The Biblical Unitarian Podcast - by Dustin Smith, PhD

Episode 281–"Exploring the Triad in 1 Cor 12:4-6"

"The podcast that aims to start conversations about the oneness and unity of God and about the humanity of Jesus."

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Introduction

This week's episode will continue our new series that seeks to explore and better understand the various passages in the NT where a triad appears, usually in the form of God, Jesus, and the Holy Spirit.

Some think this is 1st-century evidence of the doctrine of the Trinity.

Others note the historical anachronism and reject that such an interpretation is even possible.

Over the last two weeks, we have examined two of the most famous triads in the NT. We observed that the doctrine of the Trinity as formulated in the 4th and 5th centuries was completely unknown to both Matthew and the Apostle Paul. Both of these authors were unitary monotheists, understanding that the true God is a single person and that Jesus was the son of this one God. Therefore, what did the triadic reference in 1 Corinthians means for Paul's original audience?

Let's find out on this week's episode of the Biblical Unitarian Podcast!

1. **The Triad in the First Letter to the Corinthians**

a. *Now there are varieties of gifts, but the same Spirit. And there are varieties of ministries, and the same Lord. There are varieties of effects, but the same God who works all things in all persons*. (1 Cor 12:4-6)
    i. The refrain "the same" indicates that while there is diversity in the body of Christ (or in Paul's case, in the community of believers at Corinth), they are empowered and gifted by the same Spirit. While they differ in their positions of ministry, they serve the same Lord (Jesus, not Caesar btw). Corinth was a Roman colony, so we always have to keep in mind that Paul's emphasis on the lordship of Jesus is subverting the lordship of the Lord ruling from Rome.
    ii. God is the one who works (indicating that this God is a single person) all things in all persons. This God is the source.
    iii. Remember that the Trinity teaches that the one God consists of three persons, Father, Son, and Spirit. However, Paul talks about the one God, the Lord Jesus, and the Spirit. This isn't even the Trinity's own definition of the 3 persons. It distinguishes Jesus from God, meaning Jesus isn't God, and it refers to God as the one who works all these things, making him the source.
    iv. What other clues about God, Jesus, and the Spirit might we gather from exploring 1 Corinthians as a whole, thus allowing us to place 1 Cor 12:4-6 in its context?

2. What 1 Corinthians Teaches about God

a. *God is faithful, through whom you were called into fellowship with His Son, Jesus Christ our Lord*. (1:9)
    i. If Jesus is God's son ("his son", then God must be the Father alone.
    ii. "His" indicates that God is a single person
b. *and you belong to Christ; and Christ belongs to God.* (3:23)
c. *Therefore concerning the eating of things sacrificed to idols, we know that there is no such thing as an idol in the world, and that there is no God but one.* (8:4)
    i. ὅτι οὐδεὶς θεὸς εἰ μὴ εἷς - "there is noone who is God except one person
d. *yet for us there is but one God, the Father, from whom are all things and we exist for Him* (8:6)
e. *But I want you to understand that Christ is the head of every man, and the man is the head of a woman, and God is the head of Christ.* (11:3)

3. What 1 Corinthians Teaches about the Son

a. *but to those who are the called, both Jews and Greeks, Christ the power of God and the wisdom of God*. (1:24)
b. *But by His doing you are in Christ Jesus, who became to us wisdom from God* (1:30)
c. *For I delivered to you as of first importance what I also received, that Christ died for our sins according to the Scriptures, and that He was buried, and that He was raised on the third day according to the Scriptures, and that He appeared to Cephas, then to the twelve.* (15:3-5)
d. *For since by a man came death, by a man also came the resurrection of the dead. For as in Adam all die, so also in Christ all will be made alive*. (15:21-22)
e. *When all things are subjected to Him, then the Son Himself also will be subjected to the One who subjected all things to Him, so that God may be all in all*. (15:28)

4. What 1 Corinthians Teaches about the Spirit

a. *my message and my preaching were not in persuasive words of wisdom, but in demonstration of the Spirit and of power* (2:4)
b. For who among men knows the thoughts of a man except the spirit of the man which is in him? Even so the thoughts of God no one knows except the Spirit of God. (2:11)
c. *Do you not know that you are a temple of God and that the Spirit of God dwells in you?* (3:16)
    i. Cf. Exod 40; 1 Kings 8; Ezek 10-11
d. *But one and the same Spirit works all these things, distributing to each one individually just as He wills.* (12:11)
    i. Boulomai
    ii. Paul, called as an apostle of Jesus Christ <u>by the will of God</u> (1:1)

5. Conclusion

a. God is the Father alone, the only one who is God, a single person. God is the head of Christ. God raised Jesus from the dead.
b. Jesus is a human being, the antitype of the first human, Adam. Jesus is mortal, indicating by his death. God had to raise Jesus from the dead. Jesus is frequently distinguished from God. The role and characteristics of God's personified wisdom are often applied to the risen Jesus, meaning that Jesus is now the true locus of God's wise activity among his creation.
c. The Spirit is the extended power of God. The Spirit belongs to God, its not a distinct person alongside God. The Spirit is also the extended presence of God,

formerly in the tabernacle and temple but now present among the temple of believers. The Spirit also manifests charismatic gifts in the Corinthian community, demonstrating that the age to come has broken into the present in the lives of God's new creation people.

d. 1 Cor 12:4-6 is not a reference to the Triune God.

Thanks for listening to this week's episode!

Join us next week as we continue to explore the triadic statements in the NT, passages that talk about God, Jesus, and the Spirit. Next week we will look closely at *2 Cor 13:14, where God, Jesus, and the Spirit are again mentioned together as Paul brings 2 Corinthians to a close.*

Please look forward to our next episode.

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Producer and Editor: Dustin Williams | Host: Dustin Smith