

On the Didache and baptism

Also dealing with doctrinal issues in early Christianity and how God was declared by two rival traditions

The Didache is definitely that early document that had come forth with a new baptism (Math. 28.19) and this baptism clearly challenged the first-century baptism in the Name of Jesus/Yeshua (Acts 2.38).

The Didache baptism represents the dogmatic stance of a tradition that did not proceed in the footsteps of the apostles of Jesus but it indeed was propagated by a sect that had joined the apostles but which later again severed ties with them. We have ample evidence of such a rival sect and which can truly be regarded as the forerunners of the post-apostolic scene.

Should we then want to keep the triune baptism, and especially the Trinitarian perspective in place, we will reason in line with the Didache for those who were part and parcel of this tradition were bent on reasoning the Name of our one and only Saviour, through whose shed blood salvation can only be had, clean out of the baptismal ritual (Acts 4.12; 1 Cor. 6.11; Jn 5.13).

We can gather from 1 Jn 5.13 that the apostle John addressed those who believed (!) in the Name of Jesus. There were then indeed apostate sects who had left the apostles' flock and who would have denied this Name and especially in baptism. It seems that for this very reason the apostle Paul had stressed one Lord, and one baptism (Eph. 4.5). Those die-hards who don't want to give credit and permanence to Peter's baptism (Acts 2.38), may perhaps, for their own sakes, read Acts 20.17+, and just to see that Ephesus was indeed a fertile area in which soil the seeds of apostasy were well represented.

Fact is, we will only be able to reason the Name of Jesus out of baptism if we should naively believe that we must have the triune concept of "Father, Son and Spirit" combined in baptism - a stance clearly adopted by those sects who had severed ties with the apostles of Jesus and who had then paved the way for this type of reasoning.

Note that the Apostle John who was the last apostle, must then have been able to see the development of the false sects clearly, namely those propagators who were out to defy the apostle's teachings - something we can indeed detect in the three pastoral letters of John and especially in the third letter. (It is no wonder that these letters, especially 2 and 3 are not always acknowledged as "apostolic". They were, seemingly, also written after the schism or in the throes thereof).

Note also that the Didache's dating is arbitrary - based on opinion, however, not totally and dating of early/ancient documents are therefore approximate, i.e. within a period of time**. I myself place the Didache in the first century as Clement I was still in the picture - regarding the Holy Spirit seemingly as the "third person" or at least as a person - and he must then also have been part and parcel of those who had initially joined the apostles only to later again have severed ties with them (Consult Paul, Peter and John on rival, apostate sects).

Should we therefore be bent on following in the footsteps of the post-apostolic church propagators, we will of course reason that we must have the trinity well represented in baptism and then in accordance with Math. 28.19 - a later baptismal formula if we retain objectivity! However, should we understand that Jesus/Yeshua brought redemption on the Cross and that we have to go through Him to the Father, we will be able to understand 1 Jn 5.11: "God has also said that He gave us eternal life and that this life comes to us (=the sinners who were saved by Jesus, 1 Tim. 1.15) from His Son."

Baptism and eternal life are clearly interconnected and therefore Paul's very sound teaching on this very issue to the Romans (4.5).

Without the Cross there is indeed no salvation! And without the blood of Jesus tying us intrinsically to the Throne of God the Father, we will be forever alienated from God Most High. It is indeed then the Father who appointed the Son, also vesting authority in the Name of His Son for the Name is the seal of God's approval on our testimony (Phil. 2.7-9). Also consult the apostle John's first pastoral letter on this very issue.

The Trinitarians will seemingly forever propagate the post-apostolic stance, namely that "all three persons in the Godhead" must be represented in baptism (Math 28.19 a follow-up baptism and rightly correlating with the Didache - an Essene tradition and therefore rejecting the apostolic Name of Jesus/Yeshua as the Holy Spirit-filled Peter indeed had brought it to the world (Acts 2.38) - believing of course that Peter's baptism is a "Unitarian" baptism* which should then be rejected

Now, I would not call myself a "Unitarian" (Oneness) - if we should begin to reason on the Godhead it is generally accepted that there are only two opposites in place, however, there are indeed more than just two rival doctrines, i.e. when it comes to finer theological/dogmatic details. I do believe in the Son of God made flesh and who is also still the only Son of God in the heavens and because I believe the aforementioned, I especially believe in the power God the Father had vested in the Name of Jesus in baptism (=under the New Covenant).

It would indeed serve no purpose to constantly quote from the viewpoints of the catholic theologians/or other traditional spokespersons, i.e. pertaining to their type of reasoning on especially the necessity of combining the triune persons in baptism. These are all prototypes of one and the same main traditional thought, all eventually following in the Didache tradition. It should also be clear from what has thusfar come to light. i.e. concerning this so-called "apostolic" document, that what is stated concerning baptism, is indeed not in accordance with the first-century apostolic tradition.

So the Didache definitely substantiates Math. 28.19 whereas the Acts of the Apostles - an authentic first-century apostolic letter! - does not. And this is the crux.

If we truly believe that Christ Jesus is the only bridge between God the Father and mankind, we will definitely understand that we are only saved through His (the Son's) shed blood and we will then bide by Peter's Upper Room command: Be baptized in the Name of Jesus for the remission of your sins! And this baptism, done in the Name of Jesus, indeed carries the approval of God the Father (Col. 3.17).

The problem with the Trinitarians is that they are not pliable in God's hands and for this very reason they do not want to objectify the Scriptures properly. And I am here concerning myself with baptism and not so much with the declaration of the Trinitarian dogma - which can of course be reasoned but it cannot be dealt with here properly.

It seems those who lay claim to "truth" will forever see their own type of reasoning as "only" and "optimal" truth. So let's objectify at least the precious baptism in the Name of the Son and so that we can bring proper glory to God the Father who had sent His Son into the world to save sinners! (Paul). Note Peter's direct command: Be baptized for the remission of sins - tying in with 1 Tim. 1.15 : Jesus Christ the Messiah (Yeshua HaMaschiach) the one and only authentic Saviour, came to save sinners.

So, believe in the teachings of the first-century apostles of Jesus/Yeshua for they were the faithful who paved the way for us to believe in the only true God in and through Jesus Christ, His precious and only Son, who is indeed the Way, the Truth and the Life (Jn 14.6) - and if He is indeed the Way, the first-century Church's alliance with Jesus of Nazareth, then why sidestep Him in baptism as the apostate sects rightly had done?

By the way, did you know that the Didache was at a stage in early Christian history grouped along with the Gospel of Matthew? It is then no wonder that we are still sitting with all kinds of inane reasoning and just to impose the very baptismal tradition that is clearly not in accordance with the first-century apostolic church's practices! (=a threefold/triune baptism).

The BIG question is: Is Christianity about who wins (acting in accordance with a majority ruling) or is it about who anchors his/her faith in the one and only Saviour - to the glory of God the Father of course! (Col. 3.17; Acts 4.12).

(Revised on 2014/09/29)

*It seems the label "Unitarian" is not appropriate as "Oneness" is preferred nowadays. On Clemens I : his letters can be consulted and he is mentioned in Paul's Letter to the Philippians (4.3) - he was, at the time of the writing of this letter, clearly still part of the apostolic assemblies but he too must have been part of the later schism. He is regarded as the third Pope and he clearly shows Essene leniencies.
** Sometimes the Didache has a later dating (fourth century) and sometimes an earlier one. There is indeed scientific ways of dating documents, however, not meaning that dating is then precise/exact. It is therefore necessary to also consider the various phases of development in early Christianity. It is also appropriate to mention here that it is said that Clement I regarded himself as the apostle for the Corinthians, an assumption that was clearly pushing Paul on the periphery as Paul was that very apostle who had planted the faith in Corinth and who, for this very reason, was regarded as the "father" of the very important Corinthian Church.

Added on 2014/09/30: Research done by F.C. Conybeare:

Great research was done by the abovementioned academic although he is sometimes criticized by those in favour of the Trinitarian formula in baptism (Math. 28.19). Now, according to my own research I am a supporter of Conybeare's findings and I have therefore decided to share the following excellent link on Google -

<http://www.godglorified.com/F.C.%20Conybeare.htm>

(A Doctrinal Modification of a text of the Gospel) If the link does not work kindly cut and paste the URL in the browser.

Those interested are advised to read this excellent viewpoint of a grand scholar, F.C. Conybeare, on the controversial Math. 28.19. I would like to add here that in my opinion (that is according to my own research work on the early Church) Math. 28.19 was indeed added to this Gospel but I strongly feel that two main branches arose within the bosom of early Christianity and that the Trinitarian baptism was especially cherished/promoted by the Hellenistic Church and that because we don't have the earliest mss and indeed the apostolic autographs anymore at our disposal, proper comparisons cannot be made and we must therefore rely on later copies and of necessity then also on opinions based on altered (!) copies (=with Math. 28.19 in mind). Two branches, the one pertaining to the Hebrews, the other to the Greek-speaking Christians (the Hellenists) are detected in Acts 6 - but the two also co-operated meaning that both would have been affected by later developments. There was a remarkable vision I'd like to also refer to, received by a servant of God in 1973, namely that the "baptism in the Name of the Father, Son and the Holy Spirit was added to the portions of the Holy Scriptures in 53 A.D." (Arie R.J Blomerus - 1910-1997). The Lord showed him that this discovery was going to be made in the near future (The vision has been dealt with in the following book, Two Baptismal Commands, the Road to Confusion by Ester Blomerus who was, at the time, independently busy with a research work, i.e. on the interpolation of Math. 28.19).

The apostle Paul mentions in his Letter to the Romans that "they" will exchange the truth for a lie (the lie)'. Now, in Conybeare's article (see the aforementioned link) there is a reference to Pope Stephen. This Pope was a martyr and he was also baptized in the Name of Jesus. It then seems that there was still in his day and age at least a portion of the Christians who still baptized in the Name of Jesus - keep in mind the two branches previously referred to. This Acts of the Apostles baptism was discarded and today many scholars, regardless of what has already come to light, still propagate that Math. 28.19 was a baptism that was not only validating infant baptism, but that it indeed was with the apostles right from the beginning of Christendom which stance of course

does not ring true else Peter, Jesus' chosen apostle who was appointed as the first leader of the Church in Jerusalem (Acts 2) - and by Jesus himself - would have announced the Trinitarian baptism recorded in Math. 28.19 on Pentecost Day in stead of the baptism in the Name of Messiah/the Christ.

However, we have good reason to believe that the Essene triune baptism was indeed well in place before Jesus had begun with his teachings and mission. So, reasoning that two baptismal formulae had simultaneously been in operation does not ring true.

So do read this article, keeping in mind that 1 Jn 5.7 has already been removed from the majority of translations (there are three that bear witness in heaven, the Father, the Word and the holy Spirit." The former was clearly a Latin tradition added to also (!) the Johannine pastoral letter (!). Note that the Arles Convention (or Synod) condemned the baptism in Jesus' Name as a heresy in 314 A.D. Also especially note the fate of the Celtic Church (see article under discussion). There had then been quite a lengthy period of wrangling about the baptism and what is discussed in the linked article is indeed worth taking note of.

For more on Pope Stephen and his particular way of mentioning Christ in baptism, see the following Google link:

<http://www.cathinfo.com/index.php/Pope-Stephen-I-on-Baptism>

There was indeed a time in the early post-apostolic church that the name of Jesus was mentioned along with the Trinity (Math. 28.10). However it is said that Stephen I was baptized in Jesus Name, yet seemingly in the aforementioned way.

The following comments by Ester were added to this article done on 2014/10/02

I also just want to point out that it is often said that the Mormons baptize in Jesus Name. However, I have done some research on the internet stating that they too are baptizing their members in the Name of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit (Math. 28.19), a baptism which is on the whole practised by mainstream Christendom. The Catholics state in their baptismal formula, "..... for Christ said we must be baptized in his Name..." adding this wording to the triune persons (Math. 28.19) but this addition seems to have been the consequence of the baptismal debate in earlier post-apostolic times (!). From my own research the two branches (the Hebrews and the Greek speaking Jews, Acts 6) reverted on the whole to the triune baptism after the schism) excepting of course those who kept faithful to the Apostles' doctrine and who persevered in Acts 2.38 up to that stage when the baptism in Jesus Name was declared a heresy (Arles, 314).

However, even after this date the wrangling went on up until round about the fifth/sixth century (A.D.). We must keep in mind that the "Nazarenes" comprised many sects and what Epiphanius then had reported about them was at a stage when this type of diversity was well in place (fourth/fifth century). And the basic two branches, the Hebrews and the Hellenist Jews, would indeed have had their particular dogmatic differences but they, on the whole, stuck to Math. 28.19 in baptism and of course proving to them belief in a trinity.

It seems that Eusebius of Caesarea, having been well acquainted with the early Church's baptismal practice (in Jesus Name) also having had access to earlier documents via the library he had inherited from Pamphilus, and as it appears before him belonging to Origen, would indeed have been reluctant to consent to Nicene prescriptions on baptism - having the Trinitarian viewpoint confirmed would naturally have promoted Math. 28.19 although the battle went on after Nicaea, i.e. between the Trinitarians and the Arians/Semi-Arians.

So let us retain objectivity in stead of naively overlooking the complete whole, i.e. concerning Math. 28.19. The former baptism clearly speaks of a well contemplated formula and which Gospel could better have served this purpose than Matthew's as Matthew's Gospel was clearly the first of all the Gospels - keeping of course in mind too that Matthew's Gospel, as we know it today, in return had its own particular history of development and of course pertaining to the Gospel according to the Hebrews, the Sayings of Jesus, the Q source, etcetera.

Additions to the text could then indeed have been made, just as Conybeare maintained as well as McGiffert. (It is sometimes just as though the Trinitarians are constantly overlooking the real history and all the environmental influences surrounding Matthew's Gospel). So be careful how you approach translators' comments. It is easy to make assumptions but not so easy to clarify the confusion often surrounding Math. 28.19. And it indeed takes immense courage to admit the wrongs of the past!

I also want to briefly refer to "semi-Arianism", a stance both Eusebius of Nicomedia and Eusebius of Caesarea maintained - two very important figures in post-apostolic Christendom. Keep in mind that both the historian and the theologian were intelligent and intellectual, and in this capacity they had then been attendants of the Council of Nicaea (325). Both of them would then also have been well acquainted with the main branches (the two basic ones) that had sprung forth from the bosom of the apostolic ranks (Acts 6.1). And just to add, both had the unity of the Catholic Church in mind, so any contention on the Scriptures would then, for both of them, have been of the utmost of importance (especially Eusebius of Caesarea would then have been under great pressure, i.e. to agree with the majority Nicene vote!).

Now, assuming that "Arianism" and "Semi-Arianism" are similar to the Mormon's dogma - something that is often propagated by the Trinitarians, i.e. making Father, Son and Spirit three physical persons in the heavens - is indeed a gross fallacy. Let's stick to truth! The Arians were fiercely persecuted also ruthlessly downed by the Trinitarians - a section (!) of the broader whole and of course backed by Rome.

So here we are again sitting with the very two traditions going back to Acts 6.1, i.e. the Greek-speakers (Hellenists) I would mainly call the Trinitarians over against the Hebrews, the Aramaic Jews, a shoot of which branch had clearly culminated into Arianism and later of course semi-Arianism (this type of evolution is complex and we must therefore keep in mind that the whole (Christendom) at that stage indeed consisted of diverse parts - it is said that by 150 A.D. there were no less than forty sects, each propagating his own type of dogmatic stances. Should we keep this in mind, we will be able to understand how the "Spirit fighters" (the so-called pneumato machi) for instance could have been closer to the Scriptures than the Trinitarians in some ways, yet be totally pagan in some of their other doctrinal stances. And the Trinitarian conglomerate definitely had their own ample share of paganism within their own bosom.

The strong first-century apostolic influence must also never be overlooked and it must therefore not naively be accepted that the apostles were Ebionites/Essene. Sects had joined the apostles but they later again severed ties with them so that three well-defined groups were indeed eventually in place, with of course the apostles of Jesus and the Gospel they had directly received from Jesus as one of them (we can infer this from Carrington's excellent research work).

Carefully take note especially of the Apostle John's words in his first pastoral letter (".... they had been of/with us but they again left us...."). Peter is also clear on this very issue in his letters.

Fact is dogmatic wording (theological doctrine/formulae) was not a trend of apostolic times (the first-century Church) but of post-apostolic times! And the apostles brought Jesus as Son of God, and clearly having had a pre-existence with His Father (Jn 17 : "Father glorify me with the glory I had with you before the world was"). Their particular stance should also be clear, namely that the Son had proceeded from the Father (in Arius wording : "There was a time that Christ was not..." - proceeded as sign that God the Father was then the first or uncaused One) yet in Trinitarian thought making the Son in the thoughts of God, i.e. since the very beginning (wasn't everything in God's mind?) and then also "God", in other words equal to the Father in every aspect (introducing the "three persons" in Godhead doctrine with the emphasis emphatically on "indivisible" which stance the Arians/semi-Arians clearly denied and which stance can then, in the light of the Scriptures at our disposal, indeed not be regarded as fallacious!).

"Subordination" was propagated by Origen - and this doctrinal stance was then seemingly strongly supported by Jerome (Eusebius of Nicomedia) as well as Eusebius of Caesarea. We can detect something of the Pauline Letter to the Hebrews in Origen's stance, however, subordination was always something the Trinitarians did not want to attach (permanently) to the Son, something propagated by Arius - and clearly through their type of philosophical reasoning.

The struggle at Nicaea then clearly revolved around a philosophical approach, i.e. in presenting the unseen God to the world - God as Spirit Being whom no one can ever see and live, His Son who was made flesh, also being God or the very same God, and then the Holy Spirit as the "third person" God, something the Arians and semi-Arians denied at all cost as for them the Holy Spirit could not be depicted as a "person" - either physically or, as in the Trinity, a spirit being/invisible being. (The Trinitarians believe in one God in three persons but this type of pluralistic depiction always, in a strange way, presented in the singular form, namely "He" in reference).

The depiction of the Holy Spirit as a "Third Person" set bitter contention in motion and all because the Trinitarians could not/did not want to visualize Jesus as that very one on whose shoulders/being had rested God's Spirit (the Shekhina Glory) and for this reason the concept of "Ruach HaKodesh" - Spirit of the holy or holy one who is none other than Jesus (Mark 1) - was interpreted as a "Third Person" whereas the Arians or Semi-Arians, often also referred to as "spirit fighters" - see the Conybeare link I have given previously - clearly sided with the apostle Paul's directive to the Corinthians : "The Lord is that Spirit (Jesus!) and where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is freedom." (The Holy Spirit Power then rested upon Jesus and should we remove this divine authority and power from Jesus, we are indeed going right against God the Father's Plan of Salvation, declaring Him as His Son and Saviour of the world. Therefore Jesus' special place with the Father in the heavens (at His right hand!) having received the Power from God the Father to baptize the bloodwashed in the Holy Spirit (an apostolic, New Covenantal reality which those denying the Holy Spirit as a third person in the Godhead, would have upheld).

Paul clearly spoke in concise manner, i.e. in reference to "the Lord is that Spirit...", meaning that the Spirit of God belongs to Jesus, a statement neatly corresponding with Acts 2.33: Jesus, the Son, indeed then received the Spirit from God, His Father, who had appointed Him as baptizer of the Holy Spirit (Acts 2). The Arians/Semi-Arians were then closer to the truth, i.e. than those who followed in the footsteps of Greek thought.

The Apostle Paul further states in his letters that he bows his knees to the God and Father of "our Lord Jesus"..... proving of course that we cannot pray to the Holy Spirit (Jesus set the example of praying to His Father, never to the Holy Spirit as a "third person"). Should we retain objectivity, we will quickly be able to see that Greek thought had indeed impacted on the dogmatic stances of post-apostolic Christendom.

So, considering the aforementioned, let's be careful not to glibly dish out labels just to keep the Trinitarian perspective untouchable! We are living in enlightened times and I just want to add here: Let's search the Scriptures diligently and without bias for, e.g., the assumption that the three men who appeared to Abraham (angels in bodily form) is proof thereof that the Trinity is indeed conveyed this way to us, i.e. in the Old Testament, has no Scriptural foundation whatsoever as:

God can never be seen by man (see Moses' history, also Jesus' remarks in John's writings); (2) God sent His Angel and He himself never put on the image/being of an angel (Ex. 23.20+; Ex. 3.14); (3) God's Spirit is nowhere described in the Old Testament as a "Person" but rather as "Power" operating as God's very own active Presence (Acts 1.8); also, the Trinity clearly states that there are not three "Gods" but one God-in-three-persons, however, not meaning that God is a physical person and the holy Spirit too - a doctrine rather in line with Mormonism.

Keep in mind that the old 1 Jn 5.7 is now regarded by the majority of scholars/translators as an interpolation ("...there are three witnesses in heaven, the Father, the Word (Son), and the Spirit....") - clearly originating from the Latin tradition, also emerging from the ranks of those who visualized God as a visible entity operating through three "persons" or three visible/physical persons).

So let's rather keep the three men who posed as angels to Abraham as three messengers who came to Abraham's assistance/interacted with Abraham - and clearly not with a message (implied or stated) to believe in the God of Israel as revealing His existence to us this way. We indeed know very little about the three "angels" - men of God - who visited Abraham and his significant revelations of God were on the whole given in and through the appearance of God's Angel of Presence, and this very same one was also consistent in His dealings with His prophets and anointed.

The Arians believed that the Son was created - brought forth by God is also implied here as it is not stated anywhere that the Arians and especially the semi-Arians regarded the Son as equal to Adam in creation. To them He was definitely a heavenly being and "created" can, like elohim, carry manifold meanings.

Those who are interested can indeed Google Eusebius and the Arians (also the Semi-Arians) and especially the contention on the Greek wording that was applied at Nicaea (being of the same substance, alternatively, similar or like/almost like God but not exactly of the same substance as God brought forth (created) a divine/heavenly being, i.e. His Son).

I think, considering the strife and division within the Body of Jesus and the time that was thusfar spent on bickering and fighting one another's stances, the time has come for Christians to grow up and tolerate one another especially on finer Godhead and Christological issues, however, not meaning that we must ignore Scriptural direction! Let's reason in a mature way, but let us also pursue the Christian love Jesus had prescribed for all of us!

Note : The Shekhina is regarded as God's Holy Spirit Presence. It is a rabbinical wording pertaining to the "Glory" (Kavod) of God. Those interested may consult the Jewish Encyclopedia on the Shekhina (pronounced "shexina") and all its related meanings.

Note: The Aramaic and the Greek texts were the two basic textual traditions in the early Church and the Greek NT is often regarded as the Gentiles' translation. The apostles brought the gospel to both the Jews and the Gentiles alike but the "judaizers", a fanatical Jewish group of believers, resisted the gospel being shared with the Gentiles.

Ester Blomerus

www.housealtarnetwork.com

September 25, 2014