

Five Major Problems with the Trinity

...or Why I am Not a Trinitarian

Problem #1

- Jesus was a Jew who believed the same about God as other Jews
- first century Jews did not believe in the Trinity
- their Scriptures proclaimed radical monotheism

Deuteronomy 4.35, 39

- 35 To you it was shown so that you would acknowledge that the LORD is God; there is no other besides him.
- 39 So acknowledge today and take to heart that the LORD is God in heaven above and on the earth beneath; there is no other.

Mark 12.28-34

- Jesus confessed the *Shema*, the core creed of Judaism, without altering it at all
- How would the Jewish scribe have heard this? As a Trinitarian creed?
- The scribe summarized the *Shema* with the words “he is one, and besides him there is no other”

Mark 12.28-34

- Jesus did not alter or criticize this unitarian reading of the Shema, rather he highly praised the scribe saying “you are not far from the kingdom of God”
- But, if the Jesus was also God, as a second member, wouldn't he be guilty of misleading this scribe?

Problem #2

- The Trinity is never explained in Scripture
- Sure one can pull together a verse here and a verse there, in order to find support for an *a priori* theory
- This is not the same as something being explained in Scripture

What Is the Trinity?

- one God in three persons
- co-eternal
- co-essential
- co-equal
- eternal generation
- dual natures of Christ in one person
- in their union each nature preserves its distinct attributes
- two wills in Christ--divine and human--never conflict

Where Is That in Scripture?

- again we are not denying that Scripture can be **used** to support the Trinity (eisegesis vs. exegesis)
- But, that the doctrine is never stated nor explained troubles us.
- The Trinity is like an oral tradition taught alongside Scripture

Is It Really Necessary If...

- it is never explained by Jesus
- it is never preached as gospel in the book of Acts
- it is never explained in the epistles of Paul, James, Peter, or John
- it is just one theory among several which tries to explain God in light of Scripture

Problem #3

- No Jews who converted to Christianity ever challenged the Trinity (lack of controversy)
- Suppose a unitarian missionary went into a mainstream church and upon being invited to speak a few words, explained that the Father is the only true God...what would the response be?

Controversies in the NT

- o Corinth is full of controversies, from factions to speaking in tongues to impropriety at communion, etc.
- o general controversy over whether Gentiles could be accepted into Christianity
- o controversy over whether justification came through the works of the law or by faith

Three Options

1. The Trinity did not exist yet
2. It existed but wasn't taught (i.e. it was not that important)
3. It was taught but it caused no controversy whatsoever among monotheistic Jewish communities (conspiracy theory)

The Primacy Myth

- o The Trinity was believed by the earliest Christians from the beginning but they didn't write about it until the "heretics" began articulating alternate theologies of God and Christ
- o But, what evidence is there that the earliest Christians believed it?
- o To assume it at the outset is circular

A Look at History

1. [325] Nicea I: Is the Son eternal?
2. [381] Constantinople I: Is the Holy Spirit the third person?
3. [431] Ephesus: Was Mary the bearer of Christ's divine nature (theotokos)?
4. [451] Chalcedon: Did Christ have one or two natures? How?

A Look at History

5. [553] Constantinople II: How can we interpret the dual natures without dividing Christ into two
6. [681] Constantinople III: Did Christ have one or two wills?
7. [787] Nicea II: Can icons of Christ be worshiped? How?

The Conundrum

- o So if the myth of Trinitarian primacy is true—that it always existed and was understand and taught since the time of the apostles—then why was there four and half centuries of controversies?
- o Why does this historical record look like the Trinity slowly evolved?

Problem #4

- God is **always** addressed using singular personal pronouns (you)
- God is **always** spoken of using singular personal pronouns (he)
- God **almost always** speaks using singular personal pronouns (except the four “us texts” in which God is including others in an action)

Singular Personal Pronouns

- **Singular** personal pronouns are used for **singular** persons
- If God were a Trinity we should find **plural** pronouns
- But, we don't...thousands of times we are confronted by the fact that God is a single individual

What about Those “Us Texts”...

- In Gen. 1.26, according to the NIV Study Bible and the NET, God is addressing his heavenly court, involving them in the creation of humans.
- Likewise in Gen. 3.22; 11.7; and Isaiah 6.8 God speaks to the angels.

He Alone Is God

- John 17.3 “And this is eternal life, that they may know you, the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom you have sent.”
- Isaiah 45.5 “I am the LORD, and there is no other; besides me there is no god. I arm you, though you do not know me,”

Problem #5

- Jesus was not omniscient
- God knows everything that can be known
- But, if the Trinity is true then Jesus is fully God, and so he **should** have full knowledge, right?

Mark 13.32

- “But about that day or hour no one knows, neither the angels in heaven, nor the Son, but only the Father.”
- Did Jesus really not know? Was he lying?

Two Options

1. Jesus, as God, really did know, but pretended not to know
2. Jesus, really did not know and therefore is not really God, (at least not in a Trinitarian sense)

The Comeback...

- o Jesus knew in his divine nature, but not in his human nature. So when he was speaking in Mark 13.32, he was speaking from his human nature.

The Response

- But, the Trinity teaches that there is only one person subsisting in two natures!
- He cannot have two minds, one that knew something and another that did not know something, unless we now want to make the absurd claim that mind and person are not correlated

Conclusion: Five Problems

1. Jesus affirmed the theology of a non-Trinitarian Jewish scribe
2. The Trinity is never explained in Scripture
3. There is no controversy of it in the first century
4. Singular pronouns exclude the notion of multiple persons of God
5. Jesus was not omniscient