

# **A New Testament Understanding of the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit**

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*Including appendix:*

A Paper on a Crucial Doctrinal Issue:  
The Biblical Doctrine of the Trinity  
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## Introduction

Hebrews 1:1 God, after He spoke long ago to the fathers in the prophets in many portions and in many ways, <sup>2</sup> in these last days has spoken to us in His Son, whom He appointed heir of all things, through whom also He made the world. <sup>3</sup> And He is the radiance of His glory and the exact representation of His nature, and upholds all things by the word of His power. When He had made purification of sins, He sat down at the right hand of the Majesty on high, <sup>4</sup> having become as much better than the angels, as He has inherited a more excellent name than they. <sup>5</sup> For to which of the angels did He ever say, "YOU ARE MY SON, TODAY I HAVE BEGOTTEN YOU"? And again, "I WILL BE A FATHER TO HIM AND HE SHALL BE A SON TO ME"? <sup>6</sup> And when He again brings the firstborn into the world, He says, "AND LET ALL THE ANGELS OF GOD WORSHIP HIM." <sup>7</sup> And of the angels He says, "WHO MAKES HIS ANGELS WINDS, AND HIS MINISTERS A FLAME OF FIRE." <sup>8</sup> But of the Son He says, "YOUR THRONE, O GOD, IS FOREVER AND EVER, AND THE RIGHTEOUS SCEPTER IS THE SCEPTER OF HIS KINGDOM."

God's final revelation of Himself was through Jesus Christ. Jesus said in John 1:18 "No man has seen God at any time; the only begotten God [the Son], Who is in the bosom of the Father, He has explained Him."

There is no question that while God is pure spirit, HE IS A TRUE PERSON, possessing the attributes of personality – namely, intelligence, emotion, and will. There are many places in Scripture, of course, where God is spoken of in human or physical terms, such as 'face, hands, eyes etc',

but these simply accommodate the truth of the Person of God to our understanding.

God spoke to Moses face to face<sup>1</sup> in the tent of meeting or tent of revelation<sup>2</sup>, and through God's presence as in the pillar of cloud that appeared at the entrance of the tent of meeting each time Moses went to the tent. Nevertheless, Moses had never seen God's face or shape, even though he had had many encounters with God. Moses wished to see the glory of God<sup>3</sup>. God allowed him to see His back, but His face was not to be seen.

Who then would be able to describe the face, shape, and form of God? Israel had no image of as such. Is God then imageless?

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<sup>1</sup> Exodus 33:11 Thus the LORD used to speak to Moses face to face, just as a man speaks to his friend. When Moses returned to the camp, his servant Joshua, the son of Nun, a young man, would not depart from the tent.

<sup>2</sup> Exodus 33:7 Now Moses used to take the tent and pitch it outside the camp, a good distance from the camp, and he called it the tent of meeting. And everyone who sought the LORD would go out to the tent of meeting which was outside the camp.

<sup>3</sup> Exodus 33:18 Then Moses said, "I pray You, show me Your glory!"

<sup>19</sup> And He said, "I Myself will make all My goodness pass before you, and will proclaim the name of the LORD before you; and I will be gracious to whom I will be gracious, and will show compassion on whom I will show compassion." <sup>20</sup> But He said, "You cannot see My face, for no man can see Me and live!" <sup>21</sup> Then the LORD said, "Behold, there is a place by Me, and you shall stand there on the rock; <sup>22</sup> and it will come about, while My glory is passing by, that I will put you in the cleft of the rock and cover you with My hand until I have passed by. <sup>23</sup> "Then I will take My hand away and you shall see My back, but My face shall not be seen."

Throughout the whole Old Testament Israel knew God from Mount Sinai as fire, as thunder, and during the wandering of the wilderness as a pillar of cloud by day and a pillar of fire by night. His attributes and character were revealed to Moses in Exodus 34:6 – 7<sup>4</sup>.

If there is one who could say anything about God, the God of Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, Moses, and all the prophets of the Old Testament, it would therefore be Jesus Christ, the only begotten Son of God. Therefore, what He says with regards to salvation, God's image, person, and character, supersedes any revelation and understanding of God in the Old Testament.

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<sup>4</sup> Exodus 34:6 Then the LORD passed by in front of him and proclaimed, "The LORD, the LORD God, compassionate and gracious, slow to anger, and abounding in lovingkindness and truth; <sup>7</sup>who keeps lovingkindness for thousands, who forgives iniquity, transgression and sin; yet He will by no means leave the guilty unpunished, visiting the iniquity of fathers on the children and on the grandchildren to the third and fourth generations."

## 1. The Relationship Between the Father and Jesus Christ

Let us go back to Hebrews 1:1 and 2<sup>5</sup>. It indicates very clearly that there is *God* and *His Son*, two distinct persons. God did not cease to exist while Jesus, the Son, was on Earth. That is why Jesus was able to call upon God and address Him as “Father”.

Now this Jesus is the radiance of His (God’s) glory, the exact representation or image of His nature.

- a. A representative is someone who represents someone else other than himself.
- b. An image, to every image is the original representation; also to be understood as an *imprint*. Still the image is distinct from the original.

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<sup>5</sup> Hebrews 1:1 God, after He spoke long ago to the fathers in the prophets in many portions and in many ways, <sup>2</sup> in these last days has spoken to us in His Son, whom He appointed heir of all things, through whom also He made the world.

## 2. Jesus is God

The Bible totally rejects the Muslims' claim that 'God has no son'. The Bible clearly shows us that Jesus Christ is the Son of God, and as such He is God.

Hebrews 1:5 For to which of the angels did He ever say, "YOU ARE MY SON, TODAY I HAVE BEGOTTEN YOU"?

And again, "I WILL BE A FATHER TO HIM AND HE SHALL BE A SON TO ME"?

6 And when He again brings the firstborn into the world, He says, "AND LET ALL THE ANGELS OF GOD WORSHIP HIM."

Here we see three clear statements that Jesus is God's Son. In the first place He says of Christ "You are My Son", secondly, that He is begotten by God, and thirdly, God says of Him 'I will be a Father to Him, and He shall be a Son to Me.'

8 But **of the Son He says, "YOUR THRONE, O GOD, IS FOREVER AND EVER, AND THE RIGHTEOUS SCEPTER IS THE SCEPTER OF HIS KINGDOM.**

9b THEREFORE GOD, YOUR GOD, HAS ANOINTED YOU WITH THE OIL OF GLADNESS ABOVE YOUR COMPANIONS."

God the Father clearly identifies His own Son, Jesus, as GOD.

Peter confessed and proclaimed Jesus as the Son of God.

And He said to them, "But who do you say that I am?" And Simon Peter answered and said,

“Thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God.”  
Matt. 16:15, 16

The disciples in the boat after the storm likewise confessed He was the Son of God.

And those who were in the boat worshipped Him, saying “You are certainly God’s Son.”  
Matt. 14:33

The Jews themselves understood that Jesus referred to Himself as ‘the Son of God,’ and in so doing was claiming to be God. They thus charged Him with blasphemy.

The Jews answered him, We have a law, and by our law he ought to die, because he made himself the Son of God. John 19:7.

### **3. Jesus and the Father are one, but not “one and the same”. John 14:7 – 11**

7 “If you had known me, you would have known My Father also, from now on you know Him, and have seen Him.”

<sup>8</sup> Philip said to Him, “Lord, show us the Father and it is enough for us.”

Philip expected to see someone else besides Jesus. - ‘Show us the Father’- Jesus explained His relationship with the Father in the New Testament often using idioms or figures of speech. Jesus now points to Himself.

9 Jesus said to him, “Have I been so long with you, and yet you have not come to know Me, Philip? He who has seen Me has seen the Father, now do you say, ‘Show us the Father?’”

Verse 10 shows us that ‘Jesus is in the Father and that the Father is in Jesus’ is a matter of believing Jesus.

10 “Do you not believe that I am in the Father, and the Father is in Me? The words that I say to you I do not speak on My own initiative, but the Father abiding in Me does His work.

11 “Believe Me that I am in the Father, and the Father in Me; otherwise believe on account of the works themselves.”

This idiom ‘I in you and you in me’ is used throughout the New Testament.

John 15:4 “Abide in Me, and I in you. As the branch cannot bear fruit of itself, unless it abides in the vine, so neither can you unless you abide in Me.”

#### **4. The Father and the Son are two distinct Persons.**

John 14:23 “Jesus answered and said to him, ‘If anyone loves Me, he will keep My word; and My Father will love him, and We [notice not *I* or *the Father*, rather *We*, *We* means at least 2 persons] will come to him, and make Our abode with him.”

‘Jesus in the Father, and the Father in Him’, or ‘I in Christ, and Christ in me’ can be understood in a very simple way: The old blacksmith takes a piece of iron, throws it in the furnace, and after a while the iron glows, you can say ‘The fire is in the iron and the iron is in the fire.’”

Peter and Paul repeat the fact that Jesus is God. Peter on the day of Pentecost made it clear.

Acts 2:33 “Therefore having been exalted to the right hand of God and having received from the Father the promise of the Holy Spirit. He has poured forth this which you both see and hear.  
34 For this was not David who ascended into heaven, but he himself says, ‘The Lord said to my Lord, sit at my right hand.’”

36b “God has made Him both Lord and Messiah” [Lord, a title for God “Adonai or Kyrios” and “Messiah Christos” the anointed one]

We have the combination of God referring to the Son and to the Father.

Paul, writing to the Philippians, clearly identifies Christ as a Person who is equal with God, not counting such equality as something to be grasped at. He wrote about how One who existed in the form of God emptied Himself taking the form of a bondservant. This points very clear to Christ's pre-incarnated state in eternity.

Philippians 2:6 "...who although He existed in the form of God [not just in the mind of God] did not regard equality with God to be grasped [He could have because He was equal in God and with God]"

7 "But emptied Himself, taking the form of a bondservant and being made in the likeness of man [not sinful man]"

Please note that when it says (verse 7), "He emptied Himself," since as we have stated He could not cease to be God, the 'emptying' refers to the incarnate Son of God setting aside the self-willed use of His attributes as God while He was upon the earth. While He was a true man on earth, He did not cease to be God, yet He lived as a man for our sakes, and thus as a man He died for us.

The greatness of salvation is not that a sinless man died for our sin – no, rather, God was in Christ at the Cross. 2 Corinthians 5:19<sup>6</sup>.

Verse 8<sup>7</sup> speaks of His humility and obedience.

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<sup>6</sup> 2 Corinthians 5:19 to wit, that God was in Christ reconciling the world unto himself, not reckoning unto them their trespasses, and having committed unto us the word of reconciliation.

<sup>7</sup> Philippians 2:8 and being found in fashion as a man, he humbled himself, becoming obedient even unto death, yea, the death of the cross.

Hebrews 5:5 speaks that Jesus was the Son. “Thou art my Son, today I have begotten Thee.”

Hebrews 5:8<sup>8</sup> Although He was a Son (Whose Son? Son of God existed in the form of God, equal with God) He learned obedience from the things which He suffered.

Philippians 2:9 – 11 This section describes a great miracle: the exaltation of Jesus. The same way the humiliation of Jesus was a miracle, like so he was restored to the same glory as before His incarnation.

John 17:5 “And now, glorify Thou Me together with Thyself, Father with the glory which I had with Thee, before the world was.”

Jesus is the eternal Son of God *because* Jesus refers to His glory in the Father / Son relationship before creation.

Philippians 2:9 Therefore God highly exalted Him, and bestowed on Him the name above every name, That in the name of Jesus every knee should bow, of those who are in heaven and on earth, and under the earth, and that every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father.

Jesus in the Father and the Father in Jesus – Adonai – Kurios – God, Lord, Master.

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<sup>8</sup> Hebrews 5:8 though he was a Son, yet learned obedience by the things which he suffered;

## 5. Who then is the Holy Spirit?

There was nothing Jesus did not know about the Godhead from eternity. In Genesis 1<sup>9</sup> we see indicated God, the Word that was spoken, and by which everything came into being, and the Holy Spirit – all three distinctively mentioned. In regard to the Holy Spirit, remember it does not say ‘God a Spirit’; rather, the Spirit of God. ‘God a Spirit’ and the Spirit of God must never be interchanged.

John 4:24 “God is spirit, and those who worship Him must worship Him in spirit and truth.”

Now this is indicative of the fact that God is a spiritual being; therefore, worship is a spiritual act. Remember, Jesus showed the woman at Jacob’s well how to worship.

John 4:21 “Jesus said to her, ‘Woman, believe Me, an hour is coming when neither in this mountain, nor in Jerusalem, shall you worship the Father.’”

Worship is not a matter of where to worship, but how to worship, because God is spirit, a spiritual being; therefore, our worship ought to be a spiritual act. Nothing material is needed, neither a mountain, nor a temple, nor Jerusalem. Notice in verse 23 and 24 Jesus interchanges the Father with God.

Now where Jesus speaks about the relationship with the Father, He speaks additionally about their (Father and

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<sup>9</sup> Genesis 1:1 In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth.

<sup>2</sup> And the earth was waste and void; and darkness was upon the face of the deep: and the Spirit of God moved upon the face of the waters.

Son) relationship to the Holy Spirit. Let us go back to John 14:16. Notice Jesus clearly says here:

“And I will ask the Father, and He will give you another Helper, that He may be with you forever.”

We see here the Son, the Father, and the other Helper. This sentence speaks clearly about three different and distinct persons.

In verse 17 Jesus defines this Helper as the Spirit of truth:

“That the Spirit of truth, whom the world cannot receive, because it does not behold Him or know Him, but you know Him, because He abides with you, and will be in you.”

Verse 18 “I will not leave you orphans; I will come to you.”

This is often wrongly interpreted as the outpouring of the Holy Spirit on the day of Pentecost. Jesus did not come on Pentecost, rather the Holy Spirit came.

Verse 18 is just a reminder of His return.

Verse 26: Jesus confirms the Holy Spirit is separate and distinct from Himself and the Father.

“But the Helper, the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in My name, He will teach you all things, and bring to your remembrance all that I said to you.”

John 15:26 “When the Helper comes, Whom I will send to you from the Father, that is the

Spirit of Truth, who proceeds from the Father, and He will bear witness of Me.”

John 16:7 “But I tell you the truth, it is to your advantage that I go away [that is physically], for if I do not go away, the Helper shall not come to you; but if I go, I will send Him to you”

What is the role of the Holy Spirit, as distinct from the Father and the Son? John 16

1. In regards to the world
  - a. He will convict the world. Verses 8 – 11<sup>10</sup>
2. In regards to the disciples
  - a. He will guide you into all truth. Verse 13<sup>11</sup>
  - b. He will not speak of His own initiative. V. 13
  - c. He will speak what He hears. V. 13
  - d. He will disclose to you what is to come. V. 13
  - e. He shall glorify Me. V. 14<sup>12</sup>
  - f. He shall take of Mine and disclose it to you. V. 14

Remember that in this whole passage, and whenever Jesus speaks of the Holy Spirit He uses the personal pronoun “HE” and not “it”.

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<sup>10</sup> John 16:8 And when he is come, he will reprove the world of sin, and of righteousness, and of judgment: <sup>9</sup> Of sin, because they believe not on me; <sup>10</sup> Of righteousness, because I go to my Father, and ye see me no more; <sup>11</sup> Of judgment, because the prince of this world is judged.

<sup>11</sup> John 16:13 Howbeit when he, the Spirit of truth, is come, he will guide you into all truth: for he shall not speak of himself; but whatsoever he shall hear, that shall he speak: and he will show you things to come.

<sup>12</sup> John 16:14 He shall glorify me: for he shall receive of mine, and shall show it unto you.

Now what is the Holy Spirit's title? Remember in John 14:16 "...and He will give you another helper." *Helper* or *Parakletos* means one called alongside to help.

He does the same here on earth, as Jesus does it in heaven.

1 John 2:1 "My little children, I am writing these things to you that you may not sin. And if anyone sins, we have an Advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous."

*Advocate* is the Latin word for the Greek word *Parakletos*. The *Parakletos* helps us in regards to prayer and worship. Romans 8:26, 27<sup>13</sup>

This ties it up with

Philippians 3:3 "For we are the true circumcision, who worship in the Spirit of God and the glory of Christ Jesus and put no confidence in the flesh."

This study leaves us with a clear understanding that there is the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit working together and yet are three distinct persons. So we can say with confidence that there is a tri-unity in God.

Remember Jesus is not the Father, the Father is not Jesus, and the Holy Spirit is not the Father nor the Son.

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<sup>13</sup> Romans 8:26 And in like manner the Spirit also helpeth our infirmity: for we know not how to pray as we ought; but the Spirit himself maketh intercession for us with groanings which cannot be uttered; <sup>27</sup> and he that searcheth the hearts knoweth what is the mind of the Spirit, because he maketh intercession for the saints according to the will of God.

Regarding Matthew 28:19<sup>14</sup>, we are commanded to baptize believers “in the name of the Father, and the Son, and the Holy Spirit.” We accept this, and have no need to harmonize Matthew 28:19 with Luke 24:47<sup>15</sup> or Mark 16:16<sup>16</sup> as they mention no specific form of baptism.

Bible critics go back to the questionable writings of Eusebius who claimed to know a different version of Matthew 28:19. Why do I not accept it? If Eusebius had known without a doubt the existence of this alleged alternate version, why did he not stand up in the Council of Nicea in 325 AD? And because he allegedly bowed to the Nicene Creed, it shows a weak character never displayed by the Apostles.

### *Example 1*

Jesus taught us to search the Scripture and not to criticize it. He accepted the Old Testament as it was in His days, although Bible critics in our days question the authenticity of the Prophet Isaiah. They speak of a first Isaiah and a Deutero Isaiah. According to their theories, Isaiah 1 – 39 had a different author to Isaiah 40 – 66. Jesus quoted from the so-called first part of Isaiah in Matthew 13:14 – 15<sup>17</sup>,

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<sup>14</sup> Matthew 28:19 Go ye therefore, and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them into the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit:

<sup>15</sup> Luke 24:47 and that repentance and remission of sins should be preached in his name unto all the nations, beginning from Jerusalem.

<sup>16</sup> Mark 16:16 He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved; but he that disbelieveth shall be condemned.

<sup>17</sup> Matthew 13:14 And unto them is fulfilled the prophecy of Isaiah, which saith, By hearing ye shall hear, and shall in no wise understand; And seeing ye shall see, and shall in no wise perceive: <sup>15</sup> For this people's heart is waxed gross, And their ears are dull of hearing, And

and also from the so-called Deutero – Isaiah in Luke 4:17 – 19<sup>18</sup>. Jesus didn't mention anything from a 'Deutero-Isaiah'.

### *Example 2*

Modern Bible critics question the Genesis record with creation and the first couple, Adam and Eve. Jesus mentioned it from the Torah as absolute truth and confirmed it. Matthew 19:4<sup>19</sup>

If the Old Testament as it was written was good enough for Jesus, so the New Testament as it is written is good enough for me.

Some may say Matthew 28:19 is only one witness and truth should be established by two or three witnesses. My answer is firstly the two or three witnesses were necessary to avoid injustice in a courtcase. Secondly, the words of

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their eyes they have closed; Lest haply they should perceive with their eyes, And hear with their ears, And understand with their heart, And should turn again, And I should heal them. cf. Isaiah 6:10

<sup>18</sup> Luke 4:17 And there was delivered unto him the book of the prophet Isaiah. And he opened the book, and found the place where it was written, <sup>18</sup> The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, Because he anointed me to preach good tidings to the poor: He hath sent me to proclaim release to the captives, And recovering of sight to the blind, To set at liberty them that are bruised, <sup>19</sup> To proclaim the acceptable year of the Lord. cf. Isaiah 61:1

<sup>19</sup> Matthew 19:4 And he answered and said, Have ye not read, that he who made them from the beginning made them male and female, <sup>5</sup> and said, For this cause shall a man leave his father and mother, and shall cleave to his wife; and the two shall become one flesh? cf. Gen 1:27; 5:1, 2

Jesus do not need any further witness, as every word He spoke is the truth.

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## *Appendix*

### **A Paper on a Crucial Doctrinal Issue: The Biblical Doctrine of the Trinity**

*Aeron Morgan*

The greatest knowledge a person can acquire is the KNOWLEDGE OF ALMIGHTY GOD. The only authoritative and trustworthy source of the revelation of God is the Bible, and so this must always be the final court of appeal on any matter of doctrine or practice. A total comprehension of God, of course is impossible, because of our finite minds and of the magnitude of the nature of divine things. God will ever remain infinitely vaster than all we deem to have perceived. 1 Kings 8:27. Job 11:7-9. We must recognise that we are dealing with the very inner nature of God Himself, and so depend entirely upon His Self-revelation – which we have in the Scriptures. Humility and the willingness to accept the teaching of God’s Word is essential.

Among those aspects of the doctrine of God deemed important is “**the Doctrine of the Trinity.**” Most Christians, whether Protestant, Roman Catholic, or Eastern Orthodox, hold to and teach this Biblical doctrine. This doctrine is denied generally by the so-called ‘Christian’ cults, such as Jehovah’s Witnesses. As for pagan religions, there are some that are *monotheistic* (believing there is but ONE God), while many others are *polytheistic* (believing there are many gods). But NO pagan religion has the Trinitarian concept of God.

# THE UNITY OF GOD

What a very important consideration of God's nature or essence this is – HIS UNITY! The doctrine of the UNITY of God is held in contradiction of the idea of a multiplicity of gods (polytheism) or even of Tri-theism, which teaches that the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit are specifically three Gods. By the UNITY of God we are affirming that there is but ONE GOD, and that the Divine nature or essence is indivisible and undivided.

Having said that, we must be sure to note that the Christian persuasion, grounded in the Word of God, is that there are THREE PERSONS IN THE GODHEAD: THE FATHER, THE SON AND THE HOLY SPIRIT, YET THERE ARE NOT THREE GODS BUT ONE – ONE IN ESSENCE. IT IS TRIUNITY IN UNITY!

When we consider the Trinity we must never confound the Persons NOR divide the substance. Since God is ABSOLUTE SPIRIT to whom belongs immensity, there is NO ROOM for a second God. In the very nature of things TWO infinite Gods cannot exist, for one would necessarily neutralize the other. TWO Self-existent and eternal Beings cannot co-exist – that would be a contradiction. How can TWO “First causes” exist together? There can be only ONE “First Cause,” thus only ONE GOD.

## **1) THE SCRIPTURES PLAINLY AFFIRM THERE IS BUT ONE GOD**

We must confine ourselves to the Word of God, for this doctrine of God's UNITY is essentially a Biblical doctrine. Note: Deuteronomy 6:4. Isaiah 44:6-8. 45:5.

Mark 12:32. 1 Corinthians 8:4-6. Ephesians 4:3-6. 1 Timothy 2:5. Tertullian said,

**“If God is not one, He is not at all.”**

We are to establish from Scripture that the three Persons in the Godhead are evidently distinct, yet have ONE BEING, ONE MIND AND ARE ALWAYS WORKING TOGETHER. It cannot be other! God is essentially ONE. GOD IS ONE – there is NO OTHER. There can be NO OTHER, *and He has no equal*. Isaiah 40:25. The sacred writers pour scorn and utmost contempt upon every fictitious ‘god’ conjured by the heathen. See Psalm 115:2-8.

Please mark this now – the fundamental requirement of life, that the creature worship the LORD his Creator with his entire being, is itself based upon this Truth of the UNITY OF GOD. You cannot love the Lord God with ALL your heart if admitting to more than One God. Can you not appreciate then that the UNITY OF GOD is the basis of all true worship? There cannot be any rival ‘god’ claiming our supreme obedience. Deuteronomy 4:39-40. John Calvin developed his doctrine of the unity of God as it is immediately connected with God’s demand for the reverence of His creatures, stating this:

“Whenever Scripture asserts the unity of God, it does not contend for a mere name, but also enjoins that nothing which belongs to divinity be applied to any other, thus making it obvious in what respect pure religion differs from superstition.”<sup>20</sup>

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<sup>20</sup> John Calvin, *Institutes of Religion*, 1.12.1

God thus declares the unity of His being and so enforces His own incontestable claim to the exclusive love and reverence of those whom He created.

## 2) THE NATURE OF SUCH UNITY

Because of our ‘finiteness’ as created beings, it is properly impossible to define the unity of God. Even the word ‘unity’ in our human language cannot give any adequate idea of this truth as relating to the nature of God. This is best expounded from the Scriptures, and what is most evident is this, that belief in the Unity of God does not militate against the idea of ‘plurality of Persons’ in the Godhead. There ARE THREE PERSONS in the Godhead – yet there is but ONE GOD. And we must allow the Scriptures to state it, for whilst in the idea of THREE being ONE there seems to be some discord or contradiction, it is undeniable that in the many references to the Divine Unity there is allusion in them to a ‘plurality’ within the Godhead. Consider:

- The use of the term “ONE” in Scripture. Genesis 2:24. 11:6. 1 Corinthians 3:6-8. 12:13. John 17:22-23. It is very evident that this cannot be a “single one” but a “COMPOUND ONE”. The Hebrew word for “one” in the single, unique or absolute sense is “*YACHID*” (see Genesis 22:2). This word is never used in respect of the UNITY of the Godhead. In Deuteronomy 6:4 the word is *'echad*, which is a “compound unity”.
- The Divine name “ELOHIM” is a **plural** form of “*eloah*”. Genesis 1:1.
- Pronouns used by God Himself are also plural. Genesis 1:26 (where we have the first distinct hint at

plurality in the Godhead). Genesis 3:22. Isaiah 6:8 – and please note here: this cannot mean some kind of ‘consultation’ with angels. It is unmistakably consultation within the Godhead. See Isaiah 40:14.

- Man was not made in the “image of angels” but in the image of GOD. God is thus single and unique, demanding the exclusion of all pretended rivals, and removing every hint of ‘tritheism’. Indeed, one might add here that while the Scriptures alone can be the sole authority for belief in the unity of the One True and Living God, even the human mind can only properly conceive of one Absolute Being. The foundation or Source of all being cannot, without contradiction, be multiplied. THERE IS ONE GOD, AND THERE IS NONE OTHER BUT HE.

# THE DOCTRINE OF THE TRINITY

There are, very often, two great difficulties that we have to contend with in areas of Biblical truth. They are

- (i) Comprehending the doctrine, and
- (ii) Conveying the doctrine in appropriate terms.

This is so with our current consideration of the “Trinity”. As you are probably aware, the actual word or term “TRINITY” is not to be found in the Scriptures. It dates from the time of Theophilus of Antioch, round about 170AD. Nevertheless, the roots of the term are deeply embedded in the Word of God. What we must not overlook is the fact that **non-Scriptural terms do NOT infer un-Scriptural truth**. As we have already intimated, while the word “Trinity” is not found in the Bible, its revelation clearly stems from the Bible. INDEED, THERE COULD BE NO NOTION OF THIS TRIUNITY OF GOD APART FROM THE BIBLE. This is one reason why in this paper I have not sought to convey any kind of “illustration” relative to the UNITY and TRIUNITY of God, for the simple reason that the nature of this Divine unity has NO PARALLEL; there is no comparison that assists any proper definition.

Observe that I have introduced the term “TRIUNITY”, which might even be deemed a better term, since “trinity” may appear to tell only half the doctrine – that is, of the “three-ness” aspect of the Godhead and not the “unity”. Perhaps the better term is “Triunity”, since it combines the

three-ness (tri), and the oneness (unity).<sup>21</sup> But let us not be too pedantic about this. Whatever be the term preferred or used – and to me the expression “the trinity” IS meaningful – this particular doctrine does bristle with difficulties, exclusively dependent upon Divine revelation through the Holy Spirit, thus a truth for the HEART! What is clear is that there are certain facts about the nature of God in Scripture that we have to face and endeavour to relate and harmonize. Can these be summarised? Observe the following:

- 1) There IS only ONE True God.
- 2) There was a MAN named JESUS who claimed equality with God.
- 3) There is a Person known as THE HOLY SPIRIT, also equal with God.

HOW are we to resolve this problem that there IS but ONE God, yet there are THREE equally Divine Persons? Well, there are those of us who are persuaded that the only solution to this seeming enigma is in **the Biblical doctrine of the TRINITY**, where there is in essence ONLY ONE GOD, yet there are THREE DISTINCT PERSONS in the Godhead.

There are two other main ideas, which are opposites. The one teaches that the One God expresses Himself in three differing “modes,” which are NOT distinct persons; while the other teaches that the claims of Christ and the Holy Spirit to Deity are not valid or true. This would be the “Unitarian” position.

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<sup>21</sup> C.C. Ryrie, *A Survey of Bible Doctrine* [Chicago, IL: Moody Press, 1972], 30.

At the outset of our brief considerations there are a few things we must state:

- c. Since God is infinitely greater than man, there must be that about God that man can neither find out by searching NOR fully comprehend what is revealed. Cf. 1 Corinthians 2:11. Job 37:23.
- d. While the truth concerning the TRI-UNITY OF GOD is beyond man's full comprehension, it lies outside of the realm of natural reason. Human reason cannot discover this glorious truth, neither can it fully grasp the revelation.
- e. The doctrine must not be rejected simply on the grounds that it is a mystery. Are there not a myriad mysteries pertaining to human life itself, human consciousness and many other aspects of our remarkable nature? Being surrounded by such mysteries does in no way invalidate their reality.

Now, the doctrine of the Trinity does not draw its support solely from the New Testament, even though we must affirm that it is in the New Testament that the fullest revelation is to be found. There are, however, OLD TESTAMENT passages that demand some elucidation, and I submit that these only find adequate explanation in being related to the truth of GOD'S TRIUNITY. It is therefore proper to state that in the Old Testament the teaching is 'IMPLICIT', (meaning it is *implied* but not fully expressed), while in the NEW TESTAMENT it is 'EXPLICIT', (meaning that we are no longer left with what is merely implied but *what is clearly and sufficiently stated*; there is detail that leaves us without any questioning of what it all entails). Keep in mind that with

all that we have revealed, this particular doctrine is still one that has its difficulties in both fully comprehending it and conveying it. Sufficient detail is not necessarily exhaustive – it is suffice to give us a firm basis for our faith!

Turn now to **Isaiah 48:16**. What a remarkable Scripture! There cannot be any mistaking that there are Persons indicated in this text that are *object to each other*. One has to examine the context, and see WHO it is that is speaking. Note verse 12 – “**I am the first, I also am the last...**” Then go down to verse 17 – “**Thus saith the LORD, THY REDEEMER... (Heb. goel) THY KINSMAN.**” Let us now turn to Revelation 1:11f. Christ is His people’s “GOEL” by incarnation (Hebrews 2:14-18), and by redemption. (1 Peter 1:18f) **Isaiah 48:16** thus becomes a marvellous revelation of the Triune God.

Now, this remarkable view of the Son of God, the “Second Person in the Godhead”, who has become to us JESUS CHRIST OUR LORD, leads us to observe some passages in the Old Testament where the identity of the Person ‘appearing’ as “THE ANGEL OF JEHOVAH” must surely be equated with that “Second Person”. These instances are generally referred to as ‘THEOPHANIES’,<sup>22</sup> and regarded by many to be even more correctly be ‘CHRISTOPHANIES’.<sup>23</sup> Genesis 16:7-13. 18:1-19:29. 22:15-16,32:22-32. Joshua 5:13-6:3. Daniel 3:25.

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<sup>22</sup> **Theophany:** a manifestation of God that is tangible to human senses. In its most restrictive sense it is a visible appearance of God in the Old Testament era often, though not always, in human form.

<sup>23</sup> **Christophany:** sometimes seen as synonymous with ‘theophany’ since the “angel of the Lord” spoken of in the Old Testament speaks for God in the first person, and could well be a pre-incarnate appearance of Christ.

It is of particular significance that in Isaiah 9:6 the Messiah is called “The Mighty GOD.” Also in Micah 5:2 – note this specific reference to Christ:

But thou, Bethlehem Ephratah, *though* thou be little among the thousands of Judah, *yet* out of thee **shall he come forth unto me *that is to be ruler in Israel***; whose goings forth *have been* from of old, **from everlasting.**

That is unmistakably a reference to Jesus, the Messiah, born in Bethlehem, and the prophecy of Him being the one who will sit on the throne of his father David. But then, eternity is ascribed to Him, revealing that this one is “*from everlasting.*” This is a clear affirmation of Jesus as being the ETERNAL SON.<sup>24</sup>

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<sup>24</sup> There may be the question arising with some concerning the expression in Isaiah 9:6 where the Messiah is referred to as “the everlasting father.” Do not be confused because the name (KJV) ‘Father’ is with a capital ‘F’ – so is “Wonderful, Counselor, the Mighty God...the Prince of Peace.” Obviously, because this cannot be construed to mean that the Messiah, the Christ is ‘God the Father’ it is necessary simply to qualify what the Hebrew word means here. The Chaldee version renders this expression, ‘The man abiding forever.’ Lowth translates it, ‘The Father of the everlasting age.’ Literally, it is “***the Father of eternity,***” עַד אָבִי *’ēby ’ad*. The word rendered “everlasting,” עַד *’ad*, properly denotes “eternity,” and is used to express “forever”. So Isaiah’s prophecy does not set forth the Fatherhood of God here, but the ‘eternalness’ and Creatorhood of Christ. That is confirmed in the following Scriptures: John 1:3. Colossians 1:16-17. It also confirms that His reign will be forever. See Luke 1:30-33.

In the Old Testament we also have evidence of the personal ministry of the HOLY SPIRIT. Of course, it is not certain isolated verses of Scripture, but the aggregation of many passages in both Old and New Testaments that convinces us of the Personality of the Holy Spirit, which in turn convinces us of the Godhead of the Spirit.

IT IS IN THE NEW TESTAMENT THAT WE HAVE THE MORE EXPLICIT REVELATION OF THE TRIUNITY OF GOD. The evidence is abundant and overwhelming. Without elaboration, note the following:

- ◆ **Divine names and titles** are given to each of the Persons;
- ◆ **Divine works** are attributed to each of them; Divine worship is accorded to each One; and
- ◆ **Divine attributes** also ascribed to each.

There are occasions when the three Persons are mentioned TOGETHER, yet they are **distinct from each other and object to one another**. Cf. Matthew 3:16-17. 28:19. 1 Corinthians 12:4-6. 2/13:14. Of these Scriptures none is more explicit than Matthew 28:19 where both the ‘three-ness’ aspect is clear AND the oneness aspect, being united in the singular “NAME”. The Son of God distinguishes Himself from the Holy Spirit. Look up JOHN 14:16. And He is obviously revealing Himself as distinct from the Father, in JOHN 17:3-5.

All the necessary characteristics of DEITY are seen to be possessed by each of the Divine Persons – Father, Son and Holy Spirit:

- **THE FATHER IS GOD**. This point is rarely debated, let alone denied. Romans 1:7. John 6:27.

20:17. 1 Corinthians 8:6. Galatians 1:1. Ephesians 4:6. 1 Peter 1:2.

- **THE SON IS GOD.** This truth has been a real battleground, and the place where all the cults fall. Is it not true, that if we are wrong here we are wrong everywhere! This is, the ‘touchstone’ of saving faith, for one cannot be saved unless he or she believes that Jesus IS the Son of God. 1 John 4:15. 5:5,10,13. To believe that Jesus is the Son of God is to believe that He IS God. This claim by Jesus is what infuriated the Jews and had them call for His death. They charged Him with blasphemy. John 19:7. The Word is so clear in its affirmations that Jesus is the So of God: cf. Hebrews 1:8. John 1:1. 5:18. 20:28. Romans 9:5. Colossians 2:9 Please note that in the Incarnation, whilst Jesus veiled the full glory of His Deity, He never discarded it. Cf. John 1:18. 3:13. Observe the claim of Jesus to the Divine attributes: Matthew 9:4. 28:18. 28:20.
- **THE HOLY SPIRIT IS GOD.** Acts 5:3-4. We can easily show how that the Holy Spirit Himself distinctly possesses those attributes belonging solely to God, as in 1 Corinthians 2:10. Psalm 139:7.

It seems very evident that these THREE PERSONS are such that act and are themselves the object of actions, establishing their true personality, while they are yet ONE IN ESSENCE, truly GOD! The whole may be summed up in the words of Boardman:

“The Father is all the fullness of the Godhead invisible, (1 John 1:18); the Son is all the fullness of the Godhead manifested (John 1:14-18); the Holy Spirit is all the fullness of the Godhead acting immediately upon the creature (1 Corinthians 2:9-10).”

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