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Steven Ritchie · Nov 15, 2016 · 18 min read

The Trinitarian Dilemma of Three God Wills, John 6:38



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From my email correspondence with Trinitarian apologist Luis Carlos Reyes

“For I have come down from heaven, not to do my own will, but the will of Him who sent Me.” John 6:38

If the Trinitarian view of John 6:38 was correct, then how could a coequally distinct pre-incarnate God the Son's will have been a distinct God will before the incarnation? Can a coequal God will ever have the capacity to be at odds with another coequal God will? For if there are really three distinct God wills of three coequally distinct God Persons, then each alleged divine will would have the ability to think with an independent God Mind, an independent God Will, and an independent God consciousness. Thus, the Trinitarian view has three self-existing God's with each God Person possessing His own distinct Mind, Will, and Consciousness rather than only One true God with One Divine Mind, Will, and Consciousness.

You ignored my comments in which I pointed out that God as God cannot have two or three divine minds or wills. If your argument held any weight, then you would not be afraid to answer in the affirmative regarding John 6:38 relating to a God the Son coming down from heaven, not to do His own alleged coequal Divine Will, but only the only the Divine Will of Him who sent Him, namely the Father. Even the New Testament proves that there is only One Divine Will of the Father, and only one human will of the Son. So where is the alleged Trinity of three God Minds and three God wills in scripture?

“I can do nothing by Myself; I judge only as I hear. And My judgment is just, because I do not seek my own will, but the will of Him who sent me (John 5:30).”

While there is no other passage with the precise words of Christ in John 6:38, we do find other passages proving that the Son had only one human will. For example, John 5:30 informs us that that the Son as the Son can do nothing by himself because there is only one human will in Christ. It is obvious that the human will of Christ sought to do the Divine Will “of Him” who “sent” him, namely the Father.

Why There Cannot be 3 Distinct God Wills of a 3 Person Deity

1. The Bible never informs us that God as God has more than one divine mind, more than one divine will, or more than one divine consciousness.
2. The Bible informs us that the Father is the divine mind, will, and consciousness of only One true God, whilst the human mind, will, and consciousness of the Son had the capacity to be in disagreement with the divine will because the human child born and son given was made "fully human in every way" (*Heb. 2:17 NIV*).
3. When the man Christ Jesus said that he came "not to do my own will (a human will), but the will of Him who sent me (the divine will)," he proved that his will as a Son had the potential to be in conflict with the Father's divine will. If the Son's will was a distinct divine God will number two, then a coequal God Persons' will would have the capacity to be out of harmony with God will number one. For why would an alleged Heavenly God the Son come down from heaven, not to do His own distinct God will, but only the distinct God will of Him who sent Him if there was no potential for God to ever be in disagreement with Himself? If God could ever disagree with Himself there would be confusion and disarray in the Universe.
4. If God has three divine minds, three divine wills, and more than one divine personal self-consciousness, then God could no longer be One God (Monotheism), but would have to be three God's (Tri-Theism).

After pointing out these facts to Trinitarian apologist Luis Reyes, Mr. Reyes responded, "I am not saying that I agree or disagree what you are saying here, but the reason I point this comment out is because of the attitude it displays on your part. It's very interesting how often Oneness advocates confidently declare that God is an omnipotent being, that he is so omnipotent that he is even capable of speaking from Heaven and yet also capable of being literally incarnated in the Son at the same time (e.g. Luke 3:22), but yet when a Trinitarian says something about the same omnipotent God, all of a sudden that God is no longer 'omnipotent enough' to do other things. Clearly, there is a very apparent bias at work here with the Oneness folks, and the notion and presupposition reflected here on your part is that God is only omnipotent enough to do things as a Unitarian God, but he is not omnipotent enough to do things as a Trinitarian God. This mentally never ceases to amaze me, and clearly reflects the level of bias that I frequently encounter among many anti-Trinitarians."

ONENESS RESPONSE:

We agree that God's omnipotence allows Him to be able to do anything. However, God as God can never speak or do anything which conflicts with Himself.

Here are a few examples of things that God cannot do:

1. God as God can never have the capacity to be in disagreement with Himself, as two distinct Divine Wills would have the potential to be in disagreement.
2. God's word can never conflict with what He has already said or promised.
3. God as God can never change by losing any of His Divine attributes.
4. God can never change by ever violating His righteous and holy character.

I agree that we must not base our exegesis of scripture based upon what sounds right to our finite human minds. I was pointing out the fact that the Trinitarian idea that God has two and three God wills "sounds worse" than the Oneness model because the Trinitarian model is completely unscriptural. While the Oneness model of the Father becoming incarnate as a true human son sounds hard to believe within our finite human logic, at least our view brings harmony to all of the scriptural data.

I had asked you this question, "Please answer this QUESTION: Do you believe that a coequally divine God will (a will is the same thing as a consciousness) could pray and be tempted as divine will number two? Or does it not make more sense to believe that the human will (the human consciousness) of Christ was the one who could pray and be tempted?"

When I had asked, "does it make more sense to believe," I was asking what makes more sense in light of all of the scriptural data rather than what makes sense to our finite human reasoning.

Mr. Reyes answered,

"No, I do not believe that a coequally divine God will could be tempted or pray, unless (here is the key for me) that coequally divine God was both Deity and human simultaneously. In that case **God (as the Son), would be able to experience temptation and pray**, not as God the Son (prior to the incarnation), but as God the Son as the God-Man, experiencing it through his human nature."

ONENESS RESPONSE:

The Oneness model also believes that God (as the Son) was able to experience temptation and pray, but not as God prior to the incarnation. Your only problem here is that you are saying that the Son was a God the Son prior to the incarnation without a single scripture to justify such a position. I understand your post incarnational answer, but how about the pre-incarnational God will of your alleged coequal God the Son? Your answer ignores the major part of my prior comments on John 6:38. For you alleged that a pre-incarnate God the Son had a distinct Son

will in heaven prior to having a Son will on the earth. How then can a coequal God will in heaven have come not to do His own divine God will, but the divine God will of the Father while remaining a coequal God Person (Mr. Reyes never responded)?

Mr. Reyes asked, “Do you believe that a Oneness Divine God ‘will’ could pray and be tempted?” You would say, prior to the incarnation ‘no’ (unless you believe otherwise?), after the incarnation, ‘yes,’ as the ‘God-man’ being one person...”

ONENESS RESPONSE:

We do not believe that God as God can pray or be tempted either before or after the incarnation! Only Trinitarians believe that the Son as the Son can have a distinct “God will” apart from the Father.

Origen was the first to use the title, “God man” which both Oneness and Trinitarians have subsequently employed (“... *the God-man is born.*” *Origen, De Principiis, Book II, Chapter VI. On the Incarnation of the Christ*). Although we believe that the man Christ Jesus is “God with us” as a true man, I strongly dislike the use of “God man” because the humanity of the man Christ Jesus is ontologically distinct from the Father. Since God as God is not ontologically a man (*Numbers 23:19*), we know that the Son of God is not ontologically God with us as God, but rather, the Son of God is ontologically God with us as a man (*Heb. 2:17*).

No, we do not believe in a Nestorian view of the incarnation because God became a single man in the incarnation through the virgin. The Son of God could not have been split into two persons with two minds and two conscious centers of self-awareness. The Son of God clearly spoke with only one human mind, one human will, and one human consciousness. However, the Son of God sometimes spoke through his divine awareness as God (*John 8:58*) which he had received only through divine revelation (*Mark 13:32; John 8:28*).

Mr. Reyes responded, “While I have the divine Son as the God-man (two natures but one person) speaking to the Father after the incarnation, you instead have the divine Father acting as some kind of divine ventriloquist, for he is supposed to be incarnated in the Son, and yet Peter hears the Father’s voice come out from heaven (*2 Pet. 1:17-18*), and then out of nowhere he supposedly hears the same Father’s voice now coming out of the Son (*Matt. 17:7*)?”

ONENESS RESPONSE:

2 Peter 1:17-18 gives the account of the Father saying, “This is my beloved Son in whom I am well pleased,” but Matthew 17:7 - gives us the post incarnational words of God with us as a fully complete human son. Hence, you have ignored the incarnation in which God as God also became God with us as a true man who “grew in wisdom” (*Luke 2:52*) and did not know all things (*Mark 13:32*).

Most Trinitarian theologians believe that the Son never lost his divine attributes in the heavens while he simultaneously became a man down on earth. In that case, the alleged Heavenly Son would be able to act and speak in heaven, while the earthly son would have been able to simultaneously act and speak on the earth as a man. This also sounds like ventriloquism as an alleged Heavenly God the Son would be able to act and speak in the heavens (in multiple places and at multiple times all at once) while acting and speaking differently on earth within the confines of a human mind, will, and nature.

I agreed with your statement earlier that we cannot use finite human logic to form our own interpretations of scripture. The omnipresent God does not have to be a ventriloquist to be able to speak as God in the heavens while simultaneously speaking as a true man on the earth after God “partook of flesh and blood” (*Heb. 2:14*) to be made “fully human in every way” (*Heb. 2:17 NIV*). While these things are impossible with men, they are certainly not impossible with the omnipresent God who fills heaven and earth.

No matter how we try to explain it, the incarnation necessitates a divine will of the God Person (our positions says the Father) who remained unchangeable in the heavens with all of His divine attributes intact (*Mal. 3:6; Heb. 13:8*), while a portion of His own “substance of Being” assumed a new human will (*Heb. 1:3*) when he became “fully human in every way” (*Heb. 2:17 NIV*) within the virgin.

Mr. Reyes responded, “What’s this notion you mention here about “a portion of His own ‘substance of Being’ assumed a new human will when he became ‘fully human in every way’?” Oneness people, for over 30 years have been constantly telling me that **ALL THE FULLNESS OF THE DEITY, and of the substance of his Father’s being as Deity** (*Col. 2:9*) **fully incarnated himself in the humanity**, not “a portion of his substance of being” as you say here. So then, are you saying that the Deity of the Father incarnate in the Son was not **ALL THE FULLNESS OF THE DEITY** and the **full substance of the being of the Father in human flesh**? Is this what you are saying now?”

ONENESS RESPONSE:

Hebrews 1:3 clearly proves that a portion of the Father’s omnipresent substance of Being was reproduced as the “express image of His Person” (the Father’s Person – Heb. 1:3) to become a fully complete man person. For God as God could never completely leave heaven to be “reproduced” (“*charakter*” in Heb. 1:3 means “copy” or “reproduction” from an original “*hypostasis*” = “substance of Being”) as a man child in violation of Malachi 3:6 and Hebrews 13:8. Could ALL of the Father’s “substance of Being” have left heaven to be in Christ Jesus? Certainly not! If that were the case, then the Father’s Holy Spirit would have had to vacate heaven to be all the fullness of the deity in Christ Jesus. While “all of the fullness of the divinity” (the Father’s Divine Person – *Col. 2:9*) was in Christ, we are not to think that this means that the substance of the Father’s Being was not also simultaneously present in the heavens.

Hebrews 1:3 informs us that God’s substance of Being was “reproduced,” “imprinted,” or “copied” (*the definition of the Greek word “charakter”*) within the virgin from the Father’s “substance of Being.” How else could God become a man if He did not reproduce His essence of Being to become a fully complete human being within the virgin? If all of the Father’s Essence of Being had been “reproduced” or “copied” within the incarnation, the Father would have completely ceased being the Father outside of the incarnation. That is why I said

that a portion of the Father's substance of Being was reproduced to become a man via His own Holy Spirit who descended upon the virgin (*Luke 1:35*) rather than all of God's substance of Being in the heavens being reproduced.

I affirm that "all of the fullness of the divinity" (*Colossians 2:9*) of the Father's Being/Person was in Christ because the Father's fullness of His Divine Person also became a fully complete human person (*Heb. 1:3*) in the incarnation. However, we are not to think that "all the fullness" of the divinity could ever be in one location in Christ just as all of the oceans of the earth could never fill a single lake. Thus, scripture proves that all of heaven is God's throne (*Isaiah 66:1* - "heaven is my throne") and "the heaven of heavens cannot contain Him" (*2 Chronicles 2:6* - "... who is able to build him a house, seeing the heaven and heaven of heavens cannot contain him?"). Wherefore, there has to be a distinction between God's substance of Being (the Holy Spirit) of the Father outside of the incarnation and the reproduced copy of that same substance of Being (the Holy Spirit - *Matthew 1:20*, "the Child who has been conceived in her is out of the Holy Spirit") who also became a limited man within the incarnation (*When God became a man, the Son was "made:" Acts 2:36*, "God has made him" - the son; *Heb. 2:17* "made like unto his brethren"; *Gal. 4:4*, "made of a woman, made under the law").

Mr. Reyes replied, "This is now a form of Arianism, and flat out polytheism, because you now have two gods! You have (1) a FULL "portion" God (the Father) who "reproduced" or as you said elsewhere, made an exact "copy" of his very substance and being, and then you have (2) the copied substance of his being. You cannot have a copy of anything and not have TWO items involved ..."

ONENESS RESPONSE:

No, we do not have "two gods." That is what we think of the Trinitarian and Arian positions. We have One God the Father who also became a man as the child born and son given. The Arian model presents a pre-incarnate angelic reproduction in heaven before the vir