

The Trinity – Why bother?

I. Pre-questions

II. Biblical basis for the Trinity¹

- The term “Trinity” is not found anywhere in Scripture but may be inferred from a systematic study of the Bible. Tri + Unity = Trinity
- How would you reply to this argument?
- There are three separate elements:
 1. The Oneness of God
 - *Hebrew is a monotheistic religion*
 - No other gods: First Commandment (Ex 20:2-3)
 - Prohibition against idolatry: Second Commandment (Ex 20:4)
 - Shema (Deuteronomy 6)
 - *New Testament*
 - James 2:19
 - 1 Corinthians 8:4-6
 - 1 Timothy 2:5-6
 2. The Deity of the Three
 - *The Father is God*
 - 1 Corinthians 8:4-6 and 1 Timothy 2:5-6
 - Matthew 6:26, 30, 31-32
 - *The Son is God*
 - Philippians 2:5-11
 - Hebrews 1 (vs. 8 from Psalms 45:6)
 - Matthew 12:28
 - Matthew 13:41
 - Matthew 25:31
 - Matthew 26:63-65
 - Mark 2:8-10
 - John 19:7
 - John 20:28
 - *The Holy Spirit is God*
 - Acts 5:3-4
 - John 16:7-11
 - John 3:8
 - 1 Corinthians 3:16-17
 - 1 Corinthians 12:4-11
 - Matthew 28:19
 - 1 Peter 1:2
 3. Three in Oneness
 - *Deuteronomy 6:4*
 - *1 John 5:7*
 - *Matthew 3:16-17*
 - *Matthew 28:19-20*
 - *2 Corinthians 13-14*
 - *John 1:33-34; 14:16, 26; 16:13-15; 20:21-22*

III. Historical Constructions

- First two centuries there were no attempts to define it
- Early heresies made it a priority to define
 1. Dynamic Monarchianism
 - *Theodotus, a leather merchant (ca. 190 AD)*
 - Jesus Christ was an ordinary man before his baptism (inspired but not indwelt by the Spirit)

¹ The outline of this paper is taken from “Christian Theology”, Millard J. Erickson (Grand Rapids: Baker Books, 1998), pages 346-367.

- *Paul of Samosata (second half of the third century)*
 - The Word (the Logos) was not a personal, self-sufficient entity; that Jesus Christ was not the Word. God ordered and accomplished what he willed through the man Jesus
 - Condemned at the synod of Antioch (268 AD)
- *Not widespread*
- 2. Modalistic Monarchianism
 - *Fairly widespread and appears to affirm the doctrine of Trinity*
 - *Noetus of Smyrna, Praxeas (busybody), Sabellius (developed and formed more fully)*
 - *Father, Son, and Holy Spirit are successive revelation of the same person*
- Orthodox Formulation
 - The Council of Nicea (325 AD)
 - *Arianism (“only-begotten” – John 1:14; 3:16, 18; 1 John 4:9)*
 - *Athanasius (293-373)*
 - Creed:

We believe in one God, the Father Almighty, Maker of all things visible and invisible.

And in one Lord Jesus Christ, the Son of God, begotten of the Father, the only-begotten; that is, of the essence of the Father, God of God, Light of Light, very God of very God, begotten, not made, being of one substance (homoousion) with the Father....
 - The Council of Constantinople (381 AD)
 - *Basil, Gregory of Nazianzus, and Gregory of Nyssa*
 - *One “ousia” and three “hupostaseis”*
 - Homoousia versus homoiousia
 - Hypostasis

IV. Essential Elements of the Trinity Doctrine

- 1) Unity of God
- 2) The Deity of each person in the Trinity
- 3) There is no contradiction in “God is one and yet three”
- 4) The Trinity is eternal
- 5) One may be subordinate to another for a period of time but this is not inferiority
- 6) The Trinity is incomprehensible

V. The Search for Analogies

- 1) The Egg
 - Tritheism
- 2) Water
 - Modalism
- 3) “Is (or are) trousers singular or plural?”
- 4) Augustine’s
 - The three elements of love
 - 1) *the lover*
 - 2) *the object loved*
 - 3) *the love that unites them*
 - The mind, its knowledge of itself, and its love for itself
 - Memory, understanding and the will
 - The mind remembering God, knowing God, and loving God
- 5) Human relationships
 - Roles: husband, father, student
 - Twins: same genetics but different personalities

VI. Why bother?

- Crucial to knowing and understanding God
- To whom are we to pray to/worship: the Father, the Son, or the Holy Spirit?