

Doctrine of the Trinity

By
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The mystery of the Trinity, Godhead in three persons, has long been a subject of controversy for the religious leaders, even to the Church of Jesus Christ itself. From the earliest beginnings of Church history, the doctrine of the Trinity has been a centerpiece of conversation...usually ending in a misunderstanding or a total misuse of the Godhead. Our songs that we sing, our stories we tell, are sometimes misleading and hard to grasp as to what is really the truth in knowing about the God in three persons concept/truth. Although we can sing, “Holy, Holy, Holy! Lord God Almighty...God in three Persons, blessed Trinity” and perform our baptisms stating, “I baptize you in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost,” do we really know without a doubt what these statements really mean?

“The Bible does not specifically teach the doctrine of the Trinity. Neither word ‘trinity’ itself, nor such language as ‘one-in-three,’ ‘three-in-one’ or three ‘persons’ is biblical language. The language of the doctrine is the language of the ancient church, taken not from the Bible but from classical Greek philosophy.”¹

Augustine, who wrote a book about the work of the three persons of the Godhead, said that he spoke of the Trinity only in order not to keep silent. Karl Barth wrote, “When we have said what is meant by Father, Son and Spirit of God, we must continue, and say that we have said nothing.”² However, this mystery is far too important and central to our Christian faith than to shrug our shoulders and say that we believe in the Trinity “just because my pastor believes that it is true” or “there is no other way to explain the work of God, His Son, and the Holy Spirit.” This type of logic is not good enough. We must believe because that is what His Word says or

¹ Guthrie, Shirley, *Christian Doctrine*, Atlanta: John Knox Press, 1968), page 92.

² Barth, Karl, *Church Dogmatics* (London: T. & T. Clark, 1936), pg. 422

justifies. We don't have to prove God, but we do have to place our faith in the strong hand of a loving God who loved us so much that He sent His Son through a virgin Mary who was impregnated by God's Spirit in order for a Holy God to make restitution through the blood of His Son who atoned for our sins. There are biblical truths, Holy Scriptures that bear out the truth of the God in three persons in whom we have placed our trust and hope for tomorrow (the future).

The Christians took over the Jews uncompromising belief that: 'The Lord our God is one God.' But, they also soon come to the belief that Jesus is Lord. They therefore applied to Christ Old Testament passages referring to Yahweh, the Lord; they worshiped Christ as God. Both Jews and pagans accused Christians of having two gods. The issue of the Trinity then became an unavoidable problem.

Tertullian (about 155-230) introduced the term Trinity, as the Latin *trinitas*, to the Christian vocabulary and also probably of the formula "three Persons, one Substance."³

There are things in life that are triune in nature but one; for instance, water. Water is one substance that can be liquid, gas, and solid distinctly. If one of the simplest of all created substances can be three in manifested form and yet remain one in nature, then the Creator of that substance can surely be Father, Son and Holy Spirit – three Persons and one Nature – without any violation of logic or reason whatever if He so wills. The Trinity was a way of explaining the belief in one God revealed through three distinct persons. Some people have a difficult time on the issue of the Bible teaching there is only one God. However, nowhere does the Bible state God is only one person, but it does say that God is one in Deuteronomy 6:4, "Hear, O Israel: the Lord our God is one Lord." The New Testament said the same thing: "There is no God but one" (1 Corinthians 8:4) and Ephesians 4:6, There is "one God and Father of us all."

³ Wikipedia, the free encyclopedia, <http://en.wikipedia.org>

The Hebrew word *Echad*, means a composite unity. That is what God in three persons is; a composite unit that has different purposes for carrying out the work of God. If God were one in person then the Hebrew word “yachid” would be used. The Hebrew word “yachid” means one in number and has a specific meaning. This word would have been used instead of “echad” in the Scriptures in reference to God’s nature if God were only one in person.⁴

However, there are and have been many denominations and non-Christian groups that have not adhered to the Trinitarian doctrine. One of these “so-called” denominations is called “Unitarians.”

Unitarianism adamantly rejects the idea of the Triune God (the Trinity). It questions belief in the divinity of Christ and of the Holy Spirit in favor of the oneness of God. Unitarian thought was found in the early church. The modern movement dates from the early sixteenth century. Renaissance ideas mixed with extreme teaching in the Radical Reformation to produce Unitarian ideas in the minds of many individuals. John Biddle (1615-1662) is regarded as the founder of English Unitarianism and it emerged in the turbulence of the Civil War era. Although confined to individuals at first, some denominations were affected later (English Presbyterian and General Baptist churches). Dr. Joseph Priestly (1733-1804) was an English Unitarian minister, chemist, and thinker. He rejected the doctrines of atonement and the Trinity.⁵

The expression Trinitarianism means one who believes in the doctrine of the Trinity. Monotheism is defined in the online dictionary as “The doctrine or belief that there is but one God.” Mono means “one”, and Theism means “belief in God, god, or gods.” When these two Greek terms are combined, it means “the belief in the one God.”

⁴ Apologetics for Christians, website: <http://www.afcministry.com>

⁵ Dowley, Tim; *Introduction to the History of Christianity*, (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2002), pgs. 504-506.

The Bible teaches that there is only one God. Isaiah 43:10 teaches that there is one God; Isaiah 44:6-8 teaches there is only one God; and, Isaiah 45:18-23 teaches there is only one God. There are many groups who say they are monotheistic in theology, but they have different beliefs. Muslims believe they are monotheistic in that they believe in only one god called Allah (They reject the Trinity and reject Jesus being the only begotten Son of God in the flesh). Jehovah's Witnesses believe only the Father is a God...but that Jesus is a God, too; therefore, they are polytheist (following two Gods)...and they do not believe in the Trinity. Mormons believe that there is only one God of this world---that is the Father. However, they believe that the Father is a God, Jesus is a God, the Holy Spirit is a God...all three being three Gods. They also believe that men can become Gods today and have their own worlds. Jews are true monotheists...believing in one God of the Hebrew Scriptures. However, they are lost without the Messiah and unless they repent and turn to the Lord Jesus, they will remain lost.

Christians then are true Monotheists. They hold to the one God of the Bible revealed through three distinct persons (God, Jesus, and the Holy Spirit—the Trinity).

The following Truths/Facts from the Holy Scriptures point to a “Three in One” Godhead:

- ***There is only one true God revealed through the Scriptures*** (Isaiah 43:10, “You are ‘my witnesses,’ declares the Lord, ‘And My servant whom I have chosen, in order that you may know and believe Me, and understand that I am He. Before there was no God formed, and there will be none after Me.” Also, Isaiah 44:6-8, (6 quoted), “Thus says the Lord, the King of Israel and his Redeemer, the Lord of hosts: ‘I am the first and the last, and there is no God besides Me.”

- ***The Unity of God is revealed through Scriptures.*** (Genesis 1:26, “Then God said, ‘Let Us make man in Our image, according to Our likeness; and let them rule over”
- ***There are three distinct personages in the Bible revealed as being God of all creation*** (Genesis 1; Job 9:8; Psalm 104:30; John 1:1-3; Colossians 1:16-17, Isaiah 44:24, “Thus says the Lord, your Redeemer, and the one who formed you from the womb, ‘I, the Lord, am the maker of all things, stretching out the heavens by Myself, and spreading out the earth all alone.” Also, Hebrews 2:10, 11-“For it was fitting for Him, for whom are all things, and through whom are all things, in bringing many sons to glory, to perfect the author of their salvation, through sufferings. For both He who sanctifies and those who are sanctified are all from one Father; for which reason He is not ashamed to call them brethren.”
- ***The Father is identified as God, Jude 1:1; (Galatians 1:1), “Paul and apostle (not sent from men, nor through the agency of man, but through Jesus Christ, and God the Father, who raised Him from the dead).***
- ***Jesus is identified as God*** (John 1:1-3; John 1:14-18; John 8:58, “Jesus said to them, ‘Truly, truly, I say to you, before Abraham was born, I am...’”; John 20:28, “and Thomas answered and said to Him, ‘My Lord and my God!’” 1 John 5:20, “ And we know that the Son of God has come, and has given us understanding, in order, that we might know Him who is true, and we are in Him who is true, in His Son Jesus Christ. This is the true God and eternal life.”
- ***The Holy Spirit is a distinct personage from the Father and the Son, and is identified as being God*** (John 14:16-17; John 16:7-15; Acts 5:3-4; Acts 13:2; 1 Corinthians 12:4-18; Hebrews 9:14; Hebrews 10:15-18.) Just as Jesus Christ finished the work He came to

do in the flesh, so the Holy Spirit (Spirit of God the Father and Son) will finish the work He came to do in the church.

Jesus said, “I and my Father are One” (John 10:30) and “He who has seen me has seen the Father” (John 14:9).

The Trinity of God is revealed clearly in Matthew 3:16, “And after being baptized, Jesus went up immediately from the water; and behold, the heavens were opened, and He saw the Spirit of God descending as a dove, and coming upon Him, and behold, a voice out of the heavens saying, ‘This is My Beloved Son, in whom I am well-pleased.’”

Jesus’ Spirit is God’s Spirit...Romans 8:9, “However, you are not in the flesh, but in the Spirit, if indeed the Spirit of God dwells in you. But if anyone does not have the Spirit of Christ, he does not belong to Him.”

We believe that the Trinity is one God revealed in three (3) eternal personages as the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit.

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