

HOW WERE YOU BAPTIZED?

IN Matthew 28:19, 20, Jesus said, "Go ye there- fore, and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost: teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you: and, lo, I am with you alway, even unto the end of the world. Amen." We want to "observe all things" that Jesus said, and we baptize in the "name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost."

The Jesus' Name Doctrine

There are people who go under the name of the Apostolic Faith but who deny the Holy Trinity. They baptize in the name of Jesus only. In addition to denying the fundamental teaching of the Bible on the Holy Trinity, they deny the eternal existence of the Son of God.

The advocates of this doctrine assert that "since there is but one God, there is therefore but one person in the Godhead, and that person is Jesus." They maintain that the Father, Son, and Holy Ghost are but three "manifestations" of one and the same Person — Jesus. They say, "The name of the Father is Jesus, the name of the Son is Jesus, and the name of the Holy Ghost is Jesus." (Where is there one instance in the Bible in which either the Father or the Holy Ghost is called "Jesus"?) It is therefore wrong, they say, to baptize Christians "in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost" (although Jesus Himself commanded it). They claim that Christians should be baptized "in the name of Jesus only," because, they assert, that is the formula the disciples used, citing certain passages in Acts as proof.

Those who hold to the Jesus Only theory further maintain that "the Son of God did not exist until He was born of the Virgin Mary. As a Son He was only a man." According to this doctrine, then, the Son of God was not the eternal "Logos" of John's Gospel. To quote one of their number: "The 'Only Begotten' of the Father, referred to in John 1:14, was the Person of God who came into existence millions of years before the 'Only Begotten Son.'"

Continuing their line of thought, they say, "At the time of Jesus' birth, God in Person, the Father Jesus, who alone was from all eternity, descended from Heaven and became incarnate in Mary's baby." And thus they explain, the child became the Son Jesus and the Father Jesus — "Two personalities in one person."

We confess we are somewhat at a loss to fathom the thought in that last paragraph; but that is, in substance, a fair statement of the doctrine as put out by these people. And such a denial of the scriptural doctrine of the Trinity, as well as of the eternal pre-existence of the Son of God, as is contained in this statement, is enough in itself at once to brand the doctrine as false.

"In Jesus' Name"

A large part of their argument (if such it may be called) centers around their interpretation of the expressions "in the name of Jesus," "in my name," "in my Father's name," etc., occurring frequently in the New Testament. What is the meaning of these expressions? The proponents of this new doctrine have given us their answer. They maintain that when Jesus said, "I am come in my Father's name," He meant that the name "Jesus" which He bore was the true and original name of the Father, which was not revealed until the incarnation.

To resort to such an absurd line of argument is, to a serious student of the Bible, simply trifling with the Word of God. What did Peter mean when he said to the lame man, "In the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth rise up and walk"? Perhaps even a child could answer the question. He simply meant, "In the power and authority of Jesus Christ rise up and walk." That is the plain and accepted meaning of these expressions wherever they are found throughout Scripture, and nothing more can be made out of them. When Jesus said, "I am come in my Father's name," He meant, "I am come in the power and authority of My Father."

Again in speaking of His disciples Jesus said, "In my name shall they cast out devils; they shall speak with new tongues; they shall take up serpents; and if they drink any deadly thing, it shall not hurt them; they shall lay hands on the sick, and they shall recover." The Lord indicated by these words that His disciples were commissioned in His name — that is, by His power and authority — to carry on the work of the Gospel. That is why, throughout the Book of Acts, we find Peter and the other disciples, in the course of their ministry frequently repeating the expression, "In the name of Jesus," meaning it was by His power and authority alone that they acted. Did Peter get some "new light" on the baptismal formula to be employed, as the advocates of this doctrine would give us to understand, when, on the Day of Pentecost, in exhorting the assembled

multitude, he said, "Repent, and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins"? Not for one minute! Those early disciples were more scrupulous in carrying out their Lord's commands to the letter than certain of these modern "prophets." Peter was not conducting a baptismal service when he spoke those words, and he was under no more necessity of repeating the entire baptismal formula in a casual reference to water baptism than a minister of today would be.

Another instance in Acts, referred to by these people, occurred in the ministry of Paul. The narrative states that Paul, upon coming to Ephesus, found certain disciples there, about twelve in number, who, after a brief conversation with the Apostle, "were baptized in the name of the Lord Jesus." And the proponents of this doctrine immediately seize upon this passage of Scripture as a further evidence. But in their haste they overlook what took place in the conversation. Paul asked these disciples, "Have ye received the Holy Ghost since ye believed?" They replied, "We have not so much as heard whether there be any Holy Ghost." And he said unto them, "Unto what then were ye baptized?" Why did the Apostle ask that question? Because he knew if they had received Christian baptism, they were baptized "in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost," as Jesus commanded, and hence they would have "heard" of the Holy Ghost. The narrative mentions that they were baptized "in the name of the Lord Jesus" simply to differentiate Christian baptism from John's baptism which these disciples had previously received. It is obvious from this instance that the disciples, instead of baptizing "in the name of Jesus," scrupulously followed the command of their Lord, and baptized "in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost."

Who Came Down From Heaven?

As has been indicated above, these prophets teach that there is but one Person in the Godhead, God the Father. The Son, they maintain, did not exist until He was born of the Virgin Mary. Therefore it was God the Father Himself who, according to their doctrine, left His throne in Heaven and became incarnate in the Babe of Bethlehem's manger.

Were this the case, there are naturally a few questions which arise in our minds. If it were God the Father who came to earth, then who occupied His vacated throne in Heaven during the thirty-three years He walked this earth? Also we are left to wonder to whom Jesus prayed when, in His great intercessory prayer, He "lifted up his eyes to heaven," and prayed, "Father, the hour is come. . . ." If Jesus Himself was the Father, why then did He lift His eyes heavenward? And If Jesus was the Father here upon earth, why did He teach His disciples to say, "Our Father which art in heaven . . ."?

At the Time of Jesus' baptism it is recorded: "And lo a voice from heaven, saying, This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased." Upon another occasion when Jesus was praying, He said, "Father, glorify thy name." And the narrative states, "Then came there a voice from heaven, saying, I have both glorified it, and will glorify it again." Now if Jesus was the Father, we would like to ask, Who was the author of this voice from Heaven?

And then, too, Jesus frequently spoke of "him that sent me." If Jesus was the Father, then who sent him? That oft-recurring expression, "He that sent me," can mean but one thing, that the Father in Heaven "sent" the Son, bearing out the teaching of John's Gospel, as well as of many other portions of Scripture, that the Son was with the Father from all eternity. Jesus Himself said, "No man hath ascended up to heaven, but he that came down from heaven, even the Son of man which is in heaven" (John 3:13). Do we need anything more definite to teach us that it was the "Son" who was "in heaven" and that it was the "Son" who "came down from heaven"?

Jesus also came as a mediator. And Paul upon this point particularly explains, "Now a mediator is not a mediator of one"; that is, there must be two parties to a mediatorship. Now God the Father is one of the parties and the human race is the other party, and Jesus is the Mediator between the two. "If any man sin, we have an advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous" (I John 2:1). How then could Jesus be the Mediator and Advocate for men, and also be God the Father?

As stated above, the proponents of this false doctrine maintain that the Father, Son, and Holy Ghost are but three "manifestations" of God. Yet throughout the Bible the personal pronouns, "I," "Me," "Thou," "Thee," "He," and "Him," are constantly applied to the Father, to the Son, and to the Holy Ghost. They are represented as speaking to each other and to men. Who, may we ask, ever heard of a "manifestation" being addressed as

"Thou," or referred to as "He"? Or where was it ever before heard that "manifestations" held conversations with one another?

These are not idle questions. They are all based upon sound scriptural doctrine. And they are presented to show to what absurdities an unscriptural doctrine, like the one under examination, will lead.

The Persons in the Godhead

The whole contention involved in this peculiar doctrine centers around the question of the Persons in the Godhead. And there is nothing new about this issue. The doctrine of the Trinity has been an object of attack by the enemies of the Gospel from the early dawn of Christianity. The proponents of this modern doctrine have simply resurrected an age-old controversy which was settled and dead and buried centuries ago, as far as all true Christians are concerned.

This controversy arose in the early history of Christianity, because certain sects in those days failed to distinguish between God's being, or essence, and His personality. And hence they became bitter opponents of the Christian doctrine of a triune God. The substance of their argument was, "If there is but one God, there can be but one Person in the Godhead." And from then on down there has arisen one crooked sect after another that has harped on the same old argument. It was the cry of the Mohammedan hordes in 700 A.D., "There is one God, and Mohammed is His prophet." They charged the Christians with being polytheists — worshipers of many gods — because they believed in three Persons in the Godhead. And so in our day, the so-called "Jesus' Name," or "Jesus Only," sect has risen and they have taken, up the same line of reasoning: "There is but one God, and but one Person in the Godhead." The only contribution which they have made to the crooked doctrines of the past is the amazing teaching that that one Person is Jesus.

That there is but one true and living God no believer in the Bible denies. That truth is taught from Genesis to Revelation. The crux of the whole argument, as intimated above, lies in the distinction between God's being, or essence, and His personality. In being, or essence, there is but one God. But the Bible just as clearly teaches that there are also three distinct Persons in the Godhead: the Father, Son, and Holy Ghost. Jesus could say, "I and my Father are one," because in being, or essence, They were one, but in personality They were distinct. The Son was upon the earth, the Father in Heaven. The Son spoke to the Father and the Father to the Son.

Biblical Evidence of the Trinity

Sufficient Scripture, we believe, has already been cited to reveal to any reasonable mind the absurdity and falsity of this "Jesus' Name" doctrine. It would be impossible here to go into all the scriptural evidence and to review all the arguments in support of the doctrine of the Trinity, and no such attempt will be made. The works of many orthodox Christian writers are available which deal exhaustively with the subject. Suffice it to say that the doctrine of the Trinity has been a well-established tenet and a foundation stone of the Christian religion for centuries, and no true Christian questions its scriptural authority for one minute. We therefore shall cite only a few of the outstanding passages of Scripture in support of the Trinitarian doctrine.

A plurality of Persons in the Godhead is implied in the name for God in the Old Testament. It is the Hebrew word Elohim, which is the plural form, the name most commonly used for God. A plurality of Persons is also implied in the account of the creation. When man was to be created, God said, "Let us make man in our image" (Genesis 1:26). This first person plural, as applied to the Godhead, is also found in Genesis 11:7 and Isaiah 6:8. The threefold ascription of praise, "Holy, holy, holy," uttered by the seraphims before the Throne (Isaiah 6:3), implies a trinity of Persons in the Godhead.

Two of the Messianic Psalms by David prove conclusively the existence of the Persons of the Father and the Son in the Godhead. In the second Psalm is recorded an instance where the Father personally addresses the Son by name, "Thou art my Son: this day have I begotten thee" (Psalm 2:7). In the 12th verse also the "Son" is referred to by name. Again, in Psalm 110 we read, "The LORD said unto my Lord, Sit thou at my right hand, until I make thine enemies thy footstool" (Psalm 110:1). Jesus Himself quoted this verse to the unbelieving Pharisees to prove His eternal Sonship with the Father, and then said, "If David then call him Lord, how is he his son?" (Matthew 22:45). The Pharisees did not attempt "to answer him a word," but these modern prophets do. In the face of this direct appeal to a Messianic Psalm, which Jesus made for the express purpose of proving His eternal existence, as a "Son," with the Father, they brazenly maintain that "The 'Son' did not exist until He was born of the Virgin Mary."

We have even more conclusive evidence of the Persons in the Godhead when we come to the New Testament. The prologue of John's Gospel was written expressly to show forth the eternal existence of the Son. It opens with these words, "In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God" (John 1:1), while the 14th verse tells us, "The Word was made flesh." If there is but one Person in the Godhead, as these modern prophets loudly proclaim, then who was this "Word" that was "In the beginning with God," and afterwards "was made flesh"? He was none other than the eternal Son of God who was with the Father in the beginning. Also in the "apostolic benediction," as it is called, we have a recognition of the three persons in the Godhead: "The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, and the love of God, and the communion of the Holy Ghost, be with you all" (II Corinthians 13:14). And finally Jesus Himself gives His unqualified support to the doctrine of the Trinity in Matthew 28:19, to which reference has already been made: "Go ye therefore, and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of The Holy Ghost." And then He significantly added, "Teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you: and, lo, I am with you alway, even unto the end of the world. Amen."

In the attempt of these prophets to find scriptural authority for their doctrine we have an example of the oft-repeated effort to make the Word of God conform to the teaching of men; of trying to build a doctrine upon isolated passages of Scripture, selected with a view, not of ascertaining the truth, but of supporting some pet dogma.

The great fundamental teachings of the Bible which for centuries have constituted the bulwark of Christianity, do not rest upon any such flimsy foundation. These doctrines were arrived at by patient and prayerful study, for the sincere purpose of ascertaining the truth. And God has put His stamp of approval upon these tried teachings down through the ages, by blessing, with the salvation of thousands of souls, the ministry of those who have stood for these doctrines and preached them.

"To the law and to the testimony: if they speak not according to this word, it is because there is no light in them" (Isaiah 8:20).