

*[From the Sangre de Cristo Lectures on the Holy Spirit]*

Non-Christian Views by Gordon H. Clark

Now I guess it's time to start the new lecture, is it. Today's lecture. Unless there is somebody anxious to say something. and I'm afraid there are too many of you who are not anxious and I'm going to needle you until you do.

This has to do with a particular type of religion that is to a certain extent, widespread. I've met it in various places. It may not be as widespread as Jehovah's Witnesses.

I doubt that it is. But anyhow it is an active organization of the present day. And it is called The Way. And their chief theologian is a man by the name V. P. Wierwille. W-I-E-R-W-I-L-L-E. I suppose he says "veer-ville" or "weer-ville" I don't know.

You've heard of him? W-I-E-R-W-I-L-L-E. Wierville. The title of his book is *Jesus is Not God*. Now Wierville in this book argues that Jewish Christianity was not Trinitarian. But by the 4th century the church was altogether Gentile. Not being well-inclined to the Jews, the large majority of whom were not Christian, and having been raised from childhood among Greek and Roman polytheists, the Gentile theologians imposed their pagan ideas on the church. In fact, I'm summarizing Wierville, in fact the pagans were not so much polytheists as they were Trinitarians. It is a common, natural, universal religious doctrine. Buddhism, Hinduism, Stoicism, and the Homeric gods all had trinity. Hence, Athanasius and his Gentile supporters foisted trinitarianism onto the original monotheistic Judaic Christianity.

The author even gives the name of three Homeric gods, but with no mention of several others. One could hardly suppose that he ever read Homer. Americans may have heard of the Greek gods from A to Z. Ares, Artemis, Dionysus, Hephaestus, Hero, Poseidon, and Zeus. But Americans cannot probably rattle off the names of the Hindu deities. Aditi, Agni, Aranyaniis, Dyaus-pitar, Indra, a minor war god, and his wife Indrani, Prithvi, another female diety, Pūṣan, Radha, Soma, Sūrya, Varuna, Vāc, and Vata. Some of us, no doubt, have heard of Vishnu and Shiva. But where in all this is there any hint of Father, Son, and Holy Ghost? Where are their particular personalities, their mutual relationships, and their activity. True, Frazer's *Golden Bough*, not so well thought of as when it was first published, but at any rate, Frazer's *Golden Bough*, when I memorize the Hindu gods it is on this page here.

*[Audience Laughter]*

Well, it is. Frazer's *Golden Bough* when first published, speaks of a Hindu trinity. Brahma, Vishnu, and Shiva. Yet on a later page he refers to Krishna, and still later to a goddess Kuree and her husband Mahadi. So the point there is that Hinduism was not trinitarian, despite of what Wierville says.

Less fanciful, but equally mistaken, is any attempt to find in Plato, a trinity significantly resembling the Christian Trinity. Of course it is always possible to find some resemblance

between any two things. Not only are lions and squirrels both vertebrates, they're alike in that, but also the square root of minus one and political justice are similar, how?

*[Audience comment]*

*[Laughs]* Well, I said because they are both concepts of the mind. My dog Victor, when I was a boy, recognized a marked similarity between a cat and a catechism. Thus one can say, truly and trivially, that the Holy Spirit and Poseidon, as well as Britannia, all rule the waves. Now, as it is with triangles too, there is a sort of trinity in Plato. Triangle is a trinity, isn't it? And there is a sort of a trinity in Plato. The supreme being is the world of ideas, or more particularly, the idea of the good. Then there is a demiurge, a soul who made the heavens and the earth. The third member of the trinity is the recalcitrant space on which the demiurge imposed the ideal forms. All of these are eternal, but they are not equal in power and glory. The demiurge is clearly a soul or person, but he is not the son of anyone. The world of ideas is a living mind, if we take the sophists seriously. But this living mind is not the creator of anything. Space, of course, is not a mind or soul or person. And aside from being extended, is unconscious and chaotic. It's not a divine being at all.

Three persons in one substance is a concept Plato never thought of. And if he had, he would have rejected it immediately. Hence any attempt to see the origin of the Athanasian trinity in Plato or in the Stoics is a case of hallucinogenic athalmea.

Now you may be a little uninterested in the details of ancient Greek philosophy. I can understand that, but this isn't altogether ancient Greek philosophy. Just a month ago, this is July the, well six weeks ago, at least recently, about six weeks ago, two ladies came to the door of my house and told me that the Trinity was a pagan religion which all religions have. These were not people from The Way either, they were Jehovah's Witnesses. And they tried to insist to me that all pagan religions were trinitarian, and that's why we shouldn't be trinitarians.

Well, in Indianapolis we had Jehovah's Witnesses come to our door about once a month. Now, down in Lookout Mountain they come about once a year. Of course it is not a city as congested as Philadelphia, or Indianapolis I mean. But these things are vital today. And you have to know something about Plato if you're going to answer them. Or something about Vishnu and Sheva. I suggest as a matter of strategy or tactics maybe you call it, tactics, to ask them what religions are they talking, or to mention a particular religion that has a trinity. And then either they will mumble something because they probably don't know what they're talking about anyhow. Or they might give an example and then you can pin them down. But this is something that happens today as, this is an evangelistic effort on the part of these people and we must meet it. And don't be too upset or repelled by my talking about Plato and Aristotle. They're very useful when two uninformed ladies come to the front door. I was sorta amused at these two. There was one that was obviously going to do most of the talking and the other stood back. But when I began to ask questions, the one who stood back had to answer them. I suspect that this second lady was just supervising this person's first attempt at visitation. But, well anyhow, I say this isn't altogether ancient history.

Questioner: Question.

Yes

Questioner: Could you not argue also from the point of church history?

Well how would that answer the question that all pagan religions are trinitarian?

Questioner: Well, it probably wouldn't answer that, but it would answer the question of Christianity is not a late-comer fourth century.

But, no, they would say that the history of the Christian church shows that it became pagan in the year 325 A.D.

Questioner: But Church history says different.

What does it say?

Questioner: Well, before that it was pronounced a heresy, was it not? By the church fathers.

Well, what was pronounced a heresy?

Questioner: Arianism.

What?

Questioner: Arianism.

No it wasn't. Arianism was pronounced a heresy in 325 A.D.

Questioner: I know, but I mean he spoke about it long before 325.

Well yes, but these were gentiles you know. Tertullian wasn't a Jew. And it was these gentiles that brought it into the church and they conquered the church in 325. That's church history. Are you all asleep?

Audience: No.

Questioner: I was wondering about the textbook you'd given ???

Beg your pardon?

Questioner: A textbook that would give us ???

Well this one that I am talking about is one. And later on I'll talk about the Jehovah's Witnesses. I'll just have to mention them by the way. Yes, you can get their books.

Questioner: Just one more question, if you don't mind. You said, if Plato had ever thought of three persons in one he never would have accepted it. Did you explain why?

Not within the period of an hour. You just have to take this part of it as a partial explanation. He had three principles. The world of ideas, of which the top was the world, the idea of the good. And this was a living mind. You could call that a person. Then there was a demiurge who imposed the ideas on an eternal space. There is no creation, as I may say later on. The demiurge took space and formed it into pyramids and cubes. Well, no, it is a previous step. He took space and formed, I guess you might say, plates that were equilateral triangles and squares. And with equilateral triangles, he formed pyramids, and with the squares he formed cubes. Now, out of the cubes, he made water. And out of the pyramids he made the other three elements. And that's why the other three elements can change from one to the other, but water, I think it's water, I'm pretty sure it's water, can't change anything else. And this was his explanation of how the demiurge, a powerful spirit, formed chaotic space by imposing geometrical forms on it. And that is not trinitarianism. Space is eternal or everlasting. But it is chaotic, it has no mind, it is not a person. The demiurge is a person, but he is not the supreme being. And there is no idea of creation. The more you know of this, the more you can irritate the people that knock on your door.

Oh, it's easy to deal with the, I played a dirty trick on the Jehovah's Witnesses once. I was sitting on the lawn of our house in Wheaton many years ago and I happened to be reading Plotinus in Greek. And one of Jehovah's Witnesses came along and began to lecture me on the first chapter of John you know that's what they often do. And he told me all about the Greek of the first sentence. I said, you know a lot of Greek, please translate this. I had some Plotinus. It was a dirty trick because Plotinus' Greek is one of the most difficult there is. But he got up and left.

I can tell you another story. Now, this isn't, I didn't do this, but a friend of mine did. Except he didn't have Plotinus, he had the New Testament. And so the Jehovah's Witness talked about the first verse of John, and my friend happened to have a Greek testament in his hand. And handed, showed him, maybe turned to First John, and said "look at this." And the Jehovah's Witnesses, according to my friends report, which I think he told the truth, looked at it this way [*audience laughter*], what is this? That's the first chapter of John which you are talking about.

Questioner: I have a question.

Yes.

Questioner: I don't quite, you say we need to know this, in order to confuse the friends who come to our door here, but why not take them to these trinitarian scriptures you gave us yesterday? And let them, let the Holy Spirit work and show them those scriptures. Would that do the same thing?

No, not exactly. Although I agree that you must preach the scriptures and ask God to grant them faith. But if you wish to engage in apologetics, you have to answer their arguments and show what's wrong with them. And, of course, when you try to show them something from scripture

they will say yes, but that is a Gentile imposition on an original Jewish Christianity. Now, I'm all in favor of what you call preaching the simple gospel, although it's not so simple as some people think, but you have to preach the atonement. That's the central doctrine, yes. But you also have to meet the opponents. And it's merely the two women come to your door. The Jehovah's Witnesses and The Way circulate the general public with arguments that seem plausible to people that don't know more. And if they say "well now the Greeks had a trinity and Indians, East Indians had a trinity, people who don't know anything about Greek civilization or Indian civilization can't say anything. And so Peter says you must always be ready to give an answer to the person who brings this stuff to you.

Questioner: I thought that was preferably. I thought the answer was scriptural.

The scripture doesn't say anything about whether the religions of India have three gods or so on.

Questioner: But I thought Peter's inference was that it should be scriptural.

Well, I think it should be, but also you have to point out what their error is. And in these cases the scripture does not give us any information about the Indian religions.

Let me make some further remarks on this. You not only have to meet the two ladies who come to the door, you have to meet a large array of highly educated people. And, of course, the Holy Spirit can change their minds just as he changed the mind of Paul, but they are apt to discount what you say, unless you can meet them on their own ground. And if you can show them, say Plato's Timaeus, where you have some of these things just mentioned, they'll listen to you. Otherwise, they won't listen to you. And while I certainly don't advocate discarding the scriptures by no means, but it's a matter of strategy. Maybe I could use the scriptural phrase: "becoming all things to all men." And if you are working with scholars, you have to give certain scholarly, you have to meet certain scholarly requirements.

Questioner: I always thought the Bible doesn't need any defense.

Oh, it didn't?

Questioner: It defends itself doesn't it? Did you take people to the scriptures?

The Holy Spirit may convince a person of the truth of the scriptures, but if he is preaching a wrong religion, I think that it is very well to show that it is illogical or in the case of this, what he says about it is not correct and so on. And after you have cleared the ground, then I think you can present the scriptures with a greater expectation of the Spirit using them. But that isn't always the case, of course.

Questioner: What happens if you come across the man who has a Ph.D. in some sort of the sciences?

Then you write a book on the philosophy of science and belief in God.

Questioner: We're all not capable of doing that.

I wish you were.

Questioner: I know, I wish I was too.

And that's the trouble with [Edward F.?] Hills. He doesn't know beans about physics.

Questioner: Right.

Then he shouldn't talk about it in his book.

Questioner: I agree.

All right.

Questioner: He knows a lot about textual criticism.

Yes he does. But, you see, he injures his cause by putting in stuff he shouldn't put in.

Questioner: But that still doesn't answer the question of the common person who comes out of High School who's busy with many things who has the word of God. He had to write a book?

Of course you have to meet a person where he is. Now, The Way and the Jehovah's Witnesses have certain ideas about Greek philosophy, Indian religion and so on. And you must meet them there.

Questioner: I don't think he has to write the book, Dr. Clark, he has to read it. He doesn't have to write it.

Who doesn't have to do what?

Questioner: The common man doesn't have to write the book on the philosophy of science, he has to read it.

Well yes.

Questioner: But the question is can you read enough books to deal with everybody in the world?

Oh no you can't.

Questioner: There is no possible way.

But you should be as well prepared as you can be.