

GOD'S TRINITIES

For the last couple millennia most all Christians have been told that God is actually three persons. Three distinct persons connected so they are actually just one after all. Sort of like what my pastor described as Siamese triplets. And the church calls it the trinity.

This understanding stems from conflicts in early Christian history about who Jesus actually was. Was he just a plain man whom God selected to be the Christ, the Messiah? Was he a man who God specially gifted to be the Messiah? Was he a man who actually is god?

These three concepts were hotly debated by church leaders for many years. Then came Caesar. The Roman Empire had rigidly controlled the entire known world for centuries.

The Christian religion was a problem for Rome. It honored the government despite being severely vilified and persecuted by that government. . .and was spreading everywhere.

Rome's emperor, Constantine, was a master tactician, if nothing else. In an historic version of if-you-can't-beat-'em-join-'em, he declared that the empire would take Christianity as its official and required religion. Effectively giving him the ability to shape this otherwise leaderless movement.

And shape it he did. He decreed that important people in the growing religion would meet in a town called Nicaea, near Constantinople, the city named after him.

He told them church leadership had to be like the Roman Empire requiring unquestioning allegiance to the authority and doctrines decreed by this council and its leaders from here on out. Which is exactly what happened.

Roman government had long favored a focused leadership style called the triumvirate. Three men who control everything. This fit perfectly with a position some church leaders were already teaching to clarify their version of what it meant to be the Messiah, or the Christ.

Thus, the trinity was born. Born and pushed through by Imperial edict. Banishing any competing ideas. Burning copies of any works that were to the contrary. Threatening to burn opponents at the stake. . .and in the fires of hell.

Ever since then, Church dogma has required belief in and loyalty to a Jesus who is the same as and equal to both God the Father and His Holy Spirit. All three being individually infinitely powerful, infinitely knowledgeable and collectively eternally in control of everything.

But in the real world, man's power sharing arrangements are inherently unstable. Almost always, one person takes over. As the Roman's triumvirate model would repeatedly collapse into the next Caesar.

The trinity model has had the same predictable degeneration. Evangelical churches nowadays mostly have segued into Jesus worship with only occasional lip service to the other two of the triplets. God might have preferred one of the other options that Constantine's church counsel outlawed.

This isn't to say that God doesn't have trinities He loves. Just not this human kind. The concept of trinity, God repeatedly forging three entities into a single something that's unique and wondrous, is awesome to behold. The most obvious being the one that this church counsel mistook when they split up God.

In Matthew 28:19, Jesus tells his followers it's time to evangelize the world. Then he recounts the trinity cascade which generates believers' salvation symbolized by baptism.

The One God, the Father graciously (number one) selects and produces saving faith in the individual through His son, whose (number 2) sacrifice made Christ the one Way. God then (number three) pours His own Holy Spirit into mortals. This divine spark making believers into actual children of God. Our most important of all the trinities.

Of course, there's the stunning trinity that makes the universe exist. One that makes us human. And another that makes God's peoples into a family. And, no doubt, trinities we can't imagine. Each one a breathtaking encounter. For some other time.