

an essay:

ON DEFENDING THE DOCTRINE OF THE HOLY TRINITY

Robert Baral
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I. A GIVEN HYPOTHETICAL PROBLEM

A respected and well known Theology Professor visiting in the Holy Land discovers what he claims is an until now unknown original letter of the Apostle Paul. Some academic journal articles label the manuscript as “The Book of 2nd Laodaceans.” The work is undoubtedly real, Pauline, and original. It fits well with all Pauline theology and writing practice. Its contents are sound, except it makes what could be argued to be a scriptural “proof” for a fourth person in the Godhead. What would you recommend be done with the document? Would your opinion change if the reference to the fourth person were not included? Why?

II. USING SIMPLE LOGIC TO REFUTE PRESUMPTIONS

”A respected and well known Theology Professor visiting in the Holy Land.” First, a good character and renowned scholarly reputation of the discoverer of such a document must not be taken as “proof” that the document is necessarily genuine. Focus must be on the document, including independent verification of circumstances surrounding the find itself, and not the one who discovered it.

“He discovers an original letter of the Apostle Paul.” Second, how do we really know this find is an “original” letter of Saint Paul? By what standards and by whom is this supposedly determined? Such a presupposition entices us to take this assertion as fact without examining the evidence itself. ”Some academic journal articles label the manuscript as “The Book of 2nd Laodaceans.”” Third, note that “some” studies make this determination, implying that other studies of the same character make other conclusions.

“The work is undoubtedly real, Pauline, and original.” Fourth, we can not take the subjective conclusions of “some” studies of this document that it is “undoubtedly” as is claimed. The very word use reveals this to be an opinion couched in language designed to sway the conclusions of others without objective academic study of the document itself. “It fits well with all Pauline theology and writing practice.” Fifth, that the document fits well with Pauline theology and writing practice is not a proof that the document itself was written by Saint Paul. Much of the Holy Bible’s New Testament was written by Saint

Paul. Quoting these Scriptures and writing in the Spirit of The Word does not thus make us all Saint Pauls.

“Its contents are sound, except it makes what could be argued to be a scriptural “proof” for a fourth person in the Godhead.” Sixth, the words “what could be argued” and “its contents are sound” in conformity with Holy Scripture are mutually exclusive. If the document’s theology is Biblically correct, then extrapolating a meaning contrary to Scripture from it is not possible. On the other hand, if the document clearly supports theology contrary to Scripture, then the document is not genuine, nor Pauline, nor “real” in the sense of a manuscript that should be accepted on the level of the unerring, completed and Divinely inspired Holy Scriptures.

“What would you recommend be done with the document? Would your opinion change if the reference to the fourth person were not included? Why?” This document of historical interest, like all such documents, deserves to be preserved and made available to the scholars and academics outside of and within The Church for further study. But regardless of how the document may or may not be interpreted, even if it were to make no reference to a “fourth person” if The GOD-head, its use and care should still be limited for such purposes only. The canon of The Bible has long since been closed. It is closed because it is perfect in its canonized form as The Word of GOD. Neither The Church, which is the custodian and not creator of Holy Writ, nor any authority consecrated by man, has the power to reopen and change the canon of The Bible in any way.

III. HOLY SCRIPTURE THE STANDARD

But the above intellectual discussion of this subject is NOT the authoritative answer to the questions raised by this “discovery.” Rather, it is The Holy Bible which Itself is The Standard that we must use to address such questions. II TIMOTHY 3:16 declares, “All Scripture is given by inspiration of GOD, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness.”¹

¹ 1, KJV, II TIMOTHY 3:16.

IV. DOCTRINE OF THE TRINITY SUPREME

The doctrine of The Trinity nature of GOD The Father, The Son and The Holy Spirit are clearly gleaned from Holy Scripture. Consider but a few examples of each from The Old Testament and The New Testament. First, consider GOD The Father: GOD The Father is revealed in the Old Testament as in ISAIAH 48:2, “For they call themselves of the holy city, and stay themselves upon The GOD of Israel; The LORD of Hosts is His Name.”² In the New Testament, Saint Matthew writes in MATTHEW 1:25, “At that time JESUS answered and said, “I thank Thee, O Father, Lord of heaven and earth...”³ Saint Paul himself writes in ROMANS 4:4, “...that like as CHRIST was raised up from the dead by the glory of The Father, even so we also should walk in newness of life.”⁴

Second, consider GOD The Son: GOD The Son is revealed in The Old Testament to us in JOB 19:25, “For I know that my Redeemer liveth, and that He shall stand at the latter day upon the earth.”⁵ In the New Testament, Saint Matthew writes in MATTHEW 11:27, “All things are delivered unto Me of My Father: and no man knoweth The Son, but The Father; neither knoweth any man The Father, save The Son...”⁶ And Saint Paul himself writes in ROMANS 1:3-4, “Concerning His Son JESUS CHRIST our Lord, Which was made of the seed of David according to the flesh: And declared to be The Son of GOD with power, according to the Spirit of holiness, by the resurrection from the dead.”⁷

Third, consider GOD The Holy Spirit: GOD The Holy Spirit is revealed to us in The Old Testament as in ISAIAH 61:1, “The Spirit of The LORD GOD is upon me; because The LOD hath anointed me to preach good tidings unto the meek...”⁸ In the New Testament we find that Saint John writes in JOHN 3:5, “JESUS answered, Verily, verily, I say unto thee, Except a man be born of water and of The Spirit, he cannot enter

² 1, KJV, ISAIAH 48:2.

³ 1, KJV, MATTHEW 1:25.

⁴ 1, KJV, ROMANS 4:4.

⁵ 1, KJV, JOB 19:25.

⁶ 1, KJV, MATTHEW 11:27.

⁷ 1, KJV, ROMANS 1:3-4.

⁸ 1, KJV, ISAIAH 61:1.

into the kingdom of GOD.”⁹ Saint Paul himself declares in ROMANS 15:19, “Through mighty signs and wonders, by the power of The Spirit of GOD; so that from Jerusalem, and round about unto Illyricum, I have fully preached the gospel of CHRIST.”¹⁰

Fourth, consider The Nicene Creed: In 325 AD, the Council of Nicea defined Christian doctrine on the nature of the GOD-head, identifying three fully equal and yet distinct Divine persons: GOD The Father, GOD The Son; GOD The Holy Ghost. In “A History of Christian Thought, Paul Tillich describes the Nicene Creed as “the fundamental Christian confession.”¹¹ The Nicene Creed itself confesses, ““We believe in one GOD The Father Almighty... And in one Lord JESUS CHRIST, the only-begotten Son of GOD, begotten of The Father before all worlds, GOD of GOD... Very GOD of Very GOD... being of one substance with The Father.. And we believe in The Holy Spirit, The Lord and Giver of Life, Who proceeded from The Father and The Son, Who with The Father and The Son together is worshipped and glorified...”¹²

V. THE BIBLE NOT TO BE ADDED TO OR SUBTRACTED FROM

The Holy Scriptures themselves in the Old Testament contain directives that they are not to be altered. In DEUTERONOMY 4:2 we read, “Ye shall not add unto the word which I command you, neither shall ye diminish ought from it, that ye may keep the commandments of The LORD your GOD which I command you.”¹³ PROVERBS 30:5-6 declares, “Every word of GOD is pure: He is a shield unto them that put their trust in Him. Add thou not unto His Words, lest He reprove thee, and thou be found a liar.”¹⁴

The Holy Scriptures themselves in the New Testament also contain similar directives that The Bible is not to be altered. So it is written by Saint Paul in II TIMOTHY 1:13, “Hold fast the form of sound words, which thou hast heard of me, in

⁹ 1, KJV, JOHN 3:5.

¹⁰ 1, KJV, ROMANS 15:19.

¹¹ 2, Tillich, A History of Christian Thought, page 71.

¹² 3, The Worship Book, United Presbyterian Church USA, The Nicene Creed.

¹³ 1, KJV, DEUTERONOMY 4:2.

¹⁴ 1, KJV, PROVERBS 30:5-6.

faith and love which is in CHRIST JESUS.”¹⁵ And Saint John records in REVELATION 22:18, “For I testify unto every man that heareth the words of the prophecy of this Book, If any man shall add unto these things, GOD shall add unto him the plagues that are written in this Book.”¹⁶

In “The Bible: A History - The Making and Impact of The Bible” by Stephen Miller and Robert Huber, we are given a brief summary of the canonization of The New Testament’s Books. In the early 200’s AD, a theologian named Origen developed a three-category list of acceptable, disputed and unreliable Christian writings then in use. Origen’s accepted and disputed lists provided the bases for the Christian New Testament canon.¹⁷ Origen’s first list of widely accepted Christian writings included “...the four Gospels we now have[MATTHEW, MARK, LUKE, JOHN], the 13 letters of Paul we now have [ROMANS, I and II CORINTHIANS, GALATIANS, EPHESIANS PHILIPPIANS, COLOSSIANS, I and II THESSALONIANS, I and II TIMOTHY, TITUS, PHILEMON], and ACTS, I PETER, I JOHN and REVELATION. On his second list, of questionable writings, were the 6 other Books that complete our New Testament: HEBREWS, JAMES, II PETER, II and III JOHN and JUDE...”¹⁸

In 313 AD, the Christianized Roman Emperor Constantine asked the theologian Eusebius - who was taught by a student of Origen - to produce fifty Bibles. Eusebius relied on Origen’s list of accepted and disputed books for a New Testament. “Laodaceans” was on none of Origen’s lists of either widely accepted or questionable lists, much less a “2nd Laodaceans.”¹⁹ In 367AD, the Bishop Athanasius sent a letter to the Churches under his care identifying the 27 books of the New Testament we find today in The Bible. Bishop Athanasius’ list of New Testament books was formally adopted as Church cannon at the Council of Hippo in 393 AD, the Council of Carthage in 397 AD and the 2nd Council of Carthage in 419 AD. Athanasius wrote of his list of New Testament Books: “These are the foundations of salvation, that they who thirst may be

¹⁵ 1, KJV, II TIMOTHY 1:13.

¹⁶ 1, KJV, REVELATION 22:18.

¹⁷ 4, Miller and Huber, The Bible – A History, Settling The New Testament, page 94.

¹⁸ 4, Ibid.

satisfied with the living words they contain. In these alone is proclaimed the doctrine of godliness. Let no one add to or take anything from them.”²⁰ Neither was there any Book of Laodaceans in Bishop Athanasius’ list of New Testament Books.

VI. HERETICAL DOCTRINE CONTRARY TO HOLY SCRIPTURE TO BE AVOIDED

Any interpretation “that could be argued” from any source that there is a fourth member of The Godhead is heretical error which is not of The LORD. Neither is any such proposition to be even considered by the faithful Church –the custodian of The closed canon of GOD’s Word – which is inspired by His Spirit and thus exactly as He would have It. Nor is the faithful Christian man or woman to entertain any such blasphemy that would change, take away from, or add to The Holy Bible. Rather, let the faithful Church and Christian be on guard against such apostasy, for we have been warned as by Saint Peter of such assaults upon the integrity of GOD’s Word in II PETER 2:1, “But there were false prophets also among the people, even as there shall be false teachers among you, who privily shall bring in damnable heresies, even denying The Lord that bought them and bring upon themselves swift destruction.”²¹

VII. CONCLUSIONS

In conclusion, canonization of Holy Scripture is closed. Since the Church Council of Nicea in 325 AD, Divine Revelation in the form of Holy Scripture has been at an end. Interpretation of the given hypothetical document and any subsequent doctrines must be guided by established and accepted canonized Holy Scripture. To do otherwise is to promote heresy within Christianity.

¹⁹ 4, Miller and Huber, *The Bible – A History, Settling The New Testament*, page 94.

²⁰ 4, *Ibid.*, page 97.

²¹ 1, KJV, II PETER 2:1.

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4. The Bible: A History - The Making and Impact of The Bible. Stephen M. Miller & Robert V. Huber. Good Books. Intercourse, Pennsylvania. 2004.