

Beware of Polytheism

Historically Christianity religion along with Judaism and Islam have been categorized as monotheistic religions. However, since many Christians believed in the Trinity, some felt their claim of monotheism was suspect. Since the Trinitarian's historic phrase "one substance" was nebulous enough to imply their three gods were one person--the Trinitarian wing of the Christian church was accepted as monotheistic.

The word "Trinity" does not appear in the Bible. Adolf Harnack, a Trinitarian and noted church historian observed that as late as the 3rd Century most Christians did not believe the holy Spirit was a personality but merely the power of God.¹ Early church writers, such as Irenaeus, Clement of Alexandria, Tertullian, Origen, Novatian, Arnobius and Lactantius, were very explicit in affirming that the Heavenly Father alone is the supreme God and that Jesus is completely subordinate to His authority and will. As educated converts from Paganism vied for positions of authority in the church. They brought with them the pagan concept of a "triune god" that was resisted by ordinary believers. "The victory of orthodoxy [so called] was a triumph of priests and theologians over the indeed deeply rooted faith of the people."²

In 325 AD Emperor Constantine convened the Council of Nice and through political intrigue with the bishops had the Nicene Creed formulated. It stated that the Father and Son are coequal and coeternal. This disagreed with Jesus' words, "My Father is greater than I." (John 14:28) "I can of mine own self do nothing my judgment is just; because I seek not mine own will, but the will of the Father which hath sent me." (John 5:30) "as my Father hath sent me, even so send I you." (John 20:21) "I ascend unto my Father, and your Father: and to my God and your God." (John 20:17)

Note that the Heavenly Father is said to be the God of Jesus. Jesus spoke of his Father in John 17:3 as the "only true God."

Then in AD 381, 300 years after the Christian Church began, the holy Spirit was declared a God and the dogma of the Trinity was forged by the Trinitarian wing of the Church at the Council of Constantinople. They defined the Trinity as three Gods in one substance. This was not a Scriptural teaching held from the inception of the Christian Church. This was the forging of a tradition that would plague the church for centuries.

Why the Tradition Endured

In the whole Bible there is only one scripture that seems to teach the concept of three persons in one. It is the King James rendering of 1 John 5:7, 8, "For there are three that bear record in heaven, the Father, the Word, and the Holy Ghost: and these three are one. And there are three that bear witness in earth, the Spirit, and the water, and the blood: and these three agree in one."

The words italicized in this scriptural quotation are not found in any of the oldest and most reliable Biblical manuscripts. That they are not a genuine part of the original text is the unanimous verdict of contemporary scholars, evangelicals included. Look up 1 John 5:7, 8, in the Revised Standard Version, New American Standard Version, New International Version, etc. These translations do not agree with the King James Version. They omit these italicized spurious (not authentic) words. Why? Because overzealous Trinitarians added these words after the Council of Constantinople in AD 381.

More properly translated 1 John 5:7, 8, reads: "For these are three which testify; the spirit, and the water, and the blood; and the three are of one."³ Here the holy Spirit is part of the only trinity (three in one) taught in the Bible. But it is a trinity of non-personalities, the water (Jesus' baptism), the spirit (Jesus' anointing), and the blood (Jesus' death). Blood and water are not persons; therefore, the third part of this trinity-the holy Spirit is not a person either. Rather, it is the Holy influence or power of God.

Since the corruption of 1 John 5:7, 8, was not yet discovered by the Reformation period, the Protestant Reformers accepted the tradition established in 381 AD of three Gods in "one substance." Until the mid 20th Century, the esteem of the King James Version by many Born-Again Christians bordered on Divine inspiration; therefore, they were locked into the corruption of 1 John 5:7, 8. But now with their exposure to new translations, Born-Again Christians are redefining "the Trinity."

Trinitarians now claim that the phrase "one substance" was not used to teach that the Father, Son, and holy Spirit were one person. Rather they were of the same nature and one in purpose, yet three distinct persons. However, history indicates to the contrary. "The Papacy has in some of its churches, as, for instance, in the monastery of the so-called Trinitarians of Madrid, an image of the Triune God, with three heads on one body. The Babylonians had something of the same. Mr. Layard, in his last work, has given a specimen of such a triune divinity, worshipped in ancient Assyria."⁴

"In the unity of that one Only God of the Babylonians, there were three persons, and to symbolize that doctrine of the Trinity, they employed, as the discoveries of Layard prove, the equilateral triangle, just as it is well known the Romish Church does at this day."⁵ In the mid-20th Century C. S. Lewis was considered an outstanding spokesman for Protestantism. Lewis affirms the "one substance" view of the Trinitarians:

"we could never have guessed in advance, any more than a knowledge of squares would have enabled us to guess at a cube. He contains 'persons' (three of them) while remaining one god, as a cube combines six squares while remaining one solid body. We cannot comprehend such a structure any more than the Flatlanders could comprehend a cube."⁶

This traditional view of the trinity was an unfortunate 4th Century (381 AD) departure from the teachings of Jesus and his Apostles. This was bad enough, but the redefining of the Trinity by many contemporary Born-Again Christians has crossed the line to

polytheism. To say that the Father, Son, and holy Spirit are coequal and coeternal Gods, one in purpose and all of the same nature, yet separate and distinct persons is plain and simple polytheism--a worshipping of three separate Gods. This was a gross departure from true Christianity.

A Return To Jesus' Teachings

Meanwhile in 1864 Benjamin Wilson, a Christadelphian, published THE EMPHATIC DIAGLOTT--an interlinear Greek-English translation. It was one of the first to render 1 John 5:7, 8 correctly, its effect was electrifying. Many Christian groups founded after its publication didn't believe in the Trinity. Also, THE EMPHATIC DIAGLOTT rendered John 1:1, "the Word was with the God and a god was the Word." This defines Jesus as "a god" who was inferior to and separate from the Father. Several translations in the 20th Century that follow this rendering have raised the ire of Trinitarians. However, THE BIBLE TRANSLATOR (Vol. 28, No. 1, Jan. 1977) published by translators who are Trinitarians, said of this rendering--"As a word-for-word translation it cannot be faulted."

Elohim

The word "God" in the Old Testament is often a translation of the Hebrew word ELOHIM. Since Jesus and the Father are both called ELOHIM, it is asserted that they are the same being. But angels (Psalm 8:5), Abraham (Genesis 23:5,6), Israel's judges (Exodus 21:6) and the Church (Psalm 82:6) are also called ELOHIM in the Scriptures. ELOHIM signifies: a mighty one, prince, ruler, or judge; and since it is scripturally used to refer to men and angels, as well as to God, its use in referring to our Lord Jesus Christ does not in any way prove his equality with God. Nor is there any validity in the assertion that, because ELOHIM is plural in form, its application to God indicates that there is more than one person in God. In Exodus 7:1, Moses is called ELOHIM by God. Was Moses plural? Certainly not, for the word ELOHIM, like our English word "sheep," can be either singular or plural, as the occasion demands.

Several scriptures seem to refer to the holy Spirit speaking, however, other scriptures also symbolically portray non-personal entities as exercising personality traits. In Proverbs 1:20-22, "wisdom" is portrayed as speaking and referred to by the personal pronoun "she." Also, in Luke 7:35, wisdom is designated "she" and has children. In Romans 7:11, "sin" is spoken of as exercising mental deception.

A dilemma for Trinitarians! How can the concept that the Father, Son, and holy Spirit are three Gods that are coequal harmonize with Isaiah 11:2-10? In this Kingdom scene, the Son will receive the spirit of the Father that he might have the wisdom to perform the work of the Kingdom. If these are three equal Gods, why will the Father need to give his Son a third God to enable the Son to exercise wisdom?

Endnotes

1. Adolf Harnack, OUTLINE OF THE HISTORY OF DOGMA, Translated by E. K. Mitchell (Starr Kemp Press, 1957) P.266.
2. Ibid. P. 266.
3. Benjamin Wilson, THE EMPHATIC DIAGLOTT; NESTLE AND MARSHALL; and THE INTERLINEAR GREEK-ENGLISH NEW TESTAMENT.
4. Rev. Alexander Hislop, THE TWO BABLYONS (Neptune, NJ: Loizeaux Brothers, 1959) P.17.
5. Ibid. P.16.
6. C. S. Lewis, THE BEST OF C. S. LEWIS (Washington, D.C: Cannon Press, 1974) P.282.
7. see STRONG'S CONCORDANCE and NEW ENGLISHMAN'S CONCORDANCE.

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