

The Quran and its Message

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سَلَامٌ عَلَيْكُمْ

Salamun Alaikum (Peace be upon you)

THE BIBLE DOES NOT TEACH THE 'TRINITY'

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There are Muslims who retain the view that many beliefs of Christians such as the Trinity are **taught** by the Bible. This contributes to an unwarranted fear which causes some Muslims to remain aloof from reading the Bible due to its possible 'corruptive' influence.

The doctrine of 'Trinity' is not **taught** by the Bible. Indeed, there are many Christians that attempt to make use of the Bible to support their doctrine and its implied establishment. However, this is rather different from the proposition that such a belief is '**taught**' by the scripture as a fundamental matter of faith.

It is also to be appreciated, that much in the same way as Christendom, even in Islam there are many beliefs of Muslims that find no support in the Quran.

The Encyclopædia Britannica asserts:

"Neither the word Trinity nor the explicit doctrine appears in the New Testament, nor did Jesus and his followers intend to contradict the Shema in the Hebrew Scriptures: "Hear, O Israel: The Lord our God is one Lord" (Deuteronomy 6:4)" [1]

The doctrine of Trinity is a theological belief. It found its way into Christian thought and scripture was often interpreted **and in one explicit example** (as we will note below), interpolated, to support the concept.

This article does not intend to provide an exhaustive discussion on the subject, but rather a cue to entice readers to conduct their own research.

THE COMMA JOHANNEUM

Well known to Biblical scholars and many erudite Christians is the phrase 'Comma Johanneum'. This is a short excerpt (**comma**) which has been inserted into the Biblical text to support the concept of Trinity.

The Biblical New testament text in question is **1 John 5:7-8**. These passages provide the only explicit reference of the doctrine of Trinity anywhere in the Bible.

[King James Version]

1 John 5:7

For there are three that bear record in heaven, the Father, the Word, and the Holy Ghost: and these three are one. [2]

1 John 5:8

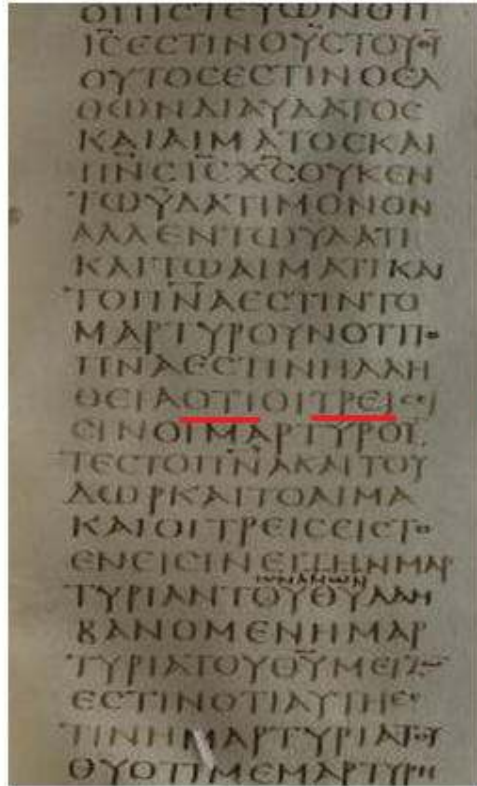
And there are three that bear witness in earth, the Spirit, and the water, and the blood: and these three agree in one. [3]

The highlighted text in **bold black** are interpolations or '**a comma**'. This text **does not** exist in any of the older, best Greek manuscripts of the New Testament Bible. This is clearly an addition to support a theological standpoint.

AN EXAMPLE OF AN OLD MANUSCRIPT

CODEX SINAITICUS

The Codex Sinaiticus, the earliest complete Christian Bible circa 350 CE (Approximately 250 years before the revelation of the Quran), is considered one of the best texts in Greek of the New Testament along with the manuscript of the Codex Vaticanus. Alexandrian manuscripts are well known to scholars as representing some of the 'best' manuscripts.



(1)

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The script reads:

Verse 7

"For they that testify are three"

Verse 8

"The Spirit, and the water, and the blood, and the three are one"

[Red highlight (1) - for (hoti - because, since, that, for) + treis (tree'-ah) - trice, three]

There is no mention of "in heaven, the Father, the Word, and the Holy Ghost: and these three are one" (Verse 7) or "And there are three that bear witness in earth" (Verse 8). These are later additions into the text.

Even as late as the 16th century, controversy surrounded the inclusion of the 'comma' (the additional text) in the edition by the priest and theologian Desiderius **Erasmus**. The discussions as to why **Erasmus** included the comma given his circumstances are well exhausted in Biblical scholarship.

However, for the interests of this article, it is of interest to note that scriptural support for the explicit reference of the doctrine of Trinity was not fully supported.

As the English, mathematician, astronomer and theologian, Sir Isaac Newton (c.1642- 1727CE) notes:

"Now this mystical application of "the Spirit, Water and Blood," to signify the Trinity, seems to me to have given occasion to somebody, either fraudulently to insert the testimony of "the Three in Heaven" in express words into the text, for proving the Trinity; or else to note it in the margin of his book, by way of interpretation; whence it might afterwards creep into the text in transcribing. And the first upon record that inserted it, is Jerome; if the preface to the canonical epistles, which goes under his name, be his. For whilst he composed not a new translation of the New Testament, but only corrected the ancient vulgar Latin (as learned men think), and among his emendations (written perhaps at first in the margin of his book) he inserted this testimony; he complains in the said preface, how he was thereupon accused by some of the Latins for falsifying Scripture; and makes answer, that former Latin translators had much erred from the faith, in putting only "the Spirit, Water, and Blood," in their edition, and omitting the testimony of "the Three in Heaven", whereby the Catholic faith is established" [5]

Sir Isaac Newton some paragraphs later then continues to note...

"And that it was neither in the ancient versions nor in the Greek, but was wholly unknown to the first churches, is most certain by an argument hinted above; namely, that in all that vehement, universal, and lasting controversy about the Trinity in Jerome's time, and both before and long enough after it, this text of "the Three in Heaven" was never once thought of. It is now in everybody's mouth, and accounted the main text for the business, and would assuredly have been so too with them, had it been in their books. And yet it is not once to be met within all the disputes, epistles, orations, and other writings of the Greeks and Latins (Alexander of Alexandria, Athanasius, the council of Sardica, Basil, Nazianzen, Nyssen, Epiphanius, Chrysostom, Cyril, Theodoret, Hilary, Ambrose, Austin, Victorinus Afrem Philastrius, Brixienensis, Phaebadius Agennensis, Gregorius Baeticusm Faustinusm Diaconus, Paschasius, Arnobius Junior, Cerealis and others,) in the times of those controversies; no, not in Jerome himself; if his version and preface to the canonical epistles is to be excepted. [6]

FINAL THOUGHTS

The doctrine of Trinity is not taught by the Bible and remains a theological doctrine. Even the explicit reference of the Trinity in the New Testament was a late interpolation (known as the Comma Johanneum) and was not present in any ancient manuscript.

REFERENCES

[1] Encyclopaedia Britannica [online] <http://www.britannica.com/EBchecked/topic/605512/Trinity> [Accessed: 1st December 2011]

[2] The Bible - King James Version.

[3] Ibid.

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<http://codexsinaiticus.org/en/copyright.aspx> [Accessed 1st December 2011].

Highlights marked in red are my own insertions. They have no bearing on the original text other than they emphasise relevance to the topic at hand. These are merely illustrations and have solely been utilised for educational and explanatory purposes.

[5] NEWTON. I, *Two Notable Corruptions of Scripture: In a letter to a friend*, Published entire from a MS. in the author's hand-writing in the possession of the Rev. Dr. Ekins, Dean of Carlisle. Exactly reprinted from Bishop Horsley's Edition of Sir Isaac Newton's Works, vol. v. 1785. LONDON: John Green, 121 Newgate Street. 1841, pages 11-13.

[6] Ibid., page 17

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