

The Trinity

Intro:

What is the apparent difficulty with the doctrine of the trinity?

What about God's mode of existence seems to be incompatible, contradictory, or a mystery?

Answer: On the one hand, we have the clearly revealed fact that there is but one God and on the other hand, no less clearly revealed fact that there are three to whom the attributes and qualities of Deity are ascribed, the Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost.

I. The Different Views of God – See Handout **PUT CHARTS IN FROM C.H.**

Transition: Church's Response: The issue became soteriological in nature. Could Christ save man if He were a demigod, less than true God, and of a similar or different essence from the Father? Just what was His relationship to the Father? The controversy became so bitter that Alexander and Arius condemned by a synod. Arius then fled to the friendly palace of Eusebius. Since the dispute centered in Asia Minor, it threatened the unity of the empire as well as that of the church. Constantine then called a council of the bishops of the church to work out a solution to the dispute. The council met at Nicaea in the earthly summer of 325. Between 250 and 300 bishops of the church were present, but fewer than ten were from the western section of the empire. The emperor presided over the first session and paid all the costs.

II. The General Definition of God

A. The Three Major Features

1. The Oneness of God
2. The Three Eternal Persons of the One God – the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit.
3. The Deity of Each of the Three

B. The Compilation in Creeds

1. The Nicene Creed:
2. The Athanasian Creed:
What about Christ being begotten (Jn. 3:16)?
 - a. This does not mean ontologically begotten, but begotten in the same sense of eternal establishment of relationship.
 - b. Christ is not ontologically subordinate.
 - c. The names Father, Son, and Holy Spirit are not applicable to the divine essence, but are only applicable to their hypostatical distinctions; therefore, they do not imply the Son's essence came from the Father's essence.
 - d. "Begotten" is not a commencement of existence, but an eternal relation to the Father.
 - e. "Begotten" only shows how the trinity stands in relation to each other in personality, office, and operation. (human analogy: an order which involves no

inequality -relationship between man and woman – priority is not necessarily superiority)

- f. Abstract Reason: To be the eternal Son of God, one need only an eternal relationship as Son to the Father. He does not need to have his individual personhood eternally produced by the Father (Human analogy: in adoption there is a real relationship without ontological production).

III. The Biblical Proof of the Doctrine of the Trinity

A. The Doctrine of the Trinity in the Old Testament

- 1. God is One - Deut. 6:4 - Hear, O Israel: The Lord our God is one Lord:
- 2. Three Distinct Person as Deity –
Teacher’s Note: All three persons are indicated - Isa. 48:16; 63:7-10.
 - a. The Father is Recognized as God: Elohim – Gen. 1:26
Teacher’s Note: Ps. 2:7
 - b. The Son is Recognized as God:
 - 1) Isaiah 9:6 For unto us a child is born, unto us a son is given: and the government shall be upon his shoulder: and his name shall be called Wonderful, Counsellor, The mighty God, The everlasting Father, The Prince of Peace.
Teacher’s Note: The mighty God is the title “El”
 - 2) Isaiah 6:1-3 In the year that king Uzziah died I saw also the Lord sitting upon a throne, high and lifted up, and his train filled the temple. [2] Above it stood the seraphims: each one had six wings; with twain he covered his face, and with twain he covered his feet, and with twain he did fly. [3] And one cried unto another, and said, Holy, holy, holy, is the Lord of hosts: the whole earth is full of his glory.
Teacher’s Note: “Holy, Holy, Holy” could be taken as only emphatic if it stood alone. But it doesn’t, and it has been a proof to the plurality of persons. Look down to vs. 8 – “Who will go for US?” This is not our only evidence. The being being addressed here is the “Lord of Hosts,” but look and see what John 12:41 says, “These things said Esaias, when he saw his glory, and spake of him.” Go over to Acts 28:25-26 - And when they agreed not among themselves, they departed, after that Paul had spoken one word, Well spake the Holy Ghost by Esaias the prophet unto our fathers, [26] Saying, Go unto this people, and say, Hearing ye shall hear, and shall not understand; and seeing ye shall see, and not perceive:” Verse 26 is a direct quote from Isa. 6:9 but is here accredited to the Holy Spirit.
 - c. The Spirit is Recognized as God: Gen. 1:1-2; Ex. 31:3; Judges 15:14; Isa.11:2

B. The Doctrine of the Trinity in the New Testament

- 1. God is One: 1 Tim. 1:17 Now unto the King eternal, immortal, invisible, the only wise God, be honour and glory for ever and ever. Amen. (c.f. 1 Cor. 8:4-6; Eph. 4:4-6; 1 Tim. 2:5-6; James 2:19)
- 2. Three Distinct Persons as Deity – **See Handout**

a. The Father is Recognized as God: Pet. 1:2 – Elect according to the foreknowledge of God the Father...”

b. The Son is Recognized as God:

Teacher’s Note: The first step in the proof that the Lord Jesus Christ has His equal and rightful place in the Godhead is taken, when the truth is substantiated that He existed before He came into the world in human form.

1) His Preexistence:

a) He was sent into the world (Jn. 17:18)

b) He descended out of heaven (Jn. 3:13)

c) He said, “I am from above” (Jn. 8:23)

d) John the Baptist said, “He was before me.”
(Jn. 1:15, 30)

Teacher’s Note: A time relationship is indicated, and though John was older in years than Christ, he declares that Christ was before him. If John’s intention was to show Christ’s higher rank and dignity he could have said, “He **is** before me,” and not “He **was** before me.” The point is that Christ preceded John.

e) He came down from heaven (Jn. 6:33,38, 41,50,51,58,62)

f) “Before Abraham was, I am.” (Jn. 8:58).

Teacher’s Note: Some disclaim this by stating that His existence at that time was prior to the time when Abraham would become the father of many nations through the preaching of the gospel to the Gentiles, or that Christ merely pre-existed in the foreknowledge of God. These thoughts are not worthy of consideration.

Teacher’s Note: “verily, verily” – Christ introduces what he says with much seriousness.

Teacher’s Note: “Before Abraham was, I am.” He does not say of himself as he says of Abraham, “Before Abraham was, I was.” That would have been sufficient to declare his existence previous to Abraham, but he now wanted to teach his full claim to the majesty of God.

Teacher’s Note: “I am” – the signature of the Jehovah of the OT, the uncreated, continual existence in direct opposition to those created beings.

g) In the beginning was the Word... (Jn. 1:1)

Teacher’s Note: All throughout this passage is the imperfect tense of the verb “to be.” It has the idea of an eternal present

Teacher’s Note: We know that Christ did not have a time of beginning, because he goes on to say in vs. 3 – that he is the creator of all things, taking him out of the category of creatures. What he is saying that “in the beginning, when things began to come into being, He already was.

h) glory, which I had with thee before the world was – (Jn. 17:5)

2) His Names:

a) Jehovah

• Zech. 12:10 – (cf. Rev. 1:7)

• Jeremiah 23:5,6 – (cf. 1 Cor. 1:30; Rom. 3:22, 2 Cor. 5:21).

• Ps. 68:18 – (cf. Eph. 4:8-10).

- b) Elohim, God
 - Isa. 40:3 – (cf. Lk. 3:4)
 - Acts. 20:28
 - Jn. 20:28 – “My Lord and my God.”
 - Titus 2:13 – “the glorious appearing of the great God and our Saviour Jesus Christ.”
 - 1 John 5:20-21

- c. The Spirit is Recognized as God:
 - 1) *Acts 5:3-4 – “lie to the Holy Spirit...not lied unto men, but unto God”
 - 2) I Cor. 2:11 – “For what man knoweth the things of man, save the spirit of man which is in him? Even so the things of God knoweth no man, but the Spirit of God.”

- d. Evidence for the Tri-Unity - The Great Commission - Matthew 28:19 - Go ye therefore, and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name (singular, not plural “names”) of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost:

Implications

A. Dishonors

1. Christ – the whole plan of salvation rests upon Christ’s deity. How could He give eternal life, if he himself does not have eternal life. A creature can by generation produce after his kind, but none but an eternal being can give eternal life. If Christ is but a creature it also waters down the measure of God’s love – he only gave creature to man as His love-gift to us? No it was Jehovah who was pierced (Zech. 12:10) it was God who purchased the Church with His own blood (Acts 20:28), it was the High Lord that bought sinners (2 Pet. 2:1) and the Lord of glory was crucified (1 Cor. 2:8).
2. Scripture – a great part of Scripture is directed against idolatry. The first commandment says to have no other gods before him and we are told to love the Lord our God with all our heart, soul, mind, and strength. If the Son is a creature, how could we worship him? How could the very name Jehovah be given to both the Son and Spirit. We are not to worship creatures as God.