

Three Gods or One God?

by Edward F. Sylvia, M.T.S.

Emanuel Swedenborg spent a lot of his effort on correcting the concept of Trinitarian doctrine that has been held by the Christian Church since the Nicene Council. There is indeed a Divine Trinity, but the idea of a Trinity of Persons was unknown to the Apostolic Church.

From the Nicene council and the Athanasian Creed, the idea of a trinity of persons, each of whom is separately God, has, according to Swedenborg, perverted the entire Christian Church. This idea of the Holy Trinity is incongruous and defies human reason. It creates a belief and faith that God is one, but is still not one person.

Under this schizophrenic form of worship one is forced to believe deep in one's heart that there are three Divine Persons, but give lip service to the idea of one God. This is fuzzy math.

If you give distinct properties and attributes to three divine persons, you carve up the Divine Essence so that no one of the three can represent God in fullness. This throws the concept of Divine omnipotence right out the theological window.

This is why the Trinitarian doctrine is declared a "mystery" by the church and we are told not to worry our finite minds over such things.

The picture we form (should we refuse to shut our minds) is that God the Father, who sits overhead, was moved by watching His Son suffer on the cross and pleading for all men and women. This arousal of the Father's compassion and love for His Son next sets the Holy Spirit into high gear, who then descends toward earth to dispense gifts of justification by which humans are instantly transformed from the condemned to the elect (in spite of themselves).

This picture turns serious thinking people into atheists.

According to Swedenborg, the angels of heaven understood that Jesus was Jehovah, who came into the world to make himself both visible and accessible to the human race. The Holy Spirit represents the acceptance and reception of God's divine operation into the minds and hearts of men and women on earth.

Swedenborg points out that one God cannot go out and proceed from another (as Christian dogma maintains). But a divine operation can certainly go out and proceed from God. So God can display all three operations and divine attributes without having to be described through the distinct activities of three separate persons.

If the clarification of Trinitarian doctrine described by the Nicene Council was such an improvement over the understanding of doctrine in the Apostolic Church, then why did Europe soon after plunge into the Dark Ages? Surely, such an important doctrinal improvement would not have led to an era of religious conflict and denigration.

(Swedenborg goes into much more detail concerning the Holy Trinity. If you're interested in learning more, contact the Swedenborg Foundation and ask for his great theological work, titled *True Christianity*.)

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