

# THE TRINITY MYSTERY

Of all the doctrines extant in the world today, probably none is more widely accepted by all faiths, both Catholic and Protestant, than that of the Trinity. It is considered a central or cardinal doctrine of the Christian religion; a doctrine of great importance, “a bulwark for Christian theism.”

Theologians and laymen alike acknowledge that the word “Trinity” does not appear in the Scriptures, but they insist to a man that it is implied, even definitely taught by the Bible. It is admittedly “above reason and cannot be comprehended in its depth and fullness,” yet it supposedly is “not opposed to reason.”

Writes a contemporary doctor of divinity: “Devout and careful Bible students throughout the church centuries have been convinced that the plain teaching of the Bible is that in the unity of the Godhead there exists a Trinity of coequal Persons.

“The doctrine of the Trinity is superior to human reason. It is one of those truths that must be apprehended, although by our finite wisdom it cannot be fully comprehended. It is difficult to illustrate this truth. We can only confine ourselves to the statements of God’s Word and believe them, whether or not we can explain them.”

Obviously the doctrine is shrouded in mystery. Dissertations and explanations on the subject are often ambiguous, replete with such phrases as “Implicit rather than explicit”; “transcending finite comprehension”; “may be deduced from the Scriptures”; “a deep mystery”; numerous passages are said to “point to the dogma”; and it is said to be a “doctrine to be accepted by faith,” or as stated above to be “apprehended” rather than “comprehended.”

In spite of its incomprehensibility the doctrine is still widely acclaimed in our modern age (where almost everything else has to be provable to be believed!). Infants held in their mother’s arms are baptized “in the name of the father, and of the son, and of the Holy Ghost”; children, long before they reach the age of understanding, repeat the words parrot-like; and nominal churches throughout the world sing the familiar hymn, “God in three Persons, Blessed Trinity.”

We take the position that the so-called “Trinity” is unscriptural, that no doctrine of the Bible is superior to human reason, that God’s Word can be understood if properly studied. True, man is finite, and God infinite, but He does not shroud His truth in deep mystery. The words of Moses, (repeated by Jesus, the Son of God) are too plain to be misunderstood: “*Hear, O Israel: The Lord our God, the Lord is one*” (Deut. 6:4; Mark 12:29).

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Our study will center around the following:

- What Is the Trinity?
- The Origin of the Trinity
- “Evidence” According to Theology
  - From the Old Testament
  - From the New Testament
- \*Scriptural Evidence Against the Trinity

Through the centuries since the founding of the Christian Church, religious thought has undergone an evolution process. As the Jews became acquainted with Greek philosophy they incorporated Greek thought into their religious beliefs. Included was the concept of the Trinity.

A few facts are necessary at the onset:

1) The doctrine of the “Trinity” cannot be found in the Bible.

2) The word “Trinity” was not even coined until nearly two hundred years after Christ, and it did not become a church doctrine until more than one hundred years after that, or more than three centuries after the founding of the Christian Church.

3) The Jewish people were strongly monotheistic (believers in one God).

We believe that the trinity has no part in true Christian faith. There are a few religious groups who would agree with us, but most accept the tradition of their fathers.

Our present age is one of tolerance; to the majority it matters little what one believes. This was not true in former days; and in the early nineteenth century Trinitarians and anti-Trinitarians contended earnestly for their beliefs. In the little-used religious sections of some libraries may be found many books on the subject, some even dating to the eighteenth century. Some of these books record debates between opposing groups. It is noted in one book that a minister in central New York preached a series of 24 sermons in defense of the Trinity in the early 1800’s.

Thomas Jefferson (President of the United States from 1801-1809), gave classic expression to the anti-Trinitarianism typical of the eighteenth century: ““When we shall have done away with the incomprehensible jargon of the Trinitarian arithmetic, that three are one, and one is three; when we shall have knocked down the artificial scaffolding, reared to mask from view the simple structure of Jesus; when, in short, we shall have unlearned everything which has been taught since his day, and got back to the pure and simple doctrines he inculcated, we shall then be truly and worthily his disciples; and my opinion is that if nothing had ever been added to what

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flowed purely from his lips the whole world would at this day have been Christian.”“

Other persons as well as Thomas Jefferson opposed the doctrine as vigorously, but apparently they obtained only a small following and soon the opposition died out and the doctrine remains today in the creeds of all major denominations.

Does a “Trinity of coequal Persons exist in the Godhead”? We will give the matter careful study, following the Bible rule of “comparing spiritual things with spiritual,” relying on the unerring Word of God.

### **What Is the Trinity?**

It is difficult to arrive at a lucid definition of the Trinity since believers in the doctrine claim also to believe in the contradictory doctrine of but one God. Also, because the term does not appear in the Bible, our definition of the word must come from secular sources.

### **The Trinity Is ...**

The Encyclopedic Dictionary defines Trinity as “A threefold consubstantial personality existing in the one divine being or substance; the union in one God of Father, Son, and Holy Spirit as three infinite persons.”

A contemporary theologian attempts this explanation: “It follows that, since relationship in God is God, and since there are three related Persons in God, Father, Son and Holy Spirit, then each of them (although related to each of the others) is God too. This confirms the truth of the mystery of God, One in nature but Three in Persons. Far from being an affirmation of the existence of three Gods, the mystery of the Trinity lies in the existence of a trinity of relations or relationships in one God, and each of these is itself God since it possesses the whole of the divine essence. Each one is God, yet the three are one God only.” (Bernard Piault, What Is the Trinity? p. 135)

Such a “definition” (?) asks more than it answers and could certainly be correctly termed “incomprehensible.” Other definitions available add little to the comprehensibility of the doctrine:

“The Father is God, the Son is God and the Holy Spirit is God, and yet there are not three Gods, but one God,” reads one; and yet another says, “Always God, always Son, at the same time Father, at the same time Son, the Son exists unbegotten with the Father, everlasting uncreated, neither in conception nor in any smallest point does God excel the Son.”

Any number of similar explanations by a host of writers do little to clarify the subject.

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Rather than elucidate, they only confuse. Cyril C. Richardson, in his book *The Doctrine of the Trinity*, comments on the subject: “It must be recognized that the subject is one of great difficulty. Not only is the literature on it so enormous that scarcely a lifetime would suffice to master it, but trinitarian doctrine has generated the most subtle speculations which are not easy to follow. It has been observed that while one may be in danger of losing his soul by denying it, he is in equal danger of losing his wits in trying to understand it.”

### **Origin of the Trinity**

Though it is readily admitted that the word “Trinity” did not have its origin in the Bible since it cannot be found there, theologians hasten to add that the “principle of Trinity” is found there, hence it is said to be a Bible doctrine. But is it?

### **Historical Background**

The Trinity had a rather inglorious early history, but its proponents rather than its opponents were the victors and the doctrine survives. In the early centuries it was not uncommon to excommunicate and even imprison men for contesting the doctrines of the church and those who opposed the Trinity when it was first introduced were bitterly denounced by the hierarchy.

The Trinity originated in the philosophy of Plato, a Greek philosopher some four centuries before Christ. An English scholar has noted that “the germs of all ideas, even of most Christian ones, are to be found in Plato.” (Gerard S. Sloyan, *The Three Persons in One God*, p. 31)

Triadic formulas were a part of a variety of paganisms, and “it should surprise us greatly if these did not have an impact on late Judaism and early Christianity; and in fact it was so. The predominant idea was that of a family triad, father, spirit (female principle), and offspring. The ‘Egyptian Gospel’ mentions a ‘self-subsistent Father, self-subsistent Son, and self-subsistent Holy Spirit.’” (Sloyan, p. 31)

According to other historians, some sort of trinity was recognized in all the ancient nations of the world. It is found not only in Greek mythology, but also in the mythologies of Persia, Egypt, India and Japan. Ideas range from a triad of gods worshiped by Taoists, a triple-bodied deity of Buddhism and a three-headed god of the Japanese.

### **The Trinity Introduced to Christianity**

Church historians agree that the word “trinity” first appeared in the writings of Tertullian near the end of the second century after Christ. It was not formulated into a church doctrine until the Council of Nice, 325 A.D. Previous to this a battle of words raged among the church fathers over the proper wording of the doctrine of the Trinity. Arius, a priest, was excommunicated and

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forced to seek refuge in another country for teaching that Christ did not pre-exist.

### **The Council of Nicaea**

In the year 325 A.D. the emperor Constantine called a meeting of the church fathers to decide the matter of the Trinity. Some 300 assembled and Arius was condemned for his teaching. The context of the condemnation is interesting: “Examination was made into the impiety and lawlessness of Arius and his followers, in the presence of our most God-beloved sovereign Constantine, and it was unanimously decided that his impious opinion should be anathematized, together with all the blasphemous sayings and expressions which he has uttered ... affirming that ‘the Son of God is from what is not’ and ‘there was [a time] when he was not’; saying also that the Son of God, in virtue of his free-will, is capable of evil and good, and calling him a creature and a work. All these utterances the holy Synod anathematized . . .” (Unger’s Bible Dictionary, p. 1119). Arius and his followers were denounced because they refused to believe in the preexistence of Christ.

The Council of Nicaea is better known for its formulation of the doctrine of the Trinity than for its opposition to Arianism. It “adopted the formal statement of the consubstantiality of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit, while maintaining the distinction of personality. The doctrine of the Nicene Council was reaffirmed at various succeeding councils, and is the generally recognized doctrine of the Christian Church.” (Unger’s Bible Dictionary)

Probably no doctrine has had more volumes written concerning it than the Trinity. Augustine spent twenty years composing a study on the subject, yet the doctrine is still considered a “mystery.”

### **According to Mainstream Theology...**

Theologians claim that the Bible, while not using the word “Trinity,” definitely teaches that such a union exists. Numerous volumes have been written in an effort to prove this thesis, i.e., while God is one, He exists in three persons. “We worship one God in Trinity, and Trinity in unity,” says the Athanasian creed. “There is one Person of the Father, another of the Son, and another of the Holy Ghost. They are all one, coeternal, uncreated, incomprehensible, and almighty. Yet there are three persons, distinguished by the fact that the Father is unbegotten, the Son begotten, and the Spirit, proceeding from the Father and [or through] the Son.”

The doctrine of the Trinity has been stated and restated in various creeds: the Nicene Creed, the Athanasian creed, the creed of Constantinople, and the Apostles Creed. But creeds are the work of men (the apostles had nothing to do with the “Apostles Creed”), not the word of

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God. We will study some Scriptures adduced by Trinitarians to prove the doctrine.

### **From the Old Testament**

After establishing the Trinity as an official tenet of the church, the leading theologians of the day determined there must be proof for it in the Old testament in spite of the fact that the religion of the Jews was emphatically monotheistic. The Jews thought of God as they were instructed by Moses: "The Lord our God is one Lord." Theology contradicts this, saying, "There is one God, eternally existing and manifesting Himself in three Persons." God is One, yet three, a mathematical impossibility, yet theologically possible (?).

Where was the proof? A Moody publication entitled "The Trinity, Must We Believe It?" cites as Old Testament proof of the existence of three Gods in one the fact that the Old Testament word most frequently used for God is plural in form. Examples given include Genesis 3:22, 27, "*Behold the man is become as one of US,*" and Genesis 11:7, "*Let US go down.*"

According to the booklet, "This word [presumably *elohim*] is found hundreds of times.... There is a plural name for the one God because there is a multiplicity of Persons in the one Godhead."

This is an exercise in jumping at conclusions. Had the author not been attempting to prove the existence of three Gods in one, he might not have reached such a conclusion. There is absolutely nothing to indicate the presence of Jesus at any of the occasions where the plural *elohim* is used.

The word *elohim* is used often to refer to God Himself and also the angels. Gesenius' Hebrew and English Lexicon says of *elohim*: "In a plural sense of gods or deities in general.... Not a few interpreters, both ancient and modern, have regarded *elohim* as denoting angels-see Ps. 8:5; 82:1; 97:7; 138:1....Hebrews 1:6 and 2:7, 9, show plainly that this word sometimes means angels, and the authority of the New Testament decides the matter."

Applying the above definition, the "us" of both Genesis 3:22 and 11:7 represent God and His angels, an explanation in harmony with Bible teaching.

A contemporary writer of the Catholic faith would also take issue with the conclusion of the writer quoted above. In a book entitled *What Is the Trinity?* by Bernard Pialt we read the following: "God is called *Elohim* about two thousand times in the Old Testament, but this in no way challenged the monotheism of Israel. Interpreters of Scripture see in it rather a plural of intensity or of excellence and majesty, meaning that the God of Israel is the only true God. There is no way in which it can be made to disclose a revelation of the Trinity, however veiled....For

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the same reason it cannot be admitted that Genesis 1:26, in which God-Elohim says: ‘*Let us make man,*’ suggests a joint decision of the three divine Persons.” Of Genesis 3:22, the author says, “*God is talking to himself and declares that man, in judging right and wrong, has set himself up as a judge, that is, he is acting like a god.*”

### **From the New Testament**

“The same Bible,” says a contemporary writer, “that says there is but one God, continually implies, side by side with statements of the unity of the Godhead, that there are three Persons in the one Godhead.... That there is but one God must not be overlooked, for apart from this there cannot be a correct conception of the Trinity.” This is admitted to be somewhat of a puzzle, but man being of a finite nature was not meant to understand it fully, so they say.

To the majority of present-day Christians, the doctrine of the three persons in one God is a fundamental belief, fully supported by the Scriptures. We will discuss some New Testament passages commonly used in support of the doctrine.

\*Matthew 28:19, “*Baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit.*”

Trinitarians point to this verse as the first definite linking of the three-in-one: “... *baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit.*” The fact that this verse associates the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit does not in itself prove that a trinity of the three exists in one God. Nothing is said of their being coequal or coeternal. That it was actually a part of Christ’s commission to His Apostles is questioned by some Bible students who believe that the command to baptize “in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit” was not part of the original rendering of the text but was added at a later date.

A writer in Hasting’s Encyclopedia points out that the baptism performed in the Acts of the Apostles was not a trine baptism as according to the commission, as commanded in the traditional rendering of Matthew. (See Acts 2:38; 8:16; 10:48; 19:2-5.) The writer then comments, “The obvious explanation of the silence of the New Testament on the trine name, and the use of another formula in Acts and Paul, is that this formula was the earlier, and that the trine formula is a latter addition. It would require very strong arguments to controvert this presumption, and none seem to exist.”

It is obvious that such a baptism was not in use at Ephesus in Paul’s time, for in answer to Paul’s question: “*Did you received the Holy Spirit when you believed?*” their reply was, “*We have not so much as heard whether there is a Holy Spirit*” (Acts 19:2-3). Verse 5 states simply

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that “*they were baptized in the name of the Lord Jesus.*” Obviously they knew nothing of the Trinity.

\* 1 John 5:7, “*For there are three that bear witness in heaven, the Father, the Word, and the Holy Spirit: and these three are one.*”

Of this verse says one writer: “It is the most conclusive proof of a triune God of any one text in the Bible.” Be that as it may, it is almost universally agreed today that the verse does not belong in the Scriptures; that it is spurious, having been added several centuries after John wrote his epistle. The verse is omitted from most of the newer versions including Moffatt, Goodspeed, Williams, New English, Today’s English and the Revised Standard. In most of them it is pointed out that the words do not occur in any of the best Greek manuscripts. For example, this passage in the New English Bible reads, “*This is he who came with water and blood: Jesus Christ. He came, not by water alone, but by water and blood; and there is the Spirit to bear witness, because the Spirit is truth. For there are three witnesses, the Spirit, the water, and the blood, and these three are in agreement*” (1 John 5:6-8, verse 7 omitted).

The Interpreter’s Bible comments: “This verse in the KJV is to be rejected. It appears in no ancient Greek MSS (Manuscripts) nor is it cited by any Greek father; of all the versions only the Latin contained it, and even this in none of its most ancient sources. The earliest MSS of the Vulgate do not have it. As Dodd reminds us, ‘It is first quoted as a part of 1 John by Priscillian, the Spanish heretic, who died in 385, and it gradually made its way into the Latin Vulgate MSS until it was accepted as part of the authorized Latin text’... The mention in the true text (v. 8) of the three witnesses which agree naturally led to an interpretation along trinitarian line,, and this occasioned the present gloss which appears in various forms in MSS and quotations from the fifth century on.”

Concerning this verse, another writer comments that the fact that it “contains a doctrine clearly revealed in the Scriptures is strong proof of its authority.” Universal acceptance of a belief does not render it the Truth of the Scriptures. Since the weight of evidence is against its being valid, we cannot accept 1 John 5:7 as proof of the Trinity.

According to the text in the New English Bible, “*there are three witnesses, the Spirit, the water, and the blood, and these three are in agreement.*” The spirit signifies the Word, God’s saving knowledge, not the Holy Spirit. Jesus tells us in John 6:63: “*the words that I speak unto you, they are spirit, and they are life.*” This is the spirit we have today, the spirit of truth, the Word of God.

The water represents the water of life, signifying that there must be a cleansing

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accomplished, and the blood signifies the death to sin, being “*crucified with Christ*” (Gal. 2:20), being dead to sin as was Christ (Rom. 6:10-11). We have these three witnesses: The spirit or Word; the water of life or the cleansing medium; and the example of Jesus’ death to sin. These three agree-not as one person, but as one record, the Word of God.

\* John 1:1, 14, “*In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God....And the Word was made flesh, and dwelt among us, (and we beheld his glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father,) full of grace and truth.*”

These verses in our common version are among those most often used to prove that Christ existed from the beginning as the second person of the Trinity. Theologians see in these verses proof that Christ existed at the time of the creation and that He became a man and came to the earth to live. Accepting the translation as literal, they reason that since “the Word was God,” and the “Word was made flesh,” the “Word” is Christ and Christ is God. (If this reasoning were correct, it would prove only a duality, not a trinity.)

Such reasoning is faulty. Other translations shed some light on these verses. Goodspeed translates John 1:1 as follows: “In the beginning the Word existed. The Word was with God, and the Word was divine.” The Greek word translated “Word” is Logos, which authorities claim should have been left untranslated. Dr. Moffatt leaves Logos untranslated in his translation of the Bible since the word has no true equivalent in the English language.

The Greek word Logos signifies a word spoken, speech, eloquence, doctrine, reason, or the faculty for reasoning. Hastings’ Encyclopedia credits the philosopher Philo with establishing the Platonic philosophy that the Logos was a person. In Greek philosophy the Logos was “the cosmic reason giving order, purpose, and intelligibility to the world.” The authors of the Septuagint used it to translate the Hebrew emer spoken word of the deity.

John 1:1 does not teach that Christ was in existence at the time of the creation. It is God’s Word, His Truth that was in the beginning with God, and that Word, being the Word of God, was Divine.

John 1:14, “*And the Word was made flesh,*” again uses the Greek word Logos and is likewise left un-translated in the Moffatt Bible. Jesus was the personification of the Word and He dwelt among men. He did His Father’s will so completely that He could say “*I do always those things that please him*” (John 8:29). He spoke only the words received of His Father: “*For I*

*have not spoken of myself; but the Father which sent me, he gave me a commandment, what I should say, and what I should speak*” (John 12:49). He exemplified the Word of God in

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every word and act of His life; He was the Word in action. There is nothing in these verses to indicate that He was coequal or coeternal with His Father. Jesus Himself stated unequivocally: *“My Father is greater than I”* (John 14:28). We cannot deny His word, else we deny Him.

\*2 Corinthians 13:14, *“The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, and the love of God, and the communion of the Holy Ghost [Spirit], be with you all.”*

This verse, often spoken of as the “Apostolic Benediction,” is also given as proof of the doctrine of the Trinity. Just why this text should be singled out as the “Apostolic Benediction” is not clear, for no other apostle than Paul used this phraseology, and he but once. All other benedictions used omit any reference to the so-called “trine formula.” Paul’s most common salutation was, “The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with you all.” If such a doctrine as the Trinity had been known in Apostolic times, it would be indeed strange that it should appear but once in the many benedictions in the New Testament. The use of the three names here in no way proves a triune God. Two or more names or titles of God are frequently used in succession in the Scriptures with no intent to indicate a plurality of Gods.

\*Luke 3:22, *“And the Holy Spirit descended in a bodily shape like a dove upon him, and a voice came from heaven, which said, Thou art my beloved Son; in thee I am well pleased.”*

This verse is likewise said to be proof of the existence of three distinct persons in the godhead. The phenomenon mentioned here occurred at Jesus’ baptism in the Jordan River. The occasion marked the beginning of Jesus’ ministry. The Holy Spirit power was necessary to the success of His ministry and His heavenly Father chose to send it upon Him with the appearance of a dove that the assembled people might recognize Jesus as the Messiah, the Son of God. The voice from heaven is that of the Father’s messenger assuring those who stood by and us that Jesus is truly the Son of God. According to one source, the words, “Thou art my beloved Son,” could have been translated, “Thou art my only Son,” since Greek Biblical language uses a word with two meanings, “beloved,” and “only.”

The incident must have caused the Jews to think about the meaning of this manifestation, but we can be equally certain that they saw nothing of the Trinity in the act; and we are confident no such teaching was intended.

\*John 16:14:15, *“Howbeit when he, the Spirit of truth, is come, he will guide you into all truth ... he shall glorify me: for he shall receive of mine, and shall shew it unto you.”*

These verses also supposedly prove the Trinity. Granted, the verses make mention of the Holy Spirit, the Father and the Son-but where is any mention of the three being one, or coequal

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or coeternal?

These verses form part of Jesus' long discourse to His disciples the night preceding His crucifixion. He was informing them concerning the Holy Spirit which they would receive after His ascension and glorification. It is evident from the context that the disciples did not understand all that was about to happen, for they did not have foreknowledge of it as did Jesus. The Holy Spirit was a power, not a person, and no part of a Trinity. After Jesus' ascension, the disciples were given the Holy Spirit, and by it they were able to recall and record the teachings of Jesus as well as to perform many miracles while teaching the Gospel.

\*Luke 4:8, *"Get behind Me, Satan: For it is written, You shall worship the Lord your God, and Him only you shall serve."*

Trinitarians use this verse to prove the Deity of Christ: only God is to be worshiped, and since Jesus was worshiped (Luke 24:52), then Jesus must be God. This reasoning is incorrect. Jesus worshiped no one other than His Father, for only His Father was greater than He. But during the course of His ministry, Jesus said, *"The Father loves the Son, and has given all things into His hand."* And in His last sermon to His disciples, He said, *"Whatever you ask the Father in My name, He will give you. Until now you have asked nothing in My name: Ask, and you will receive, that your joy may be full"* (John 3:35; 16:23-24). After the Father had given Him authority, it was quite proper that He should be worshiped, but that does not make Him God or put Him in the place of God, or prove that He is any part of a Trinity.

Jesus repeatedly identified Himself as the Son of God, addressing God as His Father. He prayed that His followers *"that they may know You [the Father] the only true God, and Jesus Christ, whom You have sent"* (John 17:3) two separate and distinct beings. And note that Jesus addresses His Father as *"the only true God,"* leaving no place for a second or third co-equal being.

Ephesians 4:4-6, *"There is one body and one Spirit, just as you were called in one hope of your calling; One Lord, one faith, one baptism, one God and Father of all..."*

These verses plainly state that there is but one God, one Lord [Jesus Christ], and one spirit [the Holy Spirit], yet supporters see in them a Trinity of the three.

Contrary to the claim of the Trinitarians, these verses can in no way be said to ascribe deity to all three personages. The verses also mention one body (the church), one faith, and one baptism. All were essential elements in the Apostolic Church.

Paul was exhorting the Ephesian brethren to be of one mind in the faith and to realize how

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privileged they were to have been called to such a glorious calling. Certainly he was not teaching the Trinity or attempting to prove the Deity of Christ and the Holy Spirit. The three supposed parts of the Trinity do not even appear together in the verses in question! Attempting to prove a tri-unity of one God in these verses is a case of men reading into the Scriptures something that is not there.

Other New Testament Scriptures used to support the doctrine are too numerous to cover here in detail. The meaning of some of them may be obscure, but we are confident that there is not a single verse in the Scriptures that supports the theory of a plurality of Divine persons: that Jesus, His Father and the Holy Spirit are coequal and coeternal. On the contrary, the Bible teaches the absolute oneness of God.

### **Scriptural Evidence Against the Trinity**

In the preceding section we have covered verses of Scripture commonly accepted as proof of the existence of the Trinity. Theology makes the claim that the “same Bible that says there is but one God, continually implies, side by side with statements of the unity of the Godhead, that there are three Persons in the one Godhead. Certainly the writers could not contradict themselves in so glaring a manner.”

We are confident that the Bible does not contradict itself, that it can be established from the Word of God that there is but ONE GOD, that He is indivisible, that He exists as but one Person, not three. We believe the Bible is so plain on the subject that men of ordinary intelligence can comprehend the teaching and that we are not asked to believe in anything so puzzling as a God who is, in the words of one trinitarian, “one as to essence and three as to persons.”

### **Old Testament Evidence**

The Old Testament teaches categorically that there is but one God, that He is without equal and without rivals. This is in accord with reason; it is unreasonable to suppose two First Causes. The Scriptures state that God is One; we cannot say “God is Three.”

#### God’s Word through Moses

*“Hear, O Israel: The Lord our God the Lord is one”; “The Lord Himself is God; there is none other besides Him”; “The Lord Himself is God in heaven above and on the earth beneath; there is no other”; “The Lord your God is a jealous God among you” (Deut. 6:4; 4:35, 39; 6:15).*

#### God’s Word through Isaiah

*“Thus says the Lord, the King of Israel, And his redeemer, the Lord of hosts: I am the*

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*First, and I am the Last; Besides me there is no God....Is there a God beside Me? Indeed there is no other Rock; I know not one”; “I am the Lord, and there is no other; there is no God besides Me: I will gird you, though you have not known Me,... that they may know...That there is none besides Me. I am the Lord, and there is no other”; “For thus says the Lord, Who created the heavens, Who is God Who formed the earth and made it;...I am the Lord, and there is no other.... I, the Lord speak righteousness, I declare things that are right....They have no knowledge, Who carry the wood of their carved image, And pray to a god that cannot save....There is no other God besides Me; a just God and a Saviour; There is none beside me. Look unto Me, and be saved, All the ends of the earth! For I am God, and there is no other” (Isa. 44:6, 8; 45:5-6, 18-22).*

The Bible asserts positively and often that there is but one God. The Hebrew word JHVH, or Jehovah, from which “God” is translated means the Self-existent, or Eternal One, the First Cause of all things. This title is applied exclusively to God. Hence God, or Jehovah is not a created Being, but the Creator of all things, “from everlasting to everlasting,” as stated by the Psalmist. The name Jehovah is never applied to Jesus.

Again, “Remember the former things of old, For I am God, and there is no other; I am God, and there is none like Me” (Isa. 46:9). (For other texts on the subject, see Isa. 40:25; 42:8; 43:10-11; 46:5).

### **God’s Word through Other Old Testament Prophets**

Other prophets, while not as vocal on the subject as Isaiah, also understood that Jehovah was the One and Only God. Solomon, in his prayer at the dedication of the Temple said, “there is no God like thee, in the heaven above, or on earth beneath.” David, after being forbidden to build the Temple, acknowledged Him thus: “O Lord, there is none like You, nor is there any God beside You, according to all that we have heard with our ears” (1 Chron. 17:20). Cyrus, King of Persia making a proclamation to rebuild the Temple, described it as “the house of the Lord God of Israel, (He is God,) which is in Jerusalem” (Ezra 1:3). Hezekiah, praying for deliverance from Sennacherib, addressed his Maker: “O Lord God of Israel,... You are God, You alone, of all the kingdoms of the earth. You have made heaven and earth” (2 Kings 19:15).

Nehemiah likewise recognized God as Sovereign: “You alone are the Lord; You have made heaven,...The earth....The seas....and You preserve them all....” (Neh. 9:6). Jeremiah was also confident of the One in whom he trusted and whose words he spoke, saying: “There is none like :You, O Lord; You art great, and Your name is great in might. Who would not fear You, O King of the nations?” Then, comparing the Eternal One with idols, he adds, “But the Lord is the

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*true God; He is the living God and the everlasting king*” (Jer. 10:6-7, 10).

All these testimonies assert the unity of God. Many other Old Testament passages could be cited as proof that God is One One in person and One in essence. Not one text contains even a suggestion to the contrary.

### **New Testament Evidence**

That the New Testament writers studied the prophets is evident in their fluent quotations. Jesus also found the basis for His teachings in the words of His Father spoken through the patriarchs and prophets.

#### From Jesus

When He was asked: “Of all the commandments, which is the most important?” Jesus replied, “*The one that says, ‘Hear, O Israel! The Lord our God is the one and only God. . . .’*” (Mark 12:28, Living Letters). Jesus was here quoting the words of Moses, conclusive proof that the God of Moses’ day and the God of Jesus’ day were the same-one God.

Jesus gave further testimony on the subject in His prayer before His death: “*And this is eternal life, that they may know You, the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom You have sent*” (John 17:3). This text not only shows one God but also shows that Jesus was not God. Because He was sent by God in no way proves that He was God, nor any part of a trinity of Gods, but that He was God’s representative on the earth.

#### From the Apostle Paul

The Great Apostle was well versed in the Old Testament Scriptures as is clearly shown throughout the record of his missionary journeys and his Epistles written from prison. There is absolutely no evidence that he taught a trinity of persons in one God, but to him, as to the prophets and Jesus, there was one God.

To the Corinthians Paul wrote: “*For even if there are so-called gods, whether in heaven or on earth, (as there are many gods and many lords), yet for us there is one God, the Father, of whom are all things, and we for him; and one Lord Jesus Christ, through whom are all things, and through whom we live*” (1 Cor. 8:5-6).

To Timothy Paul wrote: “*For there is one God, and one mediator between God and men, the man Christ Jesus.*” In the previous chapter he also spoke of “*to God who alone is wise*” (1 Tim. 2:5; 1:17).

To the Galatians Paul wrote: “*God is one*” (Gal. 3:20).

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To the Ephesians Paul wrote: “*One Lord, one faith, one baptism, one God and Father of all...*” (4:5-6).

That there is but one God in one Person is implied in many other texts in Paul’s epistles. In his speech to the men of Athens (Acts 17:22-31), he chided them for their worship of an “unknown God” and declared to them the one true God, the creator of all things, making no mention of a trinity of persons in the godhead.

We quote freely from Paul since he was chosen for the ministry by Christ Himself; and of the gospel he preached, he said, “the gospel you heard me preach is no human invention. I did not take it over from any man; no man taught it me; I received it through a revelation of Jesus Christ.” And he further said: “*Follow my example as I follow Christ’s*” (Gal. 1:11-12, 1 Cor. 11:1, NEB).

### **Jesus is NOT God**

In the booklet entitled “The Trinity, Must We Believe It?” the author states that “the Bible invests each of these [God, Christ and the Holy Spirit] with the attributes and titles of deity. If the deity of Christ and of the Holy Spirit can be established from Scripture, the matter is settled: There must be a tri-unity in the one God, and belief in the trinity must be fundamental.

“Careful Bible students are agreed that the Scriptures ascribe deity to Christ and that He himself claimed it.... Jesus Christ was God while at the same time man. He was not half God and half man but actually God and real man.”

This is a broad statement and one with which we cannot agree. We believe that “careful Bible students”-students of the Scriptures and not theology-will find upon careful study that Jesus Christ was NOT God. To claim that Christ could be “actually God and real man” is ridiculous. We will go to the Bible itself for proof that Jesus was a man and not God.

### **How Can We Know?**

#### Jesus Was a Human Being

No one knew Jesus better than the Twelve who accompanied Him throughout His three-year ministry. They walked and talked with Him; they prepared food and ate with Him. There is nothing to indicate that they considered Him part God or God Himself. Peter, speaking to the assembled multitude after the Holy Spirit had been received, still spoke of Him as “*Jesus of Nazareth, a man approved of God among you by miracles and wonders and signs*” (Acts 2:22).

#### Jesus Was Born-Not Created in Heaven

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The prophets foretold that Jesus would be born, not sent down from heaven. Moses said that “*God will raise up for you a Prophet like me from your midst, from your brethren, Him you shall hear*” (Deut. 18:15). He was here alluding to Jesus’ being a descendant of the tribe of Judah. The prophet Isaiah likewise foretold that “*Behold, the virgin shall conceive, and bear a son, and shall call His name Immanuel*” (Isa. 7:14). The name Immanuel means “God with us,” that is, Jesus was to be God’s representative on earth, not God Himself.

Paul testified to the fulfillment of the prophecy: “*But when the fullness of the time was come, God sent forth His Son, born of a woman, born under the law*” (Gal. 4:4). He was born as any other child, “born of a woman.”

### Jesus Had to Learn

Jesus did not possess all knowledge and all wisdom, but had to learn. As a child, His mental capabilities were equal to those of any other child. It is recorded that in His youth He “*increased in wisdom and stature, [age, margin], and in favor with God and men*” (Luke 2:52). He went home with His parents “*and was subject unto them*” after being located in the Temple in Jerusalem. “*He learned obedience by the things which He suffered*” (Heb. 5:8) These are not characteristics of Deity, but of a human being, the youth who was later spoken of as “*the Man Christ Jesus*” (1 Tim. 2:5).

### Jesus Was Subject to Temptation

“*God cannot be tempted with evil,*” but we read that Jesus was tempted. Three of the four Gospel writers tell of His temptation in the wilderness (Matt. 4; Mark 1; Luke 4), and the writer to the Hebrews describes Him as one “*In all points tempted as we are, yet without sin*” (Heb. 4:15). From the New English translation we read that “*he had to be made like these brothers of his in every way, so that he might be merciful and faithful as their High Priest before God...to help those who are meeting their test now*” (Heb. 2:17-18). He is our High Priest before God, not God Himself, as plainly shown in this text.

### Jesus Possessed Other Human Characteristics

Jesus is clearly revealed in the Scriptures as a man, not God. We read of His being weary (John 4:6), of His weeping (John 11:35), of His dying (Matt. 27:50), of His being buried (Matt. 27:59-60). These are all things that could happen to a human being, but not to God. God “*Neither faints nor is weary*” (Isa. 40:28), there are no tears in heaven (Rev. 21:4); God is omniscient, He is all-knowing (Isa. 46:9-10); He is both eternal and everlasting, hence He could not die and be buried.

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### Jesus Was the SON of God, not GOD the Son

Genealogies were important to the Jews and the genealogy of Jesus in both Matthew and Luke states that He was the “son of David,” and Luke adds “the son of Adam, the son of God.” Jesus acknowledged God as His Father, and throughout His ministry emphasized that He was the “Son of God.” The title “Son of God” is applied to Him more than 50 times in the New Testament, more than half of these being in the Gospels.

The phrase “God the Son” appears frequently in Creeds and Catechisms, but it is not once found in the Scriptures. “God the Son” is theology and NOT Bible.

Christ made no claim of being God. On the contrary, He showed His dependence on God, His Father. We read that He “continued all night in prayer to God” on one occasion. On another, He prayed, “O My Father, if it is possible, let this cup pass from Me: nevertheless, not as I will, but as You will.” Again He said, “I do not seek My own will but the will of the Father who sent Me.” He said “I do nothing of Myself; but as My Father taught Me, I speak these things....I always do those things that please Him.” He said, “My Father has been working until now, and I have been working.” All these texts show two separate persons, not one person in two parts (Luke 6:12; Matt. 26:39; John 5:30; John 8:28-29; 5:17).

Jesus said, “*I and My Father are one*” (John 10:30). Believers in the Trinity fly to this verse to prove that Jesus was God. True, He said He was one with the Father, but that in no way proves He was God.

The late William Barclay makes an interesting comment on this verse. He says in part: “What did Jesus mean by this? ...If we will go to the Bible itself for the interpretation of this statement, we will find that it is in fact so simple that the simplest mind can grasp it....Let us go on ahead and turn to the 17th chapter of John’s gospel. There John tells us of the prayer of Jesus for His own people before He went to His death. He prayed thus:

“*Holy Father, keep through Thine own name those whom thou hast given me, that they may be one as we are*’ (v. 11). It is clear that Jesus conceived of the unity of Christian with Christian as the same as His own unity with God. He says so in so many words. In the same passage He goes on: ‘*Neither pray I for these alone, but for them also which shall believe on me through their word; that they all may be one, as Thou, Father, art in me, and I in Thee; that they also may be one in us: that the world may believe that Thou hast sent me. And the glory which Thou gavest me I have given them; that they may be one, even as we are one*’ (John 17:20-22).

“There Jesus is saying with simplicity and with clarity which none can mistake that the end

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of the Christian life is that Christians should be one as He and His Father are one....

“Here is the essence of the matter: the bond of unity is love; the proof of love is obedience. Christians are one with each other when they are bound by the bond of unity, and obey the words of Christ.

“Jesus is one with God, because as no other person ever did, He obeyed God and He loved God. His unity with God is a unity of perfect love, issuing in a perfect obedience.

“When Jesus said: ‘I and the Father are one,’ He was not moving in the world of philosophy and metaphysics and abstractions; He was moving in the world of personal relationships. No one can really understand what a phrase like a ‘unity of essence’ [a common phrase in creeds on the Trinity] means; but any one can understand what a unity of heart means. Jesus’ unity with God came from the twin facts of perfect love and perfect obedience. He was one with God because He loved God perfectly and obeyed God perfectly.”

### **In Summary**

The doctrine of the Trinity is without Biblical foundation. It is not mentioned in the Bible and was not formulated until more than three centuries after Christ. There is no evidence whatever that such a belief existed in the Apostolic Church nor in the Christian Church that grew out of their missionary efforts. The writings of the “Christian fathers” of the early centuries after Christ contain no indication that such a doctrine was in existence.

It is admitted by Trinitarian writers that the Trinity doctrine developed gradually. Church history also shows that the early church was disturbed by the admixture of heathen philosophy with the doctrines of the Bible. Paul witnessed to “the mystery of iniquity” already at work among the believers. He also warned Titus to hold fast to sound doctrine “for there are many unruly and vain talkers and deceivers” teaching other doctrines.

The doctrine of the Trinity as stated in the fourth century remains today in most church creeds. But not being supported by the Bible, we must totally reject it. The Bible teaches “one God, and one Mediator between God and men, the Man Christ Jesus” (1 Tim. 2:5). The Holy Spirit is no part of divinity but is only the power of God.

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### STUDY GUIDE

#### Can You Answer These?

1. Define briefly the doctrine of the “trinity” as it is accepted by the religious world.
2. Where in the Bible does the word “trinity” occur?
3. What is the earliest known source of the idea of a trinity of persons? When was it officially adopted by the so-called Christian church?
4. Who or what is the Logos of John 1:1? What was Christ’s part in the creation of this physical earth?
5. Prove from the Bible that the Holy Spirit is not a third person of the Godhead.
6. Did Jesus administer with God’s authority because He is God?
7. What was Isaiah’s position concerning the oneness or the trinity of God?”
8. Cite three texts in the book of Isaiah where the Prophet specifies that God is one God, not a trinity of deities.
9. Mention four other Old Testament personages who testified that God is one.
10. Name four characteristics about Jesus which prove definitely that Jesus was not the eternal God.

(If you need assistance in answering these questions, refer to your Bible and to the pages of this lesson.)