

Fiction and imagination: The case of the Love of God- A response to Ty Gibson

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Introduction

I have often wondered why the SDA church (and any other church I know for that matter) has no fundamental doctrine/belief statement on the love of God. It is interesting because in my mind, the love of God is the primary doctrine of all doctrines. Just like the Catholics would say the trinity doctrine is the fundamental teaching on which all their other beliefs are built so, I believe so must be the Love of God doctrine to all who worship the One God of the Bible. To me, all the other beliefs are built on the Love of God (the character or name of God). And I am sure I am not the only one.

But some may argue that the Love of God is in every doctrine, which I will agree, and yet still say that does not stop the Love of God from being a specific teaching on its own. That is because the Love of God is a very specific concept. It is not love in the same sense we apply the term love such as “ooh cute puppy, I love it”, or “I love this car” or something that mundane and self-centered. In fact, as we will see in this article, failure to clearly delineate what the Love of God is has led some into wild imaginations.

Before I get into that, I would like to say that I write this article with a strong sense of purpose and duty. The task of responding to Ty Gibson was given to me by a head elder in the church and a brother in Christ. This brother in Christ had just come into the knowledge of the truth about the Only True God, and ditched the trinity idea. Sadly, before I even started writing, he passed away.

The trail of imagination

Let us set the context of this response, specifically about fiction and imagination. The realm of fiction is very intriguing to the human mind. The attraction that the masses have to the endless list of Hollywood movies is a clear testimony to that. It seems to be the pleasure of a human mind to take any item of reality, and of it build a whole story by sheer fictional imagination.

Related to that are dreams. Who has not dreamt before some event that is outside of the normal realm of possibility that reality imposes on the human mind. Yet religion is one realm in which imagination has been allowed to run free. Consider the numbers and types of idols and gods that have been made and worshipped. Out of nothing or out of some simple entity that people can sense or read about in reality, they are capable of imagining just about any form of an idol.

Take the identity of the Chinese dragon god for example. Wikipedia suggests that the Chinese dragon is inspired by three things. These three things we can observe in reality, namely a snake, Chinese alligator and thunder. That is as far as reality plays a role in the Chinese dragon god. Beyond that, profuse levels of imagination kick into gear. If the reader has seen a picture of the Chinese dragon, or a display of it during the Chinese festivals, the reader would agree that it takes a huge dose of imagination to combine the characteristics of snake, an alligator and thunder into one entity. And of course, the outcome of that imaginative process, i.e. the dragon itself is a work of fiction.

Something else happens when imagination is invoked. The details of the reality that is used in the imagination process do not have to be accurately and specifically defined. With the case of the Chinese dragon, what a snake, an alligator and thunder are in reality does not matter once imagination begins. The product of the imagination process does not have to accurately resemble a snake, alligator or thunder. Why should it since imagination is all about trying to move away from the grips of reality to start with. Thus the Chinese dragon does not account for the exact specific shape and nature of any of the entities used in its invention.

When it comes to the identity of something to worship, it behoves the human mind to come up with something that is somehow mysterious or beyond human comprehension. And since fiction and imagination surpass the realm of human comprehension, it follows that there is no better place to be than in fiction and imagination if one is seeking something that goes beyond simple human understanding. Thus it seems to sooth the human mind to create an identity and a nature of God that is out of this world and mysterious. The mindset is that God just can't be as simple as is plainly read from the scriptures.

The challenge with this mindset is that if it ever is pointed out that the imagined identity and nature of God that people have come up with is not what is seen and stated in reality (for example in the Bible), then that is the more reason to hold on to it. The very fact that it does not exist in reality and was never stated as such anywhere is the very attractiveness which validates it and draws many human minds to it. It is a perfect almost inescapable catch-22 situation.

Pity that when trapped in this catch-22 situation, the human mind feels exalted to a greater understanding of God. Yet all the while, the human mind is only clutching to a figment of its own imagination.

It is interesting that the Bible said this about the business of conjuring up what God is like.

Exodus 20:4 Thou shalt not make unto thee any graven image, or any likeness of any thing that is in heaven above, or that is in the earth beneath, or that is in the water under the earth.

Deuteronomy 4:16 Lest ye corrupt yourselves, and make you a graven image, the similitude of any figure, the likeness of male or female.

Let us focus on these phrases: “any likeness of anything” and “similitude of any figure”. To make an image of God, to figure out and describe his similitude, whether graven or as concept in one’s mind, requires a lot of imagination. Whether God is idolised in physical form such as the dragon, or is represented in a conceptual diagram as the trinity triangle with bi-directional arrows, or a three faced head, or intersecting circles, the process is the same. The human mind is imagining something that it was never told to do by scripture. Besides, the physical idol is simply the fruition of a mentally conceptualised identity and nature of God.

God is Love

Let us now consider what Ty Gibson wrote in Chapter 1 of his book titled “The Heavenly Trio”. The same is also found elsewhere in his writings. Ty starts by quoting that beautiful sentence “God is love” from 1 John 4:8 and 16. Next, Ty makes this statement:

“And all the power God has is employed toward the exercise of the love God is.”

The meaning of this statement is neither stated in the Bible nor warranted by biblical text. Only one who has an understanding of all the power of God, and how God uses all His power can say this. The statement may or may not be true, but that is beside the point. The point is that we need to refrain from speculating or is it imagining on things we have not been told, especially when they are about God Himself and His nature.

Ty’s next statement takes imagination to the next level. He writes:

“Within God's essential makeup, God's abilities serve God's character, not the other way around.”

No man can figure out the essential makeup of God from anything. I believe Job had this in mind when he said:

“Canst thou by searching find out God? canst thou find out the Almighty unto perfection? It is as high as heaven; what canst thou do? deeper than hell; what canst thou know?” (Job 11:7, 8).

It is amazing that Ty has the audacity to pry into the essential make-up of God, seeing that the writers of the Bible did not go that far.

If anyone ever tries to discuss the essential make-up of God, to state how God’s abilities and character relate to each other, if there is no verse which gives that understanding, then that discussion is an imagination, or even a presumption. Man does not have the capacity to peep into the essential make-up of God outside of express text to that effect. Yet it appears that is what Ty is attempting to do.

Next Ty writes:

“Love only occurs by the voluntary crossing of the neutral space that lies between an individual free self and an equally free other. If the essence of God's identity is love, it follows that God does not employ force in His quest to establish a relationship with us. Implicit to the biblical idea that "God is love," is the idea of divine self-limitation: God cannot control those whom He would have love Him. If love is the desired end, the sheer power of force cannot be the means of its attainment. This is why the biblical narrative portrays God as restraining His power in favor of wooing, drawing, alluring, calling, and pleading:

Turn to me and be saved, all you ends of the earth. Isaiah 45:22, NIV

The Lord has appeared of old to me, saying: "Yes, I have loved you with an everlasting love; therefore with lovingkindness I have drawn you." Jeremiah 31:3”

I totally agree with Ty on this point. At this point he cast off imagination albeit briefly, only the evidence is dealt with. It is an obvious and observable phenomenon of human existence that love cannot be forced.

Jeremiah 7:13 And now, because ye have done all these works, saith the LORD, and I spake unto you, rising up early and speaking, but ye heard not; and I called you, but ye answered not.

So I agree that God is love also means He limits Himself not to go beyond that which we allow Him to as we respond to His love towards us. Love and the exercise of free will are inextricably connected. But there is an important point here not to be missed. That point has an implication on what Ty does next. The point is this.

I am sure Ty himself and many other Bible students agree, and have even said it themselves before, that the words of the Bible must be understood in context. I therefore point out that in every instance that the Love of God is spoken of, be it by Isaiah and Jeremiah as Ty quoted, or in 1 John 4 where the sentence “God is Love” comes from, the context is always about God’s love to man. At no time is the word ‘love’ given by any biblical author in the context of describing the essential make-up of God, not once.

Therefore, to take the word ‘love’ and spin on it a meaning that the biblical author of the very text being quoted never intimated is wrong. It is a sure path to erroneous thinking, experimenting with fictional imagination and the creation of doctrines of men. Just as much as Ty and any other Bible student would argue against any verse used out of context pertaining to any other doctrine, so should he and all of us respect the context with respect to the meaning of the Love of God. Without the context to limit the boundless capacity for human imagination, no doubt we end up with nothing less than another version of a dragon god.

It therefore follows that we test Ty’s thought process against the context of “God is Love” as given by the Bible. This attempt to exceed the limits imposed by context will feature strongly as we continue to analyse Ty’s thoughts, and indeed, those of other trinitarian thinkers.

Ability, character and nature of God

The overall point that Ty made goes as follows (in his own words):

“So, yes, God can do anything—any thing. "With God, all things are possible" (Matthew 19:26). But it does not logically follow that with God all non-things are possible. God can do anything except what lies logically outside of the realm of possibility—like creating two

adjacent mountains with no valley between, or creating existing things that don't exist, or causing love to exist in the heart of a free agent who chooses not to love. Or—reaching all the way to the very foundation of reality itself—God cannot be love without someone to love, in as much as love entails other-centeredness. God cannot be love unless God, as God, is composed of both self and other. That is to say, if God is and always has been love, then God necessarily is a social dynamic of some configuration that includes both selfhood and otherness.”

I am sure that this makes a lot of sense to many people. I can testify that I have talked to some brethren who have quoted this thought process as evidence for the so-called plurality of God. But bear with me and let us analyse this statement carefully.

Let us follow the logic. Remember where Ty started. It was about God’s abilities serving his character. Next he wrote of his character of love dictating his abilities when he said God as love can only woo us to love him without force. So clearly, the logic that Ty is working on is the ability-character nexus. This thought process I agreed with in as far as it means the Love of God (character) compels Him not to force (ability).

Now notice that Ty has introduced a new element completely out of thin air. That new element is God’s nature. If you did not notice it, let me show you where. But first, some definitions.

By ability, I mean that which God is capable of doing. By character, I mean the ‘moral’ qualities that determine His decision to do or not do something. You could describe character as the mental and moral qualities that give motive for action or inaction. In this context, God’s key character is love. Nature is how God is composed, comprised or made up. A man has human nature, i.e. flesh. A man is also by nature body, soul and spirit. I believe Paul is referring to nature this way in 1 Corinthians 15:35-58 when he refers to celestial bodies which are different from terrestrial bodies (verse 40). In the same passage, Paul talks of natural bodies and spiritual bodies (verse 44). In addition, he refers to different kinds of flesh (verse 39, that of men, different from beasts and fishes and birds).

In Ty’s writing, and in all trinitarian thinking, to say “three-in-one god” is not directly an expression of ability or moral qualities. The statement “three-in-one god” or “the plurality of god” is an expression of the nature of God, His “essential make-up” (as Ty puts it). Other authors use phrases such as “made up of”, “union/unity of persons” and similar ideas. We also know that from the beginning, i.e. the Council of Nicaea, the theologians grappled with the substance of God. So, the three in one God theory grapples with describing the nature of God beyond simply the character of God. Let me state that I believe no one should be grappling with such ideas about the nature of God.

Now, with that, let us come back to what Ty wrote. Notice this statement, “Or—reaching all the way to the very foundation of reality itself—God cannot be love without someone to love, in as much as love entails other-centeredness.” In this statement, the phrase “be love” here refers to God’s character which, according to Ty himself, is being served by God’s abilities (“to love”).

Now notice the next sentence. “God cannot be love unless God, as God, is composed of both self and other.” At this point Ty has drifted without warning from talking about ability and character into ability, character and nature, i.e. what God cannot do (ability) because of his character as it relates what God is composed of (nature). Essentially, Ty has now started using the word ‘love’ to imagine how God is composed. To me, that is no less a work of art and fiction as any idol god or even the Mona Lisa painting. The product of such thought is as good as the fertility of one’s imagination.

I want to emphasise two points here. The first we have talked about before and it is that no man has capacity to figure out God's composition from any word, whether it be a word about God's ability or character. The subject of the nature of God, when taken outside of what is expressly stated, is one that invites experimenting with human imagination. I believe it is the height of presumption for any man to suppose that the nature of God is open to him by virtue of his own understanding of any word that refers to ability and character of God. The very thought of entering into ideas about God's composition is frightening to me. How Ty can presume to do that is amazing to me.

The second point is this. The very logic by which Ty tries to do this presumptuous act is completely flawed. It is based on the assumption that ability and character can be used to determine the nature of an entity. This fallacy occurs throughout trinitarian thinking that verses about the actions of the Father, the Son and the Spirit whether individually or collectively (i.e. performance and character) are used to reason out the natures (composition) of these three. However, in reality, entities of the same nature can have different abilities and characters and vice-versa. In short, there is no logical reason in the Bible which connects ability and character to nature in such a way as to say (as Ty does) a certain nature is only possible if a certain ability and a certain character are present in an entity or vice versa.

The limitation imposed on a human mind, that it cannot derive the nature of God from His ability and character can only be broken by entering the realm of fictional imagination, just as the dragon god, by fictional imagination, is made up of a snake, an alligator and thunder somehow combined together. If that limitation is respected by Ty and others, the plurality of God would be impossible to derive from the ability and character of God.

The path that Ty God chose to go down is not new. Consider what Plato, the philosopher, wrote:

“The god of love lives in a state of need. It is a need. It is an urge. It is a homeostatic imbalance. Like hunger and thirst, it's almost impossible to stamp out” (Plato).

This was Plato's philosophical reasoning, with absolutely no biblical basis. I wonder if Plato was reasoning based on Greek philosophy, or should I say, imagination.

Let me focus on this statement by Ty.

“God cannot be love without someone to love, in as much as love entails other-centeredness. God cannot be love unless God, as God, is composed of both self and other.”

To analyse this statement, remember that Ty is dealing with three things namely nature (what God is composed of or what he is), character (why He chooses to act, i.e. moral qualities) and ability (what He does because of his character and nature, i.e. his performance). In this case, when Ty says “God cannot be love...” whether he means love as character or as what he calls essential make-up (his nature), there is a huge problem with the logic. The problem is that Ty is making the performance of God's character or nature the basis for His existence.

The logic is similar to this. A building is not a house unless it houses something. Therefore a house must exist as an entity that has itself, the house, and another, the housed, as a combined entity. If there is nothing housed in it, then it cannot be a house. Basically, all houses with nothing inside them are, by their essential make up, not houses. That is very unsound logic.

Do you see the logical problems of a fertile imagination in a fictional mode of thinking? Remember we said to form the dragon, a snake, an alligator and thunder have to be mixed in a way that does

not make sense to reality. I draw parallels to what is going on here. To justify the three-in-one god composition and thinking, one needs to escape from sensible reality.

It should come to one's mind, if still operating in the mode of reality, that if a structure must house something for it to be called a house, and if it cannot be a house without housing something, then it was never possible to use the word house on it to begin with. The structure is not independent of what it houses if it can only be a house when together with which it houses.

Let us try to simplify this further by testing logic with logic. The problem with Ty reasoning is that he has no clear identity of what he is calling God who loves another, or who the self is or who the another is. These three are not defined before they are brought into the love-to-essential make-up logic. Is it the triune God that he refers to as loving another? Or is it one of the three triune God members, who is referred to as loving another? If that God (who is loving another) is the triune God person/being, then when he loves another that is part of him, he is not loving another, he is loving a part of himself. If the God that he refers to as loving another is one of the three members, the Father (for example), then, according to Ty's logic, it must be God the Father who is composed of self and another. But in the trinity doctrine, there is no such thing as the Father being composed of persons in Him. So basically, the logic is self-defeating and not making sense. God, self and another are being switched around in a way that makes no sound logic.

Maybe the reader did not notice the switch that happened in the last quote above? Let me explain. In the statement "God cannot be love without someone to love", the reader is led to understand that two entities are the subject of the discourse, i.e. God and someone else. So, when Ty then says "[God]...is composed of both self and other" an attentive reader is left wondering 'where did the two entities go?'. Or to put it in other words, how did the other, which was supposed to be the object of the love as a separate entity with its own free will become incorporated into the same entity with its own separate freewill, that was supposed to be the one loving the other, then both to become one free will of one entity?

This is what one expects when imagination is the operating mode. All this is because Ty has since tracked out of the limits imposed by biblical context to the words "God is love". The biblical context limits the meaning of "God is love" to the relationship between God and man, not to some intra-God composition. As if that is not enough, Ty has also stepped out of the bounds of any known reality and into the hands of unbridled philosophical imagination. As we discussed before, escaping the limits imposed on the human mind by biblical context and natural reality is a necessary step to the creation of an idol just as with the dragon god.

Interpretation challenges

The basic interpretation challenge I face with Ty's reasoning is that the Bible does not use the word 'love' in the context of God's composition. Consider where Ty said before based the statement "God is love". Ty discussed God's love in the context of "...in His quest to establish a relationship with us." That was correct. So the love of God is revealed to us in the context of the God-man relationship. What pains me is how Ty departs from this simple, clear and correct understanding of the Love of God, into vain philosophies about the essential make-up of God.

Let me try to simplify the problem in Ty's approach to biblical interpretation. Consider a recipe. One can breakdown a recipe into two components – the ingredients and the method. If I take the ingredients as stated in a recipe, and apply the method as given by that recipe, the food will be as expected by both the recipe's author and the audience. If I change either the ingredients or the method, the food is not going to be the same as per recipe.

In our case, the evidence are the ingredients. The fact that the Bible says there is God, that He is one and that He is love are all equivalent to the ingredients of a recipe. The ideas about what love is and how it relates to ability, character and nature is the method that Ty uses. In Ty's case, the ingredients are from the Bible but the method is not, it is Ty's own ideas. Hence the outcome is something that comes not from what the Bible says and has required, but from the invention of the cook.

To solve this problem, Ty needs to go back to the method as given in the Bible (which he knows and has done before). If indeed we be sola scriptura, then both the ingredients and the method of our interpretation must come from the Bible. First, the Bible does not give us any method for deriving nature from ability (performance) and character (moral qualities). So that method is out and its practice wrong. Second, the Bible gives us a very specific definition of what God's love is, i.e. to give everything. The Bible also gives us exactly to whom that love is directed, i.e. from God to us. If then Ty could use this simple method to interpret the evidence that God is Love, and God is one, the result would be different from the so-called plurality of God.

Abuse of the Context of Time

There is another huge problem with Ty's discussion of the essence of God. That problem is the context of time. Let us read what Ty wrote further on in his book.

"Either God existed in eternity past as a relational dynamic of persons, plural, or God is no person at all, but rather some kind of impersonal power..."

Ty makes this statement in the discussion about how some Adventist pioneers reasoned that the existence of Christ started at some point in time past. Ty comments specifically on Uriah Smith's writings as follows.

"Smith retains the idea that Christ had not existed at some point in eternity past and then he was brought into existence..."

This sounds to me like time language. If both Ty and Uriah are discussing about the modalities of the existence of the Father and the Son in time, then there is a huge problem. They may be disagreeing on what the modalities of the existence of God are within that time (eternity past), but they are both far away from what the Bible itself requires of us. It is hard to take sides between them because they are on the same side in as far as being beyond what the Bible reveals. They both are far exceeding the limits of revelation. To discuss God's existence within time as it is known to humanity is to try to peep into things which have not been revealed to any human mind to date. Trouble is that God must not be seen as subject to time and his existence cannot be reckoned in terms of long times going either backwards into the past or forward into the future.

I know this is a common practice to think of eternity as time as we know it, but a quick thought will show that it is impossible. Time, by design has a beginning and an end. Time began and will end, but God has neither beginning nor end. Neither does Christ have a beginning in time because everything, including time as we know it was created by him (things visible and invisible Colossians 1:16). So if Uriah says there was a time when Christ was brought into existence, Uriah has failed to take into account a simple fact about time as a created reality. Similarly, when Ty says that if God existed in eternity past alone, then he was lonely, Ty is not only speculating on the matters of loneliness of God, which thing is not explained, but Ty has also not factored in that time as we know it is irrelevant to God's existence.

Fictional interpretation – a case study

In order to clearly highlight what I consider as fictional interpretation of the Bible, allow me to use this example from my recent discussion with a trinitarian theologian.

First, the theologian wrote:

“Thus my advice is to be content with the fact that the God of Moses is not Just ONE person. You have in Exodus 3 YAHWEH revealing Himself to Moses in His quality of Heavenly Messenger (“Angel”) of YAHWEH. Thus there is ONE YAHWEH in Heaven, and anOTHER YAHWEH as His legate showing Himself to Moses. If the name of God is not applicable to the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit together (three Persons each manifesting the true God), then we have in Exodus 3 a case of idolatry, worshipping another god. There is no way to escape this conclusion, therefore my non-trinitarian SDA friends prefer to avoid Exodus 3 and similar scriptures.”

Notice that the point he is making is that Exodus 3 shows that there are two which are called by the same name YHWH, yet YHWH is the name of one God. This situation of two persons using one name, which name belongs to only one person is the conundrum to which a harmonising solution must be found. Notice that his solution to this conundrum is a logic which combines the two (of course with the Spirit, though the Spirit was never called YHWH neither by Moses nor any writer in the Bible) to make up the one being called the One God.

Then I responded challenging him to separate what the Bible says from his own solution. I wrote:

“You admitted yourself that in your theology, the Bible is not enough in logic...If you consider the Bible to be complete in defining who God is, and if you stick to biblical definitions, you will come to a different conclusion. Try it. In your thinking about Exodus 3, try to separate what is stated, from what you reason out (your logic). Then consider where your reasoning is coming from. It is a simple normal scholarly thing to do, really...So when you say the plurality is obvious, it is only obvious to what you have added to your insufficient Bible by logic. You need to learn the difference between what is in the Bible, and what you add by logic and tradition, and that both the data and the logic must come from the Bible... On the plurality of one being, you add your logic to the Bible.”

That must be straightforward. The theologian is challenged to identify his logic and separate it from what the Bible says. Then identify where he got the logic from.

Then he responded as follows:

“You want me “try to separate (in Exodus 3) what is stated” from what I reason out (my logic).” ... In Exodus 3 the pluri-personality of God is obvious, because it is the simplest deduction from the data, not some complex philosophical or theological speculation. If Moses called the One in the burning bush both the Messenger of YHWH (Ex 3:2) and God or YHWH Himself, how one can justify such colossal confusion, if Moses did not mean two different persons? If your logic is better in this case, please dare to explain to me! Why Moses, the father of monotheism, compromised his grand idea from the beginning?”

Notice that the theologian does not see that to make a deduction from biblical data, which deduction is not given by the Bible in text and context, is the same as “philosophical or theological speculation”. True to the theologian’s earlier assertion that the Bible does not contain enough logic to explain the One God and he has to make his own deductions, the theologian responds saying that

by using the same name for two persons, Moses could have shown colossal confusion, except if he meant the logic that says combine persons to form one being/person. The colossal confusion is that he called two persons by the same name, yet the name belongs to one person/being. If a way is not found to make these two one God, then Moses is teaching polytheism, which is not true. The theologian then throws back to me to tell him if there is biblical logic which explains how two separate persons can use the same name, yet the same name belongs to one person/being.

Notice that the theologian agrees that his deduction, that these two persons are combined to make one person/being called one God is his own, is not from the Bible. The theologian recognises that biblical data and logic (his simplest deduction) are different in his case. It sounds obvious to him, as it does to many trinitarians, that their logic explains what the Bible intended to mean, but the Bible did not say, which now has been reasoned out or deduced by them.

So I take up the challenge to use only what the Bible says to explain how the Father and the Son use one name, yet the name belongs to only one God. I responded.

“Consider Exodus 3 and let us see how you cleverly add to the scriptures... Here is how you separate the data from your own logic, then how you find biblical logic, which is complete.

Here is the data.

- *Moses referred to the one who spoke from the burning bush as YHWH.*
- *YHWH refers to the Father who cannot be seen neither interacts directly with mankind, and is in heaven.*
- *So that means two persons referred to as YHWH.*

That is as far as the biblical data goes.

- *To that you can add [more biblical data] that Christ is "I AM", is worshipped, forgives sins, is called God, etc. All that is just the [biblical] data. [The logical problem that two persons are referred to by one name, and yet the name belongs to one person, still remains.] But what does the Bible explicit say that is what the data means?*

Now to say these two (Father and Son) then have to be put together to make a plural [one] God is your deduction [as you asserted yourself], not biblical logic. That logic cannot be found anywhere in the Bible [neither the Bible nor natural reality ever teaches the combination of persons to form another being/person]. So what I am saying to you is stop right there and consider, what is in the Bible, explicitly written that gives us an explanation, i.e. the logic of how two persons can be referred to by the same name, which name belongs to one person.

“It does not follow, even in normal non-fictional human logic, that the reference to multiple persons by the same name combines them into one being. Neither is it logical biblically.

“... Don't pull ideas out of thin air to explain these two persons with one name, search for the answer in the Bible. You are stopping your search, and giving your conclusion [or deduction] while there is still much more data to explain how two persons can use the same name. That is where I am saying separate your fictional ideas about making a being out of persons, which thing you were never told to do, and consider the Bible to be sufficient. Continue searching the Bible and SOP for an answer, not your own imagination of a being with persons, or the meaningless idea of a plural being, which is pure fiction.”

So I gave him back his challenge to search again something that is not of his own deduction, to let the Bible make the deductions. It has been half a year and the challenge has not been answered yet. But let us consider a logic that is found in the Bible.

I ask the reader to think about this carefully. If two persons use the same name, what question comes to your mind if you are investigating that situation? I suggest that it is absolutely biblically and humanly logical to seek how the two persons got the name. So does the Bible explain how the Father and the Son got their names? Yes it does.

Philippians 2:9 Wherefore God also hath highly exalted him, and given him a name which is above every name.

So Christ was given a name by God the Father. What name was he given?

Hebrews 1:4 Being made so much better than the angels, as he hath by inheritance obtained a more excellent name than they.

Christ got a name by inheritance. Now I don't know if there is anyone who does not know what inheritance means. The only way Christ can get a name by inheritance is if he gets his Father's name, that name is YHWH. The Father Himself was not given a name by anyone.

If you believe in EGW, here is what she says on the same point.

"Jehovah is the name given to Christ..."—The Signs of the Times, May 3, 1899, p. 2. { 7ABC 439.3 }

So, the Father and the Son are using one name because the Father gave His Son the His (the Father's) own name, YHWH. That is why Christ speaks as the Father Himself. EGW says exactly that.

"The great Creator assembled the heavenly host, that he might in the presence of all the angels confer special honor upon his Son. The Son was seated on the throne with the Father, and the heavenly throng of holy angels was gathered around them. The Father then made known that *it was ordained by himself* THAT CHRIST SHOULD BE EQUAL WITH HIMSELF; **so that wherever was the presence of his Son, it was as his own presence. His word was to be obeyed as readily as the word of the Father.** His Son he had invested with authority to command the heavenly host." — (Ellen G. White, Signs of the Times, January 9, 1879; also in Spirit of Prophecy, vol. 1, pp. 18, 19) (emphasis added).

Christ says the same.

John 7:16 Jesus answered them, and said, My doctrine is not mine, but his that sent me.

Please identify if I used any concept of human imagination in explaining how one name is used by both the Father and the Son? Did I not only read very explicit verses and quotes with absolutely no addition except what the verses and quotes actually say in their own text. This is non-fictional explanation of how there are two persons in one name, which name belongs to one person, the One God, God the Father.

To end this section, let me say, when faced with a situation where two persons use the same name, yet the name belongs to one person, probably the most illogical, fabricated, meaningless, fictional and pagan idea you can ever think of is to combine the persons into one entity that you can refer to singularly as a 'he' as the One God of the Bible is referred to. To me that does not make sense at a grand scale. So is the idea of making the word 'love' explain the nature of God, a totally fabricated thought process.

Non-fictional interpretation of the Love of God

Let us now try to discuss “God is Love” only as far as the Bible takes us, while casting out all human imagination about how God’s composition must be figured out of any word. Here is how it goes.

To me, the Greek language is an absolute marvel with respect to the concept of love. While in English the use of the word love is rather loose, as Ty has demonstrated in the above quotes, in principle the Greek language is very specific. Specifically, the word agape that is often used to say that “God is love” (agape) refers to giving without receiving back the same.

Let us consider God’s love as giving everything to His Son as listed below.

- Authority - John 5:27
- Divinity - Colossians 1:19, 2:9; Hebrews 1:3
- Equality in divinity - Philippians 2:6
- Exalted Position - Acts 2:33, 5:31; Philippians 2:9-11
- Inheritance - Hebrews 1:2, 4
- Judgement - John 5:22
- Kingdom - Luke 22:29
- Life - John 5:26, 6:57
- Name and Character - Philippians 2:9; Hebrews 1:4
- Power - Matthew 28:18; John 17:2
- Sanctification/Anointing - John 10:36; Psalms 45:7; Isaiah 61:1; Acts 10:38; Hebrews 1:9
- Sent and given what to say by God - 1 John 4:14; John 12:49; John 8:42
- Throne – Acts 2:30, Hebrews 12:2
- Victory - Mark 12:36; Hebrews 1:13
- Went back to God - John 1:1-3, 17:5 John 20:27

And lastly, the one God of the Bible gave everything to His Son.

John 3:35 The Father loveth the Son, and hath given all things into his hand.

Here in is the love of God, that everything that Christ received, we received with him. In Christ, we received eternal life, the name and character of the Father, we partake of the very divinity, we received authority and kingship to reign with him, and to sit on the same throne. In Christ we received power from God, we received an inheritance, an exalted position to judge angels, and we received victory and sanctification. In Christ we were sent by the One God of the Bible. In Christ, the Father gave us what to say. And in Christ, we were reconciled with God to be with him again as it was supposed to be if Adam had not sinned. So like Christ, we too received everything from the Father. This is as far as the love of God, and that God is love is explained by the Bible.

Even the love of God to the Son is described to us in relation to what the Son has done for us. In addition, God loves us as he loves his Son, so that we too are called the sons of God.

John 17:23 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.

1 John 3:1 Behold, what manner of love the Father hath bestowed upon us, that we should be called the sons of God: therefore the world knoweth us not, because it knew him not.

It therefore is obvious and simple that the love of God can only be discussed biblically as it pertains to Him giving to us. In giving us His Son, who had received everything from God, God also gave us all

that the Son has and all that God can give. At no time do we have the Bible relating the love of God to any essential make up of God.

By the way, with all this simple revelation of God's love, the one God of the Bible is very clearly identified, not a conglomerate of persons, but one single individual, God the Father, the one who gave His Son. Christ is not the trinity's Son, but the Son of God, that God is the Only true God, God the Father. That is without imagination or fiction.

A brief from Ellen White

There is one book where both in text and context, Ellen White sets out to explain how we should know God. This is Chapter 35 of the book Ministry of Healing. The section is titled "The Essential Knowledge" and Chapter 35 is titled "A True Knowledge of God". What is interesting is that Ellen White uses about 127 verses in about 16 pages to explain what we should know of God. At no time does she exceed the actual words of the Bible. Allow me to take a quote from this chapter talking about God as love.

"It is through the gift of Christ that we receive every blessing. Through that gift there comes to us day by day the unending flow of Jehovah's goodness. Every flower, with its delicate tints and its fragrance, is given for our enjoyment through that one Gift. The sun and the moon were made by Him. There is not a star which beautifies the heavens that He did not make. Every drop of rain that falls, every ray of light shed upon our unthankful world, testifies to the love of God in Christ. Everything is supplied to us through the one unspeakable Gift, God's only-begotten Son. He was nailed to the cross that all these bounties might flow to God's workmanship." {MH 424.5}

Of the about 127 verses Ellen White uses, the common so-called trinitarian verses are not there. Matthew 28:19 is not there, neither is 1 John 5:7, nor Deuteronomy 6:4. There is no equality of persons in that chapter. In fact, I have searched carefully and I am yet to see anywhere where Ellen White uses Matthew 28:19 in the context of the nature of the one God of the Bible. I see her consistently going as far as the Bible goes and no further. To her, Matthew 28:19 is about the great commission, the completion of Christ mediatorial work and the nature of Christ kingdom.

In the same spirit, the verses that Ellen White used to discuss what we should know about God are about what God has done for us through Christ. As it is in the Bible, what God has done for us, His love for us, is the only explicit text and context of who God is. In this chapter, not once does Ellen White refer to the nature of God or how God is composed. I think I know the reason why she never referred to the nature of God as Ty tries to speculate in his book. It is because Ellen White could only go as far as the Bible goes, i.e. only God as love in what He has done for us, not what His essential make-up is. Ellen White ends this Chapter 35 saying:

"This is the knowledge which God is inviting us to receive, *and beside which all else is vanity and nothingness.*" {MH 426.4} (emphasis added)

Since Ty goes beyond this simple knowledge of God, I have no option but to relate his philosophy as vanity and nothingness. The hype that has been created in theological circles since long ago, this theological hype about reasoning out the nature of God is just as much, vanity and nothingness. God has never required us, or told us of any such explicit exposition of His nature as theologians, including Ty, would have us believe.

Conclusion

Thus Ty's entire book "The Heavenly Trio" is the advancement of human philosophy employing clever imagination about the existence of God and his nature based on what God has done, i.e. express his love to us. The basis of Ty's arguments about the nature of God derived from the character and ability of God (i.e. his performance towards us), that basis is not found in the Bible, neither in text nor context.

END

For further discussion, please write to us on therockfortress@gmail.com.