

God in Three Persons

*A Study of the Biblical and Historical
Doctrine of the Trinity*

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Introduction

It amazes me, as I watch and listen and teach as a pastor in our modern world, how much is *not* said in reference to the fact that the God of the Bible is Trinitarian in nature. Whether it be that people do not mention the Trinity, or, when they do, they mention it in an improper (and sometimes even heretical) way, I notice that this once foundational doctrine is not really a vital part of the worship and understanding of God for most Christians today. Yet, while this is true, if you were to ask the majority of confessing evangelical church members in the world today if they believed in the Trinity, they would say “Yes”.

We suffer today, in the world of the church, from an epidemic of ignorance. I say this not to be ugly or rude, but simply to point out the fact that most Christians have become so engrossed in the “feelings” associated with Christianity that they have become far removed from the “facts”. Most people do not want to study the faith, or dive into the deep things of God, but are more satisfied having a shallow (and often lukewarm) faith.

I wrote this series of lessons, on the Doctrine of the Trinity, in hopes that those who read them will become

hungry for the Word of God and that they will begin to see the need for more than a superficial study of God's revelation. I also wrote this series for another reason: I want to clear up any miscommunication in regards to our own understanding of the Trinity as Christians.

Dr. James White (1998) says that, "The single greatest reason people struggle with the doctrine of the Trinity is miscommunication" (pg.23). You see, people can be saying the same words that have absolutely different meanings. For instance, if you were to ever speak to a Mormon missionary about his faith, he would share with you what he calls "The Gospel". The problem is, when you begin to listen to their presentation you learn quickly that this 'gospel' is not that which comes from Jesus Christ or His apostles. It is 'another gospel' which includes a false god, a false Jesus, and a false message of salvation. Yet they use the same term "Gospel" that we use.

Likewise, when discussing the Doctrine of the Trinity, it is easy to fall into the error of miscommunication. As we will see, just because someone affirms Jesus as the Son of God does not mean that they affirm the Trinity. And just because someone believes in the Holy Spirit, does not mean that they affirm the Trinity. In

fact, Mormons would affirm both of these things, yet still would deny the orthodox doctrine of the Trinity. Truth be told, the Mormon doctrine of God is light-years away from most any other view of God in the religious world.¹

It is my genuine desire that all Christians be able to articulate and defend the foundational principles that form the biblical and historical Doctrine of the Trinity. This work has been written to aid in the realization of that goal. I hope, as well, that this will not be the reader's only investigation into the subject, but instead would be like an appetizer that would create a hunger in him or her to go further into the study of the nature of our Blessed Triune God.

¹ For information on the Mormon doctrine of God, as well as other doctrines held by the LDS church, books and articles can be found at www.aomin.org, the apologetics resource website of Dr. James White.

CHAPTER 1

The Doctrine Defined

As I begin this first session I want to outline this section for you and what I hope to accomplish in this first chapter:

- Describe the competing views of God in the world.
- Define the Scriptural, Historic, Orthodox Doctrine of the Trinity.
- Discern the errors people often make in regards to the Trinity.
- Distinguish Trinitarianism from other views of God.

Section 1: Major Theistic Worldviews

We will only be looking at a few of the major competing worldviews, as to give us an overview of the different ways people look at God. This will help us later when we begin to communicate the absolute uniqueness of the Doctrine of the Trinity in regards to other views of God.

Monotheism

The dictionary defines monotheism as “the doctrine or belief that there is only one God”. Thus mono – meaning one – refers to there being but one God in the entire universe. Normally monotheists understand the God that they serve to be independent upon anything else, but solely and perfectly self-existent. There are three main world religions that claim to be monotheistic: Judaism, Islam and Christianity. We will see, however, that though these three all agree that God is One, the way that they understand this One God is different in each. This difference in understanding God, especially in the Christian view of God being a Trinity, makes it impossible that all three serve the same God. There are many in today’s world who would claim that Allah of Islam is the same as Yahweh in the Bible. Yet by the end of the lesson tonight we will see that this is not possible.

Polytheism

The dictionary defines this as “the doctrine of or belief in more than one god or in many gods.” Thus polytheism is in contrast to monotheism. You cannot have only one God and have many gods at the same time. This would constitute a logical contradiction. The belief of

polytheism is found in many cultures including the Greeks and the Romans. Examples of polytheism are Santeria, voodoo, Shinto and most of the “folk” religions. Any religion that would affirm the belief and worship of more than one God would be polytheistic.

Henotheism

This is defined simply as “Belief in one god without denying the existence of others.” This is not as open as polytheism in regards to their being ‘many gods’. But at the same time Henotheism is NOT monotheism. It is essentially polytheism with a *preference* for one deity or a *mandate* to honor one's family/tribe deity. So, in a sense, in henotheism one can place one god above others in which he is supreme over. Very similar to Henotheism is *monolatry* which teaches that though there are many gods, only one should be worshipped.

So, to review, we have:

Monotheism – The belief in one God.

Polytheism – The belief in many gods.

Henotheism – The belief in one god without the exclusion of there being others.

Now, as I said before, this is not an exhaustive list by any stretch of the imagination. We have not put in this list dualism, pantheism, or atheism – all of which are views about God. I have simply given these three views of God as a reference point for us to go back to later. The reason I chose these three, as you will see, is that many people in their misunderstandings of the Doctrine of the Trinity end up falling into the error of either polytheism or henotheism.

Section 2: Defining the Biblical, Historic, Orthodox Doctrine of the Trinity

When one begins to define the doctrine of the Trinity, he immediately runs into a bit of a problem. That problem is the lack of anything in the universe comparable to God. When we define the Doctrine, it is likely that we begin to try to imagine something to compare it to, because this is how we learn. For instance, think of how we teach things to our children. When we are teaching them about shapes we say, “A ball is round” because round is comparable to the shape of a ball in their minds. We say “A box is square” and so on. We learn naturally by way of comparison.

The difficulty is that there is nothing in all the world that compares to God. Certainly many have tried to compare things to God, yet they have often come away in error or even more confused than when they began. I have heard people say God is like a ‘PIE”, which has three parts, but is still one pie. Others have said God is like a “PERSON” who can be a husband, a father and a son, all at the same time. Yet what we don’t realize is that I have just expressed examples of both Tri-theism and Sabellianism – both of which are not consistent with the doctrine of the Trinity and, by the way, were determined to be heresy in the early church!

Later in this course we are going to look at some of the historic creeds of the early church to understand what Christians down through the ages have believed about the Trinity. We will see that the early church fathers spent a lot of time considering the depth of truth contained within this doctrine. And they were very careful to stay consistent with the Scriptural revelation of God. But for this series I want to state the doctrine as simply as possible:

There is one Being that is God.

**Within the Being of God there exist three Persons (The
Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit).**

**These three persons are all
equal and eternal.**

Now, that definition seems simple enough. Yet we know that this causes many questions in regards to how God can be three and be one at the same time. For years Christians have been accused of being self-contradictory by saying that there are three persons and yet only one God.

But one thing should be understood from the outset: though the Doctrine stated above has no comparisons that we can look to, it is not a contradiction. A contradiction, by definition, is a statement that is necessarily false. The statement 'The page is white' and 'the page is not white' is a contradiction. This is because something cannot "be" and "not be" in the same relationship at the same time. The Doctrine of the Trinity does not contradict. It does not say:

- There is one God who is three Gods.
- There is one Being who is three Beings.
- There is one Person who is three Persons.

All of these would be contradictions. The Doctrine instead states that God is ONE in BEING and that He is THREE in PERSON. So we see the doctrine is not irrational, nor illogical. But it is incomparable, because there is nothing analogous in nature. Also, it makes sense that there would be no analogies in nature, as this is describing the very nature of God who has no equals.

Section 3: Discerning the errors of false views of the Trinity.

Modalism.

This is also called “Sabellianism” after Sabellius, who taught a form of this doctrine in Rome in the third century. Modalism teaches that God is not, in His nature, three persons, but that He simply reveals Himself to us in specific “modes” of being. Thus we have the Father in the OT, the Son in the Gospels, and the Holy Spirit now. But we do not have all three at the same time, because these are all simply “modes” of being for God. This belief has caught fire recently in groups that call themselves “oneness” or “Jesus only” movements.

The problem with modalism, as we will see, is that in the Bible there is obvious interaction between the persons of Christ, the Father and the Holy Spirit. Of course the most powerful Scriptural passage against modalism is at Jesus' baptism.

Mark 1:9-11 (KJV) *⁹ And it came to pass in those days, that Jesus came from Nazareth of Galilee, and was baptized of John in Jordan. ¹⁰ And straightway coming up out of the water, he saw the heavens opened, and the Spirit like a dove descending upon him: ¹¹ And there came a voice from heaven, saying, Thou art my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased.*

Note that all three of the divine persons were present. On top of this many times we see Jesus describing the relationship He had with the father before creation. Thus God did not simply take on different “modes” of being for our benefit.

Modalists, in my opinion, think that they are trying to hold a more rigid doctrine of monotheism than are Trinitarians, but all the while they must deny obvious Scripture passages concerning the pre-existence of Christ.

Below is an ancient illustration regarding the Trinity that describes the error of Modalism (see illustration 1A). We notice that, though the one God is all three persons, all three persons maintain their individual personalities within the Godhead.

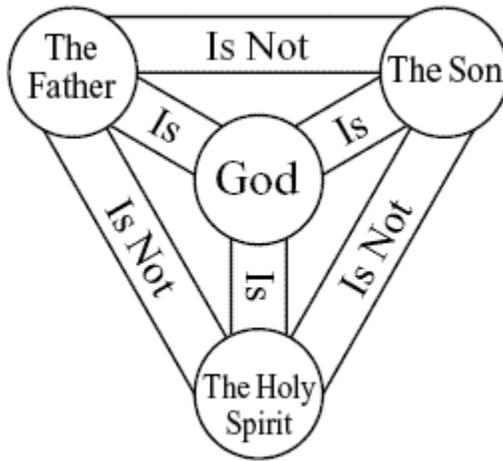


Illustration: 1A

Tri-Theism.

This doctrine is defined as the belief that there are three distinct, each powerful gods, who form a triad. Each god in the triad has its own sphere of influence and power. Tri-theism is essentially polytheism. Many non-Christian

religions (especially monotheistic religions like Islam) accuse Trinitarianism as being Tri-theism.

The truth, however, is that in Trinitarianism God is never divided. This is why the one PIE with three SLICES analogy is not a good one. The three persons of the Trinity share the same being, they are not divided. The Father, Son and Holy Spirit do not have “separate powers”, as God is omnipotent. Likewise they do not have separate “spheres of influence”, since their influence is unlimited. So ultimately Trinitarianism teaches one indivisible God, while Tri-theism (at least in its basic understanding) gives three separate gods. Athanasius, in the fourth century, distinguished the Christian faith in the Trinity against both Modalism and Tri-theism.

Subordinationism

Essentially this doctrine teaches that Jesus is subordinate to God the Father, and thus, is not truly God. Many verses are cited by those who hold this view, most of which deal with Jesus’ constant reliance on the Father and His willingness to do the Father’s will. What is often missed by those who cite these verses is the immediate context that they are in.

Christ, when He came to earth in the incarnation, humbled Himself and was made a little lower than the angels so that He might become our sacrifice. To truly understand the issue of the equality in the godhead we must remember that Christ was both fully human and fully divine. But the point is that, within the godhead Christ is co-equal and co-eternal with the Father and the Holy Spirit.

The points of the Trinity are simple and easy to distinguish from the errors concerning the doctrine:

- **There is one Being that is God.**

To deny this would make one a polytheist.

- **Within the Being of God there exist three Persons. (Father, Son, Holy Spirit)**

To deny this would make one either be a modalist or they would be forced to deny the deity of Jesus Christ (which we will see is a clearly Scriptural Doctrine)

- **These three persons are all equal and eternal.**

To deny this would make one a henotheist and/or subordinationist.

Section 4: Separating Trinitarianism from all other faiths.

It is so important that we understand that, ultimately, Trinitarianism is unlike any other religious view of God in the world. Believing in the Trinity is not a belief in polytheism, nor is it a belief in henotheism. Trinitarianism is, by definition, a monotheistic understanding of God. Christians do not ever deny that God is one being.

But, just because we are specifically monotheistic, this does not mean that we are the same as other monotheistic religions. When a person says that ‘We serve the same god as the people of Islam’ we know that this cannot be the case. It is not as simple as saying that God is simply called by a different name. The people of the Islamic religion emphatically deny the Doctrine of the Trinity. So essentially they serve a different god.

Likewise, sadly, so do most Jewish people. They may call their god by the same name, but they have denied for centuries that which He revealed about Himself in Jesus Christ. A denial of the Trinity is ultimately a denial of God Himself.

As I conclude this first chapter I would like to say a few words in regards to our ability to actually grasp the Doctrine of the Trinity. I have heard it said, more times than I would like to remember, that it is impossible for us to comprehend the Doctrine of the Trinity. A. W. Tozer (1961) has said, “Our sincerest effort to grasp the incomprehensible mystery of the Trinity must remain forever futile, and only by deepest reverence can it be saved from actual presumption” (pg.25). And I would agree with Tozer that it is not possible for us to fully comprehend everything about the way God is one Being and Three persons because, as I said earlier, we have nothing to compare Him to.

But, I would like to add this: While I cannot fully comprehend all there is know about the Trinity, I can properly understand what the Bible teaches about God – and that is He is a Trinity. The Bible teaches clearly that: **There is one God, within the Being of God there exist three Persons, and those three persons are all equal and eternal.**

How this works exactly will be a mystery to finite men because we only understand that which is finite. We are limited by language that only relates to the finite and

minds that only understand the finite. God is an infinite Being, which makes full comprehension of His nature an impossibility for us.

Yet this shouldn't stop us from believing the doctrine. Consider the most basic doctrine of God in the Bible: The Doctrine that God is "eternal". We understand that we explain this Doctrine as God's being without beginning or ending. But really we are just explaining what God doesn't have: He doesn't have beginning and He will have no ending.

We cannot give a truly "adequate" expression of His eternity because there is nothing else in all the universe that is eternal. We know our limitations in understanding this doctrine, yet we have no trouble receiving it by faith.

This is also how we are to view the Trinity. We can understand what the Doctrine says, and what it doesn't say. We can rightly claim the truth of it as it aligns with Scripture. And we can do all this without fully being able to comprehend the full scope of God's nature because of the limits of our finite minds.

CHAPTER 2

The Scriptural Support of the Doctrine

I notice that often, when engaged in discussions about the Trinity, some will simply throw out a myriad of passages in defense of the Doctrine. And usually all these passages *are* relevant.

But sometimes, instead of simply throwing out a list of verses, it is best to look closely at the most specific passages that regard the topic you are dealing with. The reason is that if a person is left with only Scripture verses, many of which that are twisted by those who would deny the Trinity, this person will not know how to respond to the cultic interpretations of the key passages.

We will see in this section that, in many of the non-Christian groups, the verses we are going to look at are interpreted improperly. And because we are going to spend time with these verses we can look at the errors of some of those groups. My goal for this section is to provide a proper

exposition of these texts that set the groundwork for the doctrine of the Trinity.

Section 1: Scripture that supports the oneness of God

Probably the most quoted, and thus one of the most significant verses in regards to the one being of God is found in the writings of Moses. It is a verse of Scripture that would be well known to the people of the Jewish faith, for it was the foundation of their monotheistic religious system. It comes in the form of a prayer, and is called the “Shema”:

Deuteronomy 6:4-6 (ESV) ⁴ *"Hear, O Israel: The Lord our God, the Lord is one. ⁵ You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your might. ⁶ And these words that I command you today shall be on your heart.*

It is verses like this one that form the basis of true, biblical monotheism. And Jesus not only confirmed the truth of this passage, but He also included it in the Great Commandment:

Mark 12:28-30 (ESV) ²⁸ *And one of the scribes came up and heard them disputing with one another, and seeing that he answered them well, asked him, "Which commandment is the most important of*

all?" 29 Jesus answered, "The most important is, 'Hear, O Israel: The Lord our God, the Lord is one. 30 And you shall love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind and with all your strength.'

Sometimes Christians will attempt to interpret the last word of the Shema in such a way as it would fit within the concept of Trinitarianism. This is because the last word Echad, translated “one”, is used in other places in Scripture to describe a plural oneness. Here are a few examples:

Numbers 13:23 (KJV) *And they came unto the brook of Eshcol, and cut down from thence a branch with one [Echad] cluster of grapes, and they bare it between two upon a staff; and they brought of the pomegranates, and of the figs.*

Genesis 2:24 (KJV) *Therefore shall a man leave his father and his mother, and shall cleave unto his wife: and they shall be one [Echad] flesh.*

And in doing this they will show that this word is different from the absolute expression of “singular one”, which is the word “*Yachid*”, found in other verses of the Hebrew text, such as this one:

Genesis 22:2 (KJV) *And he said, Take now thy son, thine only [Yachid] son Isaac, whom thou lovest, and get thee into the land of Moriah; and offer him*

*there for a burnt offering upon one of the mountains
which I will tell thee of.*

Many have attempted to use the different Hebrew words for “one” and “singular” to say that the Shema is actually supporting Trinitarianism. And while I would not deny that the Shema is a Trinitarian passage, it does not do any injustice to the doctrine to say that God is absolutely ONE.

In the last chapter we noted that it is the Tri-Theist who attempts to break God into parts, or say that there are three Gods. The Trinitarian, however, is a monotheist, and has no problem supporting the phrase, “The Lord is One”. We believe that the Being of God is undivided while at the same time it is shared completely by three persons. And, as we stated in the first session, this is not an exercise in contradiction for we understand the fact that when we speak of God’s oneness we are speaking of His Being, and when we speak of God’s plurality it regards His persons.

Another very important verse that supports the fact that there is only one God is found in the book of Isaiah. This passage is also important to remember in regards to

the Trinity when we begin to see the verses that teach that Jesus Christ and the Holy Spirit are fully divine persons.

Isaiah 43:10 (KJV) *Ye are my witnesses, saith the LORD, and my servant whom I have chosen: that ye may know and believe me, and understand that I am he: before me there was no God formed, neither shall there be after me.*

Note the facts presented: Before God there was no God formed. This would be impossible because God is eternal, and there is nothing that comes BEFORE Him. But also it says that there were none formed AFTER Him. This is relevant for those who would call Jesus “a god” created by Yahweh and lesser than Yahweh. (Which is the view of the Jehovah’s Witnesses.) This verse stated emphatically that there is only One God, and that is the view that we hold in the first statement of the Doctrine of the Trinity when we say “The is One God”

Section 2: Scripture that supports the deity of Christ.

The following is a crucial point for us to understand: If there is only one God, AND Jesus Christ is proven in Scripture to be God, AND Jesus interacts with

God the Father, we see then how the formulation of the Doctrine of the Trinity came into existence.

So the most important questions are:

- (1) “Does the Bible teach that Jesus Christ is fully God?”
- (2) “Does the Bible show interaction between the Son and the Father?”

In regards to these questions, let us go to the most elegant passage of Scripture in regards to this subject in the entire Bible – The opening verses of John’s Gospel.

John 1:1-3 (KJV) *¹ In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. ² The same was in the beginning with God. ³ All things were made by him; and without him was not any thing made that was made.*

As I said earlier I want to break down the important passages, rather than throw a bunch of passages out at one time. And this passage deserves our attention. Things we should note from this passage are:

The significance of the phrase “In the beginning”

This phrase should strike us as very familiar, for it comes to us in the first verse of Genesis:

Genesis 1:1-3 (KJV) *¹ In the beginning God created the heaven and the earth.*

The introduction of Genesis speaks of the introduction of TIME. When it says “in the beginning” the inference is that it is the beginning of TIME.

God Himself lives outside of time. When we think of God and His infinitude we often think of Him existing on a timeline that is simply infinitely longer than our own. But this is NOT how God exists. He exists outside of time – for time is a created thing. By this I mean it was given a “beginning” and it will have an “ending”. So we see that by saying “In the beginning” both Genesis and John’s Gospel are harkening back to a point when TIME was starting.

SO WHY IS THIS SIGNIFICANT?

The usage of the word “was”.

The phrase “In the beginning ‘was’ the Word” is pregnant with meaning. For what we see here is that before

TIME began “the Word” already existed. The New English Bible makes clear what the phrase is suggesting: “*When all things began, the Word already was*”. The significance is simple: By using the phrase ‘was’ we see that the Word did not come into being at any point in TIME – For when time began the Word already was.

BUT OF WHOM DO WE SPEAK?

The usage of the word “Word” (Logos).

It is without doubt that in John’s prologue the “Word” is the name John has chosen to call Jesus Christ. This is proven later in the first chapter: **John 1:14 (KJV)** *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.*

But why does John not simply say that “*In the beginning Jesus was...*” It is usually understood in this way: In the OT, the Word of God is how God’s power was expressed in creation, wisdom, salvation, and revelation.

Psalms 33:6 (KJV) *By the word of the LORD were the heavens made; and all the host of them by the breath of his mouth.*

Psalms 107:20 (KJV) *He sent his word, and healed them, and delivered them from their destructions.*

On top of this, John was also using a phrase common among Greek philosophers to describe “divine reason” or “wisdom”, but in an impersonal way. What made John’s opening statement relevant for both Jews and Greeks was that it took this seemingly impersonal “wisdom” and showed its personal nature in the person of Jesus Christ. So we see that, as far as John is concerned, Jesus is the true Logos.

NOW COMES THE PART THAT IS RELEVANT IN REGARDS TO DIVINITY

The two uses of the word “God” (Theos).

The first statement says that “*the Word was with God*”. In this we see personal communion. These two – the Word and God – are together WITH one another. The phrase in Greek actually adds an article before God. The phrase “was with God”, in the Greek, actually contains the article “the”. So it could be read “the Word was with the God”.

The reason John does this is important. In this first instance of the word God, John is speaking of the Father. “Ton Theon” or “The God” that the Logos was with is the Father. And it is important that we do not confuse the Son and the Father. If we do we end up with modalism. The Word, as the Second person of the Trinity, was in divine fellowship with Father throughout eternity.

Thus we read the next use of the word God. This time it is in relation to the Word: “*The Word was God*” And this time there is no article before the word “God” It doesn’t say “the Word was with the God and the Word was the God”, for this would confuse the members of the Trinity. Rather it simply says the “Word was God” in a qualitative sense, speaking of the nature of the Word being the very nature of Divinity.

IMPORTANT NOTE: Those who argue that Jesus is a lesser (or created) god say that this requires an indefinite article before the word “God”. In fact, if you read the Jehovah’s Witness’ (mis)translation, you will see that they have added the indefinite article “A”. So it reads that “*the Word was a god*”, not “*the Word was God*”.

The argument goes like this: If the word God has the article “the” before it, this is a definite article. But in the

Greek language there is not an ‘indefinite’ article, like we have in the English language “a”. “A” being the indefinite article because it speaks of no ‘particular’ thing. It is “A” thing not “THE” thing. So those who place the “A” in John 1:1 do so because they argue that John would have done so had he had the option of using an indefinite article. They argue that, because the phrase ‘A god’ appears in other passages wherein there is no definite article, the same should apply here.

But such an argument misses the context of John’s words completely. In fact, if this is the case it would go against all of the Bible’s Scripture that teaches monotheism. Consider one of the foundational monotheistic verses we cited earlier:

Isaiah 43:10 (ESV) “...*Before me no god was formed, nor shall there be any after me.*”

John, who was a Jew, would not have written about ‘another god’ other than Yahweh.

I am not a linguist – but I study the works of men who are very familiar with the Greek language. Regarding this passage, renowned scholar F.F. Bruce says, “The people who emphasize that the true rendering of the last

clause of John 1:1 is “the word was a god” prove nothing thereby save their ignorance of Greek grammar” (Bruce, 1963, as cited in White, 1998, pg.56-57).

So how do we understand the term God – when used of the Word – if it is neither in the ‘definite sense’ (the God) or in the indefinite sense (a god)? The answer is that the term God is being used “qualitatively”. It speaks of the “nature” of the Word. Again the New English Bible renders this as “*what God was, the Word was*”. Again F.F. Bruce says that the Word “shared the nature and the being of God” (Bruce, 1983, as cited in White, 1998, pg.57).

So here we get the full expression of what John is telling us about the Word - Jesus.

- He is eternal
- He is in communion with the Father
- He is fully divine

The second and third verses of John’s prologue back up the truth of what is said in the first verse:

John 1:2-3 (KJV) ² *The same was in the beginning with God.* ³ *All things were made by him; and without him was not any thing made that was made.*

Again we see the use of the word “was”. Christ “was” in the Beginning. Thus He was not “made”, but already existed. And He was integral in creation. Nothing was made that was not made by Him. How is this? Because He was with God and He was God. Christ is not a part of creation; He is, in fact, creator.

There are, in fact, many verses of NT Scripture that support the Doctrine of the Deity of Christ.

Colossians 2:9 (ESV) *For in him the whole fullness of deity dwells bodily.*

Colossians 1:15-16 (ESV) ¹⁵ *He is the image of the invisible God, the firstborn of all creation.* ¹⁶ *For by him all things were created, in heaven and on earth, visible and invisible, whether thrones or dominions or rulers or authorities—all things were created through him and for him.*

Revelation 22:13 (ESV) *I am the Alpha and the Omega, the first and the last, the beginning and the end."*

And, of course, we have the great confession of Thomas, who was not rebuked when He called Jesus “*My Lord and my God*” (John 20:28)

While all of these stand as testimony to the deity of Christ, the prologue of John is the most powerful of these texts. Later in this series of lessons we will look to some of the passages concerning Jesus that are used to deny His deity and compare them to what John has written and other texts that show clearly that He is fully divine.

Section 3: Scripture that supports the personality of the Holy Spirit.

One of the arguments against the Doctrine of the Trinity is describing the Holy Spirit as an impersonal force RATHER than a person within the Godhead. But the clearest proof of the Holy Spirit being a person and not a thing or “force” is indicated in the continuous use of personal pronouns for Him in the Bible:

John 15:26 (ESV) *"But when the Helper comes, whom I will send to you from the Father, the Spirit of truth, who proceeds from the Father, he will bear witness about me.*

John 16:13-14 (ESV) ¹³ *When the Spirit of truth comes, he will guide you into all the truth, for he will not speak on his own authority, but whatever he hears he will speak, and he will declare to you the things that are to come. ¹⁴ He will glorify me, for he will take what is mine and declare it to you.*

Acts 10:19-20 (ESV) ¹⁹ *And while Peter was pondering the vision, the Spirit said to him, "Behold, three men are looking for you. ²⁰ Rise and go down and accompany them without hesitation, for I have sent them."*

And in case one would argue that the Holy Spirit is personal, but not God, they must then hear the words of Peter.

Acts 5:3-4 (ESV) ³ *But Peter said, "Ananias, why has Satan filled your heart to lie to the Holy Spirit and to keep back for yourself part of the proceeds of the land? ⁴ While it remained unsold, did it not remain your own? And after it was sold, was it not at your disposal? Why is it that you have contrived this deed in your heart? You have not lied to men but to God."*

2 Peter 1:21 (ESV) *For no prophecy was ever produced by the will of man, but men spoke from God as they were carried along by the Holy Spirit.*

The truth of Scripture is that the Holy Spirit is a divine person, eternal, possessing all the attributes of personality and deity, including intellect (1 Cor. 2:10–13), emotions (Eph. 4:30), will (1 Cor. 12:11), eternality (Heb. 9:14), omnipresence (Ps. 139:7–10), omniscience (Is. 40:13,14), omnipotence (Rom. 15:13), and truthfulness (John 16:13).

Section 4: Scripture that supports the three personalities co-existing.

Likely the most recognizable verse in regards to the co-existing nature of the three persons of the Trinity is found in Matthew’s Gospel:

Matthew 28:19 (KJV) *Go ye therefore, and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost:*

In regards to this verse I will make an important note: The “name” in view is in a singular sense. The name of God in this passage is being substituted with the name ‘of the Father, and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit’ (White, pg.175). The mark of our entrance into the

faith, which is our baptism, is done so in the name of the Trinity – the blessed Triune God whom we worship in Spirit and in Truth.

I have chosen to end this chapter with a quote from a famous Bible teacher from our own day, the late Dr. D. James Kennedy:

This [doctrine of the Trinity] is the teaching of Scripture and this has been the historic view of the Church in all of its branches down through the centuries (Kennedy, cited in Morgan, 2000).

It is true; this is the historic doctrine of the church. And, as Doctor Kennedy says, it is so only because it is derived from the Holy Scripture. In our next session we will look at how the Doctrine of the Trinity has been understood historically as the key tenet of the faith and some of the creeds and confessions that sought to solidify the truth of this great Doctrine.

CHAPTER 3

The Historical Support of the Doctrine

Years ago a ‘Peanuts’ cartoon featuring Charlie Brown made a funny, yet telling, observation about the modern church’s view of history. Charlie Brown went up to his friend Lucy, who was writing a paper. He asked, “What are you writing about?” She answered, “Church history.” He said, “How far have you gotten?” She replied, “My pastor was born in 1950”.

Though this is just a cartoon, it is very true to the condition of most modern Christians. The vast majority of Christians today know very little about the history of their faith. Some seem to have the idea that Church history ended with the book of Acts and then picked up again around 1950 and everything in between has no real significance.

In this chapter we are going to look back into history and get an understanding of the origins of the Doctrine of the Trinity and how it has been understood

down through the ages. I want us to peer down into history and see what the early church understood about this doctrine, and how the understanding of God's Triune nature has stayed incredibly consistent over the past 2000 years, even in the midst of those who would try to replace it with heresy.

Section 1: Trinitarianism in the early church

Most who are familiar with church history understand that the first two centuries of the church's existence was a time of horrible persecution. Men, like Nero, in the first century brought about acts of terror against Christians that are too heinous to even conceive. Under Nero, Christians were crucified, sewn in animal skins and thrown to dogs; frequently they were nailed to posts and covered with pitch to be burned as torches.

It is quite understandable that, during this time, the churches were mostly "underground". Because of this, and many other circumstances, there have been no documents or creedal statements from this era that give us an exhaustive view of the doctrine of the Trinity from the early church. But this does not mean that we are totally unaware of what was believed. One simply can look to the writings

of the men who lived (and died) during this period; and it is easy to see that the Doctrine of the Trinity goes back to the very foundation of the church.

This is extremely important in regards to some of the arguments against the Trinity. There are those who believe that it was a conspiracy led by Constantine in the fourth century that began the Doctrine of the Trinity. This is the foundation for books like *The Da Vinci Code* (Brown, 2003) and others that deny the divinity of Jesus Christ. They claim that the council of Nicea was where this conspiracy took place. And, while the council of Nicea was important in formalizing the doctrine of the Trinity, it in no way came as a result of this council. The Doctrine of the Trinity was already being taught in the church, as it was the Scriptural Doctrine of the nature of God. Again, one simply needs to read the writings of those who were Christians in this early period to understand what the Doctrine concerning the Trinity was.

Justin Martyr (100-165 AD): "...the Father of the universe has a Son; who being the Logos and First-begotten is also God" (*First Apology* 63:15).

Irenaeus (130-200 AD): (referencing Jesus)
"...Christ Jesus, our Lord, and God, and Savior, and King, according to the will of the invisible Father, . . ." (*Against Heresies* I, x, 1)

Clement of Alexandria (150-215 AD): "Both as God and as man, the Lord renders us every kind of help and service. As God He forgives sin, as man He educates us to avoid sin completely" (*Christ the Educator*, chapter 3.1). In addition, "Our educator, O children, resembles His Father, God, whose son He is. He is without sin, without blame, without passion of soul, God immaculate in form of man accomplishing His Father's will" (*Christ the Educator* Chapter 2:4).

Hippolytus (170-236 AD): "And the blessed John in the testimony of his gospel, gives us an account of this economy and acknowledges this Word as God, when he says, 'In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God and the Word was God.' If then the Word was with God and was also God, what follows? Would one say that he speaks of two Gods? I shall not, indeed, speak of two Gods, but of one; of two persons, however, and of a third economy, the grace of the Holy Ghost" (*Against the Heresy of One Noetus*. 14).

Tertullian (150-225 AD): "...the only God has also a Son, his Word who has proceeded from himself, by whom all things were made and without whom nothing has been made: that this was sent by the

Father into the virgin and was born of her both man and God. Son of Man, Son of God, ..." (*Against Praxeas*, 2).

Melito, bishop of Sardis (*Excerpt from a sermon preached around 180 AD*) "And so he was lifted up upon a tree and an inscription was attached indicating who was being killed. Who was it? It is a grievous thing to tell, but a most fearful thing to refrain from telling. But listen, as you tremble before him on whose account the earth trembled! He who hung the earth in place is hanged. He who fixed the heavens in place is fixed in place. He who made all things fast is made fast on a tree. The Sovereign is insulted. God is murdered. The King of Israel is destroyed by an Israelite hand. This is the One who made the heavens and the earth, and formed mankind in the beginning, The One proclaimed by the Law and the Prophets, The One enfleshed in a virgin, The One hanged on a tree, The One buried in the earth, The One raised from the dead and who went up into the heights of heaven, The One sitting at the right hand of the Father, The One having all authority to judge and save, Through Whom the Father made the things which exist from the beginning of time. This One is "the Alpha and the Omega," This One is "the beginning and the end"—the beginning indescribable and the end incomprehensible. This One is the Christ. This One is the King. This One is Jesus. This One is the Leader. This One is the Lord. This One is the One who rose from the dead. This One is the One sitting on the right hand of the Father. He bears the Father

and is borne by the Father. “To him be the glory and the power forever. Amen.”

We see in just these few excerpts that these men all understood Jesus Christ to be fully God and fully man; and they believed in the full personality of the Holy Spirit. So, though we have no specific doctrinal statements coming out of this era, we can know beyond doubt what the faith of the early church was regarding these doctrines.

Section 2: Trinitarianism in the early creeds.

Sometimes when I mention “creedal statements” I get strange looks. This is because the Baptist church and many other churches with whom I am affiliated have been known to be non-creedal, meaning that they do not hold to specific “creeds”. But there is something we need to understand. If we are to truly comprehend our faith, it is important that we understand those who came before us. And in regards to the Doctrine of the Trinity, I could seek to write out an exhaustive history of how the early church councils understood this Doctrine *or* I could simply show how, throughout the ages, this Doctrine was placed in the creeds. This is why I have chosen to examine these creedal

statements as they are proof of what the church has understood about the Doctrine of the Trinity down through the ages.

The Apostles' Creed

This creed gets its name from those who believe that it was actually formulated by the twelve apostles after Pentecost. It has twelve articles. Thus, some believe that each one contributed an article under the guidance of the Holy Spirit. There are, of course, others who say that it had a much later origin (some say as late as the 5th century). Something important to note is that this creed is not specifically a statement of the Trinity, but rather a defense against some forms of gnosticism, which taught that Jesus was not truly a man, but a spirit being. In any case, however, there are truths in this confession that lend themselves to a right understanding of the Trinity.

I believe in God, the Father almighty, creator of heaven and earth.

I believe in Jesus Christ, God's only Son, our Lord, who was conceived by the Holy Spirit, born of the Virgin Mary, suffered under Pontius Pilate, was crucified, died, and was buried; he descended to the dead.

On the third day he rose again; he ascended into heaven, he is seated at the right hand of the Father, and he will come to judge the living and the dead.

I believe in the Holy Spirit, the holy catholic Church, the communion of saints, the forgiveness of sins, the resurrection of the body, and the life everlasting. Amen.

NOTE: The phrase “Catholic”, which we will see again, simply speaks of the “universal” church – not the Roman Catholicism of today.

In this creed, as I stated earlier, the Doctrine of the Trinity is not as specific as in others, but all three persons of the Godhead are spoken of and affirmed in their specific positions within the Godhead (The Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit).

The Nicene Creed

The Nicene Creed was formed during the reign of the Roman Emperor Constantine. Constantine is the emperor most responsible for stopping the terrible persecutions of Christians that were happening in the first two hundred years of Christian history. After his alleged conversion in A.D. 312, Constantine made it legal for Christians to worship openly. It is Constantine who the book *The Da Vinci Code* accused of hijacking Christianity

and propagating the doctrine of Jesus Christ being the Son of God incarnate – a doctrine that *The Da Vinci Code* author claims was never even considered before the council.

As we have already seen this is not true. The truth of the deity of Christ was well known since the time of the apostles and attested to by the early fathers. The purpose of the Council of Nicea was to settle a dispute over a heresy that was being taught in the early 300's called "Arianism". A bishop named Arius was gaining a wide following by teaching that Jesus was not fully God incarnate, but was simply a created being. This dispute was literally tearing Constantine's empire apart. This may not make much sense to us in our society where all religions are basically tolerated, but during the time of Constantine "beliefs" and "doctrines" actually caused serious arguments. It has been said that if a person went to buy a loaf of bread in Constantinople, he might be asked if he believed that "God the Son is begotten or unbegotten".

So as a result, Constantine, who was not necessarily interested in seeking a certain theology, but simply wanting the infighting among Christians in his empire to end, called the church leaders to Nicea to come to a conclusion about

what the Scriptures actually taught about the nature of Jesus Christ.

- Was Jesus both fully God and fully man?
- Was He only ½ God and ½ man?
- Was He all man and not divine at all, just another mortal prophet?

What did the Scriptures actually teach about Jesus?

The council of (approx) 318 Bishops came to the same conclusion that the church still holds today – that Christ was, in fact, God incarnate. They then instituted the Nicene Creed:

We believe in one God, the Father, the Almighty, maker of heaven and earth, of all that is, seen and unseen.

We believe in one Lord, Jesus Christ, the only Son of God, eternally begotten of the Father, God from God, Light from Light, true God from true God, begotten, not made, of one Being with the Father; through him all things were made. For us and for our salvation he came down from heaven, was incarnate of the Holy Spirit and the Virgin Mary and became truly human.

For our sake he was crucified under Pontius Pilate; he suffered death and was buried. On the third day he rose again in accordance with the Scriptures; he ascended into heaven and is seated at the right hand of the Father.

He will come again in glory to judge the living and the dead, and his kingdom will have no end.

We believe in the Holy Spirit, the Lord, the giver of life, who proceeds from the Father and the Son, who with the Father and the Son is worshiped and glorified, who has spoken through the prophets.

We believe in one holy catholic and apostolic Church.

We acknowledge one baptism for the forgiveness of sins.

We look for the resurrection of the dead, and the life of the world to come. Amen

It is important to remember that this document did not change or add to what Christians already believed – it simply solidified what 250+ years of church history already knew – that Christ was not just a man, but that He was God incarnate, the Second person of the Holy Trinity.

The main point of this debate was an argument over a simple phrase: The word was “ousia”, which is a Greek word which means “essence”, “substance” The question was, is Christ:

Homoiousia - of like substance of the Father

Homoousia - of the same substance of the Father

Heteroousia - of different substance than the Father

You may have heard the phrase “Don’t change it one iota”. Iota is the Greek letter “I”. And it is all that separated the truth from falsehood in this foundational issue. Those who added the “iota” were essentially denying the full divinity of Christ. The council decided that Scripture taught that Jesus must be of the same substance as the Father – for, if not, He could not rightly be called God - thus the term Homoousias was adopted.

It is also in the Nicene Creed wherein we find the words “begotten, not made” in regards to Christ and “proceeds” in regards to the Holy Spirit. These concepts are essential to understanding how the early church understood the eternity of the Three persons within the Godhead. It is also seen in the confessions that followed Nicea as all saw this as an important mark in understanding the co-eternal nature of the members of the Godhead.

When we say Christ is begotten, but not made, this sounds like an exercise in contradiction, but it is not. If I were to say that I “beget” thought, this would be true, because my brain constantly is working and thinking. If I were to go back to the time when I was born, my thought process began. As long as I have been, my thought process

has been. Also, as long as I have been, and my thought process has been, so has been my will.

So if my thought process has been begotten, so, too, has my will been proceeding from me. All of this has been since I came into existence. The same can be used as an analogy to the relationship of the Father, the Son and the Spirit.

Christ is begotten of the Father, but this in no way means there was a time of created origin. The Holy Spirit ‘proceeds’ from the Father and the Son, but again this speaks not of origin (for He is eternal) but of place and purpose within the Godhead. The reason for this is because God is eternal, which means He is without beginning and without a starting point. Thus, that which is begotten of the Father (the Son) and proceeds from the Father and the Son (the Holy Spirit), is also co-eternal, and has no point of creation.

The Athanasius Creed

We should know from the outset that it is almost unanimously understood that Athanasius did not write this work himself. However his teachings would have been strongly mirrored by what it says. It is probably the most

strategic statement regarding the Trinity because it seeks to keep all of the elements of the Doctrine in balance with one another.

Whosoever will be saved, before all things it is necessary that he hold the Catholic Faith.

Which Faith except everyone do keep whole and undefiled, without doubt he shall perish everlastingly.

And the Catholic Faith is this: That we worship one God in Trinity, and Trinity

in Unity, neither confounding the Persons, nor dividing the Substance.

For there is one Person of the Father, another of the Son, and another of the Holy Ghost.

But the Godhead of the Father, of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost, is all one, the Glory equal, the Majesty co-eternal.

Such as the Father is, such is the Son, and such is the Holy Ghost.

The Father uncreated, the Son uncreated, and the Holy Ghost uncreated.

The Father incomprehensible, the Son incomprehensible, and the Holy Ghost incomprehensible.

The Father eternal, the Son eternal, and the Holy Ghost eternal.

And yet they are not three eternals, but one eternal.

As also there are not three incomprehensibles, nor three uncreated, but one uncreated, and one incomprehensible.

So likewise the Father is Almighty, the Son Almighty, and the Holy Ghost Almighty.

And yet they are not three Almighty, but one Almighty.

So the Father is God, the Son is God, and the Holy Ghost is God.

And yet they are not three Gods, but one God.

So likewise the Father is Lord, the Son Lord, and the Holy Ghost Lord.

And yet not three Lords, but one Lord.

For like as we are compelled by the Christian verity to acknowledge every Person by Himself to be both God and Lord, so we are forbidden by the Catholic Religion, to say, there be three Gods, or three Lords.

The Father is made of none, neither created, nor begotten.

The Son is of the Father alone, not made, nor created, but begotten.

The Holy Ghost is of the Father [and of the Son], neither made, nor created, nor begotten, but proceeding.

So there is one Father, not three Fathers; one Son, not three Sons; one Holy Ghost, not three Holy Ghosts.

And in this Trinity none is afore, or after other; none is greater, or less than another; but the whole three Persons are co-eternal together and co-equal.

So that in all things, as is aforesaid, the Unity in Trinity and the Trinity in Unity is to be worshipped.

He therefore that will be saved must thus think of the Trinity.

Furthermore, it is necessary to everlasting salvation that he also believe rightly the Incarnation of our Lord Jesus Christ .

For the right Faith is, that we believe and confess, that our Lord Jesus Christ, the Son of God, is God and Man. God, of the substance of the Father, begotten before the worlds; and Man, of the Substance of His Mother, born in the world; Perfect God and perfect Man, of a reasonable soul in human flesh subsisting; Equal to the Father, as touching His Godhead; and inferior to the Father, as touching His Manhood.

Who, although He be God and Man, yet He is not two, but one Christ; One, not by conversion of the Godhead into flesh, but by taking of the Manhood into God; One

altogether; not by confusion of Substance, but by unity of Person.

For as the reasonable soul and flesh is one man, so God and Man is one Christ.

Who suffered for our salvation, descended into hell, rose again the third day from the dead.

He ascended into heaven, He sitteth on the right hand of the Father, God Almighty, from whence He shall come to judge the quick and the dead.

At whose coming all men shall rise with their bodies and shall give account for their own works.

And they that have done good shall go into life everlasting; and they that have done evil into everlasting fire.

This is the Catholic Faith, which except a man believe faithfully, he cannot be saved.

The Christian faith, since its inception, has been based upon an understanding of the Deity of Jesus Christ. This is why the creed states simply that this is the universal faith. A Christian is one who worships Christ, and one cannot worship Christ if He is not God, and Christ cannot be God apart from a right understanding of the Holy Trinity. So we understand that, while a person may not be able to articulate the particulars of the Doctrine of the trinity, a denial of Jesus' full divinity is a denial of the Christian religion.

Section 3: Trinitarianism in the later Confessions

The Westminster Confession

This confession is used by many Reformed churches, specifically within the Presbyterian Church. It was drawn up in 1646, and is still in use today all around the world. The following is a short segment from the confession relating to the Doctrine of the Trinity:

Chapter 2 Article 3. In the unity of the Godhead there be three persons, of one substance, power, and eternity: God the Father, God the Son, and God the Holy Ghost: (1 John 5:7. Matt 3:16–17, Matt. 28:19, 2 Cor. 13:14) the Father is of none, neither begotten, nor proceeding; the Son is eternally begotten of the Father; (John 1:14,18) the Holy Ghost eternally proceeding from the Father and the Son. (John 15:26, Gal. 4:6)

The London Baptist Confession 1689

The following quote, taken from *A Faith to Confess: The Baptist Confession of Faith of 1689 Rewritten in Modern English* (1975), gives a brief history of the London Baptist Confession:

Between the years 1644 and 1648 an Assembly of Puritan Divines of England and Scotland had drawn up the Westminster Confession which was and is highly esteemed by believers. But its church Order was that of Presbyterianism, and Baptists differed

from it on important matters such as the nature of the gathered church, baptism, the Lord's supper and church government. Hence, when opportunity arose, they drew up their own Confession of Faith, accepting the fundamental doctrines of the Westminster Confession but making such adjustments to, and correction of, that Confession as seemed to their minds and consciences to be demanded by the pure Word of God. Thus a comparison of the two Confessions will reveal many word-for-word similarities but also sundry changes (n.p.).

Regarding the Trinity, the London Baptist Confession states:

Chapter 2 Article 3. In this divine and infinite Being there are three subsistences, the Father, the Word or Son, and Holy Spirit, of one substance, power, and eternity, each having the whole divine essence, yet the essence undivided: the Father is of none, neither begotten nor proceeding; the Son is eternally begotten of the Father; the Holy Spirit proceeding from the Father and the Son; all infinite, without beginning, therefore but one God, who is not to be divided in nature and being, but distinguished by several peculiar relative properties and personal relations; which doctrine of the Trinity is the foundation of all our communion with God, and comfortable dependence on him. (1 John 5:7; Matthew 28:19; 2 Corinthians 13:14; Exodus 3:14; John 14:11; 1 Corinthians 8:6; John 1:14,18; John 15:26; Galatians 4:6)

That which is most striking, in my opinion, when looking over these various documents, which origins spread hundreds of years, is just how alike they are in their understanding of this very perplexing Doctrine. It would seem that God has preserved the orthodox understanding of who He is by first preserving His Scriptures. And as long as we have the Scriptures we will have these confessions and creeds that are based upon Scripture. All of which will attest to our belief in the blessed Triune nature of our God.

Do we believe in the Trinity because the creeds or confessions say so? Absolutely not. We believe in the Trinity because it is specifically taught in the Word of God. And because it is revealed in God's Word we can trust that it is the absolute truth about God.

CHAPTER 4

Questions Concerning the Doctrine

In this lesson we are going to go further in our study by examining some of the arguments people use to object to the doctrine of the Trinity. Some of the things we discuss may be issues that you have considered and wondered about. Hopefully by the end of this chapter we will clear up some of the confusion that often is involved in trying to understand this doctrine.

Section 1: Common objections from logic

Probably the most common objection in this category is the simplest of all to refute. It usually is worded like this: “The word ‘trinity’ is not found in the Bible. We are supposed to hold the Bible as our sole rule of faith. We shouldn’t use non-biblical language to describe God”.

This objection comes up more times than one might realize. And we must realize and remember that it is true that the word ‘Trinity’ is not a biblical word. It is a

conclusion reached through a process of deductive reasoning. This is the kind of reasoning in which the conclusion is *necessitated* by, or reached from, previously known facts (the premises). If the premises are true, the conclusion must be true.

For instance, beginning with the premises "sharks are fish" and "all fish have fins", you may conclude that "sharks have fins". Deductive reasoning is logically valid and it is the fundamental method in which mathematical facts are shown to be true. The deductions for the Trinity come as follows:

*IF the bible teaches that God is one in essence,
and...*

*IF the bible teaches that the Father, Jesus and the
Holy Spirit are God, and...*

*IF the bible teaches that these three interact with
each other in a relationship, and...*

*IF the bible teaches that these three share the same
nature and glory, then...*

The logical deduction is that the Bible teaches the doctrine of the Trinity.

It should not upset us or offend us that we use extra-biblical words to describe the nature of God. In fact, there are many words we use often to describe God, that are not Scriptural, yet are founded on the principles of Scripture:

Monotheism – We know this is taught in the Bible, yet the term is never used.

Atheist – Not a scriptural word, but an implication.
Psalms 14:1 (ESV) *“The fool says in his heart, “There is no God.”*

Incarnation – Which simply describes in theological terms how “the word became flesh” (John 1:14)

A person who would use such an argument against the Trinity does so because of an obvious bias against the doctrine, not because this is a good argument.

Another question people might pose from a seemingly ‘logical’ point of view is that the whole concept of the Trinity is an illogical one. They would say simply that you cannot have one and three at the same time. We

discussed this a bit in the first chapter, and I will simply reiterate what has already been said: If we were saying that there is one God, who is three Gods, this would be a contradiction. But we have not said this. Instead we have said that God is ONE IN ESSENCE (Being) and THREE in PERSON. This is not a contradiction. Christians say that God is ONE in one sense, yet THREE in another sense. The essence of God is infinite, and undivided – yet it is shared by three persons. This belief, though it is incomprehensible because of nothing to compare it to, does not violate the law of non-contradiction.

But, there are other objections that people have, in regards to the Trinity, that are actually based upon their understanding of Scripture. There are important passages in the Bible that cause question and confusion about the Doctrine of the Trinity.

Section 2: Common objections from the Bible

Now, before I mention the specific texts that are often cited to deny the Trinity, I want to first teach an important concept regarding the person of Jesus Christ. When we speak of Jesus being “God incarnate” we are making a very specific reference to two important truths:

- 1) Jesus is fully God
- 2) Jesus is fully man

He is not half-god and half-man, nor is He one with the exclusion of the other. He is fully both divine and human. Luke's Gospel portrays this in a vivid way. Luke's Gospel has the story of Jesus' baptism in the third chapter. We know that this is a place wherein the Trinity is seen clearly. But following this event in chapter 3 of Luke we also see a genealogy that stretches back to Adam. We see in it both His divine nature in His relationship within the Trinity and His human nature described in having a human genealogical line.

In theological terms this has been known as the **HYPOSTATIC UNION**. Hypostasis simply means "essence". So when we speak of the hypostatic union of Christ we speak of His "union of essence" This is seen most clearly in **John 1:14 (ESV)** "*And the Word became flesh and dwelt among us...*" This teaches us that the DIVINE LOGOS became flesh in the person of Jesus Christ, thus having a union in the nature of both human and divine.

It is important to remember that though there was union between the divine and human, there was no change in the divine nature. It was not altered in this union. Rather, the divine and holy nature of the Logos remained as it always has been. Also, this does not mean that Jesus was simply a man who “had God with Him” or a man who “showed forth the God principle”. No, He is God “incarnate”. Jesus’ two natures are not “mixed together” nor do they combine in a new form of “god-man” nature. They are separate natures, yet they function as a unit in the one man Jesus Christ.

The theological term “hypostatic union” has its origins in the Council of Chalcedon which took place in 451. One of the purposes of this council was to correct doctrinal errors that were being taught within the church. The errors were as follows:

Apollinarianism – This taught that Jesus was God but not fully human.

Nestorianism – This taught that Jesus had two separate and distinct personalities.

Monophysitism – This taught that Jesus had one nature, a divine nature, which cancelled out his human nature.

The problem with each of these false views is that they overemphasize or underemphasize Jesus' deity or His humanity. In response to these arguments about the nature of Christ, the council labored over and produced what is, perhaps, the most significant Christological statement in the churches' history:

We, then, following the holy Fathers, all with one consent, confess one and the same Son, our Lord Jesus Christ, the same perfect in Godhead and also perfect in manhood; truly God and truly man, of a reasonable [rational] soul and body; consubstantial [coessential, of the same substance] with the Father according to the Godhead, and consubstantial with us according to the Manhood; in all things like unto us, without sin; begotten before all ages of the Father according to the Godhead, and in these latter days, for us and for our salvation, born of the Virgin Mary, the God-bearer, according to the Manhood; one and the same Christ, Son, Lord, Only-begotten, to be acknowledged in two natures, inconfusedly, unchangeable, indivisibly, inseparably; the distinction of natures being by no means taken away by the union, but rather the property of each nature being preserved, and concurring in one Person and one Subsistence, not parted or divided into two persons, but one and the same Son, and only begotten, God, the Word, the Lord Jesus Christ, as the prophets from the beginning [have declared] concerning Him, and the Lord Jesus Christ Himself has taught us, and the Creed of the holy Fathers has been handed down to us.

Now, because of this union of essence, we must understand that when Christ became flesh He was, for that time, put into a position of limitation because He was fully man.

Hebrews 2:9 (ESV) *But we see him who for a little while was made lower than the angels, namely Jesus, crowned with glory and honor because of the suffering of death, so that by the grace of God he might taste death for everyone.*

Galatians 4:4 (ESV) *But when the fullness of time had come, God sent forth his Son, born of woman, born under the law,*

Philippians 2:5-8 (ESV) *⁵ Have this mind among yourselves, which is yours in Christ Jesus, ⁶ who, though he was in the form of God, did not count equality with God a thing to be grasped, ⁷ but made himself nothing, taking the form of a servant, being born in the likeness of men. And being found in human form, ⁸ he humbled himself by becoming obedient to the point of death, even death on a cross.*

This last verse tells us something more than we usually see in a cursory reading. The context is that we learn to be humble. The point Paul makes is that Christ “humbled” Himself by not counting Himself equal with

God while He was on the earth. If, in fact, Christ was NOT equal with God, it is not humble for Him to not count Himself equal, it is the *right* thing to do. But because He *was* equal, His humbling Himself becomes a great example for us.

So we see that, from these verses, for a time Christ took on the limitations of human flesh. By acknowledging this truth we see that the most common Scriptural attacks against the Trinity and the Deity of Christ are easily understood. Such questions of:

- If Jesus is God, to whom did He pray in John 17?
- If Jesus is God, why would He say the Father was greater than He in John 14:28?
- If Jesus is God, why did He say that He did not know the time of His return in Matthew 24:35-36?

All of these questions are answered when one remembers that, though Christ was fully divine, He took on the *LIMITATIONS* of humanity for a season. Consider this

elegant summation from John Chrysostom (c. A.D. 347–407), Bishop of Constantinople:

“I do not think of Christ as God alone, or man alone, but both together. For I know He was hungry, and I know that with five loaves He fed five thousand. I know He was thirsty, and I know that He turned the water into wine. I know he was carried in a ship, and I know that He walked on the sea. I know that He died, and I know that He raised the dead. I know that He was set before Pilate, and I know that He sits with the Father on His throne. I know that He was worshipped by angels, and I know that He was stoned by the Jews. And truly some of these I ascribe to the human, and others to the divine nature. For by reason of this He is said to have been both God and man” (Chrysostom, cited in Morgan, 2000, Pg. 478).

The difficult passages of Scripture regarding the Trinity become much less of a problem when we accept the truth that Christ was unique – He was man and God – fully divine and fully human. As the apostle Paul says clearly, *“For in him dwells all the fullness of the Godhead bodily.”* (Col 2:9)

Essentially those who would argue from the Bible against the Trinity usually do so by attacking the full deity of Jesus Christ. To do this they must deny certain key

passages, mistranslate them, or ignore them. The Bible is clear in teaching the foundations of what the Doctrine states: God is one in essence, and three in persons. Jesus is God the Son, the second of the Trinity, fully divine and fully human.

Section 3: The Objections Posed by Arianism

The name arianism comes from a teacher in the 4th century called Arius. Arius held that Jesus was not divine in nature, but instead was a created being. He did not deny that Jesus had divine attributes, but he did deny that Jesus was divine in and of Himself. Arius and his followers misunderstood the passages about Jesus being “tired” and “hungry” as being clear denials of full deity.

As we have already seen in this lesson, trying to make Jesus a created being is not the answer. Jesus was fully man, in union with his divine nature, thus could experience all that we experience. His limitations on his human nature do not impact his divine nature.

One of the major misinterpretations of Arius is how he understood the phrase “first-born” when it refers to Jesus.

Romans 8:29 (ESV) *For those whom he foreknew he also predestined to be conformed to the image of his Son, in order that he might be the firstborn among many brothers.*

Colossians 1:15-20 (ESV) ¹⁵ *He is the image of the invisible God, the firstborn of all creation. ¹⁶ For by him all things were created, in heaven and on earth, visible and invisible, whether thrones or dominions or rulers or authorities—all things were created through him and for him. ¹⁷ And he is before all things, and in him all things hold together. ¹⁸ And he is the head of the body, the church. He is the beginning, the firstborn from the dead, that in everything he might be preeminent. ¹⁹ For in him all the fullness of God was pleased to dwell, ²⁰ and through him to reconcile to himself all things, whether on earth or in heaven, making peace by the blood of his cross.*

Arius' argument was that if Jesus was the "first born" this means that He is created, thus He is not eternal but a part of the created order.

This, however, is not the case. The use by the apostle Paul of the phrase "first-born" has a specific meaning in the context of which He was writing. This term, in both Greek and Jewish culture, refers most often not to the person who is in the pre-eminent position. The "first-

born” was the son who received the right of inheritance of the father, whether he was first chronologically or not. The term was used of Israel, even though Israel was not the “first” nation to ever exist (Exodus 4:22). “Firstborn”, in this context, clearly means the highest rank.

We should note also that the very text Arius tries to use to deny Christ as divine, speaks of Him as creator. It says, *“For by him all things were created, in heaven and on earth, visible and invisible, whether thrones or dominions or rulers or authorities—all things were created through him and for him”* Christ is never called a created being – yet is in many places called the creator of “all” that has been created. We should always remember that Christ existed before creation, rules over creation, and has the rightful inheritance to all creation; thus He is called the first-born of all creation.

After about one-hundred years of debate, as various councils (most notable being the Nicene Council) Arianism was determined from Scripture to be a false teaching. Arianism has never been accepted as a viable Christian doctrine. But that has not stopped it from gaining followers. It has continued throughout history in various forms. The modern day movement of the Jehovah’s Witnesses are very

much like the Arians. Because of this they even formulated their own set of Scriptures called the “New World Translation”.

I mentioned in an earlier chapter that, if one holds to a view denying the Trinity they must change the Scriptures. Here are a few excerpts from the New World Translation, which is the version which comes from and is used by the Jehovah’s Witnesses:

Genesis 1:1-2: In [the] beginning God created the heavens and the earth. Now the earth proved to be formless and waste and there was darkness upon the surface of [the] watery deep; and *God's active force* was moving to and fro over the surface of the waters." (New World Translation, Emphasis added)

Colossians 1:16,17 “because by means of him all [other] things were created in the heavens and upon the earth, the things visible and the things invisible, no matter whether they are thrones or lordships or governments or authorities. All [other] things have been created through him and for him. Also, he is before all [other] things and by means of him all [other] things were made to exist’ (New World Translation)

John 1:1 In [the] beginning the Word was, and the Word was with God, and the Word was *a god*. (New World Translation, Emphasis added)

Dr. Bruce M. Metzger of Princeton, a professor of New Testament Language and Literature, says concerning the New World Translation that it is, "A frightful mistranslation." He goes on to say that, "If the Jehovah's Witnesses take this translation seriously, they are polytheists" (*What Greek Scholars Think of the New World Translation, n.d.*).

There have been others, along with the witnesses, who have followed the lead of Arius, sadly to their own destruction. Certainly, though, Arius was not the only one to deny the Trinity in history. As we have already mentioned, there were many who tried to concoct differing, and unbiblical views of the nature of God and the nature of Christ. But, throughout, the orthodox doctrine has stood strong.

There is one God.

Within the Being of God there are three Persons.

These Persons are coequal and coeternal.

There is one last question I want to deal with in this chapter:

Can a person be a Christian without believing in the Trinity?

This is not an easy question, but it is an important one. It is obviously not a prerequisite to faith to be able to articulate the particulars of this doctrine. We know there are many who cannot but have experienced genuine conversion. But I do believe that to be a Christian it does require a belief in the most fundamental truths of the Doctrine. A Christian must believe that:

God is one.

Jesus is fully divine.

The Holy Spirit is personal.

These are not just “ideas” formulated by men. These are incontestable Scriptural truths. To deny them (as many do) is to deny the Scripture, which is the foundation upon which the Christian faith is built. I especially like the words of Ra Mclaughlin on this subject:

I suspect that while most Christians don't think about these matters much, most also assume a great number of things that depend upon these doctrines

(e.g. Jesus is a sufficient and reliable savior; it is good to pray to Jesus; baptism is to be done in the name of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit). I also suspect that most Christians know a good deal more about these doctrines than they realize. Consider a parallel in grammar: most people who speak English can't parse a sentence and its constituent parts, but they can converse quite well. They recognize good grammar even though they can't define it (McLaughlin, n.d.).

The point Mr. McLaughlin makes is a good one. A person may not be able to formulize the doctrine of the Trinity the moment he is saved. In fact, I would say it is rare that a person could. But the core of what is taught in the doctrine of the Trinity is recognized. Thus, while the full understanding of the doctrine is not essential to salvation, God is still a trinity, and He is essential for salvation. A denial of the truth He has revealed about His nature is a denial of Him.

CHAPTER 5

Application of the Doctrine

In this final chapter we are going to go away from the Doctrine of the Trinity in the abstract sense, and instead we are going to engage the Doctrine of the Trinity with the question of how its truth ought to affect us practically. Application is essential in lessons like these because if all we have are the facts of what the Bible teaches we can easily fall into the trap of having a “dead orthodoxy”.

It has been said that “right thinking promotes right living”. And I believe this to be true. We must begin with “right facts” about any subject. But we must also know how these facts are to affect the way we live as Christians. So we must learn to apply the facts we know.

Section 1: How the Trinity affects our worship

If I were to ask the average Christian churchgoer how vital the Doctrine of the Trinity is to their worship experience I would probably get a pretty strange look back from most of them. This is because many in the evangelical

world have come to the conclusion that doctrine doesn't matter. Some have even called doctrine "dangerous" because it has the power to divide the body of Christ. But it is far better to be divided over truth than to be united in error.

Doctrines such as the belief in the Trinity are the grounds of our worship. Without firm beliefs in God, and the nature of God, we may simply be worshipping a God of our own making. A.W. Tozer once said:

"It would be impossible to overemphasize the importance of sound doctrine in the life of a Christian. Right thinking about all spiritual matters is imperative if we would have right living. As men do not gather grapes of thorns nor figs of thistles, so sound character does not grow out of unsound teaching" (Tozer, cited in Morgan, 2000, 241).

Sound doctrine is the foundation for right worship. Without a knowledge of who it is we are ascribing adoration to, it is a task done in vain. God is not honored in the worship of false gods, is He? No, He is not. True worship is founded upon the truth. Do you remember what Jesus told the woman at the well?

John 4:23 (ESV) *But the hour is coming, and is now here, when the true worshipers will worship the Father in spirit and truth, for the Father is seeking such people to worship him.*

What does that mean when Jesus says worship...in truth?

The idea is simple: God has revealed certain things about Himself in Scripture. For example He is Holy, just, righteous, and loving. Those who would draw close to Him are required to center their worship upon the TRUTH of those things God has revealed concerning Himself. This is not to say that someone must have all truth to properly worship God, as no one has all truth. But the revealed truth of the Trinity is foundational to right worship and its foundational principles are clear in the pages of the New Testament. Dr. James White (1998) rightly says that “Christian worship will be vital, consistent, and powerful when the proper attitude toward the Triune God is maintained. When that truth is lost Christian worship ends” (pg.195).

Section 2: How the Trinity affects our understanding of salvation.

The science of God is called “Theology”. Within that science are various subcategories: Christology (the doctrine of Christ), Pneumatology (the doctrine of the Holy Spirit), Hamartiology (the doctrine of sin) and there are many others.

One of the most important in the Christian life is called “soteriology”. This is the Doctrine of Salvation. The question that soteriology seeks to answer is “How does a Holy God save sinful men?” Under the banner of soteriology rests such important concepts as atonement, sacrifice, forgiveness, etc. So soteriology is at the heart of the Christian religion.

The question, then, is “How does the Trinity affect our understanding of soteriology?” Even though the members of the Trinity are all God, they all took upon themselves specific duties in the act of man’s redemption. Having an understanding of the Trinity helps us to understand these duties.

Salvation is a work wholly of God. And while there are many important aspects of salvation, we will look to simply three in relation to the Trinity.

Election

Redemption Regeneration

It is easy to see which person within the Godhead the Bible calls the worker of each of these roles. The Father is almost exclusively seen as the one who “chooses” the elect for salvation (Romans 8:28-30; Ephesians 1:3-6; 1 Peter 1:1-2; John 6:37). The Son is almost exclusively seen as the one who “redeems” those who are of the elect (Romans 3:24; Ephesians 1:7; Colossians 1:14; Hebrews 9:12). Likewise it is the Holy Spirit who is seen as the one who brings regeneration (the new birth) to the elect (John 3:3-8; Titus 3:5).

So we see that the Bible is clear in teaching that salvation is a Trinitarian work of God. Knowing this, we look back to the issue of worship. When we worship we worship the Father who chose us, the Son who redeemed us and the Holy Spirit who gave us new life.

Section 3: How the Trinity affects our walk with God

Understanding the nature of God as being one in essence and three in person is an invaluable truth for the believer who seeks to have an active relationship with God.

Our relationship is about honoring Him, bringing glory to Him, and praising Him. And God is most honored when we seek to know Him intimately.

We know this principle is true by simply looking at our human relationships. Consider the subject of dating and marriage. When two people first meet they may have an immediate attraction. But this grows into love only if the two people begin to find out more and more about one another. In fact, if the two did not care to learn about each other it would be a safe assumption that the relationship would not be a very strong one. It certainly would not be a long-lasting one. Relationships are strengthened when two people seek to get to know each other. Thus, as we become more knowledgeable about God's nature, our relationship with Him gets stronger too.

I know this from my own experience. The more I learn about God in His Word the more I feel an intimate connection with Him. And the Doctrine of the Trinity is the truth of the very nature of God. Learning and loving this truth helps us in our relationship with Him.

Something else to consider regarding the Trinity and our relationship to God: Part of our relationship with

God is founded upon our obedience to Him in our daily lives.

We might call this our “Christian walk” And a vital part of that “walk” is that we be good witnesses for God in the world. This means we are supposed to be presenters of the Gospel to a lost world. But do you realize that apart from the work of the Triune God there is no Gospel to present? The Gospel itself is a Trinitarian truth. Without the Father, the Son or the Spirit there would be no good news. As we have already seen, these three are all active in the Gospel of salvation.

In fact, one simply needs to look at the various cult groups that attempt to call themselves “Christians” who deny the Trinity and we see that the true Gospel is also missing. Mormonism denies the truth of God being one in essence, and eternal. Thus it leads to perversion. The Gospel in Mormonism is about how a person becomes a God, not specifically about salvation. Jehovah Witnesses deny the full deity of Jesus Christ and personality of the Holy Spirit. Thus they, too, fall into grave error. They have developed a works-based system of salvation. Their Gospel is no good news at all. Oneness groups often become very

legalistic in their promotion of certain experiences or gifts that one MUST have before they can be TRULY saved.

The Gospel is the result of God. Those who have a wrong view of God will naturally have a wrong view of the Gospel. A right view of God is essential to have a right view of the Gospel.

Throughout this chapter I have sought to show you just a few of the ways that the Doctrine of the Trinity is not some abstract principle for “ivory tower” theologians, but it is a truth that all Christians should be aware of because it has important implications in all aspects of our life of faith.

While I am sure that this course has not exhausted all important points regarding this important Doctrine I do hope that this class has been a beginning to a life of sincere study into the nature of God. As I close I want to share a story about how I came to understand what was meant by the doctrine of the Trinity.

I remember watching a film when I was a teenager, and the people in the film were in a church service. I had grown up in church so I had heard often the word trinity, but I had never had it explained. In this film I heard the words of one of the most famous hymns in history – one I

had likely sung many times. But it was that day that the song really grabbed my attention.

The song was by Reginald Heber, and it is entitled “Holy, Holy, Holy”. The first verse goes as follows:

Holy, holy, holy! Lord God Almighty!
Early in the morning
our song shall rise to Thee;
Holy, holy, holy, merciful and mighty!
God in three Persons, blessed Trinity!

At that moment I felt as though I finally understood what was meant by the phrase “Trinity”. There is one God. Within the one God are three persons. All are holy. All deserve worship. All are God.

Now, I do not attempt in any way to say I was fully understanding the Trinity at that point, because, even now I wouldn’t say I have absolutely comprehended it because the nature of God is outside of the grasp of finite men. But at least, at that moment, I knew what the church was saying when it said that God was a Trinity. It is my hope that this book has been that to you as well. I hope that, in some small way, your eyes have been opened to this glorious

truth. And I hope that your walk, and your witness, and your worship will be affected by a stronger understanding of our Triune God, who is blessed forever. Amen.

**Praise God, from Whom
all blessings flow;**

**Praise Him, all creatures
here below;**

**Praise Him above, ye
Heavenly Host;**

**Praise Father, Son, and
Holy Ghost.**

Amen.

APPENDIX

Questions for Study and Reflection

Chapter 1 – The Doctrine Defined

1. Henotheism is a theological worldview that teaches that
 - a. There is only one God
 - b. There can be a multitude of gods
 - c. Human beings are gods
 - d. While there can be a multitude of gods, only one should be worshipped

2. The biblical doctrine of the Trinity states that God is one in essence (being) and three in
 - a. Shape
 - b. Person
 - c. Essence
 - d. Purpose

3. Modalism fails to make a proper distinction between the
 - a. Full deity and humanity of Christ
 - b. Persons of the Trinity
 - c. Regeneration and the Baptism of the Holy Spirit
 - d. Various names of God in the Old Testament

4. A pie, which is a whole that can be divided into three parts, is an example of a wrong understanding of the Trinity called
 - a. Modalism
 - b. Subordinationism
 - c. Tri-theism
 - d. Arianism

5. The belief that the Holy Spirit is lesser than the Father is an example of
 - a. Trinitarianism
 - b. Modalism
 - c. Subordinationism
 - d. Tri-theism

Chapter 2 - The Scriptural Support of the Doctrine

1. Deuteronomy 6:4-6 supports which of the following foundational points of the Trinity
 - a. The plurality of persons within the Godhead
 - b. The oneness of God
 - c. The personality of the Holy Spirit
 - d. The deity of Christ

2. What does the distinction between “Ton Theon” and “Theos” in John 1:1 indicate?
 - a. Jesus is a lesser god
 - b. The word is not truly God
 - c. There is a distinction between the Word and the Father
 - d. The Word and the Father are the same person

3. The mis-translation of John 1:1 which states, “The Word was a god” violates which fundamental tenet of Trinitarianism?
 - a. Monotheism
 - b. Tri-theism
 - c. Modalism
 - d. Henotheism

4. The prologue of John’s gospel proves all but the following about Jesus Christ
 - a. He is eternal
 - b. He was born of a virgin
 - c. He is in communion with the Father
 - d. He is fully divine

5. The Holy Spirit is the
 - a. Third Person of the Trinity
 - b. Active force that comes from the Father
 - c. Will of God
 - d. Second Person of the Trinity

Chapter 3 – The Historical Support of the Doctrine

1. There was great unanimity between early Christian writers about

- a. The deity of Christ
 - b. The oneness of God
 - c. The humanity of Christ
 - d. All of the above
2. The creeds and confessions are designed to
 - a. Update the faith to fit the surrounding culture
 - b. Attempt to solidify what the true church has always believed
 - c. Replace Scripture as the infallible rule of faith and practice
 - d. Create new doctrines not found in the Scriptures
3. The Apostles' Creed is
 - a. A clear statement regarding the distinction between the three members of the Godhead
 - b. Not specifically a statement of the Trinity
 - c. Designed to help us remember the names of the Apostles
 - d. Proof that the apostles believed in the Trinity
4. The Council of Nicea was primarily called to settle the dispute of
 - a. Polytheism
 - b. Pelagianism
 - c. Calvinism
 - d. Arianism
5. The Council of Nicea determined that Christ was in what relationship with the Father?
 - a. Homoiousia
 - b. Homoousia
 - c. Heteroousia
 - d. Monoousia

Chapter 4 – Questions Concerning the Doctrine

1. Which of the following arguments might a person make if he held to the views of Arius?
 - a. Christ used the phrase, “I AM” to refer to Himself
 - b. Christ felt hunger and thirst

- c. Christ rose from the dead
 - d. Christ's bones were not broken
- 2. Hypostatic Union refers to
 - a. The connection between Christianity and other faiths
 - b. The connection between Jesus and His followers
 - c. The union of man and woman in marriage
 - d. The union of the divine and human essence in the person of Jesus Christ
- 3. The belief that Jesus had two distinct personalities is
 - a. Appolinarianism
 - b. Nestorianism
 - c. Monophysitism
 - d. Trinitarianism
- 4. If Jesus is fully divine, whom did He pray to in John 17?
 - a. The Father, who is greater in essence than He
 - b. The Father, who is distinct in person, but is equal with Him in essence
 - c. The Father, who is lesser than He
 - d. The Holy Spirit
- 5. To be considered a true Christian, a person must certainly believe all of the following, except
 - a. God is one in essence
 - b. The world was created in six literal 24 hour days
 - c. Christ is fully divine and fully human
 - d. The Holy Spirit is personal and divine

Chapter 5 – Application of the Doctrine

- 1. The doctrine of the Trinity
 - a. Has no influence on true Christian worship
 - b. Has some influence on Christian worship
 - c. Has great influence on Christian worship
 - d. Is essential to true Christian worship

2. Within the working out of God's plan among the members of the Trinity, the Son is generally seen bringing about mankind's
 - a. Redemption
 - b. Regeneration
 - c. Election
 - d. Condemnation

3. While it is true that the Trinity has no analogies in nature, the Christian can still know
 - a. The complete truth about the Trinity
 - b. What the doctrine of the Trinity states
 - c. Exactly how the members of the Godhead relate to one another
 - d. How to visualize the Trinity

4. Without an understanding of the doctrine of the Trinity there can be no right understanding of
 - a. The Gospel
 - b. The person and work of Jesus Christ
 - c. The proper understanding of the Holy Spirit
 - d. All of the above

5. God's work in salvation is
 - a. Of the Father alone
 - b. Of the Son alone
 - c. Of the Holy Spirit alone
 - d. A fully Trinitarian work

Questions for Study and Reflection

Answer Key:

Chapter 1

1. d
2. b
3. b
4. c
5. c

Chapter 2

1. b
2. c
3. a
4. b
5. a

Chapter 3

1. d
2. b
3. b
4. d
5. b

Chapter 4

1. b
2. d
3. b
4. b
5. b

Chapter 5

1. d
2. a
3. b
4. d
5. d

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