

"Christians Worship Three gods and, Therefore, Christianity is Paganish!"

by Randy Yost

While teaching at a college, I learned that some students were distributing fliers that said the following: "Christians worship three gods and, therefore, Christianity is paganish!" Since the Bible is the source that tells us about God and Christianity, let's look at what the Old Testament and New Testament teach about this topic.

Genesis chapter one is "the Jewish account of creation" (Wouk 57). Genesis 1:1 says, "In the beginning GOD created the heavens and the earth." (Genesis is the first book of the Old Testament.)

As the Old Testament clearly reveals (e.g. Exodus 20:2-3), Jews are monotheistic (the belief that there is only one God). But Dr. Graham points out something important about the word "God" in Genesis 1:1: "The Hebrew word used here is Elohim. And as Matthew Henry says, it signifies the plurality of persons in the Godhead: Father, Son, and Holy Ghost" (29).

Since Genesis 1:1 explicitly states that God is the Creator and the Hebrew word for God (Elohim) "signifies the plurality of persons in the Godhead," Genesis 1:26-27 says the following: "Then God said, Let US make man in OUR image...So God created." That is, the "us" and "our" are plural in number because the Godhead (the Hebrew word, Elohim, for God) is plural in number---God the Father, God the Son, and God the Holy Spirit. In other words, the meaning of the Hebrew word Elohim (God) in Genesis 1:1 is confirmed by the "us" and "our" in Genesis 1:26.

The "us" and "our," or God the Father, God the Son, and God the Holy Spirit---since the Old Testament explicitly forbids worshipping more than one God, the phrase God the Father, God the Son, and God the Holy Spirit must refer to ONE God and not three gods. In other words, the Trinity (Godhead) is also monotheistic (ONE God) and not polytheistic (the belief that there are many gods, or paganism).

How, though, is there ONE God in the phrase God the Father, God the Son, and God the Holy Spirit? It is ONE God who manifests Himself as three Divine Persons, not three gods who are manifested as three Divine Persons.

On the divine level you still find personalities; but up there you find them combined in new ways which we, who do not live on that level, cannot imagine. In God's dimension, so to speak, you find a being who is three Persons while remaining ONE Being, just as a cube is six squares while remaining ONE cube. (Lewis 142-143)

It is not $1+1+1=3$. It is $1 \times 1 \times 1 = 1$ (Graham 30-31).

Genesis 1:26-27 says "Let US make.... So God created." Since the "us" is plural in number because this pronoun refers to God the Father, God the Son, and God the Holy Spirit (the Godhead/Elohim), it follows that Genesis 1:26-27 teaches that God the Father, God the Son, and God the Holy Spirit (the "US") created the world. Therefore Genesis 1:1 says God created, and Genesis 1:2 mentions the Holy Spirit (the Spirit of God) in the creation; Colossians 1:13-18 refers to Jesus Christ's participation in the creation, thus supporting that the "US" in Genesis 1:26 refers to God, the Holy Spirit, and Jesus Christ as co-creators. Or to say the same thing in another way, ONE God who exists as three Divine Persons (God the Father, God the Son, and God the Holy Spirit) were together creating the

world.

But what about the New Testament? Though Christianity has its roots in Judaism and hence the term "Judeo-Christian," the New Testament is the main source for Christianity. So does the New Testament teach that Christians worship three gods? In other words, does the New Testament teach that Christianity is polytheistic? Does it, then, contradict what the Old Testament teaches?

In John 8:42 Jesus Christ says, "I proceeded forth and came from God" (NKJV). Unlike John the Baptist who is only sent by God (John 1:6), Jesus Christ says He PROCEEDS from God.

Greek New Testament scholar Thayer says the word "proceeded" in John 8:42 refers to the incarnation (222). John 1:1-14 defines the incarnation: ONE God who is manifested as the Son, or God the Son.

Not only does the New Testament teach that Jesus Christ proceeds from God, but it also teaches that the Holy Spirit proceeds from God: 'But when the Comforter comes, whom I shall send to you from the Father, the Spirit of truth who PROCEEDS from the Father' (John 15:26, NKJV). So if it is God the Son because Jesus Christ proceeds from God, it is also God the Holy Spirit because the Holy Spirit also proceeds from God. In other words, the New Testament also teaches the Godhead/Trinity of God the Father, God the Son, and God the Holy Spirit---that is, one Divine Being (God) who is three Divine Persons, while remaining one Being/God, and not three gods.

So both the Old Testament and New Testament teach that the Trinity (Godhead) is monotheistic, or one God, and not polytheistic, or many gods (paganish). Therefore, Christians do not worship three gods. Instead, they worship one God. (The New Testament is a continuation of the Old Testament: The New Testament fulfills the Old Testament; it does not negate nor contradict it. As expected, then, the New Testament also teaches the Trinity of God the Father, God the Son, and God the Holy Spirit---one God who is three Divine Persons, while remaining one Being/God, and not three gods.)

Still, why would one God manifest Himself as God the Father, God the Son, and God the Holy Spirit (the Trinity)? I believe Dr. Graham is correct in his analysis of this "why": we pray to God the Father since God the Father is the source of all blessings; we pray in Jesus Christ's name (God the Son) because God the Son is the mediator between God and humankind; we pray with/in the power of the Holy Spirit (God the Holy Spirit) because God the Holy Spirit empowers us to pray and to live victoriously. So though it's one God who is manifested as three Divine Persons, the three Divine Persons are distinct in their FUNCTION while remaining ONE God: "Functionally the Father came first, then the Son became incarnate...Now the Spirit does His work in this age of the Spirit" (27).

We are blessed to be living "in this age of the Spirit," as Dr. Graham calls this era, because the Holy Spirit is essential for understanding the spiritual things of God, such as the Judaic-Christian Trinity. We must study and use our God-given faculties, as the Bible clearly teaches (2 Timothy 2:15, Romans 12:2, 1 Thess. 5:21, Phil. 4:8-9, John 8:31-32, Psalm 1:1-3, etc). But we must rely on the Holy Spirit's indwelling to understand what we are studying or the spiritual things of God (cf. 1 Corin. 2:11-12), such as the biblical teaching (OT and NT) of One God who is three divine persons who are distinct in function but coeternal (Judaic-Christian Trinity). I have done my best to do both of

these before and while writing this. I exhort you to do the same as you STUDY this subject for an understanding of the biblical teaching of the Judaic-Christian Trinity of God the Father, God the Son, and God the Holy Spirit---the BIBLICAL teaching of the Old Testament and New Testament that clearly shows that Christians do not worship three gods and, therefore, Christianity is nonpaganish!

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