

Jesus Was Not a Unitarian

(Full Version)

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The doctrine of the Trinity has long distinguished conventional Christianity from the world's other great monotheistic religions, including Judaism and Islam. But in his book *Jesus Was Not a Trinitarian*, Sir Anthony Buzzard argues for a strict, numerical monotheism and argues against all major forms of trinitarianism. He asserts that the doctrine that "God is a single Person . . . ought to be the creed of the Church. That it is not should be cause for alarm. Jesus was a unitarian, believing that God the Father alone was truly God."¹

When taken as a whole, Buzzard's claims decree that fundamental beliefs held by the overwhelming majority of conventional Christians are seriously in error. Nor do they fit well within Mormon doctrine. Latter-day Saints would agree with Buzzard's primary theses that the conventional Trinitarian view of God is not biblical, was developed long after Christ's death, and would have been alien to the mortal Messiah. However, his secondary thesis, that Jesus and his teachings demand a numerically strict monotheistic view of God, would require significant redefinition in order to agree with Latter-day Saint theology.² Furthermore, Buzzard sharply diverges with Latter-day Saints in his forthright denial of the divinity of Jesus Christ. While accepting his role as Messiah and Savior, Buzzard flatly denies that Jesus is the God of Israel, that he has always existed or even that he existed prior to his mortal birth, that he was the Father's agent in creation, or that he is deity in any usual sense of the term. In this paper, we explain Buzzard's unitarian understanding of God by comparing and contrasting it with views held by Latter-day Saints and conventional Christians; briefly summarize and critique Buzzard's biblical case for unitarianism and against the divinity of Jesus Christ; and examine and

defend why Latter-day Saints are uniquely committed to both the divinity of Jesus Christ and a plurality of divine persons in the Godhead.

BUZZARD'S UNITARIANISM

A stated goal of *Trinitarian* is to define “who the God of the Bible is,” and more specifically, to define “biblical monotheism.”³ The book focuses on creeds, both biblical and ecumenical. Though the word *creed* is found nowhere in the New Testament, Buzzard claims that the Jewish Shema prayer (Deut. 6:4–9) is the creed to which Christ and his disciples strictly adhered as the core doctrine of their faith. Jesus’ commitment to this creed, Buzzard says, is clearly communicated in the four gospels, most prominently in Mark chapter 12:

And one of the scribes came, and having heard them reasoning together, and perceiving that he had answered them well, asked him, Which is the first commandment of all? And Jesus answered him, The first of all the commandments *is*, Hear, O Israel; *the Lord our God is one Lord*. And thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind, and with all thy strength; this is the first commandment. And the second is like, *namely* this, Thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself. There is none other commandment greater than these. And the scribe said unto him, Well, Master, thou hast said the truth: for *there is one God; and there is none other but he*. And to love him with all the heart, and with all the understanding, and with all the soul, and with all the strength, and to love his neighbor as himself, is more than all burnt offerings and sacrifices. And when Jesus saw that he answered discreetly, he said unto him, Thou art not far from the kingdom of God. (vv. 28–34; emphasis added)⁴

Thus, the thrust of the book is that the “creed of Jesus” was a unitarian one (there is only one divine person: God the Father), and hence Trinitarianism—or any other non-unitarian view—contradicts the Bible and, accordingly, is heretical.

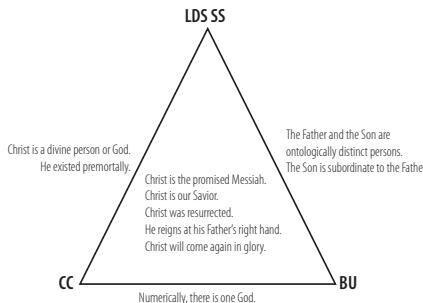
Similar to the message of the Latter-day Saints, Buzzard’s claim is one of restoration. Indeed, the subheading of the book is “A Call to Return to the Creed of Jesus.” While the book is ostensibly a critique of Trinitarianism, it declares as antibiblical anything but numerically literal monotheism: only one person (God, the Father of Jesus Christ) is divine. This would clearly make the LDS view of the Godhead and of Christ’s divinity heresy in Buzzard’s eyes.⁵ His insistence on monotheism seems to have some warrant, as it appears to be repeatedly affirmed in both the Old and New Testaments.⁶ However, as we will argue in our critique, we believe Buzzard’s specific formulation of biblical monotheism is problematic at best.

Convergences and Divergences

Buzzard's unitarianism can best be understood by comparing and contrasting it with conventional Christian and Mormon views of God, as illustrated by the figure to the right. The propositions inside the triangle are affirmed by all three groups. Propositions found outside the triangle on each side apply to the two groups sharing that side of the triangle, and are rejected by the group in the opposite corner. Mormons and conventional Christians agree that Jesus Christ is a divine person while Buzzard rejects this claim. Buzzard and conventional Christians insist that there is numerically only one God, while Latter-day Saints insist that there are three. And contrary to conventional Christians, Buzzard and Latter-day Saints agree that the Father and the Son are ontologically separate and distinct beings. This is a distinction for which Latter-day Saints have been categorically anathematized by many Christians, a reaction that is apparently not foreign to Buzzard's personal experience.⁷ The report of the Father and the Son as physically distinct persons in Joseph Smith's First Vision incites some of the most excoriating insults by anti-LDS critics⁸ and provokes perennial critique from the general Christian world.⁹

Latter-day Saints and Buzzard would agree that the Son is at least functionally subordinate to the Father.¹⁰ While Buzzard denies Christ's divinity, he asserts, as do Mormons, that the Son's subordination to the Father does nothing to diminish his roles as Messiah and Redeemer.¹¹ This is yet another sin against the Athanasian and Nicene Creeds and against the classical doctrine of the Trinity in general. To most Latin Trinitarians at least, the Son and the Holy Ghost are both equally and fully God in the same way and essence that the Father is, and none is subordinate to any other.¹²

At the same time, Latter-day Saints and Christians agree that Christ is divine. Christ's nature is not only metaphysically fundamental, but also soteriologically and practically fundamental as it applies to the manner of worship that believers are to practice in order to gain salvation. The Father's identity is also a fundamental issue: who he is determines the parameters of who the Son is. For example, if the Father is one and the same substance with the Son, as Latin Trinitarianism holds, then there



are certain obvious implications for the identity and nature of the Son. On the other hand, if the Father brought the Son into existence, then the Son, as Buzzard maintains,¹³ is a creature wholly separate from the Father and totally dependent on God for his existence. Because the goal of *Trinitarian* is to define biblical monotheism and the God of the Bible, the definition of divinity is imperative to the discussion.

To be clear, when Latter-day Saints say Jesus is God or divine, they are saying something very different than conventional Christians. While Christians say that Jesus and God the Father are ontologically and numerically one being or substance, Latter-day Saints say that the Father and the Son are ontologically and numerically distinct members of a divine community.¹⁴ This statement alone—not to mention the inclusion of the Holy Ghost as yet another numerically distinct person—is enough to be denounced immediately as polytheism by Christians and Unitarians alike. However, Latter-day Saints view the divinity of Christ and the Holy Ghost differently in some respects from the Father's divinity. The Latter-day Saint model of the Godhead, including both a divine community and a subordination to the Father, allows for the most graceful resolution of the tensions arising in the debate over monotheism and Trinitarianism. We will examine later four ways of understanding divinity.

In *Trinitarian*, Buzzard argues against conventional readings and interpretations of scripture, and he accordingly offers detailed accounts of his views together with citations from supporting scholarship. Buzzard is right to afford the Shema so much attention due to its role in biblical religion, but his interpretation is considered unconventional. Weinfeld explains in the *Anchor Bible* series that Deuteronomy 6:4–25

centers on exclusive allegiance to YHWH, which means scrupulous observance of his commandments. . . . [It] opens with the basic demand for loyalty to the one God (Shema'), which actually constitutes a theoretical restatement of the first two commandments of the Decalogue: the unity of God corresponds to the first commandment, while the denial of all other divinities corresponds to the second (cf. Miller 1984).¹⁵

Buzzard draws on this section of Deuteronomy in defending his unitarianism, especially on the second part of verse 4. Weinfeld proposes the best translation of this phrase is “YHWH our God is one YHWH (cf. Driver 1902) . . . with a clarification, however: the connotation of ‘one’ here is not solely unity but also aloneness.”¹⁶ Weinfeld establishes this aloneness by citing parallel language in the kingship context of the ancient Near East, found in a Sumerian inscription, Ugaritic literature about Baal or Mot, and other ancient literature. He concludes that

all of these pagan proclamations cannot of course be seen as monotheistic;

yet they are of hymnic-liturgical nature. By the same token, Deut 6:4 is a kind of liturgical confessional proclamation and *by itself cannot be seen as monotheistic*; it is its association with the first two commandments of the Decalogue and its connection with other proclamations in the sermons of Deuteronomy, such as Deut 10:17, that make it monotheistic.¹⁷

Though Weinfeld believes that Deuteronomy 6:4 fails to introduce other deities within biblical religion, he concedes that “no explicit notion of exclusiveness is attested here.”¹⁸

The regular interpretation of the Shema in Mark 12:28–34 also disagrees with Buzzard’s interpretation. Joel Marcus’s commentary for The Anchor Yale Bible points out the peculiarity of the account given by Mark.¹⁹ Matthew and Luke share a low opinion of the questioning lawyer, while Mark considers him a sincere scribe. Furthermore, Matthew and Luke lack the oneness declaration from the Shema (“Hear, O Israel; The Lord our God is one Lord”). Buzzard does not mention these alternate accounts but draws from Mark’s minority account to support Jesus’ unitarianism. Furthermore, Marcus understands Mark’s peculiarities much differently than Buzzard:

The Markan narrative’s inclusion of the proclamation of God’s oneness (12:29) is significant for Markan Christology, since the whole section of the Gospel (11:27–12:37) answers the question posed in 11:28 about whether Jesus’ authority derives “from heaven” or from the sinful human sphere. Mark’s answer . . . is that Jesus’ authority comes from God; in the very next passage, indeed, Jesus will come close to placing himself on par with “the Lord” (12:35–37). . . . Mark thus foreshadows a daring Christian reinterpretation of the Jewish idea of divine oneness, a reinterpretation that implies a *unity between God and Jesus*.²⁰

Where Buzzard sees unitarianism, Marcus sees shared unity. The scribe responded with a synthesis of Jewish scripture on the oneness of God, often invoked *against* Christians, who were accused of making Jesus equal to God.²¹ But Marcus explains that because of the Jewish scribe’s complimentary attitude toward Jesus, his response “implies that the Shema’s affirmation of divine oneness is compatible with reverence for Jesus.”²²

BUZZARD’S BIBLICAL CASE FOR UNITARIANISM

Buzzard’s case for unitarianism consists of two parts: his biblical case *against* the divinity of Jesus Christ and his refutation of biblical arguments *for* Christ’s divinity. Buzzard’s arguments against the divinity of Jesus are based upon the numerical singleness of God and the “begotten” nature of Jesus Christ. The former argument can, to capture his overall reasoning, be formulated as follows:

1. The Bible teaches that there is only one divine person or God.²³
2. This divine person is God the Father, otherwise known as Yahweh, the God of Israel and the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ.
3. Jesus Christ is not God the Father.
4. Therefore, Jesus Christ is not a divine person or God.

His second argument can be formulated in this way:

1. If x is God, then x is eternal (uncreate, self-existent, without beginning or end).²⁴
2. According to the New Testament (especially the birth narratives), Jesus Christ was “begotten” or, properly translated, was “brought into existence” by the Father.²⁵
3. Hence, Jesus Christ is not eternal. (1) (2)
4. Hence, Jesus Christ is not God. (1) (3)

Buzzard’s first biblical case against Christ’s divinity requires that divinity is discursively exclusive. However, research on the wider ancient Near East provides an interesting context for the issue. For instance, scholars generally now hold that early Israelite religion esteemed God as the head of a court of divine beings, not as teaching a strict numerical monotheism.²⁶ Mark Smith represents most scholars’ position well:

The earliest texts render Yahweh as a divine monarch enthroned among other heavenly beings. *The divine status of the other members of the council* is stressed by terms such as “sons of gods,” *bēnē ‘ēlīm* (Pss. 29:1; 89:7) and “congregations of the holy ones,” *qēhal qēdōšim* (Ps. 89:6; cf. Hos. 12:1; Zech. 14:5). Similarly, *ēlōhīm* in Psalm 82:1b apparently means “gods,” since it parallels the divine council. All these texts present Yahweh as the preeminent member of the divine assembly.²⁷

Others even argue that the idea of a divine council endured throughout second temple Judaism.²⁸ In light of this research, we find that a more historically informed resolution of the biblical dilemmas of the Trinity is found not in Buzzard’s unitarian interpretation of numerical monotheism, but in positing a sharing of divinity via council: subordination without exclusion. In this way, one can preserve a single God in some respects (there is only one Most High Father) as well as affirm Christ’s divinity.

Buzzard’s second biblical case against Christ’s divinity assumes that to be begotten denies the possibility of an antemortal existence. Here, Buzzard overlooks that the Bible does teach Christ’s antemortal existence together with his begotten nature.

Biblical Arguments for Christ’s Divinity and Buzzard’s Rebuttals

Buzzard identifies several biblical arguments for the divinity of Jesus Christ and attempts to show that none of them is compelling. These argu-

ments are based on biblical passages wherein Christ is referred to as Lord or even God, Christ is described as being worshipped, and Christ is identified as the creator of the world or otherwise affirmed to be eternal or to have existed premortally.

Buzzard's general strategy in rebutting these putative proof-texts is to attribute them to misinterpretations or mistranslations of the earliest Hebrew and Greek texts—errors occasioned by translators who read the ancient texts, not in terms of their likely original meanings but in terms of the then-reigning Christian theology. Below are some examples of proof-texts that Buzzard attempts to refute.

Passages referring to Christ as “Lord” or “God.” Perhaps the clearest New Testament text affirming Christ's divinity is Thomas's exclamation upon viewing the risen Savior, “My Lord and my God” (John 20:28). *Trinitarian* has a twenty-eight-page appendix that reprints an essay in which Clifford Hubert Durousseau argues, based on his analysis of the meaning of the original Greek text, that Thomas's statement cannot be considered evidence for the divinity of Christ,²⁹ but the refutation he makes in the book proper is worthy of note here:

Thomas' exclamation 'my Lord and my God' beautifully summarizes his realization that in meeting his Lord Jesus, he is also meeting the One God who is at work in him. The address is to both 'my Lord' (the Messiah) and 'my God,' the God of Jesus and of Thomas.³⁰

According to Buzzard's reading, Thomas carefully addresses two ontologically distinct persons, namely the Messiah ("my Lord") and the God of Jesus who is at work in him ("my God").³¹

Another proof-text used in support of Christ's divinity comes from Psalm 110 and is quoted by Jesus in Mark 12: “The LORD said unto my Lord, Sit thou at my right hand, until I make thine enemies thy footstool” (Ps. 110:1; Mark 12:36). Buzzard argues that the Psalmist's prophecy is a declaration that the “LORD” (Yahweh) is speaking to the mortal “Lord” Jesus.³² His argument is a linguistic one, drawn from the Hebrew words used in Psalm 110. Buzzard contends that the Psalmist uses the words *Adonai* (used in place of YHWH, translated as LORD) and *adoni* (Lord), and “*adoni* in none of its 195 occurrences ever refers to Deity.” In fact, in contrast to *Adonai*, *adoni* “deliberately identifies anyone so designated as a non-Deity” or, in other words, a mortal person of high rank.³³

However, the “two Lords” problem may not be as serious as Buzzard believes. First, Buzzard's reading of John 20 seems strained. One would expect the master teacher to issue a correction if Thomas mistakenly addressed him as God, or at least to confirm Buzzard's suspicion

that Thomas was referring to two separate beings. Jesus did neither. The straightforward reading ascribes both titles to Jesus the resurrected Christ.

Second, Buzzard's belief that begotteness contradicts premortality has colored his reading of Psalm 110:1 and its appearance in Mark 12:36. These verses are best understood as affirming Christ's premortality *together with* his mortal begottenness. The two concepts need not exclude one another. Joel Marcus explains that for these verses

many exegetes . . . prefer to take their cues from Rom 1:3–4: Christ is *both* the Son of David *and* the Son of God (see, e.g., Tertullian, *Against Marcion* 4.38; Novatian, *On the Trinity* 11; Bede, *Exposition of Mark* 12:35–37). The fourth century anti-Gnostic writer Adamantius asserts that “how” in Mark 12:35 implies questioning but not denial, as in Deut 32:30; Isa. 1:21; 14:12 (*Concerning True Faith in God*; PG 11.1849–52). A similar conclusion is reached by modern interpreters such as Lövestam (“Davidssohnfrage,” 72–82) and Juel (*Messianic Exegesis*, 142–44), who take our passage as a rabbinic-style reconciliation of contradictory scriptural expectations (the Davidic descent of the Messiah on the one hand, his exaltation to heaven on the other).³⁴

Philosophically, the “two Lords” problem need not imply the non-divinity of the Son, but rather a welcoming of the Son to rule at the Father’s side. Indeed, in their book *Putting Jesus in His Place*, Bowman and Komoszewski explain that the imagery of sitting at God’s right hand implies just that:

A careful examination of Psalm 110:1 . . . reveals how remarkable Jesus’ claim was and why it seemed to the Sanhedrin to be blasphemous. It was one thing to enter God’s presence and yet another to sit in it. But to sit *at God’s right side* was another matter altogether. In the religious and cultural milieu of Jesus’ day, to claim to sit at God’s right hand was tantamount to claiming equality with God.³⁵

Given this cultural understanding, Jesus’ divinity appears unproblematic and his subordination moot. It then becomes useful to understand the prevalence of Psalm 110:1 in New Testament times. *The Word Biblical Commentary* summarizes D. M. Hay’s *Glory at the Right Hand* to explain: “The prime reason for the popularity of v 1 was that the session image [of being at the right hand of God] affirmed supreme exaltation without calling into question the glory of God the Father. It permitted Christians to confess faith in the absoluteness of Jesus before they had resolved such problems as ditheism or subordinationism.”³⁶ Latter-day Saints and Buzzard would agree that the Trinitarian solutions to these problems, offered by the post-apostolic church, are biblically and philosophically unsatisfying. But the LDS solution forfeits less of the conventional reading: it maintains divinity for Christ without calling into question the glory of God the Father.

Passages describing the worship of Christ. Like Thomas's proclamation that Christ was his Lord and his God, several biblical passages seemingly describe instances of worshipping the Messiah.³⁷ For example, after his resurrection Christ appeared to the disciples in Galilee, and Matthew tells us that "when they saw him, they worshipped him" (Matthew 28:17). There is no record of Christ reprimanding the disciples for this; rather, Jesus appears to assure them that their worship was appropriate, telling them in response, "all power is given unto me in heaven and in earth" (Matthew 28:18). Buzzard's rebuttal claims that to worship someone (even appropriately) does not necessarily mean that the person is divine, and Jesus is worshipped in a different sense than the Father.³⁸ In the Greek New Testament and the Septuagint, Buzzard explains, the word for divine worship is *latreuo*, and is used only once in reference to the Messiah, in Daniel 7:14. He asserts that in other references of worship or paying homage, Greek scripture uses *douleuō*, *peithō*, or *proskuneō*. At the same time, he admits that the Aramaic is ambiguous, with no linguistic distinction designating mortal as contrasted with divine worship.³⁹

The problem with this argument is that, although *latreuo* appears to refer specifically to worshipping the Father, the Father accepts other varieties of worship as well (that is, if the Greek words carry such strict connotations at all)⁴⁰—*proskuneō*, for example, which means "to prostrate oneself in homage."⁴¹ Kittel and Friedrich's *Theological Dictionary of the New Testament* compares the uses of *latreuo* and *proskuneō*: "Where [proskunein] is used for the customary worship of God rather than a single act it often seems to be parallel to [latreuein]."⁴² "When the [New Testament] uses [proskunein], the object is always something—truly or supposedly—divine."⁴³ Similarly, *TDNT* says that "[latreuein] can be used indifferently of the cultic worship of the God of Israel . . . or concretely of Melech, Baal or Baalim."⁴⁴ *TDNT* gives several examples highlighting the significance of *proskunein*, and its highly sacred character in the New Testament. When Christ is tempted of the devil, "the ungodly totalitarian claim of the tempter finds expression in the fact that he asks for [proskunein] which belongs to God alone." Any gap between the meanings of *latreuo* and *proskuneō* seems less severe than Buzzard proposes.

Besides these definitions, the objects of and reactions to *proskuneō* in the New Testament support a broader understanding of worship than Buzzard defends. *TDNT* mentions instances where an angel refuses the *proskynesis* of John, and Peter rejects the *proskynesis* of Cornelius.⁴⁵ Alternatively, throughout the New Testament the Father and the Son each regularly accept *proskuneō*.⁴⁶ For example,⁴⁷ *Proskuneō* is used to describe the Apostles' actions upon seeing the resurrected Christ: "And when they saw

him [Christ], they *worshipped* (*proskuneō*) him” (Matthew 28:17). Given that *proskuneō* is used for someone either “truly or supposedly” divine, it is important that the Savior does not object to the Apostles’ adoration, but rather confirms it against those who doubted, saying, “All power is given unto me in heaven and in earth” (Matt 28:18). In another instance, *proskuneō* is the same word used by John to refer to worship of God: “And all the angels stood round about the throne, and about the elders and the four beasts, and fell before the throne on their faces, and *worshipped* (*proskuneō*) God” (Rev. 7:11; see also Rev. 11:16, 19:4; John 4:20).

Perhaps a more convincing example than mere mortal worship of the Messiah is that of him being worshipped by the angels of heaven. The Epistle to the Hebrews quotes the Father as saying, “Let all the angels of God worship (*proskuneō*) him [Christ].”⁴⁸ Bowman and Komoszewski maintain that Hebrews is not saying “that angels happened to worship Jesus . . . but that God told them to worship Jesus.”⁴⁹ It would take a very robust argument to deny the Father’s endorsement and command for angelic worship of the resurrected Christ. The command was given through the same worship word Hebrews chose to describe Jacob’s worship (*proskuneō*, apparently of the Father).⁵⁰

We have seen that *latreuo* and *proskuneō* are not dramatically partitioned. But what about *latreuo*’s unique subject of the Father? If I use the name David only to refer to my brother, and I call him Dave, I am not implying that I could not have called him David. Similarly, just because the use of *latreuo* to refer only to worship of the Father does not mean that is the only way it can be used. Buzzard’s inference is not irresistible—absence of use to refer to the Son does not tell us that *latreuo* could not and should not be applied to worship of the Son. Buzzard’s argument appears to rest on the assumption that worship and divinity do not admit to degrees. If one breaks free of these assumptions, a more comprehensible model appears in which the Father and the Son share in divinity and worship.

Passages describing Christ as Creator or otherwise affirming his pre-mortal or eternal existence. Several passages affirm or imply that Christ existed premortally as a divine person. See, for instance, Christ’s words in his intercessory prayer: “And now, O Father, glorify thou me with thine own self with the glory *which I had with thee before the world was*” (John 17:5; emphasis added). Jesus, possibly aware that his death will occur the next day, asks his Father that upon the completion of his life’s mission, he regain the glory that he enjoyed in his premortal state, as “the Word” by whom “all things were made.” (John 1:1-3). Rather than a declaration of Christ’s premortal glory, Buzzard explains that these verses reference “glory in *prospect*, glory promised in advance. [Jesus] says nothing about

regaining glory, temporarily forsaken, but of winning that glory for the first time.”⁵¹ Buzzard sees this theme repeated in the chapter when Jesus prays for those disciples not yet born.⁵² “Neither pray I for these alone, but for them also which shall believe on me through their word” (John 17:20).

However, Buzzard’s treatment of this passage is labored. “In John 17:5,” Buzzard believes,

Jesus requests that he now receive as the reward of his ministry then accomplished, the glory ‘which I had with You [the Father] before the foundation of the world.’ This is glory *in prospect*, glory *promised in advance*. He says nothing about regaining glory, temporarily forsaken, but of winning that glory for the first time.⁵³

Contra Buzzard, the *Word Biblical Commentary* points out that as Christ prays for glory, his mortal life “entailed a forfeiture of glory that the Son once possessed.”⁵⁴ The intuitive reading of John 17—that Christ possessed premortal glory—is also supported by mainstream exegetes.

However, the most common reference used to validate this doctrine is the first chapter of the Gospel of John, verses 1–10.⁵⁵ Buzzard responds to these verses, but to conventional Christians and Latter-day Saints alike these passages are definitive affirmations of Christ’s divinity and antemortal existence.

Buzzard begins by calling the convention of capitalizing the *W* in *Word* an artful interpolation, “forcing readers to suppose that a second Person has existed as God from eternity.”⁵⁶ He reads “the word” as God’s “divine intention and mind,” and nothing more. Buzzard’s second major criticism is related to Jesus being “the embodiment of God’s gracious purpose.”⁵⁷ In verse 3, referring to “the word,” translations such as the KJV have “All things were made by *him*,” again assuming that “the word” is a masculine person. To support his interpretation of the word as God’s “self-expression” or “creative activity,” Buzzard cites the first eight English translations prior to the KJV, showing that they rendered the pronoun in verse 3 as *it* not *him*: “All things were made through *it*.”⁵⁸ Both of these points depend upon the assumption that not only is Buzzard’s conceptual understanding of ‘the word’ as “divine intention and mind” correct, but also that this is the *only* reading. The *Anchor Bible* and *Word Biblical Commentary* both translate verse 3’s pronoun, *autou*, as “him.”⁵⁹ The pronoun in verse 3 is ambiguous because the masculine and neuter are the same in the genitive case, but the antecedent (*houtos*) in verse 2 is masculine, meaning that *autou* ought to be read as masculine.⁶⁰

Buzzard’s reading remains difficult as we move further into the prologue. In verse 5, John introduces us to “the light,” and tells us that “the darkness comprehended *it* not.” Buzzard makes a point of highlighting

the shift here from the neuter pronoun ‘it’ in verse 5, to the masculine pronoun ‘him’ in verse 7. He does this to argue that Jesus had no preexistence, that just as “Jesus is the embodiment of God’s gracious purpose,” or an embodiment of the non-personal *word*, so he is “the true light which when it comes into the world was the Son,” thus necessitating the use of *him* to signify the embodiment of “the word” and “the light” in a *person*, Jesus.⁶¹ This reading would be fine except for John’s commitment to “the word” (who is now clearly a *him*, or person) as creator in verse 10: “He was in the world, and *the world was made by him*.⁶² Thus the word made the world, and is therefore the creator, and if the creator, then prior to the world, and thus had an antemortal existence.⁶³ In verse 14, John explains that the “Word” is Jesus Christ: “And the Word was made flesh, and dwelt among us, (and we beheld his glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father,) full of grace and truth” (John 1:14). Buzzard’s handling of this apparent challenge to his view of Christ’s preexistence is disappointing:

John 1 introduces the word or wisdom of God as His self-expression and His creative activity. The Genesis account is recalled and provides John with a way of introducing the new creation in Jesus. God’s word is full of life and light and darkness “did not overpower it” (not “him,” v. 5). John then describes the historical event of the coming of John the Baptist who was “sent from God” (v. 6). He was a witness to the true light which when it comes into the world (v. 9) was the Son.⁶⁴

Buzzard’s argument is unconvincing. He has overlaid a definition of “the word” that he does not draw from the text of the Bible itself but from his own unitarian viewpoint.

His handling of verse 14 is also inadequate. Buzzard explains that “verse 14 resumes the description of the historical Son . . . and introduces for the first time the title ‘uniquely begotten Son from the Father’ (just as John was also ‘from God,’ v. 6).”⁶⁵ Sadly, Buzzard makes no mention that John equates “the Word” with Jesus Christ, as he who “was made flesh, and dwelt among us, (and we beheld his glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father,) full of grace and truth” (John 1:14). This is alarming, considering that, as *The Word Biblical Commentary* states, the declaration that “the Word became flesh” is “the controlling utterance of the sentence. It is not to be subordinated to the third clause, as though it signified only the condition for manifesting the glory of God in the world.”⁶⁶

Let us then examine the premises that John lays out:

1. The Word was in the beginning *with* God. (John 1:1)
2. The Word was God (or “a god” in a literal reading of the Greek).

(John 1:1)

3. The Word created the universe, including our world. (John 1:3,10)
4. The Word is Jesus Christ. (John 1:14)
5. Thus, Jesus Christ existed “in the beginning” with God. (1, 4)
6. Thus, Jesus Christ is God or a god. (2, 4)
7. Thus, Jesus Christ created the universe. (3, 4)

Despite Buzzard’s linguistic arguments, with all of the ramifications associated with the phrase “the Word” in verse 14, one would expect Buzzard to be quick to address its identification with Christ.

JESUS CHRIST AND THE TRINITY IN LDS-SPECIFIC SCRIPTURE

Whatever doctrines may be problematic in the biblical record, unique LDS scripture adds clarifications. Mormon scripture definitively establishes Christ’s divinity and antemortal Godhood. Indeed, our expanded and expanding canon enables us to resolve many of the otherwise intractable disputes arising out of conflicting interpretations of the Bible.⁶⁷ A quick overview of LDS-specific passages that explicitly set forth the divinity of Christ will illuminate our very high Christology.

The title page of the Book of Mormon itself declares its aim of “convincing . . . Jew and Gentile that Jesus is the Christ, *the Eternal God*, manifesting himself unto all nations” (Book of Mormon, title page; emphasis added). In his prophecy of the coming of Christ, King Benjamin declared:

For behold, the time cometh, and is not far distant, that with power, *the Lord Omnipotent who reigneth, who was, and is from all eternity to all eternity*, shall come down from heaven among the children of men, and shall dwell in a tabernacle of clay, and shall go forth amongst men, working mighty miracles, such as healing the sick, raising the dead, causing the lame to walk, the blind to receive their sight, and the deaf to hear, and curing all manner of diseases. (Mosiah 3:5; emphasis added)

Throughout the Book of Mormon, Jesus is declared to be the God of Israel. Nephi proclaims, “And the God of our fathers . . . yea, the God of Abraham, and of Isaac, and the God of Jacob, yieldeth himself . . . as a man, into the hands of wicked men, to be lifted up . . . and to be crucified” (1 Nephi 19:10). And the resurrected Lord, himself, confirms Nephi’s testimony: “I am the God of Israel, and the God of the whole earth, and have been slain for the sins of the world” (3 Nephi 11:14).

Additional Mormon scripture also affirms Christ’s divinity. The Doctrine and Covenants, for example, gives this description of the Savior:

Thus saith the Lord your God, even Jesus Christ, the Great I AM, Alpha and Omega, the beginning and the end, the same which looked upon the wide expanse of eternity, and all the seraphic hosts of heaven, before the world was made; The same which knoweth all things, for all

things are present before mine eyes; I am the same which spake, and the world was made, and all things came by me. I am the same which have taken the Zion of Enoch into mine own bosom; and verily, I say, even as many as have believed in my name, for I am Christ, and in mine own name, by the virtue of the blood which I have spilt, have I pleaded before the Father for them. (D&C 38:1–4; see also 18:33, 47; 27:1)

Such verses are categorical; clearly there is no room in Latter-day Saint theology for unitarianism. The Book of Moses also discloses that Christ was actively involved in the creation process: “And worlds without number have I created; and I also created them for mine own purpose; and by the Son I created them, which is mine Only Begotten.”⁶⁸

In addition to canonical restoration scripture, the First Presidency and the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles of the Church proclaimed in an official declaration in 2000 that Christ was the creator of the earth.⁶⁹ Affirming his eternal nature, they said that “his life, which is central to all human history, neither began in Bethlehem nor concluded on Calvary.”⁷⁰

Ultimately, a careful reading of the complete Latter-day Saint Standard Works reveals a very high Christology and an unarguably clear proclamation that Jesus Christ is divine. Indeed, he is the Christ, the creator of the world (D&C 29:30–31; Moses 1:33) and the only begotten and eternal Son of God (D&C 76:25).

Four LDS Understandings of the Divinity of Christ

Relevant LDS discourse reveals several models for understanding Christ’s divinity, which are not necessarily mutually exclusive. The first model operates by means of “divine investiture of authority.” In other words, the Father has given Christ the full, complete use of His authority and power, and the right to represent Him and act *as if* he were, in fact, the Father Himself. Christ alluded to this investiture of authority when he said, “I am come in my Father’s name” (John 5:43) and “I and my Father are one” (John 10:30). By asserting divine investiture of authority, Latter-day Saints affirm a version of monotheism *and* the divinity of Christ. In this model, Christ and the Holy Ghost are both deity by divine investiture of the Father’s authority, but in the Godhead, the Father is the one *fount* of divinity. Thus, even though “there be gods many, and lords many” (1 Cor. 8:5), there is one God the Father.

In denying that Christ had to be divine in order to fulfill his salvific mission, Buzzard makes an interesting point: “Another [person or agent] can of course *represent* Yahweh or *act* for Yahweh, *reflect* Yahweh’s character, or *carry out the will* of Yahweh—and Jesus did all of those things.”⁷¹ This resembles the LDS understanding of divine investiture of authority or

priesthood: acting in the place of God, using authority given from God to man; in effect, doing what God Himself would do if he were present. When miracles have been performed, they have always been done by virtue of the Father's invested authority. Christ himself even acknowledged this fact (for example, see John 5:19). The Father has given him *all* of His power and authority.⁷² According to Buzzard's view, however, even such complete investiture of authority does not suffice to make Christ God.

The second way of understanding what Latter-day Saints mean by the divinity of Christ is that in LDS discourse, including scripture, *God* is sometimes employed as a predicate adjective, as opposed to being used *only* as a proper noun. *God*, in this sense, is used as a title (like "President") and thus represents a description of a certain *type* of person who meets certain criteria, but not a specific person in particular. Book of Mormon writers Alma and Moroni audaciously claim that God could hypothetically "*cease* to be God."⁷³ Were he to be ungodly or unjust, he would no longer fit the description of what the title of "God" entails and would therefore no longer be known by that title. "And behold," says the prophet Moroni, "I say unto you he changeth not; if so he would cease to be God; and he ceaseth not to be God" (Morm. 9:19). When used as a predicate adjective, *God* ceases to be person specific and becomes more quality specific. Therefore, as a descriptive title of one who has the attributes of godliness, *God* can be appropriately used in reference to Christ, as well as to the Father and the Holy Spirit.

Third, *God* has also been used in LDS discourse to refer to persons who stand in a specific relationship. LDS philosopher Blake Ostler explains that godhood belongs to beings who have entered into a "relationship [that] is so profound and the unity so complete that the persons who share this unity have identical experiences, know exactly the same things . . . and always act in complete unison."⁷⁴ Though ontologically distinct, the members of the Godhead are perfectly united—"of one heart and one mind." And to be so is to be divine.

The fourth way Latter-day Saints view Christ's divinity also deals with the relationship between the members of the Godhead. Joseph Smith taught that an "everlasting covenant was made between three personages [Father, Son, and Holy Ghost] before the organization of this earth and relates to their dispensation of things to men on the earth."⁷⁵ As a result of their separate roles, they are "one" God in the sense that they do their separate work together as part of the single "work and glory," namely "to bring to pass the immortality and eternal life of man" (Moses 1:39). Paulsen and McDonald explain that Joseph Smith

understood this covenant to consist of each of the three divine beings covenanting with the others to fulfill specific roles in relation to the salvation of the human family. The Father, according to Smith, is God “the first” and presides “over all,” and it is the Father’s plan of creation and redemption that the Son carries out. Thus, Smith refers to the Son as God “the second” and as “the Redeemer” and “the Mediator.” According to Smith, God “the third,” or Holy Ghost, is “the witness or Testator.” Because of their covenant relationship, a synergistic bond exists between the Father, Son and Holy Ghost, the nature of which is distinctive to the Trinity. This bond was forged not only out of their oneness of minds, hearts, natures, and attributes, but also out of their interdependent missions. In this model, Christ’s divinity is constituted by his indispensable role in God’s “work and glory.”

CONCLUSION

Buzzard has attempted to defend a very difficult position. From the outset, he faces a deficit in the standing evidence and scholarship, which is ultimately too much to overcome. Although *Trinitarian* represents an impassioned effort, we find it unconvincing. His biblical argument for unitarianism is sophisticated and radical, but it cannot hope to supplant what are practically consensus biblical interpretations. His rebuttals to biblical arguments for Christ’s divinity are delicate and often strained because of their seeming implausibility. Though Buzzard has spelled out the attendant problems of the doctrines of the Trinity and monotheism, his solutions discard vital elements of Christ’s gospel. Where other solutions are available, they must be considered. For Latter-day Saints, restoration scripture affirms the biblical reading that Christ shares in divinity with the Father, is appropriately given divine worship, and cooperates in the Father’s godhead in a social model.

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1. Anthony F. Buzzard, *Jesus Was Not a Trinitarian* (Morrow, GA: Restoration Fellowship, 2007), 28; emphasis in original.

2. For a clear statement of LDS understanding of the Trinity, see Elder Jeffrey R. Holland, “The Only True God and Jesus Christ Whom He Hath Sent,” *Ensign* 37 (November 2007): 40–42. Compare David Paulsen and Brett McDonald, “Joseph Smith and the Trinity: An Analysis and Defense of the Social Model of the Godhead,” *Faith and Philosophy* 25, no. 1 (2008): 47–74.

3. Buzzard, *Trinitarian*, 1.

4. See Buzzard’s analysis of this passage, *Trinitarian*, 31–35, 39–41.

5. *A Journal from the Radical Reformation*, the journal of Buzzard’s theological community, has published an article that explicitly denounces Mormonism as “the fruit of the Trinitarian Christian tree” and as “a logical progression of Trinitarianism.” In a gross oversimplification, the article also condemns Mormonism for causing “God to be lowered to the level of people.” Alan M. Goldberg, “Every Tree Is Known by Its Own Fruit: Of Mormonism, Trinitarianism and Polytheism,” *A Journal from the Radical Reformation* 6, no. 1 (1996): 25, 29. Also, in appendix 1 (page 387) of *Trinitarian*, Buzzard reproduces an essay by Durousseau noting that the formulation “Jesus is God” was anathematized by the fifth ecumenical council (553 CE) at Chalcedon as Eutychianism or Monophysitism.

6. Deuteronomy 6:4; Isaiah 44:6; Mark 12:29.

7. Buzzard, *Trinitarian*, 9–11. Buzzard mentions being called a “heretic,” unabashedly accused of not being a Christian, and promised “eternal hellfire.”

8. For example, the oft-repeated “two gods” rhetoric of anti-Mormon literature. See Hugh Nibley, *Tinkling Cymbals and Sounding Brass: The Art of Telling Tales about Joseph Smith and Brigham Young*, ed. David Whittaker (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book; Provo, Utah: Foundation for Ancient Research and Mormon Studies, [1991]), 59, 77.

9. For a civil questioning of the LDS view of the Godhead, see Craig Blomberg’s half of the chapter on “Christ and the Trinity,” in Craig L. Blomberg and Stephen E. Robinson, *How Wide the Divide? A Mormon and Evangelical in Conversation* (Downers Grove, Ill.: InterVarsity Press, 1997), 111–27. Blomberg opines that Matthew 28:19 in Greek implies that Father, Son, and Holy Spirit constitute one name but three persons (114), but that “the Father and the Son in the standard Mormon perspective are too separate” (121).

10. Buzzard, *Trinitarian*, 47; John 14:28; 3 Nephi 11:1; and Mosiah 15:7. Paulsen and McDonald also explain that “while the Father, Son and Holy Ghost each possess their own distinct will, it is the Father’s will that each seeks to accomplish. . . . While the idea of such a functional subordination without inequality in being is not novel, where Smith’s theology supersedes previous explanations of divine power sharing is in the *why* of the submission. Smith’s affirmation that the Son and Holy Ghost submit to the will of the Father purely out of love is an important addition.” Paulsen and McDonald, “Joseph Smith and the Trinity,” 62. See also Blake Ostler, *Exploring Mormon Thought: Of God and Gods* (Salt Lake City: Greg Kofford Books, 2008); and Joseph Smith’s June 1843 address in *Encyclopedia of Joseph Smith’s Teachings*, ed. Larry E. Dahl and Donald Q. Cannon (Salt Lake City: Bookcraft, 1997), 298.

11. Buzzard, *Trinitarian*, 10–11.

12. This is fairly clear in a traditional Latin formulation of the Trinity. The Athanasian Creed's sixth and twenty-fifth premises state clearly that “the Godhead of the Father, of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit is all one, the glory equal, the majesty coeternal. . . . And in this Trinity none is afore or after another; none is greater or less than another.” Admittedly, some Social Trinitarians, such as Cornelius Plantinga, profess there to be “at least a functional hierarchy, with the Father ultimately in control.” Cornelius Plantinga, “Social Trinity and Tritheism,” in *Trinity, Incarnation and Atonement*, ed. Ronald J. Feenstra and Cornelius Plantinga Jr. (Notre Dame, Ind.: University of Notre Dame Press, 1989), 26.

13. Buzzard, *Trinitarian*, 33.

14. Joseph Smith preached this quite clearly: “I have always and in all congregations when I have preached on the subject of the Deity, it has been the plurality of Gods. . . . I have always declared God to be a distinct personage, Jesus Christ a separate and distinct personage from God the Father, and that the Holy Ghost was a distinct personage and a Spirit: and these three constitute three distinct personages and three Gods.” *Teachings of the Prophet Joseph Smith*, ed. Joseph Fielding Smith (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 1976), 370.

15. Moshe Weinfeld, *Deuteronomy 1–11: A New Translation with Introduction and Commentary*, vol. 5 of *The Anchor Bible* (New York: Doubleday, 1991), 328–54.

16. Weinfeld, *Deuteronomy*, 337.

17. Weinfeld, *Deuteronomy*, 338; emphasis added.

18. Weinfeld, *Deuteronomy*, 349–51.

19. Joel Marcus, *Mark 8–16: A New Translation with Introduction and Commentary*, vol. 27A, *The Anchor Yale Bible* (New Haven, Conn: Yale University Press, 2009), 836–45.

20. Marcus, *Mark 8–16*, 842; emphasis added.

21. Marcus, *Mark 8–16*, 844.

22. Marcus, *Mark 8–16*, 844.

23. Buzzard, *Trinitarian*, 31. Buzzard argues that in every use of each of the names and titles occurring in the Bible that are God-specific—namely *Yahweh* (7000), *elohim* (2300), *Adonai* (449), and *ho theos* (1317)—they are always used in the singular, even when the word has a plural connotation, such as *elohim*.

24. Buzzard states that the “point [he is] making in this book revolves around how many uncreated eternal Persons there are in the universe” (261).

25. Buzzard equates these two terms (261), but makes little effort to back such an equation scripturally. His begotten argument utilizes a core of Bible verses: Acts 7:35–38; Gen. 3:15; Isa. 9:6; Deut. 18:15–19; 1 John 1:13; Matt. 1:1; 18, 20; John 1:13; Psalm 2:7; Acts 13:33.

26. See R. Scott Chalmers, “Who Is the Real El? A Reconstruction of the Prophet's Polemic in Hosea 12:5a,” *Catholic Biblical Quarterly* 68 (October 2008): 611–30; Otto Eissfeldt, “El and Yahweh,” *Journal of Semitic Studies* 1 (1956): 25–37; Daniel C. Peterson, “Ye are Gods: Psalm 82 and John 10 as Witness to the Divine Nature of Humankind,” in *The Disciple as Scholar: Essays on Scripture and the Ancient World in Honor of Richard Lloyd Anderson*, ed. Stephen D. Ricks, Donald W. Parry, and Andrew H. Hedges (Provo, Utah: FARMS, 2000), 496–501; E. Theodore Mullen Jr., *The Assembly of Gods: The Divine in Canaanite and Early Hebrew Literature* (Chico, Ca.: Scholars Press, 1980) 207, 226; Blake Ostler, *Exploring*

Mormon Thought: Of God and Gods (Salt Lake City: Greg Kofford Books, 2008); K. Toorn, Bob Becking, and Pieter Willem van der Horst, eds., *Dictionary of Deities and Demons in the Bible*, 2d ed. (Leiden: Brill, 1999).

27. Mark Smith, *The Early History of God*, 2d ed. (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Eerdmans, 2002), 144; emphasis added. Smith has detailed the pre-kingship Israelite belief in El's council of gods, the later emergence of Yahweh as Israel's warrior god, the eventual merging of El and Yahweh, and a final achievement of monotheism in the post-exilic era. See Smith, *Early History of God*, chap. 1; and Mark Smith, *The Origins of Biblical Monotheism: Israel's Polytheistic Background and the Ugaritic Texts*, 2d ed. (New York: Oxford University Press, 2002), chap. 10. It is important to note that many LDS may not be comfortable with some of the baggage that comes with Smith's developmental approach to biblical history. These problems are not necessarily insoluble for the Mormon but won't be treated here.

28. Blake Ostler, *Of God and Gods*, 49–54. Here, Ostler examines multiple proof-texts to establish the Israelite belief in the divine council during the second temple period. Among the most relevant to our discussion is Deuteronomy 32:8–9, 43. The unredacted version of these verses discovered at Qumran unashamedly describes the divine council as consisting of “the sons of God” while the masoretic text uses “sons of Israel.” Although it is uncertain when the change occurred, it appears to have been a scribal attempt to defend a strict monotheism. Moreover, Ostler shows the Shema may be a plea for allegiance to one of many gods rather than a denial of other gods’ existence—a call for monolatry rather than monotheism. For a recent treatment on the divine council, see David E. Bokovoy, “עֲקָב נִיתָה וְהַעֲדָה: Invoking the Council as Witnesses in Amos 3:13,” *Journal of Biblical Literature* 127 (Spring 2008): 37–51.

29. Clifford Hubert Durousseau, “On John 20:28: What Did Thomas Say in Hebrew?” in Buzzard, *Trinitarian*, appendix 1.

30. Buzzard, *Trinitarian*, 98 n. 13.

31. Buzzard, *Trinitarian*, 98 n. 13. Buzzard even states that in a proper translation of John 20, Thomas is rebuked. Buzzard acknowledges, however, that Thomas is rebuked not for addressing Savior as God, but for his predisposition toward disbelief.

32. Buzzard, *Trinitarian*, 86–87.

33. Buzzard, *Trinitarian*, 87.

34. Marcus, *Mark 8–16*, 847; emphasis original.

35. Robert M. Bowman Jr. and J. Ed Komoszewski, *Putting Jesus in His Place: The Case for the Deity of Christ* (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Kregel, 2007), 244.

36. Leslie C. Allen, *Psalms 101–150*, vol. 21 of *Word Biblical Commentary* (Waco, Tex.: Word Books, 1983), 85–86.

37. From the KJV, Matthew alone gives a multitude of examples, each deserving linguistic review: Matthew 2:2, 8, 11; 5:6; 8:2; 9:18; 14:33; 28:9–10; 15:25; 20:20; 28:9, 17.

38. See Buzzard, *Trinitarian*, 135–48.

39. Buzzard, *Trinitarian*, 143.

40. For *proskuneō* in reference to the Father, see Matthew 4:10; Luke 4:8; John 4:20–24; 1 Corinthians 14:25; Hebrews 11:21; Revelation 4:10; 5:14; 7:11; 11:16; 14:7; 15:4; 19:4, 10; 22:9.

41. In fact, the first instance of the word translated “worship” in the Old Testament Hebrew means precisely the same thing, and there isn’t another word used that is translated as “worship” until midway through the Book of Jeremiah: Gen. 22:5, where Abraham says that he and Isaac will go *worship*, presumably God, on Mount Moriah, in offering a sacrifice.

42. *Theological Dictionary of the New Testament*, ed. Gerhard Kittel and Gerhard Friedrich, trans. Geoffrey W. Bromiley, 10 vols. (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Eerdmans, 2003), 6:761.

43. Kittel and Friedrich, *Theological Dictionary of the New Testament*, 6:763.

44. Kittel and Friedrich, *Theological Dictionary of the New Testament*, 4:60–61. Also see page 62: “The ministry denoted by [latreuein] is always offered to God (or to heathen gods).”

45. Kittel and Friedrich, *Theological Dictionary of the New Testament*, 6:764. See also Acts 10:25–26 and Revelation 22:8–9.

46. The reader should understand that Buzzard does not deny that *proskuneō* is used in reference to the Father. Buzzard’s primary argument is that *latreuo* is unique. See Buzzard, *Trinitarian*, 135–48.

47. See also, referring to the Father: Matthew 4:10; Luke 4:8; John 4:20–24; 1 Corinthians 14:25; Hebrews 11:21; Revelation 4:10; 5:14; 7:11; 11:16; 14:7; 15:4; 19:4, 10; 22:9. Referring to the Son: Matthew 2:2, 8, 11; 8:2; 9:18; 14:33; 15:25; 20:20; 28:9, 17; Mark 5:6; 15:19; Luke 24:52; John 9:38; Hebrews 1:6.

48. Hebrews 1:6; the language is originally from Psalm 96:7 and Deuteronomy 32:43. Buzzard does not deal directly with this particular passage as implying worship. The three times this verse is cited in his book, Buzzard overlooks its implications for worship and focuses on the phrase that says God “brings the firstborn into the world.”

49. Bowman and Komoszewski, *Putting Jesus in His Place*, 40.

50. See Hebrews 1:6 (*proskuneō*, the Son) and 11:21 (*proskuneō*, the Father).

51. Buzzard, *Trinitarian*, 287. Buzzard’s argument for prospective pre-existence is detailed. The old Jewish idea that religiously important figures or objects often held a form of pre-existence in God’s consciousness supports Buzzard’s theory. Adolf Von Harnack presented this theme long ago in a special appendix on pre-existence in his landmark work *History of Dogma*, wherein he contrasts Hellenic and Jewish ideas of preexistence: “According to the theory held by the whole of the Semitic nations, everything of real value that from time to time appears on earth has its existence in heaven. . . . Its manifestation on earth is merely a transition from concealment to publicity. . . . The old Jewish theory of pre-existence is founded on the religious idea of the omniscience and omnipotence of God, that God to whom the events of history do not come as a surprise, but who guides their course.” Buzzard, *Trinitarian*, appendix 1, pp 318.

52. Buzzard, *Trinitarian*, 288.

53. Buzzard, *Trinitarian*, 287; emphasis added.

54. George R. Beasley-Murray, *Word Biblical Commentary: John*, vol. 36 (Waco, Tex.: Word Books, 1987), 297.

55. Though the Gospel of John is perhaps the most-loved gospel by churchgoers, it may be considered the most suspicious by scholars. The Gospel of John is regularly seen as a late Christian document and consequently less relevant to

discussions on Jesus' personal claims, but the parties involved in this review treat it as canonical. Thus, though the historicity of its claims may be suspect in certain regards, its content is at least religiously important.

56. Buzzard, *Trinitarian*, 275.
57. Buzzard, *Trinitarian*, 274.
58. Buzzard, *Trinitarian*, 273n45, 275.
59. Raymond E. Brown, *The Gospel According to John (I-XII)*, vol. 29, *The Anchor Bible* (New York: Doubleday, 1966), 3; Beasley-Murray, *John*, 1.
60. *Novum Testamentum Graece et Latine*, 27th ed., eds. Eberhard and Erwin Nestle, Barbara and Kurt Aland, et al. (Stuttgart: Deutsche Bibelgesellschaft, 1984), 247.
61. Buzzard, *Trinitarian*, 273–75.
62. Brown, *Anchor Bible*, 10. The “him” in this verse refers to the word, not the light.
63. The *Anchor Bible* and *World Biblical Commentary* both agree that the Word had an antemortal existence.
64. Buzzard, *Trinitarian*, 275.
65. Buzzard, *Trinitarian*, 275.
66. Beasley-Murray, *John*, 15.
67. For a fuller development and illustrations of this point, see David L. Paulsen, “Joseph Smith Challenges the Theological World,” *BYU Studies* 44, no. 4 (2005): 176–212.
68. Moses 1:33. The Book of Moses is an “extract from the book of Genesis of Joseph Smith’s Translation of the Bible” (introductory note to the Pearl of Great Price). It is contained in the Pearl of Great Price, one of the four standard canonical LDS works.
69. Official Declaration, *The Living Christ*.
70. Official Declaration, *The Living Christ*. For more comprehensive treatments, based on LDS-specific scriptures, of Christ’s premortal Godhood and his creation of the world, see James E. Talmage, *Jesus the Christ*, 33rd ed. (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 1970), especially chapter 2 (“Preexistence and Foreordination of the Christ”) and chapter 4 (“The Antemortal Godship of Christ”); Jeffrey R. Holland, *Christ and the New Covenant: The Messianic Message of the Book of Mormon* (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 1997), especially chapter 9 (“The Father and the Son”); and Andrew C. Skinner, “The Premortal Godhood of Christ; A Restoration Perspective,” in *Jesus Christ: Son of God, Savior*, Paul H. Peterson, Gary L. Hatch, and Laura Card, eds. (Provo, Utah: Brigham Young University Press, 2002).
71. Buzzard, *Trinitarian*, 47; emphasis added.
72. The 1916 declaration from the First Presidency on the Father and the Son makes the point that the Son is often referred to in scripture as the Father because of this authority, because of his role as the Creator, because of stewardship over those who have entered the Gospel covenant, and because of divine investiture of authority. The First Presidency makes clear the fact that the creation of the earth, clearly ascribed to God in the Bible, was enacted by the premortal Jesus Christ. See James R. Clark, comp., *Messages of the First Presidency of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints*, 6 vols. (Salt Lake City: Bookcraft, 1965–75), 5:26–34.
73. See Alma 42:13, 22, 25: “Now the work of justice could not be destroyed; if so, God would cease to be God. . . . and the law inflicteth the punishment; if not

so, the works of justice would be destroyed, and God would cease to be God. . . . What, do ye suppose that mercy can rob justice? I say unto you, Nay; not one whit. If so, God would cease to be God.”

74. Ostler, *Of God and Gods*, 10.

75. Larry E. Dahl and Donald Q. Cannon, eds., *Encyclopedia of Joseph Smith’s Teachings* (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 2000), 345.

76. Paulsen and McDonald, “Joseph Smith and the Trinity” 54.