

The Trinity and the Loss of Identity

Written by Adrian Ebens

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I have read several times about the idea that for God to be love there must be more than one person for that love to exist. The key text that is used is 1 John 4:8 that God is love.

The God of the Bible is a triune Being because HE IS LOVE. Love cannot be exercised in isolation. You cannot be all-loving and be alone at the same time. Love is manifested in relationships. Augustine expressed this truth eloquently, when he said: "Ubi amor, ibi trinitas—Where there love, there is a trinity." By that he meant, that where there is love, there is a lover, a beloved, and a spirit of love." Samuel Bacchiocchi, *The Importance of the Doctrine of the Trinity*

The argument goes that because of the triune nature of God that this produces a love that is not self oriented

We would suggest that God in His Trinitarian self-revelation, has claimed that He created us to reflect the love that supernaturally resides in His very being as an eternally loving God who is one in three. Furthermore, the triune love found in God is not self oriented and thus strongly implies that we find our greatest joy and satisfaction in living and serving others." Whidden, Moon and Reeve, *The Trinity* Page 247

I had never seen a Bible passage to support this notion until recently. The text that was suggested was 1 Cor 13:5 that love does not seek its own and for this to be possible with God that more than one person must exist for this to occur.

So, based on this definition that love is centred on others, others must exist for love to be the essence of that person.

My first question is that while this is an argument of logic based on a definition taken from selected passages of Scripture, it appears to overlook the immediate context of the passage

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that John is writing. My understanding of exegetical practice would demand that we determine first what the author is saying in the immediate context and once this is determined we seek for other passages to expand our understanding. Also, it would be good to collect ALL the passages in Scripture on the subject and seek to form them into harmony in a prayerful manner. So firstly here is the immediate context of I John 4:8

1John 4:6-12 We are of God: he that knoweth God heareth us; he that is not of God heareth not us. Hereby know we the spirit of truth, and the spirit of error. (7) Beloved, let us love one another: for love is of God; and every one that loveth is born of God, and knoweth God. (8) He that loveth not knoweth not God; for God is love. (9) In this was manifested the love of God toward us, because that God sent his only begotten Son into the world, that we might live through him. (10) Herein is love, not that we loved God, but that he loved us, and sent his Son to be the propitiation for our sins. (11) Beloved, if God so loved us, we ought also to love one another. (12) No man hath seen God at any time. If we love one another, God dwelleth in us, and his love is perfected in us.

The person that John calls God in this passage, that is love in verse 8, I would understand through a consistent application to be the same person that sent his only begotten Son in verse 9 and also is the being that no man hath seen at any time in verse 12.

If the God mentioned in verse 8 as being love is the same being that gave His only begotten Son in verse 9 then is it still possible to entertain the idea that when John states that God is love in verse 8 that he is actually referring to the Father, Son and Holy Spirit in a unity and plurality of love?

If this is the case then by consistent application the God of verse 8 which includes the Son and the Spirit also can claim to give "His" only begotten Son in verse 9. We would also have to consider that no man has seen the Son or the Spirit in verse 12. Now this is certainly true for the Spirit, but can we say this of the Son?

My question is that the immediate context for the word God in this passage refers to the Father.

Consider also the meaning of verse 7. John appeals for us to love one another, through the act of loving. He then states the reason why we can love one another: because "love is of God" or

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more directly: love comes from God, it comes out of God, it is born of God. The point of verse 7 is that love comes out of God to us in order that we can be loving. And in this context the love mentioned is coming from a Source (God the Father who sent His Son) to us.

But what if John in verse 8 is not just making a simple statement that God the Father is love (meaning that He is the Source of love). What if John is switching his flow of meaning to suddenly make a profound statement about the nature of God. And this statement means that God is not the Father but contains within Him the Father and the Son. If this is what John is attempting to explain, then the flow of what John means by the word God from verse 7 is lost.

So my second appeal on this point is that the flow of meaning from verse 7 into verse 8 is confused if the meaning of God changes in the transition from “love is of God” to “God is love”. Therefore, God shifts from meaning a single Source from which love flows to a plural nature of loving essence displayed in God’s internal other-centredness.

In regard to love not seeking its own, this argument could suggest that unless there was a Trinity, a singular God would default to becoming selfish. This is indeed what Dr Bacchiocchi suggests when commenting on Allah.

By contrast the god of the Koran is “ONE,” because he is SELF-CENTERED, living in solitary aloofness, “far above” and beyond any intimate relationship – The Importance of the Trinity
Page 6

One of the key problems with this whole line of reasoning is that for this demonstration of love to occur there must be a personal sacrifice of identity. The individual members of the Godhead must drop themselves into the great ocean of this selfless love. Self is lost in this self-sacrificing focus on others. Notice this transcending of personal identity in the statement by Whidden, Moon and Reeve:

We would suggest that God in **His Trinitarian self-revelation**, has claimed that **He created us** to reflect the love that supernaturally resides in

His very being

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. Furthermore, the triune love found in God is not self oriented and thus strongly implies that we find our greatest joy and satisfaction in living and serving others. Whidden, Moon and Reeve, The Trinity Page 247

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Notice the expression "**His** Trinitarian **self**-revelation" and "He created us" and "His very being" These terms are the melting together of three persons so that we can use the terms He, His and Him to refer to three who are one. These singular terms are referring to three persons; this feat is achieved through a personal identity sacrifice.

This process is actually very similar to Zen Buddhism:

The Buddha had invented a new system of yogic meditation (vipassana) and it was assuredly this that led to his final insight. Most systems of his time induced trance like states known as "samadhi" **in which the self was said to merge with the universal godhead** or Brahman - like a "dew drop falling into an ocean".

[Introducing Buddhism](#)

I recently read a [forum](#) discussing aspects of buddhism and I found this statement interesting

"I've never really had a problem with the oneness/nothingness dichotomy. Both are ideas that are so incomprehensible in their magnitude that they're exactly the same. As your own example illustrates the feeling of being one with everything and being nothing would feel the same way,because... well... **it's the loss of identity.**"

My awareness of the sacrifice of identity within the ocean of love came about when I was sharing some of my thoughts on Identity with a dear friend of mine who once planned to study to become a Zen Buddhist priest. He shared with me how that what I was sharing on Identity was actually diametrically opposed to Zen Buddhism because what I was sharing involved finding identity as a child OF God while Buddhism involves the loss of identity by merging WITH God.

So self is sacrificed by dropping into the ocean of the universal Godhead. Is it just possible that the Trinity and Buddhism tap into very similar ideas that stem from pantheism? In light of what Adventists know about Pantheism and Dr Kellogg, I might suggest to you that they do indeed run on a similar platform. Buddhism uses the conflicting thoughts of oneness/nothingness to mystify the mind while the Trinity uses the three in one conflict to do the same job. The end result for both is the loss of identity and the ushering into the "awe" of the mystery.

Does the current Adventist Trinity cause modes of thought that discount the importance of the identities of the Father and Son? Well this example springs to mind:

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But imagine a situation in which the being we have come to know as God the Father came to die for us, and the one we have come to know as Jesus stayed back in heaven (we are speaking in human terms to make a point). **Nothing would have changed, except that we would have been calling each by the name we now use for the other**

. That is what equality in the Deity means. Sabbath School Lesson April 10 2008.

The Trinitarian is seduced into the art of role interchangeability by welding three self originated life sources into one loving God which they then call He and Him. It is indeed the identical process that Buddhists use to lose self in the ocean of the Godhead.

{swfremote}http://www.maranathamedia.com/site/download/videos/TrinityExample.swf{/swfremote}

The Adventist Message was founded on clear and distinct understanding of the Father and His Son. The foundation of our message springing from Daniel 7 and 8 demands a differentiation between the Ancient of Days and His Son. This is vital to understanding the sanctuary system and the atonement. Notice the force of these words in maintaining the identities of Father and Son from the pen of inspiration written to combat Kellogg's pantheist theories:

The Scriptures clearly indicate the relation between God and Christ, and they bring to view as clearly the personality and individuality of each.

“God, who at sundry times and in divers manners spake in time past unto the fathers by the prophets, hath in these last days spoken unto us by His Son, whom He hath appointed heir of all things, by whom also He made the worlds; who being the brightness of His glory, and the express image of His person, and upholding all things by the word of His power, when He had by Himself purged our sins, sat down on the right hand of the Majesty on high; being made so much better than the angels, as He hath by inheritance obtained a more excellent name than they. For unto which of the angels said He at any time, Thou art My Son, this day have I begotten Thee? And again, I will be to Him a Father, and He shall be to Me a Son?” Hebrews 1:1-5.

God is the Father of Christ; Christ is the Son of God. To Christ has been given an exalted position. He has been made equal with the Father. All the counsels of God are opened to His Son.

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Jesus said to the Jews: "My Father worketh hitherto, and I work. . . . The Son can do nothing of Himself, but what He seeth the Father do: for what things soever He doeth, these also doeth the Son likewise. For the Father loveth the Son, and showeth Him all things that Himself doeth."

John 5:17-20. Here again is brought to view the personality of the Father and the Son, showing the unity that exists between them. This unity is expressed also in the seventeenth chapter of John, in the prayer of Christ for His disciples: "Neither pray I for these alone, but for them also which shall believe on Me through their word; that they all may be one; as Thou, Father, art in Me, and I in Thee, that they also may be one in Us: that the world may believe that Thou hast sent Me. And the glory which Thou gavest Me I have given them; that they may be one, even as We are one: I in them, and Thou in Me, that they may be made perfect in one; and that the world may know that Thou hast sent Me, and hast loved them, as Thou hast loved Me." John 17:20-23. Wonderful statement!

The unity that exists between Christ and His disciples does not destroy the personality of either . They are one in purpose, in mind, in character, but not in person. It is thus that God and Christ are one.

8T 268,269

Let these words ring in your mind. Memorize 8T 268 and 269 and know that it was written to face pantheism which destroys the personalities of the Father and His Son. Read her warnings on this subject. This deadly poison will cause us to see more of role swapping and generalisation in regard to the identities of the Father and Son. This has always been Satan's plan.

I have a personal relationship with My Father in Heaven through His beloved Son. My Father was never in danger of being selfish nor needed to drop himself into an ocean of selflessness to save Himself from self. My Father is Love and this love flows through His Son by His Spirit into my heart.

The current Adventist Trinities (there are many but they speak with one voice in this context) are a master piece of satanic genius to suck us down the path of eastern mysticism and into the arms of the promised omega.

As for Love seeking not its own, consider whose heart that love flows from when you read this quote:

It will be seen that the glory shining in the face of Jesus is the glory of self-sacrificing love. In the

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light from Calvary it will be seen that the law of self-renouncing love is the law of life for earth and heaven; that the love which "seeketh not her own" has its source in the heart of God; and that in the meek and lowly One is manifested the character of Him who dwelleth in the light which no man can approach unto. Desire of Ages 19

When we refer to God's love as expressed in I John 4:8,9 - I think Ellen White amplifies what John means "In this was manifest the Love of God towards us" when she says

"It is not the sacrifice of Christ only; it is the Father's sacrifice also. The Father, in union and loving sympathy, with his Son

, subjected himself to suffer with his Son.

He spared not his only begotten Son

but freely delivered him up for us all.

This gift of Christ is the crowning truth of God's love, and this Fatherhood

,
through all time and through eternity

. **Here is**

the love of God in his Fatherhood

"

Ellen G White,

Spalding and Magan Collection

p. 68. "Sunnyside," Cooranbong, N. W. W., March 12, 1897 addressed to "Dear Brethren Daniells, Palmer, and Colcord:--"

The most enduring display of God's love is not three persons merging their identities in selflessness - it is a Father giving His only Son for us. To this God I bow the knee with Paul, for it is in the name of the Father that the whole family in heaven and earth is named Eph 3:14,15.