

Spirit, Water and Blood

By David Pyles

This article comments upon the following important verses in the King James Version:

1 John ch 5:

vs 5) *Who is he that overcometh the world, but he that believeth that Jesus is the Son of God?*

vs 6) *This is he that came by water and blood, even Jesus Christ; not by water only, but by water and blood. And it is the Spirit that beareth witness, because the Spirit is truth.*

vs 7) *For there are three that bear record in heaven, the Father, the Word, and the Holy Ghost: and these three are one.*

vs 8) *And there are three that bear witness in earth, the spirit, and the water, and the blood: and these three agree in one.*

vs 9) *If we receive the witness of men, the witness of God is greater: for this is the witness of God which he hath testified of his Son.*

vs 10) *He that believeth on the Son of God hath the witness in himself: he that believeth not God hath made him a liar; because he believeth not the record that God gave of his Son.*

These verses are unusually difficult. The consequence has been disagreement about how to interpret them. There is added disagreement about the seventh verse in particular. Some think it is authentic, but others think it was inserted later by someone who tampered with the original. This opinion is rooted in the fact that ancient manuscripts do not always include it. Modern translations of the Bible nearly always exclude the verse on this account. Obviously, the King James translators opted to include it. In order to address this second issue, it would of course help to settle the first. If we knew how to interpret the general message, then we might be able to determine whether the seventh verse is a fit or misfit on the intended flow of reason.

When the sixth verse says that Jesus came by water and blood, the likely meaning is that He was not only baptized in water but was thereafter faithful, even unto death, and was therefore resurrected, as was depicted by His immersion. An important point here is that water and blood are sequenced with blood following water. This same sequencing is repeated in the eighth verse where the three earthly witnesses are said to be spirit, water and blood. These are

earthly witnesses in that they are wrought through earthly men in the stated order. These begin with “*spirit*,” which likely refers to men being born of the Spirit, upon which they exhibit fruit of the Spirit (Gal 5:22-23), whereby they testify of Jesus by imitating Him with such fruit. This is followed by “*water*,” referring to water baptism, which is here a symbol of conversion. True conversion follows regeneration or “*spirit*” and is impossible without it. Conversion is then followed by “*blood*” – a likely symbol of faithful endurance till death. Under this interpretation, the earthly witnesses are not independent and concurrent witnesses but are interdependent and sequenced.

The next statement is: “*If we receive the witness of men, the witness of God is greater.*” We do in fact receive the witness of men, as is indicated by the previous verse, but because such men are moved by God, their witness is truly of heavenly origin, deriving from the Divine Persons named in verse seven. Hence, the seventh verse, though commonly omitted by modern versions, actually fits naturally and symmetrically within the flow of reason.

This interpretation is further corroborated by the tenth verse: “*He that believeth on the Son of God hath the witness in himself...*” That is, his belief in Jesus is in actuality the witness of the three Divine Persons who bear record in and from heaven.

So the inclusion of 1John 5:7 by the KJV appears to have been the best choice. Not only does it assert a truth acknowledged by all sound Christians, it fits well within the flow of reason in the context, and indeed, the flow seems to be disrupted without it.

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