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John Reeve
Andrews University, jreeve@andrews.edu

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Memory, Meaning & Faith

April 09, 2010

The Savior Is God

My last post overviewed the development of the doctrine of the Trinity, both in the early Christian centuries and in the Seventh-day Adventist Church, and then addressed the paradox of three in one. I also suggested that there are soteriological ramifications of God being three persons with one nature. One of those ramifications is that our salvation is secured by the very God who is the creator and sustainer of all.

Jesus, The Word

In John 1 we have a description of Jesus Christ as the Logos (Word). This Word is described as both creator and God (John 1:1-3). As such, he is also the all powerful ruler of the universe. (See Titus 2:11-14 and Romans 9:5, where Paul describes Christ as "our great God" and "eternally blessed God"). Most Adventists would be familiar with the description in *Patriarchs and Prophets* p. 34, where Ellen White describes Jesus Christ as "one in nature, character, and purpose" with God the Father.

John 1 goes on to describe that nature and character of God as life and light (vss. 4, 5), emphasizing that the Word is the source of both eternal life and eternal truth. In verse 14, John says that this "Word became flesh and dwelt among us," summarizing the Christmas story where the great, eternal God becomes a helpless child. Growing and becoming aware of his mission as Messiah, he carries on a public ministry for some three years while preaching the kingdom of God and preparing his disciples for his death. Then he died. He died as a sacrifice, the passover lamb, the suffering servant by whose stripes we are healed (Isaiah 53, especially vss. 5-10). However, he did not stay dead! As he said, "I have authority to lay down [my life] and authority to take it up again" (John 10:14-17). This brings to mind that oft-quoted passage of Ellen White in *The Desire of Ages*, p. 530, "In Christ is life, original, unborrowed, underived . . . . The divinity of Christ is the believer's assurance of eternal life."

I cannot but honor such a God.

The Divinity Of Christ Illustrated

Now I want to introduce a series of disparate ideas that will illustrate the main point of this post.

A few years back I worked with an abused six-year old who had a lot of street smarts. He had almost zero trust in anyone and, quite frankly, most of the people close to him in his first six years had earned that level of trust. He had developed an unconscious but simple survival technique that worked well in most social situations. When he came into any gathering of humans he would instantly identify the biggest and meanest-looking male and then rush over and make friends with him. This brought a semblance of immediate security that would last until the gathering dispersed—unless, of course, the mean-looking guy turned out to be mean.

Plato, along with many other ancient Greeks, had at least one basic concept about God that the scriptural picture of God substantiates: The One is *good.* As I describe in chapter eight of the book, *The Trinity*, many of the philosophically elite Greeks conceived of an ultimate, transcendent Monad (One). However, some thought this Monad originated the material kosmos (universe), but has no direct converse with it. Unlike Scripture's God, this transcendent One is too disconnected to be

helpfully good in any practical sense.

Irenaeus, Bishop of Lyon in the late 2nd century AD, argued (as in the quote I posted Wednesday) that the Savior had to be truly God and truly human in order to bridge the broken relationship between God and humans brought about by sin. I like to illustrate this concept by picturing a bridge reaching across a canyon. If the bridge does not actually reach all the way to either side, it is not useful for interaction between the sides.

Characteristics Of God The Son

These three disparate paragraphs come to unity as illustrations of three characteristics of God the Son in his role as Savior. (1) He is the Almighty, (2) who loves us and (3) is himself the bridge of salvation connecting us humans back to God. It is as true God that he accomplishes our salvation. If he were less than fully divine his ability to save would be diminished. *To view him as less than fully divine diminishes our ability to comprehend and enjoy his work of salvation.*

The big, mean saviors of my six-year old friend will never match the might of the Almighty, let alone the goodness. The security provided by our Savior will never fade. Plato's transcendent Monad would never become flesh and dwell among us, let alone die for us. Though viewed as good, Plato's One would never be described as loving. As John 15:13 declares, "no one has greater love than this, that he would lay down his life for his friends."

I cannot but love such a God.

Posted by John W. Reeve on April 09, 2010 in Biblical Backgrounds, Church History | Permalink

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