

# "Let us make man in our image"

## Introduction

This phrase from Genesis 1:26 was used by Herbert Armstrong, and is still used by Stephen Flurry, Roderick Meredith, etc as "proof" that "God" in the Old Testament is a group of beings. (They use John 1:1 as their proof that the group consists of two).

Genesis 1:26

And God said, Let us make man in our image, after our likeness: and let them have dominion over the fish of the sea, and over the fowl of the air, and over the cattle, and over all the earth, and over every creeping thing that creepeth upon the earth.

The argument is that a plurality of beings is represented by the word "God" because the original Hebrew word Elohim is plural, and because of the phrase "Let us make man in our image, after our likeness". If there were only one being, the phrase would have been "Let me make man in my image, after my likeness".

In this article we will analyze this scripture and others to determine if this argument is correct.

## Elohim of Genesis 1 is a Singular Being

There are some direct statements about Elohim in Genesis 1, showing the word refers to a single being:

Genesis 1:1

In the beginning God (Elohim) created the heaven and the earth.

Genesis 1:27

So God (Elohim) created man in his image, in the image of God (Elohim) created he him; male and female created he them.

Note that Elohim is referred to as "he", and man was made in "his image".

Confirmation is given in chapter 5.

Genesis 5:1

This the book of the generations of Adam. In the day that God created man, in the likeness of God made he him;

Genesis 5:2

Male and female created he them; and blessed them, and called their name Adam, in the day when they were created.

Note again the use of "he", not "they".

What is the True Explanation?

Since Elohim ("he" in verse 27) was a single being, the "us" of Genesis 1:26 must have consisted of Elohim and one or more other beings. Elohim was speaking to these other beings or being and suggested or commanded that they together make man in their common image.

There are a number of lessons from this verse.

\* There existed, before the creation of man, one or more other beings in the image of Elohim because Elohim said "in OUR image".

\* The one or more other participants were also in Elohim's image.

\* Man was to be in Elohim's image.

\* Elohim's form is roughly that of human beings.

\* Elohim and one or more other beings were involved in the creation of man, because of the "Let US make ...".

Who were these others or other? We have to look to the New Testament for the answer. Verses there tell us there was only one other and they identify him.

The Father Created All Things

In the New Testament, we have this statement about creation:

Revelation 4:11

Thou art worthy, O Lord, to receive glory and honour and power: for thou hast created all things, and for thy pleasure they are and were created.

The context shows this verse is referring to the Father, and states he has made all things, which must include Adam. (The Greek phrase for "all things" is "ta panta" which we will find is used also by Paul). Hence John tells us that the Father was one of the "us" in Genesis 1:26.

## The Other Team Member

John enlightens us further with the following verse when he is introducing his gospel about Jesus Christ:

John 1:3

All things were made by him; and without him was not any thing made that was made.

Here we find the Greek phrase "ta panta" again, as used by John in Revelation 4:11 where he wrote that the Father created all things, but this time John claims all things were made by Jesus. Is there a contradiction? No, the answer is that they both were involved in the creation, the same situation as we saw in Genesis where two or more were involved in the creation of man. John is telling us that both the Father and Christ were involved in the whole creation. Genesis told us only that two or more were involved with the creation of man but told us nothing about the rest of creation. Now read on further into John's gospel:

John 1:10

He was in the world, and the world was made by him, and the world knew him not.

John writes that the world was made by Christ, in agreement with his earlier statement that "without him was not any thing made that was made".

Now let us look at what Paul wrote to the Greeks at Corinth.

1 Corinthians 8:6

But to us one God, the Father, of whom all things, and we in him; and one Lord Jesus Christ, by whom all things, and we by him.

The NIV translates this verse as

6 yet for us there is but one God, the Father, from whom all things came and for whom we live; and there is but one Lord, Jesus Christ, through whom all things came and through whom we live.

Here Paul writes that there were two involved in the bringing into existence of "all things" ("ta panta" again). All things came from the Father, and all things came from the Father through Jesus Christ. Paul enlightens us that those in the "us" of Genesis 1:26 were two beings, the Father and Christ. Furthermore, he tells us that these two were involved not only in the creation of man in their image, they were involved together in the creation of everything, which means everything else in Genesis chapter one where only the single being Elohim is mentioned.

Paul wrote to the Greek Christians at Colossae telling them how great was Christ, greater than anyone in the Greek pantheon or cultural view of the universe. Greeks believed that in the beginning there was a great being, Chaos, which was formed of swirling clouds of matter and particles, which gradually settled to form two other great beings, (male) Uranous the sky and the heavens, and (female) Gaia the earth and

sea and underworld. These two mated and produced other types of strange beings, which in turn produced other types of beings, etc. Paul told the Colossians that these stories were false: Christ had made all things and he ranks above all things in the Greek universe.

Colossians 1:16-17

16 For by him were all things created, that are in heaven, and that are in earth, visible and invisible, whether thrones, or dominions, or principalities, or powers: all things were created by him, and for him:

17 And he is before all things, and by him all things consist.

Again, "all things" is "ta panta".

Putting these scriptures together, we have the picture of the Father as the Master Architect creating all things, with Christ at his right hand as his subordinate associate and assistant performing the acts of creation.

In the Image of The Father

Christ was begotten of the Holy Spirit in the womb of Mary. He was the son of God the Father. Many boys strongly resemble their fathers. Was Jesus any different?

John 12:44-45

44 Jesus cried and said, He that believeth on me, believeth not on me, but on him that sent me.

45 And he that seeth me seeth him that sent me.

Jesus thought he looked like the Father.

John 14:8-9

Philip saith unto him, Lord, show us the Father, and it sufficeth us.

9 Jesus saith unto him, Have I been so long time with you, and yet hast thou not known me, Philip? he that hath seen me hath seen the Father; and how sayest thou , Show us the Father?

Paul wrote:

Colossians 1:15

Who is the image of the invisible God, the firstborn of every creature:

In Hebrews, we read

Hebrews 1:3

Who being the brightness of glory, and the express image of his person, and upholding all things by the word of his power, when he had by himself purged our sins, sat down on the right hand of the Majesty on high;

There we have it as corroboration. Christ was the image of the Father. As such, he would have been involved in the "us" of Genesis 1:26.

## The Conclusion

Our conclusion is that Herbert Armstrong's interpretation of Genesis 1:26 was wrong. The word "us" indicates a team but it by no means shows that Elohim is a "uni-plural" composite being. In fact, the following verse tells us that Elohim ("he") was a single being. Elohim is indeed a plural word but in that chapter of the Bible, it was used in a singular sense, referring to a singular unique person ("he") who was credited with the creation of the heavens and the earth.

From the New Testament we conclude that the team consisted of the Father, assisted by the one who became the Saviour of mankind and is now seated at the right hand of the Father. Together they completed a truly wondrous work.

Written by Selwyn Russell, January 1997.

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