

Not Three Gods but One: Why Reductionism Does Not Serve Our Theological Discourse

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Abstract : The triune nature of God is one of the most complex doctrines of Christianity, and its complexity is further compounded when one considers the incarnation. However, many of the difficulties and paradoxes associated with our idea of the divine arise from our adherence to reductionist ontology. In order to move our theological discourse forward, in respect to divine and human nature, a holistic interpretation of our profession of faith is necessary. The challenge of a holistic interpretation is that it questions our ability to make any statement about the genuine, ontological individuation of persons (both divine and human), and in doing so raises the issue of whether we are, ontologically, bound to descend in to a form of pan(en)theism. In order to address the 'inevitable' slide in to pan(en)theism. The impact of two forms of holistic interpretation, Boolean and Non-Boolean, on our concept of personhood will be examined. Whilst a Boolean interpretation allows for a greater understanding of the relational nature of the Trinity, it is the Non-Boolean interpretation which has greater ontological significance. A Non-Boolean ontology, grounded in our scientific understanding of the nature of the world, shows our quest for individuation rests not in ontological fact but in epistemic need, and that it is our limited epistemology that drives our need to divide that which is ontologically indivisible. This discussion takes place within a 'methodological', rather than 'doctrinal' approach to science and religion - examining assumptions and methods that have shaped our language and beliefs about key doctrines, rather than seeking to reconcile particular Christian doctrines with particular scientific theories. Concluding that Non-Boolean holism is the more significant for our doctrine is, in itself, not enough. A world without division appears much removed from the distinct place of man and divine as espoused in our creedal affirmation, to this end, several possible interpretations for understanding Non-Boolean human - divine relations are tentatively put forward for consideration.

Keywords : holism, individuation, ontology, Trinitarian relations

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