the earth" (Lk. 18:8)? And so, it is the stated belief of the Master, that when he returns to set up the Kingdom of God on the earth, that "the faith" that is, the one true faith delivered by God's prophets, will have all but disappeared from the earth. The very power of darkness it seems, will have all but extinguished "the faith".

And, the challengers to "the faith" are dedicated to their causes...

#### THE ISLAMIC REVIVAL

In his book *ANTICHRIST: Islam's Awaited Messiah* Joel Richardson sounds the alarm:- "Islam is the future. Yes, you read that correctly: Islam is the future. If present trends do not change *dramatically*, Islam will bypass Christianity for the title of the world's largest religion very shortly. In fact, according to most statistics, this may take place in less than twenty years. A majority who read this book will live to see this. Islam is the fastest growing religion in the world, growing at a rate four times faster than Christianity... If present trends continue, half of all global births will be in Muslim families by the year 2055. Something dramatic and revolutionary is happening right before our eyes, and most western Christians are oblivious to it." (p. 23-24)

As we speak "Not only is Islam the fastest-growing religion in the world, but also in the United States, Canada and Europe." (p.24). The annual growth rate of Islam in the US ranges between 4 to 8%. Every year tens of thousands of Americans convert to Islam. Surprisingly, since 9-11 the numbers of American converts to Islam have "shyrocketed".

In *America Alone* journalist Mark Steyn wrote on Oct. 2006 that "Sept. 11, 2001, was not 'the day everything changed,' but the day that revealed how much had already changed... if you'd said that whether something does or does not cause offence to Muslims would be the early 21st century's principal political dynamic in Denmark, Sweden, the Netherlands, Belgium, France and the United Kingdom, most folks would have thought you were crazy. Yet on that Tuesday morning the top of the iceberg bobbed up and toppled the Twin Towers.

"This is about the seven-eighths below the surface -- the larger forces at play in the developed world that have left Europe too enfeebled to resist its remorseless transformation into Eurabia and that call into question the future of much of the rest of the world.

What's happening in European demographics is mirrored in the developed world, including Japan, Russia, Canada, even Australia "is one of the fastest demographic evolutions in history."

A Mosque erected means "This country belongs to Allah".

Why is this so significant anyway? Because Islam's stated aim is world domination. It has been rightly said that Islam is the only true anti-Christian religion. Islam says God has no son. The

God of the Bible says He has a Son. Islam means 'submit' to Allah. God says 'every knee will bow and confess that Jesus Christ is Lord'. These two faiths are on a collision course. There is a motto in Moslem circles: First the Saturday people. Then the Sunday people.

I am not scaremongering. Well surely, there are moderates, in fact, the greater majority are moderates. Possibly so. But as Ibn Wurruk says in his book *Why I am Not a Moslem* that every moderate Moslem is a 'sleeper cell'.

#### RICHARD DAWKINS AND ANTAGONISTIC ATHEISM

Listen to the latest guru of Darwinian atheism, Richard Dawkins in his best seller *The God Delusion* ... "The God of the Old Testament is arguably the most unpleasant character in all fiction: jealous and proud of it; a petty, unjust, unforgiving control-freak; a vindictive, bloodthirsty ethnic cleanser; a misogynistic, homophobic, racist, infanticidal, genocidal, filicidal, pestilential, megalomaniacal, sadomasochistic, capriciously malevolent bully. Those of us schooled from infancy in his ways can become desensitized to their horror. A *naïf* blessed with the perspective of innocence has a clearer perception. Winston Churchill's son Randolph somehow contrived to remain ignorant of Scripture until Evelyn Waugh and a brother officer, in a vain attempt to keep Churchill quiet when they were posted together during the war, bet him he couldn't read the entire Bible in a fortnight: 'Unhappily it is not the result we hoped. He has never read any of it before and is hideously excited; keeps reading quotations aloud "I say I bet you didn't know this came in the Bible ... " or merely slapping his side & chortling "God, isn't God a s\*\*t!" Thomas Jefferson - better read - was of a similar opinion: "The Christian God is a being of terrific character - cruel, vindictive, capricious and unjust." (p. 31)

I had a young Uni student recently harangue me and actually threaten me with the conviction that it will be soon illegal to teach what he called 'the myth of God' to children in home or school. He actually called me a criminal because I taught the God of the Bible to my children. In the not-too-distant future he predicted, people like me will be locked up as enemies of decent society. I think he might very well have spoken the truth. Jesus warned did he not that there will come a time when people who think they are serving God will persecute and kill the true followers of Jesus? Did not Jesus warn that if the salt loses its savour, then it will be fit for nothing but to be cast out and trodden under the foot of men?

#### ORTHODOX CHRISTIANITY

CARLOS XAVIER ... Refused entry to a Sydney seminary because of his unitary monotheism.

EXAMINE AND SEARCH FOR YOURSELF! Illustration: KOORONG REVIEWER who wrote *"False Prophet Beware"* *Greg Deuble writes 95% truth. But he writes the Devil's lies in the rest. I know. Because I went to my pastor and asked him. And my pastor told me this. And I am writing to warn you now. Beware. If you are not sure, go and ask your pastor too!"*

Ah. Such independent thinking! Such erudite scholarship! I tell you that when even the Church shuts its mind up to honest investigation and when God's people refuse to believe His word, is it any wonder that true to His promise God is already sending the people a "strong delusion that they should believe what is false" (II Thess. 2:11)?

CALUMNY. A colleague in the pastorate with whom I had many years of wonderful Christian fellowship completely washed his hands clean of me after much long dialogue. After much correspondence he called me a *ho poneros anthrosos* ... which is NT Greek for 'the evil man'.

BIGOTRY. RON a good Christian friend, member of Baptist church and elder for many years, supporter of missions and responsible for bringing many into the church. After I posted him a copy of *They Never Told Me This in Church!* I felt in my bones I was in for it. I rang him up to ask what he thought. I could sense his dry mouth. "You know that hospital pass you wrote about?"

Well, (very deliberate tone) you should end up in the hospital ward never to recover again!" I ignored that bit and continued. So, what specifically is it that you don't like? "One good thing is that you use Scripture throughout. Your Scriptural index is very extensive. But you quote *women*. *Women* theologians." I said, "So, you obviously disagree with the God Who chose *women* to be the first evangelists to announce that Jesus was risen from the dead?" Dead, stoney silence on the phone. I truly felt disappointed that the best defence for his "orthodox" position, all this man could come up with was a bit of bigotry.

So then. What are some of the teachings we believe must be rediscovered if ever the message of the Jesus is to again be attended by God's Spirit of power?

#### A. **The hope** of the Christian ... *Surprised by Hope*

Ask most Christians what their hope in Christ is, and they will say that because Jesus died on the cross for their sins and because he rose again, they hope one day to go to heaven with him and live with all the redeemed and the angels in eternal bliss in God's everlasting presence. (I am not parodying!)

We in RF do *not* believe that when the Christian dies he/she departs the body and immediately flies away in their spirit to be conscious with God in heaven. Nor does Tom Wright:-

p. 25 "It comes as something of a shock when people are told what is in fact the case: that there is very little in the Bible about 'going to heaven when you die', and not a lot about a post mortem hell either... Many Christians grow up assuming that whenever the New Testament speaks of 'heaven' it refers to the place to which the saved will go after death. In Matthew's gospel, Jesus' sayings about the 'kingdom of God' in the other gospels are rendered as 'kingdom of heaven'; since many read Matthew first, when they find Jesus talking about 'entering the kingdom of heaven', they have their assumptions confirmed, and suppose that he is indeed talking about 'how to to to heaven when you die', which is certainly not what either Jesus or Matthew has in mind... but the language of heaven in the New Testament doesn't work that way. 'God's kingdom' in the preaching of Jesus referes, not to post-mortem destiny, not to our escape from this world into another one, but about God's sovereign rule coming 'on earth as it is in heaven'."

p. 29 The Christmas carol "Away in a Manger" with its prayer 'and fit us for heaven, to live with thee there' has no resurrection; no new creation; no marriage of heaven and earth ... "is neither Christian nor Jewish but decidedly pagan." It is a "Platonic escape"; "flagrantly Platonic" and "blatant Platonism".

p. 39 Wright asks if we have souls that need saving. "Much Christian and sub-Christian tradition has assumed that we all do indeed have 'souls' that need 'saving', and that the 'soul', if 'saved', will be the 'part' of us that 'goes to heaven when we die'. All this however, finds minimal support in the New Testament, including the teaching of Jesus, where the word 'soul', though rare, reflects when it does occur underlying Hebrew or Aramaic words that refer, not to a disembodied entity hidden within the outer shell of the disposable body, but rather to what we would call the whole 'person' or 'personality', seen as being confronted by God....the idea that every human possesses an immortal soul, which is the 'real' part of them, finds little support in the Bible."

p. 67 "The resurrection narratives in the gospels never, ever say anything like ...'Jesus is raised, therefore we shall go to heaven when we die'.

We on the Restoration Fellowship here say, "Bravo to Mr Tom Wright!"

SANTOS a workmate who is firmly committed to Hindu mysticism... we are all souls emanating from the Divine Soul seeking to re-emerge with that Divine consciousness. Pantheism ...God is in everything and everything is God. Explaining to me his belief in re-incarnation. I explained

the Hebrew and Biblical view of "soul". Explained the doctrine of resurrection ....we will be raised up again and enjoy a re-embodied fully human existence, albeit incorruptible, immortal existence no longer subject to sickness, death. And we will live in a renewed and beautiful world every bit as material and physical as we now inhabit. Santos exclaimed with audible excitement, "Do you mean I would be raised up to be *myself* again?!"

I sensed the joy of the Holy Spirit in my heart as this man for the first time heard a doctrine that reaffirmed his individuality, his humanity and what true relationship with the God of creation would mean in a renewed earth.

## B. The Person of God.

"No responsible NT scholar would claim that the doctrine of the Trinity was taught by Jesus, or preached by the earliest Christians, or consciously held by any writer of the NT. It was in fact slowly worked out in the course of the first few centuries in an attempt to give an intelligible doctrine of God." (Prof. A.T. Hanson of Hull Univ. in *The Image of the Invisible God*)

"The Church's doctrine of the Trinity would seem to be the farthest thing from [the New Testament writer's] minds, and today's reader may well wonder if it is even helpful to refer to such a dogma in order to grasp the theology of the New Testament. When the Church speaks of the doctrine of the Trinity, it refers to the specific belief that God exists eternally in three distinct 'persons' who are equal in deity and one in substance. In this form the doctrine is not found anywhere in the New Testament; it was not so clearly articulated until the late fourth century AD." (Trinitarian ... Christopher B. Kaiser, Professor of Historical and Systematic Theology, Western Theological Seminary in *The Doctrine of God, A Historical Survey*, p. 23, 1982, Revised March 2007 Edition).

"Certainly we cannot speak broadly of the revelation of the doctrine of the Trinity in the Old Testament. It is a plain matter of fact that none who have depended on the revelation embodied in the Old Testament alone have ever attained to the doctrine of the Trinity." (Benjamin B. Warfield, late conservative & trinitarian scholar in *The International Standard Bible Encyclopedia*)

Reformed scholar Shirley Guthrie, Professor of Systematic Theology at Columbia Theological Seminary forthrightly states, "The Bible does not teach the doctrine of the Trinity. Neither the word 'trinity' itself nor such language as 'one in three', 'three in one,' one 'essence' (or 'substance'), and three 'persons' is biblical language. The language of the doctrine is the language of the ancient church taken from classical Greek philosophy. The doctrine of the Trinity is not found in the Bible..." (*Christian Doctrine*, Revised Edition, Louisville: Westminster/John Knox Press, 1994, p. 76-80).

"Although Trinitarian apologists have often tried to produce evidence for Trinitarian thinking amongst the apostolic fathers (the earliest church fathers before Nicea) Trinitarian scholars Roger E. Olson and Christopher Hall in *The Trinity* ask, "What do we find in the writings of the Christian leaders during roughly the first sixty years of the second century CE? As we might expect, we do not find the developed Trinitarian language or theology that will blossom from the fourth century on... We will be disappointed if we expect to find developed Trinitarian reflection in the early post-apostolic writers. It is simply not there."

Millard J. Erickson:- "The Trinity is not clearly or explicitly taught anywhere in Scripture, yet it is widely regarded as a central doctrine, indispensable to the Christian faith. In this regard, it goes contrary to what is virtually an axiom [that is a given and self-evident truth] of biblical doctrine, namely, that there is a direct correlation between the scriptural clarity of a doctrine and its cruciality to the faith and life of the church. In view of the difficulty of the subject and the great amount of effort expended to maintain this doctrine, we may well ask ourselves what might justify all this trouble....Another difficulty stems from the categories used by those who worked out the doctrine of the Trinity that the church adopted. They used Greek categories such as substance,

essence, and person...[and] Over the years, questions have been raised regarding these concepts. One contention is that the Trinity is simply a product of those ancient categories. It is not present in biblical thought, but arose when biblical thought was pressed into this foreign mold. Thus the doctrine of the Trinity goes even beyond and even distorts what the Bible says about God. It is a Greek philosophical, not a Hebraic biblical concept."

Erickson then rather astoundingly seeks to justify his belief in the Trinity in the following pages. But he subsequently writes this: "The question, however, is this. It is claimed that the doctrine of the Trinity is a very important, crucial, and even basic doctrine. If that is indeed the case, should it not be somewhere more clearly, directly, and explicitly stated in the Bible? If this is the doctrine that especially constitutes Christianity's uniqueness, as over against unitarian monotheism on the one hand, and polytheism on the other hand, how can it be only implied in the biblical revelation? In response to the complaint that a number of portions of the Bible are ambiguous or unclear, we often hear a statement something like, 'It is the peripheral matters that are hazy or on which there seem to be conflicting biblical materials. The core beliefs are clearly and unequivocally revealed.' This argument would appear to fail us with respect to the doctrine of the Trinity, however. For here is a seemingly crucial matter where Scriptures do not speak loudly and clearly. Little direct response can be made to this charge. It is unlikely that any text of Scripture can be shown to teach the doctrine of the Trinity in a clear, direct, and unmistakable fashion."

In his chapter on the Trinity in *Christian Theology* Millard Erickson (p. 321) states the doctrine is "not overtly or explicitly stated in Scripture... We have to put together complementary themes, draw inferences from Biblical teachings, and decide on a particular type of conceptual vehicle to express our understanding." And it "presents what seems on the surface to be a self-contradictory doctrine."

After reading the body of Erickson's argument as to why I should believe in the Trinity, I confess Erickson's conclusion is rather odd but to be expected. The best he can say is that the doctrine of the Tri-unity cannot be explained, does not make sense, but still has to be believed. Note how soon Erickson forgets what he wrote in his introduction that the doctrine has to be put together and constructed from inferences and is "not overtly or explicitly stated in Scripture." Listen to his concluding paragraph: (p. 342)

"It appears that Tertullian was right in affirming that the doctrine of the Trinity must be divinely revealed, not humanly constructed. It is so absurd from a human standpoint that no one would have invented it. We do not hold the doctrine of the Trinity because it is self evident or logically coherent. We hold it because God has revealed that this is what he is like. As someone has said of this doctrine:

Try to explain it, and you'll lose your mind;  
But try to deny it, and you'll lose your soul.

Here is a man who is being man-handled by Church tradition, rather than clear Hebrew and biblical revelation! We here in the RF agree with Erickson on this obvious point. For there is no passage in all the Biblical revelation which asserts that God is three. There is not one (authentic) verse that carries the meaning that the God of the Bible, the God of Abraham, the God of Moses, the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, means God in three Persons. Any such claim is a matter of inference and construction, and playing with the meaning of words that no dictionary or lexicon supports.

Grammatically speaking, there are 20,000 plus singular, personal pronouns and verbs telling us that the God of the Bible is a single individual. There are roughly 11,000 singular personal pronouns alone. How many times does God have to say "I", "Me" before we believe Him? God even calls Himself "a soul", that is, an individual Person in Isaiah 42:1. God's own testimony as

to His Being is that He is a single soul, a single Individual.

Furthermore, the word 'God' occurs some 12,000 times in Scripture (including *YHWH* 6,800 times, *Elohim* 3,500 times and *theos* 1,300 times). This is supremely significant, for if virtually all 12,000 refer to only *one* person, and none of them equates God with the number 3, then it must be asked, who are these names and titles referring to? By reading the NT it becomes abundantly clear that the *one* God of Israel, the God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob is the *one* God and Father of Jesus.

SUPPOSE that I as a believer in the unitary monotheism of the Bible, suppose that I as a believer that the God of the Bible is a single Lord, one Individual and not three, suppose that I could not find the word "one" applied to God anywhere in the Bible, I reckon I would be troubled. If every verse said God is Three, and I decided to ignore that and still insisted, No, He is one even though it says again and again He is Three on almost every page, I know He is one, you know I reckon nobody would take me seriously. If we could not find the word "One" in the Scriptures in reference to God, who would pretend God is one? However, the word 'three' is found nowhere in the Bible in connection with the Being of God. The word "three" is not found in a single verse in the entire Scriptures for any name or title of God.

It is a staggering thing to realize that the doctrine of the Tri-unity of God, the so-called primary and essential article of faith is not found in any Divine oracle but needs and depends on the explanations [and threats] of men! Amazing indeed that no announcement of the Trinity is found on the lips or from the pens of the prophets, the apostles, and supremely the Son himself.

One must wonder, if the Trinity is true, why God Who so eagerly yearns for our salvation, would leave such fallible creatures as ourselves to infer correctly what is alleged to be such an essential doctrine for salvation!

OBJECTION: "Ah, but I hear. Aren't we dealing with MYSTERY here?"

CALVARY CHAPEL, AUCKLAND, N.Z....

*"Would you like to understand the doctrine of the Trinity? You can't! That's the conclusion of hundreds of theologians for the last 1600 yrs. The Trinity is a mystery...Our ordinary, logical skills break down when we try to understand it ... it is doubtful the human mind would invent something so opposed to its own capabilities. On the other hand, we still don't understand the Trinity... We are face to face with a mystery... The concept of the Trinity is ideal for meditation. Because we can't understand it we are forced to go beyond the realm of our comprehension into the realm of God Himself." (!?!)*

TERTULLIAN. *Typical of the many who want us to circumnavigate our God-given minds when he stated, "It is certain because it is impossible". (!?!)*

The modern usage of 'mystery' is that which is mysterious, wrapped in secret, inexplicable to reason, undisclosed. But this is not what the NT means when it used that word. Whenever the NT speaks of 'mystery' it always refers to that which is now revealed and open to all God's people....

Matt. 13:11 Jesus said to them, "To you it has been granted to know the mysteries of the kingdom of heaven..." (See also Mk. 4:11; Lk. 8:10).

Rom. 11:25 "For I do not want you, brethren, to be uninformed of this mystery ... that a partial hardening has happened to Israel..."

Rom. 16:25 "Now to Him who is able to establish you according to my gospel and the preaching

of Jesus Christ, according to the revelation of the mystery which has been kept secret for long ages past, but now is manifested...."

I Cor. 2:7-8 "But we speak God's wisdom in a mystery, the hidden wisdom, which God predestined before the ages to our glory; the wisdom which none of the rulers of this age has understood...."

I Cor. 15:51 "Behold, I tell you a mystery; we shall not all sleep, but we shall all be changed."

Eph. 1:9 "He made known to us the mystery of His will...."

Eph. 3:3-4 "That by revelation there was made known to me the mystery, as I wrote before in brief. And by referring to this, when you read you can understand my insight into the mystery of Christ... v. 9 And to bring to light what is the administration of the mystery which for ages has been hidden in God..."

Eph. 6:19 "And pray on my behalf, that utterance may; be given to me in the opening of my mouth, to make known with boldness the mystery of the gospel..."

Note. In every single reference to mystery we are told it is an open secret. It is granted to God's people to know the mysteries of the coming Kingdom. The mystery of God's intention for the world was once hidden but now it is openly revealed and proclaimed. It is now out in the light, manifested. "Behold, I tell you a mystery". You see, the mystery is told. No such thing as an unrevealed, secret, incomprehensible mystery. The New Testament definition of mystery is that which is revealed! The Trinitarian who asks us to believe in the mystery of an unrevealed Trinity is working outside the NT faith. We are never asked to believe what has not been revealed.

ROBERT HACH "Revelation is, by definition, *the unveiling of a mystery*: once revealed it is a mystery no longer (see Eph. 1:9-10; 3:1-6; Col 2:2-3); if it remains a mystery, then it has not been revealed. In other words, revelation on God's side corresponds to understanding on the human side. The fact that Trinitarianism remains a mystery to human understanding, *despite its supposedly having been revealed by God*, is the strongest argument against regarding it as a revelation of God: if God had revealed it, it would be understandable..."

"Moreover, to say that the Trinity is an incomprehensible mystery that must be *accepted by faith* is to replace the apostolic faith, which is a matter of persuasion, through understanding, with a mystical faith that must find some means other than understanding to gain entrance into the heart, the alternatives being a variety of more or less coercive forms, both authoritarian and mystical, of possession. (The history of Trinitarian Christianity bears brutal witness to the truth of this observation.)" [Robert Hach, *Possession and Persuasion*, p. 116).

Even the respected Trinitarian Bible scholar Emil Brunner in *The Christian Doctrine of God* was honest enough to admit the following, "It was never the intention of the original witnesses to Christ in the New Testament to set before us an intellectual problem - that of Three Divine Persons - then to tell us silently to worship this mystery of the 'Three-in-One.' There is no trace of such an idea in the New Testament. This 'mysterium logicum,' the fact that God is Three and yet One, lies wholly outside the message of the Bible. [This mystery has] no connection with the message of Jesus and His Apostles. No Apostle would have dreamt of thinking that there are Three Divine Persons, whose mutual relations and paradoxical unity are beyond our understanding. No 'mysterium logicum', no intellectual paradox, no antinomy of Trinity in Unity, has any place in their testimony..."

**ILLUST.** There is the perception out there in 'church world' that anybody who does not believe in the Trinity and anybody who does not confess that Jesus is the Lord God of the OT, is lost forever, with no hope of ever entering the Kingdom of Heaven. In fact, I was only very recently

asked by one such Trinitarian, "Do you seriously think unitarian monotheists will enter the Kingdom of God?" I answered, "I will be in very good company in that Kingdom. After all, Moses will be there! David will be there. Isaiah, Jeremiah, and Daniel will be there. All the faithful prophets will be there. Oh, and the apostles too, they will be there in that Kingdom. And above all, Jesus himself, the Founder of Christianity who confessed that His Father is "the only true God" will be there!" Yes, there will be a lot of very surprised Trinitarians in the Kingdom of Heaven when they see those of us who do not believe that doctrine accepted by God.

Well, you might like to turn that around and ask me, "Well Greg, do you think Trinitarians will be in the Kingdom?" Good question! Do you want the long or the short answer? Well, let me give you the short answer. It will shock you! "No! There will definitely be no Trinitarians in the Kingdom of God!" Does that shock you? It ought to.

Now let me give you (in brief), the explanation. Once, by God's grace, the Trinitarian who has to the best of his/her ability believed in the God of Scripture and followed Jesus as their Lord and Master, enters that glorious Kingdom, the scales of deception will immediately fall from their eyes. All doctrinal error will cease in the full light of that Day. In that Kingdom, there will only be ex-Trinitarians!

If the believer is in the process of being saved, then we are all growing in our level of understanding. Thank God we will not be saved when we come to a full and perfect understanding. On that criterion none of us would enter that glorious kingdom. We are all started on the journey. We all now see only "dimly, but then face to face. Now we know in part, but then we shall know fully " (I Cor. 13:12).

Salvation is defined by Paul (I Tim. 2:4-5). He tells us that "God desires all men to come to the knowledge of the truth. For there is one God, and one mediator also between God and men, the man Messiah Jesus, who gave himself a ransom for all..." Note: Salvation, which is entrance into the life of the Kingdom of God, is defined as coming to the knowledge that "there is one God" and there is one mediator for all men, himself a man, Messiah Jesus.

So, there will be no Trinitarian believers in the Kingdom. They will have all been converted to see as Zechariah the prophet predicts, "The LORD will be king over all the earth; in that day the LORD will be the only one, and His name the only one."

You see, in that Day when Jesus Messiah comes back to earth His Father YHWH will be recognized as one, and His Name one. As the *Interpreter's Bible* comments on this prophecy when the Kingdom of God is established over all the earth, "the Jewish confession of faith, the Shema of Israel [and of Jesus himself!] will become the universal creed." (*Interpreter's Bible*, VI, p. 1112). Ah. In Messiah's Kingdom, the LORD who is His God and Father, YHWH, will be universally recognized in His unique and matchless glory as the one and only true God. (Cf. I Cor. 15: 28 "And when all things are subjected to Him [God the Father] then the Son himself also will be subjected to the ONE who subjected all things to him, [so] that God may be all in all.")

Belief in the Trinity necessary for salvation? Hardly. If the doctrine of the Trinity were true, and required to believe upon for salvation itself, it may be pointed out that it is utterly unique in the sense that all other essential Christian doctrines *are* taught plainly in the Bible, whereas the Trinity is somehow derived from "all of what the Bible teaches. This means we are being asked to accept a teaching that would be the only non-articulated, unannounced doctrine of the Christian faith, based on a consideration of Scripture!...Evidently, Trinitarians actually do believe, and ultimately have to defend, the idea that the Bible does not have to be specific about certain, essential Christian doctrines!

In the RF we ask, Is that really possible? You can argue 'The Trinity is defined by the Church. You can argue, 'The Trinity is formulated by the Church.' But you cannot argue, 'The Trinity is defined by Christ and his apostles.' You cannot argue, 'The Trinity is defined by the

Scriptures.'

The doctrine of the Trinity goes beyond the Scriptures. And it goes beyond Jesus, the founder of His NT church, who says unambiguously, "the Lord our God is one Lord" and who says categorically, that his Father is "the one, true God".

### C. The **Person of Jesus.**

The mainstream church belief is that Jesus is God, the God of the Old Testament, and unless one subscribes whole-heartedly to this dogma, one is considered lost.

Let me give you a typical polemic. I come back to Erickson who is representative of the so-called 'orthodox' belief in the Deity of Jesus. In his chapter on *The Deity of Christ* his very first statement under the title *Jesus' Self-Consciousness* reads thusly:-

"We should note that Jesus did not make an explicit and overt claim to deity. He did not say in so many words, 'I am God.' What we do find, however, are claims which would be inappropriate if made by someone who is less than God. For example, Jesus said that he would send 'his angels' (Matt. 13:41); elsewhere they are spoken of as 'the angels of God' (Luke 12:8-9; 15:10). That reference is particularly significant, for not only the angels but also the kingdom is spoken of as his: 'The Son of man will send his angels, and they will gather out of his kingdom all causes of sin and evildoers.' This kingdom is repeatedly referred to as the kingdom of God, even in Matthew's Gospel, where one would expect to find 'kingdom of heaven' instead." (p. 684)

Erickson it would appear, has no idea that in Hebrew thinking, in Jewish understanding, an agent can be considered as the delegating principal himself. In fact, it is a Hebrew dictum that "the agent is as the principal himself". When God the Father **gives** all authority to Jesus His chosen Son, the kingdom of God may be understood truly to be the Son's kingdom. When God the Father **gives** Jesus power over the angels, the angels are truly said to be his (the Son's) angels. When God the Father **delegates** His Son Jesus as the judge of all mankind, Jesus stands in the very place of God and acts as God, and all judgment is now his. But never in the Jewish mind did or does this mean that Jesus **is** God.

If only such erudite people would go back to the basics of the Hebrew world-view such error would be avoided. For they do get themselves into some real tangles and contradictions...

Hang on for this ride! For those who believe that God is Three Who's in one What, (a Tri-unity of Persons in one essence), also teach that Jesus is one Who in two What's (one Person in two natures)! This is called the Hypostatic Union of Jesus. That is, Jesus is both fully God Almighty and fully man. That is, the Person of Jesus has two natures.

But what a tangle this doctrine creates for those who hold it. How can Jesus who is supposed to be omniscient God not know the day nor the hour of his return? It is axiomatic: The All-knowing God cannot be ignorant. (Augustine got around this by saying that Jesus' ignorance on this question of his coming was an 'official' ignorance.) In other words, if Jesus was the so-called God-man, then you are asked to believe a ridiculous proposition that as God Jesus knew everything, but as man he did not know everything. I mean really. This doctrine of the Hypostatic union of Jesus creates a schizophrenic Jesus.

Furthermore, the tangle gets worse. How can Jesus who is supposed to be the Immortal God Who cannot die, really die on the cross for the sins of the world? The proposition is ridiculous. We are asked to believe that Jesus as God could not die, for God alone has immortality and cannot die. But as man he could die. The way they get around this contradiction is by saying that Jesus merely died 'bodily', since it was his 'assumed' human nature that 'died', not the Divine Person who died.

Wew! Back up! Did you get that? What a subtle way of denying Jesus' death. Here is lip service to the person of Christ dying while in reality they say Jesus did not die at all. Putting it bluntly, If Christ the divine person did not die, then there is no dead person at all on the cross. And if there is no dead person, we have no Saviour!

How much easier to see the New Testament unambiguously teaches that Jesus was a real human being. A unique man, yes. Miraculously pro-created in a virginal begetting, yes. But for all that, he was not the God-man...NT Greek had a perfectly good and appropriate word for 'God-man' but it appears nowhere in the NT. That is a later, imported, foreign concept. Rather he was the man of God, uniquely begotten and supremely anointed as God's Son and supreme agent. In other words, Jesus did not pre-exist his own birth because he was in the Spirit-world first.

Speaking of Israel's hope that God would send the Messiah to rescue the nation, Tom Wright sensibly says, "It is clear that whenever the Messiah appears, and whoever he turns out to be, he will be the agent of Israel's god. This must be clearly distinguished from any suggestion that he is in himself a transcendent figure, existing in some supernatural mode before making his appearance in space and time....Certainly there is no reason to hypothesize any widespread belief that the coming Messiah would be anything other than an ordinary human being called by Israel's god to an extraordinary task." (*The New Testament and the People of God*, p.320).

Alfred Harnack, prince of Church historians, in *History of Dogma*, vol. 1, p. 328 alerts us to how traditional theology has reversed this biblical order. Harnack quotes the early Second Century post-apostolic book II Clement as a clearly definable point where the sabotage became encoded...

II Clement 9:5 reads "Christ, the Lord who saved us, being first spirit became flesh". Harnack's commentary is hard-hitting: "That is the fundamental, theological and philosophical creed on which the whole Trinitarian and Christological speculations of the Church of the succeeding centuries are built, and it is thus the root of the orthodox system of dogmatics."

Again, we in the RF say, "Bravo!" Adam was a type of him "who was to come". Adam exists before Jesus. As a true man Jesus was patterned after the likeness of Adam. To claim as mainstream Christendom does, that Jesus is the "eternally begotten Son" is to speak illogical nonsense. Worse, it is to deny the Scriptures that tell us Jesus was "begotten today" which means he had a definite point of origin, a beginning, a genesis.

#### D. The Holy Spirit.

"The Trinitarian assertion that the Holy Spirit is God Himself is surely impossible to maintain when we note that *nowhere* in Scripture is the Holy Spirit prayed to or worshipped, *nowhere* is the Holy Spirit praised in song, *nowhere* is the Holy Spirit said to send his personal greetings with those of the Father and the Lord Jesus to the churches when the apostles write their letters, and *nowhere* is the Holy Spirit given a personal name.

As the spirit of Elijah is not another, separate individual but stands for the prophet Elijah himself in his powerful ministry, just so, the Spirit of God is God Himself in Personal interaction with His creation. We in RF therefore call on the church to drop the unbiblical term God the Spirit.

#### WHO AND WHY RF?

This is our aim here in RF. We call the church back to the Hebrew foundations of Biblical understanding. We call believers back to the one true God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob, back to the God of Moses, back to the God and Father of our Lord Jesus the Messiah who endorsed that "The LORD our God is one Lord", not three.

We call every honest seeker of the truth back to the NT witness that Jesus is the Son of the living God, and not a pagan 'God the Son', and that the church's bedrock foundation must rest here.

We call the world to recognize the astounding truth that through the faith of Jesus, God promises His Kingdom building is on track, the Kingdom comes! And we who are true and loyal to this faith will by the grace of God be raised up to enjoy glorious embodied life on a New Earth in which righteousness and peace will forever dwell.

As the name Christian Restoration Fellowship suggests, we are not an organised church. We come from varied church and religious backgrounds. Our business is to call the church back to the Jesus of the Bible. We believe Jesus must be allowed to define who God is. Who he himself is. He must be read in his own first-century Jewish context, not in a later constructed and foreign environment. We simply seek encouragement and fellowship with the thousands in our contact group around the world who want honest, straight-forward answers to who God is, who Jesus is, what his Gospel is, what is the key to inheriting the life of the Age to Come. We believe there is a reasonable way through the fog and quagmire or denominational confusion and conflict and division. There are various other questions and issues that we allow free-thinking and expression of opinion on (e.g. speaking in tongues; worship on Saturday or Sunday; existence of the Devil and demons; drinking alcohol, etc. etc.).

WAYNE is a well-respected member of the Church of Christ where I attended for years. After reading my book he asked me, "Why are you still here?" My answer, because I represent a very large and significant part of the very earliest of our Churches of Christ tradition. Alexander Campbell although still holding to the Trinity, stated that Jesus is not the eternal Son of God. And Barton Stone stated "I stumbled at the doctrine of the Trinity. I could not believe it!"

The Bible tells us that darkness covers the nations. "The whole world lies in the power of the evil one". And the fact that any of us is here today at this historic RF national conference is an astounding thing. For the history of the church -- the little faithful band who overcome because they love the light -- is one of persecution, torture, ex-communication and threats. It is a wonder that anybody alive on planet earth today is left to testify that the God of the Bible, the God of Abraham is "one Lord" and that this God is "the one true God" and Father of our Lord Jesus Messiah. It only goes to prove the words of Jesus our Lord and Master who promised that "the gates of hades" (the gates of death) would not overpower the church whose confession is grounded on the rock that Jesus is the Messiah, the Son of the Living God" (Matt. 16:16). Yes, that the light has shone down through the generations proves that "the light shines in the darkness and the darkness has not, cannot, will not, put it out" (John 1:5).

And so, thanks be to God, each of us has a remarkable story to tell as to how we have come to this place. What a miracle! A few dry gullies notwithstanding. Years of croaking on the sides of a stagnant billabong or two notwithstanding. Decades of deception notwithstanding. For those of us whose hearts were not satisfied with the mouldy bread of Rome, and those of us whose spirits were faint and thirsty because of the stagnant water of the traditional doctrines of so-called Protestant "orthodoxy" today give thanks to God and to all the faithful who have carried the torch to us.

RF is still here because we honestly believe the message we are holding forth represents the very earliest of apostolic tradition. We invite open, rational, honest investigation of these issues. We believe God's truth has nothing to run from, nothing to hide, nothing to fear.