

# Misconceptions And Malarkey About The Holy Spirit (Part One)

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*"... having believed, you were sealed with the Holy Spirit of promise. . . ." —  
Ephesians 1:13*

According to the *Catholic Encyclopedia*, the teaching of the Trinity is "the central doctrine of the Christian religion" (vol. 3, p. 47), despite the fact that not all Christians accept it. This concept holds that while God is one, He is also three. Perhaps no doctrine in all of Christendom has more of a reputation for obscurity and mind-boggling confusion than the Trinity.

While it can be shown to be one of the oldest concepts in all of civilization—having devotees in Egypt, Babylon, India, Greece, Scandinavia, etc. (nearly every culture that has ever existed on the earth)—the Trinity doctrine was introduced rather late in the history of the "Christian" (Catholic) church. This was done by the so-called Cappadocian Fathers: Basil, Gregory of Nyssa, and Gregory Nazianzus (*ibid.*, vol. 2, p. 794), later receiving formal approval by the Council of Constantinople in AD 382. Prior to this time, the Trinity was never given serious consideration by any sect or group proclaiming to follow Christ. In fact, the word "trinity" (*trinitas*) itself was not coined until Tertullian (c.160-230), more than a century after Christ's death.

When we examine the "proofs" of this crucial doctrine, we find them constructed out of shallow inferences, sophomoric analogies, needless redundancies, and deliberately equivocating abstractions and chicanery. When all the mistranslations are exposed, not one shred of biblical support can be marshaled in favor of the Trinity, except for bits and pieces of obviously forced, contorted, and strained passages that are forced to say things they never were intended to say.

Perhaps the one who feels he has most to gain from the promulgation of the Trinity doctrine is the father of all lies, Satan the Devil, who naturally would loathe to see the Family of God enlarged. Ephesians 1:13-14 clearly indicates that the Holy Spirit is actually the instrument of our regeneration as children of God, and further, it is a pledge or down payment on the life to come.

In Him . . . , having believed, you were sealed with the Holy Spirit of promise, who is the guarantee of our inheritance until the redemption of the purchased possession, to the praise of His glory. (Ephesians 1:13-14)

If the Holy Spirit were the Third Person of a closed Trinity, as the teaching claims, we would never be enabled to become glorified or deified.

The Bible variously labels the Holy Spirit as the spirit and mind of Christ. Romans 8:9 tells us that, if this spirit is not part of our constitution—that is, if Christ's spirit does not displace our carnal minds—we are not in the process of conversion and consequently are not candidates for the God Family. The following verses suggest a similar idea:

» Galatians 2:20: I have been crucified with Christ; it is no longer I who live, *but Christ lives in me*; and the life which I now live in the flesh I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave Himself for me. (Emphasis added throughout.)

» Colossians 1:27: To them God willed to make known what are the riches of the glory of this mystery among the Gentiles: which *is Christ in you*, the hope of glory.

» I Corinthians 2:16: For "who has known the mind of the LORD that he may instruct Him?" But *we have the mind of Christ*.

## Pagan in Origin

The concept of the Trinity has its roots, not in Christianity, but in pagan mythology. According to Alexander Hislop in *The Two Babylons*, "Babylon was the primal source from which all of these systems of idolatry flowed, so the deductions of the most learned historians, on mere historical grounds, have led to the same conclusion" (p. 12).

Hislop goes on to add that, in terms of variations of the belief, what is lacked in one country is added in another, a practice that could be analogous to the needless proliferation of slightly different automobile models. Each culture has to modify the stock symbols a little bit to suit itself, but the germinal idea remains. Consequently, from one source of idolatry flows all these tributaries:

Original Trinity of Babylon: Nimrod, Semiramis, Tammuz

Sumerian: Anu, Enlil, Enki

Egyptian: Osiris, Isis, Horus

Greek: Zeus, Athena, Apollo

Roman: Jupiter, Hera, Minerva

Arabian: Al-Lat, Al-'Uzza, Manat

Hindu: Brahma, Vishnu, Shiva

Scandinavian: Odin, Thor, Frea

Carl Jung, in his investigation of primitive cultures, became convinced that there seems to be a kind of collective cultural subconscious in which is submerged archetypes of the Hero, the Wise Man, life out of death, fertility rites, and the like. The polytheistic Trinity is no exception. Sigmund Freud concluded, "If man were to live solely by the dictates of the unconscious, the mono-theistic religions of the Judaeo-Christian tradition would disappear to be replaced by polytheistic and animistic proto-religions."

Freud's observations came several centuries too late. The Catholic Fathers were instinctively political, continually experimenting with the emotions and deep-seated feelings of the peoples to whom they proselytized. The adoption of the European fire festivals as well as of the Roman

Brumalia celebrations would indicate that these men would utilize any compromise whatsoever in gaining a greater measure of power.

The Cappadocian Three—Basil the Great (c. AD 330-379), his brother Gregory of Nyssa (c. AD 335-395), and Gregory of Nazianzus (c. AD 329-389)—are given credit for adapting, formulating, and finalizing the concept of the Trinity into the Catholic Church. These churchmen hypothesized out of their own fertile imaginations that "the Father, the Son, and the Spirit are in relation to one another like principle, realization, and completion" (*Encyclopedia of Religion*, "Vergilius Ferm," p. 121). From this crude psychological analogy, the Cappadocians inferred that the three Persons of the Deity have not only the identical energy but also have equality of dignity and nature. Yet Christ Himself contradicted this equilateral notion by simply stating, "The Father is greater than I" (John 14:28).

The Trinity doctrine was originally considered radical, and according to Herman Hansheer, a large segment of the early church regarded these theories as tritheistic heresy. The bitter disputes that ensued from the Council of Nicea in AD 325 were not finally resolved until AD 382 at the First Council at Constantinople. The opportunistic Emperor Constantine, presiding over the earlier Council, was more concerned about political unity (in the church and especially in the empire) than he was at arriving at pure doctrine. He was playing a numbers game, neither knowing nor caring about the theological matters in dispute.

In the booklet, "Is God a Trinity?" George L. Johnson summarizes the aftermath of that Nicene conference with the observation, "The church in all the ensuing centuries has been 'stuck' so to speak with the job of upholding—right or wrong—the decision made at Nicea" (p. 20).

### **Grammatical Misunderstanding**

If Protestant tract writers such as the late M.R. DeHaan (the founder of "Radio Bible Class" and co-editor of a devotional guide, *Our Daily Bread*) and Roger Campbell (best known for his weekly newspaper column, "Reflections on Faith," and daily radio program, "Higher Ground") had seriously studied a foreign language—or even into the historical background of our own English language!—they would not have dared to assert so foolishly that Jesus uses the personal pronoun "Him" when referring to the Comforter (or "Helper," NKJV) in John 16:7: "It is to your advantage that I go away; for if I do not go away, the Helper will not come to you; but if I depart, I will send Him to you."

The Greek word for "Comforter," *parakletos*, is in the masculine gender, while *pneumais* ("spirit") in the neuter gender. Interestingly, the Hebrew word for "spirit," *ruach*, is in the feminine gender.

Consequently, it cannot be deduced that this *parakletos* is a personality any more than we could say a German pen is a girl and a German pencil is a boy—even though the article *die* in *die Feder* (the pen) denotes a feminine word and *der* in *der Bleistift* (the pencil) denotes a masculine word. It may be surprising to learn that "girl" in German, *das Mädchen*, is neuter in gender.

Before the Norman Invasion in 1066, English was as much an inflected language as German or Scandinavian. Modern English has only one article, "the," to use for its nouns, while Old English differentiated between masculine articles, *se mann* (the man); feminine articles, *seo hlaefdige* (the lady); and neuter articles, *daet Maedgen* (the girl, showing its relationship to modern German).

M.R. DeHaan, oblivious to this grammatical differentiation, gullibly asserts in his tract on the Holy Spirit that there has been a faulty translation of the original text into the English Bible. With

cocksure, sophomoric naiveté, DeHaan complains that, in many cases, the Spirit is spoken of as "it" or "that" instead of "he," "him," or "whom." To give an example, he quotes Romans 8:16, "The Spirit itself bears witness with our spirit." However, since in this particular verse the pronoun is *auto* and denotes the neuter gender, the pronoun *itself* is correctly rendered.

### **Analogies That "Prove" the Trinity**

Some of the Catholic Fathers, knowing that laymen would not put up with scholarly doubletalk, resorted to rather crude physical analogies to "explain" things, such as:

1. Water can retain its chemical identity while in the distinct states of ice, liquid, and steam.
2. An egg has a shell, a yolk, and albumin, yet all are part of the egg. If we extend the analogy too far, we find that not all of the egg's components are living.
3. The triangle is the strongest brace in carpentry.
4. The shamrock and pansy have three petals—but they are still one plant. (This also applies to poison ivy.)
5. One interesting metaphor found in the *Catholic Encyclopedia* likens the Trinity to the sun, the ray, and the light.

Psychological metaphors for the Trinity are often just the breaking up of related aspects of the same thing. For instance, Augustine concocts a trinity out of thought, love, and will. Many are the psychological analogies of one being with three attributes. But why should we ever stop at three attributes? God has literally hundreds (perhaps thousands) of attributes. Are we going to give each one of these attributes a separate individuality?

### **Essence vs. Entity**

Trinitarians suggest that the baptismal formula in Matthew 28:19 sets a precedent for believing in the Trinity, since, within it, Father, Son, and Holy Spirit are juxtaposed. If such entities as President, Congress, and Constitution were taken as a cluster, I suppose Walter Martin (the "Original Bible Answer Man" and author of *The Kingdom of the Cults*) and M.R. DeHaan would consider the Constitution as a living personality.

Matthew 28:19 reads, "Go therefore and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit." If we consider this verse more closely, we see the prepositions "in" (or "into") and "of." Taken together in this idiom, they suggest that the last item in the series would be the means by which the act can take place. Thus, people are baptized into the name of the Father and Son by means of the Holy Spirit.

Parts of the New Testament have been mistranslated to distort what might have otherwise been clear. In the original Greek, in all the verses where *pneuma hagian* (literally, "spirit holy"), a substantive noun, is used, *no article is ever used*, suggesting that the Holy Spirit is not an entity but an essence. Here are some examples from just Luke's two books:

» Luke 1:15: For he will be great in the sight of the Lord, and shall drink neither wine nor strong drink. He will also be filled with ["the" not in original Greek] Holy Spirit, even from his mother's womb.

» Luke 1:67: Now his father Zacharias was filled with ["the" not in original Greek] Holy Spirit, and prophesied, saying: . . .

» Luke 4:1 Then Jesus, being filled with ["the" not in original Greek] Holy Spirit, returned from the Jordan and was led by the Spirit into the wilderness, . . .

» Acts 2:4: And they were all filled with ["the" not in the original Greek] Holy Spirit and began to speak with other tongues, as the Spirit gave them utterance.

» Acts 4:8: Then Peter, filled with ["the" not in the original Greek] Holy Spirit, said to them, "Rulers of the people and elders of Israel: . . ."

» Acts 4:31: And when they had prayed, the place where they were assembled together was shaken; and they were all filled with ["the" not in the original Greek] Holy Spirit, and they spoke the word of God with boldness.

» Acts 6:3: "Therefore, brethren, seek out from among you seven men of good reputation, full of ["the" not in the original Greek] Holy Spirit and wisdom, whom we may appoint over this business; . . .

» Acts 7:55: But he, being full of ["the" not in original Greek] Holy Spirit, gazed into heaven and saw the glory of God, and Jesus standing at the right hand of God, . . .

These verses, among many others throughout the entirety of Scripture, show that the Holy Spirit is a power rather than a personality.

Probably the most serious tampering of all was the spurious insertion into I John 5:7-8, "For there are three that bear witness [in heaven: the Father, the Word, and the Holy Spirit; and these three are one. And there are three that bear witness on earth]: the Spirit, and the water, and the blood; and these three agree as one." In a footnote in *The Emphatic Diaglott*, we find, "This [inserted] text is not contained in any Greek manuscript which was written earlier than the fifth century—and was first cited by Virgilius Tapsensis, a Latin writer of no credit."

Many more verses from the Bible have been used to "prove" the existence of a Trinity in Scripture. We will examine some of those in Part Two.