

## ~ The Trinity – Scripture or Tradition ~

The word *trinity* does not appear in the Bible. Adolf Harnack, a trinitarian and noted church historian (*Outlines of the History of Dogma*), observed that as late as the third century most Christians did not believe the holy Spirit was a personality but merely the power of God. 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.

But in 325 A.D., the 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 co-equal and co-eternal. This disagreed with Jesus' words, "My Father is greater than I". (John 14:28) Then, in 381 A.D., three hundred years after the Christian church began, the holy Spirit was declared a god, and the dogma of the trinity

was forged by the catholic 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.

Fortunately, born-again Christians have deviated from "three gods in one substance" and have redefined the trinity. But remember that the word *trinity* does not appear in the Bible. It would be far better to completely part with the tradition of 381 A.D. and follow Scriptural terminology and concept. Certainly the Scriptures teach a oneness between the Father and the son. That this is not a oneness of person is shown in John 17: 12, 20-23, where Jesus prayed that his followers would experience the same oneness; "That they may be one, as thou, Father, art in me and I in thee." We are not one in substance or person with the Father and son but one in mind and purpose.

### *Why the tradition endured*

In the whole Bible, there is only one scripture that seems to teach 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 underlined above are not found in any of the oldest and most reliable manuscripts, nor in any of the ancient translations. 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, the New American Standard Version, the New International Version, etc. These translations do not agree with the King James Version. They omit the above underlined spurious words. Why? Because overzealous trinitarians added these words after the Council of Constantinople in 381 A.D.

Without the spurious words, 1 John 5: 7, 8 reads, “For there

are three that bear record, the spirit, and the water and the blood: and these three are one”. 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 during the Protestant Reformation, the reformers accepted the tradition established in 381 A.D. of three gods in one substance. Until the mid-twentieth century, the esteem of the King James Version by most fundamentalists 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.

Meanwhile in 1864, Benjamin Wilson, a Christadelphian, published *The Emphatic Diaglott*, an interlinear Greek-English translation. One of the

first to render 1 John 5: 7,8 correctly; its effect was electrifying. Many Christian groups founded after its publication do not 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 twentieth century that follow this rendering have raised the ire of trinitarians. However, *The Bible Translator* (Volume 28, No. 1, January, 1977) published by translators who are trinitarians, said of this rendering, "...*the Word was a god* as a word-for-word translation cannot be faulted..." The translators had no trouble supplying the article *a* in Acts 12: 22 where Herod was referred to as "a god" and also in Acts 28: 6 where Paul was referred to as "a god".

The word *God* in the Old Testament is often a translation of *elohim*. Since Jesus and the Father are both called *elohim* it is asserted that they are the same being. But angels, Abraham, Israel's judges, and the Church are called *elohim*. *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 in the Scriptures indicates that there is more than one person in God. In Exodus 7: 1, God calls Moses *elohim*. 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 a mental deception.

A dilemma for trinitarians. How can the concept that the Father, son, and holy Spirit are three gods that are co-equal 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?

“He that honors the Father, honors the Son; he that honors

the Son, honors the Father.”  
(John 5:23)

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