

THE ORIGIN OF THE TRINITARIAN DOCTRINE

We are going to look at the history of the early Christian Church, specifically the circumstances surrounding the origin of the Christian dogma of a Holy Trinity. The following is what was found and please think about what your reading.

"The word Trinity is not found in the Bible, and, though used by Tertullian in the last decade of the 2nd century, it did not find a place formally in the theology of the church till the 4th century."¹

"In view of the central place which the doctrine of the most Holy Trinity holds in the Christian religion, it is somewhat surprising to find that symbols of the Blessed Trinity were extremely uncommon in the early ages of Christianity."²

"When one does speak of an unqualified Trinitarianism, one has moved from the period of Christian origins to say the last quadrant of the 4th century. It was only then that what might be called the definitive Trinitarian dogma, a "one God in three persons" became thoroughly assimilated into Christian life and thought... it was the product of three centuries of doctrinal development."³

"The Greek word *τριάς* "a group of three" appears in this sense (trinity), first in a work of Theophilus, bishop of Antioch in the 2nd century."⁴

The above fascinating historical records makes it rather obvious that the doctrinal Trinity was absolutely not a characteristic teaching of the early church. If that is the case, it leads one to ask what was the teaching of the early church concerning this subject. Alvan Lamson tells us in his book The Church of the First Three Centuries.

"...The modern doctrine of the Trinity is not found in any document or relic belonging to the Church of the first three centuries. Letters, art, usage, theology, worship, creed, hymn, chant, doxology, ascription, commemorative rite, and festive observance, so far as any remains or any record of them are preserved, coming down from early times, are as regards this doctrine, an absolute blank. They testify, so far as they testify at all, to the supremacy of the Father, the only true God; and to the inferior and derived nature of the Son. There is nowhere among these remains a co-equal Trinity. The cross is there; Christ is there as the Good Shepherd, the Father's hand placing a crown, or victor's wreath, on his head; but no undivided Three,...co-equal, infinite, self-existent, and eternal. This was a conception to which the age had not arrived. It was of later origin."⁵ (emphasis added)

Now, with this new understanding of the early teachings of the church; how did this belief in a Trinity creep into a position where it was accepted as a doctrine of the Church? Let's check history.

leading protagonist of the view which prevailed, if men were to attain divinity, God must become man. To him God became man that man might become God ...Into the struggle entered the personalities of the leaders of the two groups and of the subdivisions of these groups. Each prominent figure coloured the controversy with his own characteristics. Into it, too, came political considerations, notably the desire of the Emperors for unity."

"Long before the founding of Christianity the idea of a triune god or a god-in-three persons was a common belief in ancient religions. Although many of these religions had many minor deities, they distinctly acknowledged that there was one supreme God who consisted of three persons or essences. The Babylonians used an equilateral triangle to represent this three-in-one god, now the symbol of the modern three-in-one believers. The Hindu trinity was made up of the gods Brahma, Vishnu, and Shiva. The Greek triad was composed of Zeus, Athena, and Apollo. These three were said by the pagans to "agree in one". One of the largest pagan temples built by the Romans was constructed at Baalbek (situated in present day Lebanon) to their trinity of Jupiter, Mercury, and Venus. In Babylon the planet Venus was revered as special and was worshipped as a trinity consisting of Venus the moon and the sun. this triad became the Babylonian holy trinity in the fourteenth century before Christ. Not only did non-Christian religions believe in a triune god, but ancient cultures also accepted this idea; cultures such as the Babylonian, Egyptian, Phoenician, Greek, Indian, Chinese, Japanese, Icelandic, Siberian and others. That the triune concept of God was not only a part of the religions but even permeated the cultures of the dominant ancient nations shows how deeply rooted in human thinking this notion was."¹⁰

"The designation of the third person of the Trinity, the Holy Ghost, stems from a Hebrew figure of speech, the ruah hakodesh ("holy spirit"). In Jewish usage however, this concept was never identified with a separate person, but with a Divine power which could fill men, as, for instance, the prophets...In defense of the Trinity, reference to the Cabala (def: an occult religious philosophy developed by certain Jewish rabbis, based on mystical interpretation of the Scriptures - Webster's Dictionary) and its teachings played an important role. Falsely, without any ground, Christian scholars believed that they could find support of this doctrine in Cabalistic doctrine. The obscure language of the Zohar and of other Cabalistic writings made it possible to read all kinds of foreign ideas into it. Following the peculiar manipulation of Hebrew letters in the Cabala, some Christian scholars tried to find support for the Trinity in the Bible. Johann Reuchlin, for instance, took the second word in the Bible, bara, and made the three consonants in this word refer to the three persons of the Trinity: the Beth for ben, son; the Resh for ruah, spirit; and the Aleph for ab, father."¹¹ (emphasis added)

After the Council of Nicaea, history shows that the struggle did not cease concerning this new doctrine. The Church of Rome placed tremendous political and social pressures on anyone who went against their doctrine with the end result of general acceptance of the creed even as it is accepted today.

"The Council of Nicaea met on May 20, 325 A.D. Constantine himself presiding, actively guiding the discussion, and personally proposed (no doubt on Ossuis' prompting) the crucial formula expressing the relation of Christ to God in the creed issued by the council, "of one substance with the Father". Over-awed by the emperor, the bishops, with two exceptions only, signed the creed, many of them against their inclination. Constantine regarded the decision of Nicaea as divinely inspired. As long as he lived no one dared openly to challenge the Creed of Nicaea, but the expected concord did not follow."¹²

"Arianism from the first was a fully developed doctrine. Hence, its history is the story of attenuations in the direction of orthodoxy and return to the original tenets of the church. The Council of Nicaea (325 A.D.) condemned the teaching of Arius and declared that the Son was of the same substance (homousios, consubstantial) with the Father. However, Eusebius of Nicomedia, although he signed the formula of Nicaea, soon repudiated it. Through influence at the imperial court, he secured the recall of Arius from exile and the deposition of Athanasius of Alexandria, the leading champion of the Nicene definition...Despite the fanatical opposition of the Arian emperor Valens, Nicaean orthodoxy triumphed in the West and moved toward final victory in the East. The whole East subscribed to doctrines pronounced at Rome in 378 and 379, and the emperor Theodosius was an ardent champion of the Nicaean faith. (emphasis added)"¹³ *Church of Rome

"The Catholic Church anathemized, namely cursed those who say "there was a time when he (the Son of God) was not", or "that he did not exist before he was begotten", or "that he was made of nothing."¹⁴

"This body of western teaching found its simplest formulation in the so-called "Athanasian" Creed, a semi-liturgical document which probably originated in Gaul towards the end of the 5th century. According to this, the catholic faith is "that we worship one God in Trinity, and Trinity in unity; neither confounding the Persons nor dividing the substance."¹⁵

In review of the established facts concerning this subject, the Doctrine of the Trinity was not a result of the teaching within the original Christian Church. We have seen that "Arianism (supremacy of the Father) from the first was a fully developed doctrine" and as far as any early records or remains of the early church go, they testify to "the supremacy of the Father, the only true God, and to the inferior and derived nature of the Son". Then the council of Nicaea was called by an emperor whose sole purpose was to establish unity within the empire resulting in many of the bishops signing the new creed with reluctance. Even then it was vehemently opposed by many. With the tremendous social and political pressures the Roman Church placed on people, this creed eventually became generally accepted when Arianism died out and the supremacy of the Father was no longer being

taught. This type of pressure is still prevalent today in the Roman Catholic Church. Excommunication, anathematization, etc. is forced on anyone who denies the only "one true and holy apostolic church", or any of it's teachings.

While researching this subject, I became totally amazed at how a doctrinal teaching such as a trinity came into acceptance even when the original Church never once taught or mentioned this subject. I could only ask - Why was this accepted and what was the initiating force behind it? I then recalled numerous scriptures:

"For we wrestle not against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this world, against spiritual wickedness in high places." (Eph. 6:12)

"Now the Spirit speaketh expressly that in latter times some shall depart from the faith, giving heed to seducing spirits, and doctrines of devils."
I Tim. 4:1

We saw how men introduced philosophical terms such as "substance" and "essence"; ignoring Paul's statement in Col. 2:8 -

"Beware lest any man spoil you through philosophy and vain deceit after the tradition of men (trinitarian traditions within the Babylon mystery religions), after the rudiments of the world and not after Christ."

Paul's letter to Timothy warns of holding on to what was learned.

"But evil men and seducers shall wax worse and worse, deceiving and being deceived. But continue thou in the things which thou hast learned and hast been assured of, knowing of whom thou hast learned them." (remember: the trinity doctrine was not taught during this period of time.) II Tim. 3:13,14

The Word of God says Satan is the God of this world (II Cor. 4:4) and warns us to "be sober, be vigilant; because your adversary the devil, as a roaring lion, walketh about seeking whom he may devour." I Pet. 5:8

What is the devil's attitude toward people worshiping the one and only true God?... "Thou believest that there is one God (note: one God - not three-in-one God) thou doest well: the devils also believe, and tremble." James 2:19

Satan is a deceiver. His greatest fear is of the one true God so logically his first area of assault would be toward the worship of this one and only true God. History shows that his first major victory was to get people to worship the Son of God as the one and only true God. Then he got people to worship holy spirit as the one

and only true God. The next step was the worship of the baby Jesus - after all he was still God. Then followed the worship of the Mother of God followed by the worship of the human Father of God followed by the worship of the Grandmother of God (St. Anne), followed by the worship of the first apostles to eventually the worship of certain early saints of the church. Intermingled with all this is the worship of relics, crosses, feasts and idols. As you can see he has done a pretty good job.

The next question is - are you absolutely sure your not one of his victims?

If you overcome Satan then you have overcome the world for Satan is the God of this world. So then how do you overcome Satan and this world? The most important step is given in I John 5:5 -

"Who is he that overcometh th world but he that believeth Jesus is the SON OF GOD."

For if you believe Jesus is the Son of God than your worship and praise will be directed to the one and only true God who is the Father of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ. Then the Word of God says in Romans 8:31 -

"IF GOD BE FOR US, WHO CAN BE AGAINST US?"

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