

Kicked Out of Church in California

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I recently had a conversation with a friend who lives in California. He related that he was thrown out of his church where he has attended for 17 years. First, let me relate something about him. When he was picking me up after I did a presentation at a church, he noticed a flood of water under his pickup truck. Realizing he lost much of his coolant, he called a tow truck and had someone else chauffeur me to my hotel.

As my friend could not drive his truck, he rode with the tow truck driver to the location where his truck could be repaired. On the way, he presented the gospel to the tow-truck driver, who at that time was experiencing some major personal problems. To make a long story short, the driver accepted the gospel message and then testified that he experienced a calmness which overwhelmed him. This experience was not unusual: my friend was active in witnessing to others and, although very tactful, he was also very successful. He would even travel to where people congregate, such as near schools, to witness to them.

My friend was a highly educated, well-read, aerospace engineer. He was also deeply committed to the scriptures and his faith. I always greatly enjoy conversing with him. There were very few topics of interest to me that he is not well versed in.

When doing his routine Bible reading, he noticed 42 scriptures that *seemed to teach* that Jesus was the Son of God and not God the Son, such as in Matthew 22:44 where the Father said Jesus would sit at His right hand until His enemies were made His footstool. And Hebrews 1:5 that tells us that Jesus was begotten by His Father. In Matthew 24:36, Jesus told His disciples that no one knows the day or hour of His return, but the Father only. In Matthew 27:46, Jesus cried out, "My God, My God,

why have you forsaken Me?" In John 17:1, Jesus prayed to His Father. In John 20:17, Jesus said after His resurrection He would ascend from the Earth to the Father who was in heaven.

Endeavoring to better understand these scriptures, he had a meeting with his pastor. He first explained that he believed in the Trinity, the doctrine that three distinct persons are united in one Godhead. Then he noted the scriptures, some of which were quoted above, which raised the same question. Christianity, Judaism, and Islam are all monotheistic faiths that stress there exists only one God, not many Gods as the pagans believed. After he raised this issue with his pastor, which was typical of my friend who was a deep thinker that loved Bible study, he was told he was no longer welcomed at the church where he has faithfully attended and contributed materially and in the service for the past 17 years.

Of interest is this was the same question that was asked by one of the women at our Wednesday evening church Bible study. The pastor, Pastor Kevin Doseck, after noting he firmly believed in the Trinity, one person added that the Trinity is a mystery and we are flesh, not spirit beings as is the glorified Jesus [Yeshua (in English Joshua)]. Jesus is a glorified (holy and interdimensional) man (1 Timothy 2:5)—while on Earth fully God in human flesh--Who ascended bodily (physically—Acts 1:11) and Who will return bodily (Zechariah 14:4a). This is the same explanation I have heard from several sources, so it was not new to me. As far as I know, no one was expelled from my church for asking this question. It appears to me that we should be free to ask sincere questions in our effort to grow in the faith. Furthermore, all 14 in attendance were very satisfied with Pastor Kevin's explanation.

The controversy about the Holy Trinity dates back to the Council of Nicaea in 325 AD where the issue of the Trinity was proposed early in the 4th century by the Alexandrian presbyter Arius. The Council of Nicaea was convened to settle the controversy. In the end, the Council condemned Arius and issued a creed to safeguard "orthodox" Christian belief.

Nonetheless, even after Arius's view was denounced, it was popular throughout much of the Eastern and Western Roman empires. I have never completely understood Arius's claims, but according to the *Encyclopedia Britannica*, Arius argued for the supremacy of God the Father, and maintained that the Son of God was the direct offspring of God. In short, Arius was condemned for rejecting the

Homousian conceptions of God and Jesus (God the Son) as being of the "same in essence" as God the Father. The same term was later applied to the Holy Spirit to designate Him as being the "same in essence" with both the Father and the Son. I can understand the provocative question regarding the Holy Trinity that my friend asked, whose intellect I greatly respect.

Although I am not a trained theologian, it appears making Christ a non-eternal offspring of God the Father—and the consideration that Yeshua the Son and Yahweh the Father are separate entities of *different* natures advocates polytheism and promotes the heresy of denying Christ's divinity. This experience has caused me to think about this issue, prompting me to ask my pastor about some of my unanswered questions. After all, I do not have to fear being expelled from my church as was my Californian friend.

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