

**Excerpts From The Creeds of Athanasius, Sabellius, and Swedenborg—Augustus Clissold**

- “The Trinity is a fundamental article of the Christian religion; and as he that denies it may lose his soul, so he who strives too much to understand it, may lose his wits.”
- "People say that the doctrine of Transubstantiation is difficult to believe: I did not believe the doctrine till I was a Catholic. I had no difficulty in believing it, as soon as I believed that the Catholic Roman Church was the oracle of God, and that she had declared this doctrine to be part of the original revelation. It is difficult, impossible to imagine, I grant;—but how is it difficult to believe?" Well, then, the doctrine of Tripersonality stands upon the same ground as the doctrine of Transubstantiation. Of both it is said—"It is difficult, impossible, to imagine; but how is it difficult to believe?" I have no difficulty in believing it, as soon as I believe that the Catholic Roman Church is the oracle of God, and declares the Athanasian Creed to be a part of the original Revelation.
- The doctrine of the Tripersonality is regarded by its distinguished advocate as the highway into the Church of Rome; and this furnishes one reason why the Roman Catholics feel so averse to the possible disuse of the [Athanasian] Creed in the Church of England, or to any modifications of its language, particularly of its anathemas . . .
- Dr. Wilberforce, a strict Athanasian, in his treatise on The Incarnation, tells me that in the Unity of the Godhead there are Three Persons; but that the first and most essential condition of belief in this fact, is to acknowledge that it is a mystery . . .
- To say that the Father is wholly and absolutely the One infinitely-simple God, and then that the Son is also, and yet that the Father is eternally distinct from the Son, is to propose ideas which we cannot harmonize together . . .
- "It has been observed, that the Mystery of the doctrine of the Holy Trinity is not merely a verbal contradiction, but an incompatibility in the human ideas conveyed by them . . . "

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**Oneness And Holiness—Galen Gregg**

We Jesus Name, One God, Holiness people often view our “key doctrines” as separate theologies. While we quickly understand that Oneness and Jesus name baptism are inseparable, we often do not realize the interrelationship, the cause and effect, and the inseparable nature of the Oneness and holiness doctrines.

We have the beautiful and thrilling revelation of the Mighty God in Christ. Our spirits lift and we are blessed by the revelation that Jesus is the Almighty God, the Everlasting Father, the great I AM, God with us, the Word which is God, God manifest in the flesh. We have come to know Him as the First and the Last, the Alpha and Omega, that which was and is and is to come; and that He is not a god, or the second person of the trinity. However, we sometimes do not grasp the understanding and import of the concept that His Oneness manifests

in us as holiness and sanctification. That is, the urge and move we feel toward holiness and sanctification is not only the Holy Ghost working in us, but is also the natural consequence of the full revelation that God is One and not a multiplicity.

We often use the two words holy and wholly. Please consider that these two words can actually mean the same thing. The case can be made that the etymology of these words is the same. When a man is holy (as God is holy) he is whole. When we say some activity or some thing is wholesome, we are communicating the idea that it is good, righteous and healthy to the soul. The very concept of holiness is behavior that is wholesome to the soul.

Holiness is the dominant trait of God. (Although the idea of God having traits is awkward at best, please allow this slight liberty, as an attempt to

understand more of God than a feeble mind can grasp.) He is totally complete within Himself. He is single and whole without any other or anyone else. He is holy. He is complete. He is single. We “. . . are complete in him, which is the head of all principality and power . . . in putting off the body of the sins of the flesh . . . and you, being dead in your sins . . . hath he quickened together with him . . .”

Abraham lived in the midst of the Sumerians. They were a pagan people who believed in many gods and such belief fragmented their devotion resulting in behavior unwholesome, unholy and displeasing to God, behavior otherwise known as sin. God wanted to reveal himself to Abram, and to accomplish such Abram had to remove himself (or sanctify himself) from that pagan people. Pagan and ungodly behavior goes hand in glove with polytheism.

(continued on page 7)

**INSIDE THIS ISSUE**

<b>Oneness and Holiness</b>	<b>1</b>
<b>Against Tertullian</b>	<b>3</b>
<b>Dogmatism vs. Conviction</b>	<b>4</b>
<b>Sabellius: Oneness Theologian</b>	<b>6</b>
<b>Augustus Clissold</b>	<b>8</b>

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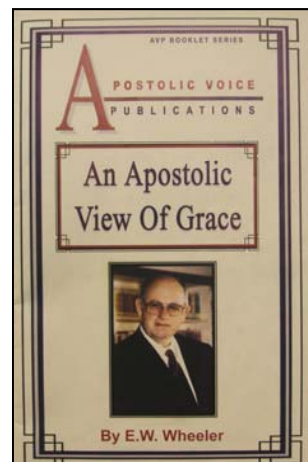
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**Oneness and Holiness—Galen Gregg—Continued**

(continued from page 1)

When God took his people out of Egypt, He was working on a people who had generations of polytheistic influence. God took them from that atmosphere and the first commandment He gave them is, "Hear, O Israel: The LORD our God is one LORD." Or, more properly "God is One." He is single, wholesome, whole and holy. The necessary extrapolation of this law is, "thou shalt love the LORD thy God with all thine heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy might." Revelation of the Oneness and singleness of God results in a holiness/singleness/wholeness which brings a devotion and focus of all of one's life—love God with all your heart, soul, and might—it is not just worship, it is an effect upon the entire life. The Oneness of God is not a commandment by itself, but devotion and holiness is all a part of the same parcel.

Thomas Cahill in his secular social exploration of the Jewish culture, entitled *The Gifts of the Jews*, puts it this way—" . . . the Jews were the first people to develop an integrated view of life and its obligations. Rather than imagining the demands of the law and the demands of wisdom as discrete realms (as did the Sumerians, the Egyptians, and the Greeks), they imagined that all of life, having come from the author of life, was to be governed by a single outlook. The material and the spiritual, the intellectual and the moral were one . . . because God is One, life is a moral continuum—and reality makes sense."

The New Testament church was admonished to keep themselves unspotted from the polytheistic Hellenistic influence. The Greeks embraced a multiplicity of gods—they were pagan. Paul admonished, "I have espoused you to one husband, that I may present you as a chaste virgin to Christ. But I fear, lest . . . your minds should be corrupted from the simplicity that is in Christ (2 Corinthians 11:2-3). Notice the contrast and association of one/chaste and corrupted/simplicity. Simplicity, singleness and Oneness is contrasted with being corrupt. The Oneness of God and holiness go together. One and chaste go together. The Oneness of God and holiness go together.

"The light of the body is the eye: if therefore thine eye be single, thy whole body shall be full of light. But if thine eye be evil, thy whole body shall be full of darkness . . . No man can serve two masters . . ." (Matthew 6:22-24). A vision or revelation of the singleness and Oneness of God will result in a physical being, behavior and appearance that is full of light.

We do not mess with the pagans. Adopting their techniques, like it or not, usually results in adopting at least some of their values. "Woe to them that go down to Egypt for help . . . but they look not unto the Holy One of Israel" (Isaiah 31:1). We have to be single/devoted/holy. We have no truck with the Trinitarian doctrine; not fellowship, not dialogue, only separation.

When one begins to lose his love for holiness and sanctification it almost always leads to fellowship with the pagans/polytheists/trinitarians. If one begins to flirt with the Trinitarians, it will almost always result in a loss of love for holiness and sanctification. It is nigh impossible to separate the Oneness doctrine from the concept of holiness. Hear, O Israel: The LORD our God is one LORD.



## Dogmatism vs. Conviction—D.S. Garza

There are some interesting differences between those who are dogmatically oriented and those who have a conviction based on the Scriptures. The *Oxford English Dictionary* defines dogmatic as: “firmly asserting personal opinions as true.” Those of us that strongly believe in this Apostolic message have a responsibility to earnestly contend for the faith. That is, to defend to the best of our ability, the Bible, its teachings and principles, and especially to contend for every aspect of Scripture that deals with salvation issues. There is also a profound need (1) to be able to distinguish Bible doctrine from mere opinion, and (2) to understand how to treat those who may differ in areas that ultimately are not salvation issues.

It is just and honorable to stand for truth. It is quite another thing to fight with the same type of zeal for personal opinions. Many friendships have been ruined, not because people differed on what the Bible said, but because they differed on what they thought the Bible said. (I’m not sure some people can tell the difference.) Someone that is dogmatic is not interested in the idea that there may be another view—because to this type of mentality, there is no other view. That is why, for example, that dialog with Islamic extremists is futile because their world view is the only world view in their opinion.

Regardless of religious persuasion, there are also some common characteristics and attitudes that can help you spot someone that has a dogmatic spirit. The extreme response is to kill or to threaten to kill someone that dares to express a variant belief. A prominent author found this out when he wrote a fictional work involving Islam. He was in hiding for several years, and knows all too well that the threat is real. Dogmatists do not have the ability to think rationally nor are they introspective enough to ask themselves why they might feel so threatened by an opposing view. The reason is clear when you look at their response which is based on deep-seated insecurities and fear, because their system of belief is a house of cards.

Dogmatists typically respond by either attacking or shunning someone who has a different view or standard. They cannot possibly admit that someone else has a good or decent standard; for all they see is that it is not the same as theirs. For example, in Genesis chapter two, God instructed Adam not to eat of the tree in the midst of the garden. Eve added to this rule and said to the serpent that they could not touch it either. Not eating it, is a Bible rule; not touching it, is an added precaution which makes for a good standard. Someone today could say that you should stay a mile away from that tree—to which I say, “Amen, that’s a great standard.” But then someone else comes along and he has a five mile standard—which obviously is a better standard. Unfortunately, this supposed stand for righteousness is ruined by a self-righteous attitude, in that there is a failure to appreciate that they both are following the Bible rule. Instead of disdain, there should be a mutual respect.

A Jehovah’s Witness that I spoke to some years ago offered me a booklet to read; I took it and offered him a tract. He would not accept it because he said he was not allowed to read material from other churches. I told him that I was not afraid to read what he had given me, because I felt very secure in my belief system and that he was instructed not to accept any reading materials because his religion is not based on the Bible, and they did not want him to find this out.

Obviously, my confidence in what I believe is not what guarantees that I have the truth; because there are many in false religion that are just as confident. We cannot base our belief system on feelings; it must be based on Scripture alone. To have a “conviction” is to base one’s beliefs on what the Bible says. I have a “conviction” about Acts 2:38. I have an opinion about peripheral things. Those that are dogmatically orientated have no peripheral issues—they are all alike to them. Unfortunately, their authoritative stands often blur the lines that separate Bible facts from mere opinion. The end result is that their beliefs become indistinguishable from the Word of God. They ignore the fact that there might be other valid or plausible positions. A dogmatist becomes like a pope, in that, his word and the Word of God are equal.

The proper response when confronted with false doctrine is to “earnestly contend for the faith.” We cannot allow men to assail the cardinal doctrines of the Bible. Also, when confronted with an idea or belief that is a non-salvation issue, we need to be tolerant—knowing that it is only an opinion. It is right to be certain about certainties. It is also right to be pliable about opinions. This is heresy to dogmatists because they are certain about uncertainties, as well.

The only thing we can be certain about is what is written. It is not correct to say: God said it, I believe it, and it is so. But rather, God said it, it is so, and I believe it. Regardless of whether we believe it or not, it is still true. Dogmatism will lead you down the road to a bad attitude and to an unteachable spirit; it even leads to a place where correction from elders is rejected. In contradistinction, a “conviction” based on Scripture produces a spirit that God is pleased with, that is respectful of others, and desires the preaching of the Gospel of peace to a lost and dying world.

Dogmatists eventually fight on a personal level because they are defending personal ideas—ideas that may only be confirmed in the minds of the select few. John Calvin was a grim-faced, dogmatically oriented reformer. Those that did not agree with his personal opinions paid the ultimate price. His persistence to indoctrinate his world with predestination had to be implemented by shear force. But those that do not want to follow Calvin’s example nor those that are like him, need to (1) preach and teach that which is firmly established as doctrine with “conviction,” and (2) relegate that which is mere opinion to its proper place. One produces conversions, while the Calvinistic group produces discord among the brethren. Let’s preach the Word!

## Sabellius: An Early Oneness Theologian—William Chalfant

We can only see Oneness-leader Sabellius through Trinitarian eyes, and so we have to adjust our focus to get a true picture of this valiant apostolic minister, who was a student in the Roman district's Apostolic Bible College, later apparently pastored in Rome, and evangelized throughout northern Africa and the Middle East. He wrote at least five books which have been lost.

Catholic, Protestant, and other scholars have attempted to portray the theology of Sabellius (c. A.D. 180-260), insofar as the Godhead is concerned, as merely demonstrating a "misguided trinitarianism." He is said to have held to an "economic trinity," a "trinity of revelation," a "Sabellian trinity." The implication is that he simply taught a "reduced" Trinitarian model of the Godhead. Stewart McDowell (*Evolution and Doctrine of the Trinity*, 1918) wrote that Sabellius taught that "God is three Persons eternally, and not merely in relation to the cosmos as Sabellius taught." This incorrectly implies that Sabellius did not have an "eternal" model of the Godhead and that he nonetheless held that God was three "Persons." This is false.

All of this misconstruction of the great third century teacher's theology is based on the grave incarnational error of Trinitarians themselves, who have wrongly deducted that a second "Divine Person" was born in the manger rather than God the Father Himself being manifest in the flesh. Since Sabellius had the correct interpretation of the incarnation, he was able to see a manifestation of God the Father in the appearance of the baby Jesus around 4 B.C., rather than the appearance of some mythical second "Divine Person" at this time. Trinitarians later "retrofitted" the pre-existence of their newly created second "Divine Person," basing it on the teaching of Philo of Alexander (20 B.C.-A.D. 50), and a Gnostic-derived interpretation of John 1.

Contemporary Trinitarians, such as Novatian (A.D. 210-280) and Dionysius (Bishop of Rome A.D. 259-268), acknowledged that Sabellius held that the Son was the Father. Thus, he could not have been a Trinitarian in any way. Sabellius did hold a form of patripassianism. The earlier Noetus (c. A.D. 130-200) had actually taught that the Father suffered on the cross, since he held that the Son was the Father. Sabellius qualified this teaching to meet the exigencies of the incarnation. In other words, the Spirit Himself suffered in a compassionate sense, but God in the flesh as the Man Christ Jesus actually suffered *in the flesh* (1 Peter 2:24). Thus Sabellius was in the older tradition and theology of the Roman Bishops Zephyrinus (fl. A.D. 198-217) and Callistus (fl. A.D. 217-222), and those before them, who taught that "the Father did not die, but the Son died." Nevertheless they identified the Son as the Father by means of the incarnation.

Oneness teaching was identified as "Monarchianism" in the third century. Sabellius, as did the Roman district, with whom he was associated with for many years until the district split in A.D. 222, held to Monarchianism (there is only "one Ruler" God the Father, who rules through the incarnation today without duplicating His individuality in any way).

In addition to being accused of being some kind of a Trinitarian, Sabellius has been falsely accused of many errors which he never held: e.g., teaching *dilationism* (that the monad of God the Father evolved or expanded into three persons), based on a teaching that should be attributed to Marcellus of Ancyra; *docetism* (a belief that Christ did not have a mortal human body, but was a materialized "phantom"), based upon false statements against him by an unknown Catholic Church father called "Pseudo-Athanasius." Sabellius was accused of teaching *pantheism* by K. Hagenbach, the German historian, simply based on Hagenbach's uninformed view of Sabellius' teaching on the incarnation. All of these false accusations have served to obscure the teaching of probably one of the greatest early Oneness apostolic theologians since the days of the apostles.

## Against Tertullian—Thomas Weisser

Tertullian is considered by many to be the father of the Trinity. He came against the majority view at that time (c. 200) which maintained the Oneness of God without subordinating Jesus Christ. In his "Against Praxeas," he outlined his heretical views of the Godhead and revealed what the largest segment of Christians believed at that time.

Tertullian believed that the Word or Son was an emanation from the Father. He maintained that the Father existed from eternity past with Reason. At the beginning the Word or Son came into existence as an emanation from the Father. Sometime after the beginning the Holy Ghost became another emanation. His concept could be described as a descending triad; Father, Son, and Holy Ghost. This, of course, is considered heresy by those who ascribe to the so-called Athanasian Creed which ascribes equality and eternity to the three. This creed came after a few hundred years of an evolutionary process which brought us full blown Trinitarianism. Tertullian's concepts related better with Greek philosophy which had its roots in Platonism—the very thing that Paul warned against in Colossians 2:8.

Tertullian contends that the Word or Son is a separate person from the Father. He makes the absurd assertion that our word becomes a separate person from us. In desperation to identify the Son's existence before Bethlehem he identifies him with Wisdom. The only problem with this analogy is that Wisdom is an attribute, not a person.

In his explanation for John 14:9 where Jesus says, "he that hath seen me hath seen the Father," Tertullian adds to Scripture by saying Jesus was the Father's commissioner or representative. While admitting that the Son came in the Father's name he asserts that Father is a name. If Father is a name, then the name of the Son is Father according to Isaiah 9:6. A man may be a father to someone, a husband to his wife, and assuredly a son to someone, but he is only one person.

The many Old Testament Scriptures that emphasize the Oneness of God and His absolute singularity are allegorized by Tertullian. Scriptures that boldly proclaim that beside the One God there is no Saviour are ignored or taken figuratively. He would like the Scripture to say the only God, but in company with His Son. In his warped imagination he twists Scripture that proclaims God is alone to mean alone with His Son.

Tertullian likes the Scripture which says, "No man hath seen God." He equates the Father as invisible while the Son is visible. This is scripturally accurate if we are distinguishing Spirit and the human part of Christ. Tertullian insists that Father and Son are two separate persons but of one essence.

Now let's examine what Praxeas, who represented the majority belief at that time, is accused of. Unfortunately, we know very little about him. He was from Asia Minor and had spent some time in prison for his faith. He was well received at Rome by either Victor or Zephyrinus, both bishops of Rome in the late second century. He opposed Montanism and convinced the bishop of Rome to turn against that group, which Tertullian became a part of.

Tertullian says Praxeas believed that the Father Himself came down into the Virgin, was Himself born of her, Himself suffered, was Himself Jesus Christ. The only logical explanation for the incarnation is that God was manifest in the flesh. To make this one Spirit which was manifest in Christ separate from the Father is to negate the basic message of Scripture and leads to a polytheistic concept of God. The idea that the Father could not suffer because of perceived impassivity ignores all the Scriptures that identify emotion with God. To say the Father is emotionless denies plainly stated Scriptures.

It is very interesting that Tertullian equates the Oneness belief of Praxeas with Judaism. It is unfortunate that the majority of Jews rejected Jesus as their Messiah. To their credit they have held to a strong belief in One God and Praxeas and his fellow Christians were doing the same. By saying that Father, Son, and Holy Ghost were the same Person these brave Christians were maintaining the apostolic teaching of the New Testament. Jesus (Jehovah has become our salvation) came in his Father's name; the Son's name is Jesus. Jesus said He would come to us in the form of the Holy Ghost. When we receive the Holy Ghost it is described as Christ in us. Certainly, according to the New Testament the name of the Father, Son and Holy Ghost is Jesus. All the Scriptures which seem to subordinate the Son to the Father are expressing the inferiority of the human part of Christ to the Spirit of God which was in Him.