

MORE INCONSISTENCIES IN TRINITARIANISM

A DOCTRINE OF CONFUSION

In 1877 Cardinal J.H. Newman stated:

The mystery of the doctrine of the Holy Trinity is not merely a verbal contradiction, but an incompatibility in the human ideas conveyed...saying that one thing is two things.

Questions raised by the concept of the Trinity are:

- Do the 3 persons have 3 minds, 3 wills or even 3 bodies?
- If God is 3 co-equal persons in one substance why is he often spoken of in terms whereby God the Father is the head of the Trinity with the Son as having been begotten, and the Spirit as proceeding from the Father or the Son or both? This is **subordinationst**.
- How could Jesus have **two natures** in one person – the hypostatic union?
- How could Jesus have **two wills**?
- How could Jesus be 100% God and **100% man**?

HOW BIBLICAL IS THE DOCTRINE OF THE TRINITY?

The Encyclopedia Britannica (15th edition) noted that:

Neither the word Trinity, nor the explicit doctrine as such, appears in the New Testament ... the doctrine developed over several centuries and through many controversies. p.126.

Leading Trinitarian apologist Millard Erickson asks the question:

Should it [*the doctrine of the Trinity*] not be somewhere more clearly, directly and explicitly stated in the Bible? ... Here is a seemingly crucial matter where the Scriptures do not speak loudly and clearly ... It is unlikely that any text of Scripture can be shown to teach the doctrine of the Trinity in a clear, direct and unmistakable fashion.

God in Three Persons, 1995, pp 108-109.

Protestant theologian Emil Brunner goes further:

The doctrine of the Trinity is itself, however, not a Biblical doctrine...It is the product of theological reflection upon the problem...The ecclesiastical doctrine of the Trinity is not only the product of genuine Biblical thought, it is also the product of philosophical speculation, which is remote from the thought of the Bible.

Professor of religious studies Karl Heinz Ohlig states:

No Trinitarian ideas occur in the New Testament ... others emphasize it [*the threeness*] in such an uninhibited way that for all intents and purposes one would have to speak of **tritheism**, albeit of one occurring within one entity, i.e., of a belief in three gods.

One or Three? under the heading *A Latent Tritheism*, pp.11, 12.

Similarly Emeritus professor of Divinity James Dunn comments that:

The confession of the Trinity in terms of essence makes too little sense...And the classic creedal distinction between different 'persons' of the Godhead, when 'person' is understood in its everyday sense, invites the perception of God in tri-theistic terms rather than Trinitarian terms, as three and distinct individual 'persons'.

Did the First Christians Worship Jesus?, p. 1

Since the 4th century Trinitarians have claimed to be monotheists; yet if they worship God as *God the Father, God the Son, and God the Holy Spirit* then **3 co-equal Gods** are being worshipped, each God being a separate and distinct person. This is **tritheism** and not biblical monotheism. Yet this anomaly is covered over by stating that it is a mystery.

Professor Ohlig also notes that: "the person of God, however, cannot be multiplied without creating a polytheism," p. 18.

Ohlig concludes his book on pp. 129, 130 by stating that:

As a result the doctrine of the Trinity thus appears to be an attempt to combine monotheism, monism and polytheism ... No matter how one interprets the individual steps, it is certain that the doctrine of the Trinity, as it in the end became "dogma" both in the East and - even more so - in the West, possesses no Biblical foundation whatsoever and also has no "continuous succession."

NOTE: **monism** means that The Father, Son and Holy Spirit are one person – one being i.e. there is no distinction of persons in the Godhead. This was the heresy of Modalism.

THE TRUE DEFINITION OF TRINITARIANISM

An analysis of Augustine's major work *De Trinitas* helps one to realize that Trinitarianism is, in reality, a vacillation between **tritheism and modalism**, which are contradictory positions. In his book *God in Three Persons* Trinitarian Millard Erikson notes:

There is a fundamental difficulty that lies at the heart of discussion of the doctrine of the Trinity: The doctrine seems impossible to believe, because at its very core it is contradictory, p. 130.

THE TRINITARIAN ANALOGIES

Erikson further notes that the Trinity "appears to be without any real analogies," p. 21. All the modern day analogies used in an attempt to prove the Trinity, in fact, would **prove modalism** rather than Trinitarianism e.g.

1. The *ice–water–vapour* analogy. These are different modes of the same element.
2. The *mind–knowledge–love* analogy. These are different attributes of the same person.
3. The analogy of the same person being a son, a father and a grandfather. They are different roles of just one person.

Trinitarianism further appeals to such features of existence as:

- The 3 dimensions of height, length and breadth.
- Time running as past, present and future.

However, as scientists have demonstrated, the universe must necessarily be treated as being 4 dimensional with time being included as the 4th because it runs forward in a single flow. It is

only from the human perspective that there is past, present and future. Additionally, scientists also posit the concept that the universe began with 11 or more dimensions. However, this argument of threeness is bogus because there are many aspects of nature which have other numbers attached to them e. g. male/female, single or dual organs in biological bodies. One sun and one moon for Earth, and 31 or more moons for Saturn etc. As David Hume's 1779 work *Dialogues Concerning Natural Religion* showed concerning the nature of analogical reasoning, the strength of an analogical argument depends on the **similarity of the things being compared**. Yet there is little similarity between the Trinity and its supposed analogies. It is a doctrine with a contradictory nature – one that is a logical impossibility.

THE PURE MONOTHEISM OF THE BIBLE

Strict monotheism means that God is a single unified personal being in the normal sense with a single centre of consciousness. He is one who does not produce incarnations of Himself. Regarding the monotheism that Jesus believed, Ohlig explains that:

Although there was a certain differentiation between God himself (Yahweh) and his action in history and the cosmos (“word of Yahweh,” “spirit of Yahweh,” “wisdom of Yahweh”), this differentiation remained fundamentally integrated in the unity of Yahweh and had only functional significance, so that the monotheism was preserved.

This view of God was fully understood by the Jews and early Christians. Trinitarianism is really a redefining of monotheism into three persons who are all God.

THE LOGICAL IMPOSSIBILITY OF THE TRINITY

The general teaching of the Trinity involves the following:

1. The Father is God.
2. The Son is God.
3. The Holy Spirit is God.
4. The Father is not the Son – the Son is not the Holy Spirit – the Holy Spirit is not the Father.
5. There is only one God.

If #1, #2, #3 and #5 are true then - the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit are one entity. Yet this means that #4 cannot be true because the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit are separate entities. The average Christian seems to hold conflicting ideas in his mind about God and Jesus:

1. Jesus Christ is God
2. God is our Heavenly Father
3. Jesus Christ is not our Heavenly Father
4. There are not two Gods.

The inconsistency here doesn't seem to have occurred to Trinitarian Bible students.

If the Father is **God**, the Son is **God** and the Holy Spirit is **God** and **each one is fully God**, then it is logically impossible that there is only one God. This must make *three Gods* no matter how much Trinitarians try to redefine the word “person” or use non-biblical Greek or Latin terms in an attempt to explain this doctrine or to call it a mystery.

Some Trinitarians propose that **Yahweh is made up of three persons** and that in later history Yahweh was replaced by **Jesus**. This, then, **makes Jesus all three persons** i.e. the entire Trinity.

THE HOLY SPIRIT' AS DISTINCT FROM THE FATHER OR CHRIST WAS NOT ORIGINAL CHRISTIAN TEACHING

TWELVE CHRISTIANS WHO DIDN'T KNOW OF THE HOLY SPIRIT

➤ “It happened that while Apollos was at Corinth, Paul passed through the upper country and came to Ephesus, and found *some disciples*. He said to them, "Did you receive the Holy Spirit *when you believed?*" And they said to him, "No, **we have not even heard whether there is a Holy Spirit.**" And he said, "Into what then were you baptized?" And they said, "Into John's baptism." Paul said, "John baptized with the baptism of repentance, telling the people to believe in Him who was coming after him, that is, in Jesus." When they heard this, they were *baptized in the name of the Lord Jesus*. And when Paul had laid his hands upon them, the Holy Spirit came on them, and they began speaking with tongues and prophesying. There were in all about twelve men” (Acts 19:1-7).

Here we have believing Christian disciples who had “*not even heard whether there is a Holy Spirit.*” Yet how could they have come to believe in the supposed central Christian doctrine of a Trinitarian God without knowing of ‘the Holy Spirit’ and understanding ‘him’ as a person distinct from the Father and Jesus?

NO TRINITY UNTIL THE COUNCIL OF CONSTANTINOPLE IN 381

The modern-day Council of Churches claims that the doctrine of the Trinity is a central Christian teaching. This makes no sense because of the fact that ‘the Holy Spirit’ was not officially included in the Godhead formula to bring about the Trinity doctrine until about 345 years after the death of Christ. This strongly indicates that such a doctrine was not part of original Christian teaching.

FURTHER PROBLEMS TO PONDER

- Because the essential Trinity requires that the Father, the Son and the Spirit have separate centres of consciousness there is a tendency for Trinitarians to see more than one divine being in their worship of God – again this is tritheism in spite of Trinitarian claims to the contrary.
 - Because of the above the Son and the Spirit tend to be viewed as second-rank Gods rather than co-equal. In Scripture it is the Father who sends both the Son and the Spirit, and so making them subordinate to Him.
 - Hebrews 1:3 says that Jesus is “*the reflection of God’s glory and the exact imprint of God’s very being.*” Colossian’s 1:15 calls Jesus “*the image of the invisible God.*” Someone who is the reflection, imprint or image of someone else cannot be that person. So Jesus cannot be God.
 - The prophecy of Isaiah 11:2 says of the Messiah “The spirit of the LORD [Yahweh] shall rest upon him...and the fear of the LORD.” How can a ‘God the Son’ **fear** Yahweh?
 - The idea that Jesus is God because he said “*he who has seen me has seen the Father*” could only lead to the confusing conclusion that Jesus is the Father i.e. God the Father.
 - If Jesus is *of God* as, for instance his being “the Son of God”, “the Lamb of God”, “the Christ of God” and his “sitting at the right hand of God” he cannot then be God. He must be distinct from God.

- The supposed incarnation of the Second Person cannot be honestly explained in Trinitarian terms because, biblically, the relationship between God and Jesus is always as between God and man.
- If Jesus had both a human nature and a God nature then he must simultaneously have perfect knowledge and limited knowledge. This is an impossible and contradictory position.
- A first person in the Trinity cannot **anoint** a second **co-equal** person who is also supreme.
- Jesus cannot be God because Jesus is the Christ (Messiah) meaning “anointed one.” God is never anointed - He cannot be His own anointed one – this would be a confusing of categories, but rather He always anoints those who serve him: “God anointed Jesus of Nazareth with the Holy Spirit and with power” (**Acts 10:38**).
- *The song of the Lamb* in Revelation 15:3, 4 shows that Jesus sings praise to the “Lord God Almighty” and thereby showing that Jesus is not the “Lord God Almighty.”
- God and Christ are differentiated in Revelation 20:6 where Christians are promised that “*they will be priests of **God** and of **Christ**, and they will reign with him for a thousand years.*”
- God and the Lamb are differentiated in Revelation 22:1, 3: “*...the river of water of life, flowing from the throne of **God** and of **the Lamb**...*”
- If the Holy Spirit were a third Person of the Godhead it could not, as Romans 8:26 states, act as our intercessor because Jesus is already our intercessor (Rom. 8:34) and advocate (1 John 2:1) and there is only “One mediator between God and men, the man Christ Jesus” (1 Tim. 2:5).
- There are no *theos* texts where they should be if Jesus really is the Almighty God:
 1. In Jesus’ own sayings,
 2. In evangelizing speeches by the apostles and disciples in Acts,
 3. In descriptions of what the apostles proclaimed,
 4. In definitions of the good news,
 5. In passages where the writer establishes just who Jesus is.

These five categories are vital for understanding what the NT teaches about who Jesus is.

THERE WAS NEVER ANY ISSUE OVER A PRE-EXISTENT JESUS IN THE FIRST CENTURY

The controversial issues and resulting persecutions of Christians of the 1st century (please see the last part of STUDY 12.) never involved ‘how many God is;’ that is to say, there was no argument that God was more than one person or that Jesus was God in a metaphysical sense. Just as with the Jews of the 1st century the Christians of that time believed in the unitary *Shema*: “Yahweh our God is **one** Yahweh” (Deut. 6:4; Mark 12:29). Furthermore, almost all scholars agree that the Trinity was not taught in the Hebrew Scriptures. Also the claim that the earliest Christians had believed that God was more than one person and that Jesus was actually God Almighty is proved to be false because if it had been the case and the Christians had proclaimed this belief, they would have been severely persecuted by the Jews because of

their pure unitary monotheism. However, the biblical record shows that, although persecuted over many issues, Christians were never persecuted for any supposed Binitarian or Trinitarian teaching.

NEVER AN ISSUE OVER THE TRINITY IN THE 1st CENTURY

1. Not once were Christians accused by Jewish leaders of teaching that God was more than one person.
2. Not once were Christians accused by Jewish leaders of idolatry because of teaching that Jesus was the Almighty God.
3. Not once were Christians accused by Gentiles of teaching that Jesus was actually the creator of the universe.

All of this is evidence that the earliest Christians never changed their view away from the biblical and Jewish statement of the unitary *Shema*, that “Yahweh our God is **one** Yahweh” (Deut. 6:4; Mark 12:29). It would indeed be strange if Christians had engaged in the above controversies and put up with persecution over the above issues and yet never engaged in a controversy or suffered any persecution because of Christian acceptance of a teaching that God had now been revealed as being 3 persons of one substance - one of which was Jesus. Surely there would have been some who raised this as a controversial issue if it really had been taught.

THE ISSUE WAS RAISED 300+ YEARS LATER

Starting in Egypt in the early fourth century, the Church debated whether or not Jesus was actually the Almighty God as part of a triune God-head. Between the years 318 and 381 no less than 25 councils met specifically to address this issue.

1. Three councils came to no conclusion.
2. Fifteen agreed that Jesus was a created being (as taught by Arius).
3. Seven agreed that Jesus was fully God with no beginning (as taught by Alexander and Athanasius).

After Theodosius became emperor in 379 he made it illegal to hold a non-Trinitarian belief. So it was a political decision that has resulted in the Trinity doctrine, rather than true monotheism, being the touchstone doctrine of the churches today. So it is evident that neither Jesus nor the earliest Christians taught or believed that Jesus was a pre-existent being or was the Almighty God or that God was more than one person as defined in the doctrine of the Trinity.

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SUGGESTED READING

- Jesus Was Not a Trinitarian* Anthony Buzzard.
The Doctrine of the Trinity - Christianity's Self-Inflicted Wound “ “
One or Three? Karl-Heinz Ohlig.
When Jesus Became God Richard E. Rubenstein.
Is God a Trinity? David Kemball-Cook.

One God and One Lord Graeser, Lynn and Schoenheit.
The Trinity - True or False James Boughton and Peter Southgate.
The Trinity – Truth or Tradition (in two parts) Stanley W. Paher.
Did the First Christians Worship Jesus?.....James Dunn.

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