

## Tactics

### *Can We Believe in the Trinity?*

The Christian doctrine of the Trinity is a distinctive of Biblical and historical Christianity. But, it is not a simple one to grasp, and there are widespread misunderstandings of it. Many people try to reason about the Trinity from a popular metaphor, or from a single proof text. But, it's best to consider the broader picture of Scriptural data about the subject, in the light of Christ.

There is no single verse that encapsulates the doctrine of the Trinity, so don't give in to someone demanding a "proof text". Rather, the consider the comprehensive Scriptural picture of God and Christ.

### **Why Did People First Begin to Believe in the Trinity?**

Jesus changed everything. His teachings, and Resurrection from the dead forced people to consider further who God is.

"Far from being a rather pointless piece of theological speculation, the doctrine of the Trinity is grounded directly in the complex human experience of the redemption in Christ, and is concerned with the explanation of this experience." -Alister McGrath, Oxford Professor

God was incarnated in flesh, and this caused people to consider how this could be.

## **The Scriptural Data**

### **I. There is One God (and no others)**

"I *am* the LORD, and *there is* none else, *there is* no God beside me..." Isaiah 45:5

"Remember the former things of old: for I am God, and there is none else; I am God, and there is none like me..." Isaiah 46:9

"Is there a God beside me? yea, *there is* no God; I know not *any*." Isaiah 44:8

"I *am* the LORD that maketh all *things*; that stretcheth forth the heavens alone; that spreadeth abroad the earth by myself..." Isaiah 44:24

"Hear, O Israel: The LORD our God *is* one LORD..." Deuteronomy 6:4 (The Jewish Shema prayer, a central confession of Judaism)

"And Jesus answered him, The first of all the commandments is, Hear, O Israel; The Lord our God is one Lord". Mark 12:29

## II. Three Distinct Persons are Called God

### 1. The Father

- i. He's a distinct person with a first-person perspective.

“And lo a voice from heaven, saying, This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased.” Matthew 3:17

- ii. He's God

### 2. The Son

- i. He's a distinct person with a first-person perspective.

“And he went a little farther, and fell on his face, and prayed, saying, O my Father, if it be possible, let this cup pass from **me**: nevertheless not as **I** will, but as **thou** wilt.” Matthew 26:39

- ii. He's God, and man.

Jesus was not God the Father. He was not God without being man. He was not man without being God. Christians have believed that Christ had a dual nature. He is fully (not partially) God. He is fully man (not part of a man).

“But **unto the Son he saith, Thy throne, O God**, is for ever and ever: a sceptre of righteousness is the sceptre of thy kingdom.

<sup>9</sup> Thou hast loved righteousness, and hated iniquity; therefore God, even thy God, hath anointed thee with the oil of gladness above thy fellows.

<sup>10</sup> And, **Thou, Lord**, in the beginning hast laid the foundation of the earth; and the heavens are the works of thine hands:

<sup>11</sup> They shall perish; but thou remainest; and they all shall wax old as doth a garment...”  
Hebrews 1:8-11

“Beware lest any man spoil you through philosophy and vain deceit, after the tradition of men, after the rudiments of the world, and not after Christ. For in him dwelleth all the fulness of the Godhead bodily.” Colossians 2:8-9

“And Thomas answered and said unto him, My Lord **and my God**.”

John 20:28

### 3. The Holy Spirit

i. He's not an impersonal force, as some believe. He's a, well, He. He's a distinct person.

“But the Comforter, which is **the Holy Ghost**, whom the Father will send in my name, **he** shall teach you all things, and bring all things to your remembrance, whatsoever I have said unto you.” John 14:26

“But when the Comforter is come, whom I will send unto you from the Father, even the Spirit of truth, which proceedeth from the Father, **he** shall testify of me.” John 15:26 [in Greek, Spirit is neuter. But then Jesus refers to the Spirit as a he]

ii. He's God

“But Peter said, Ananias, why hath Satan filled thine heart to **lie to the Holy Ghost**, and to keep back part of the price of the land? Whiles it remained, was it not thine own? and after it was sold, was it not in thine own power? why hast thou conceived this thing in thine heart? **thou hast not lied unto men, but unto God.**” Acts 5:3

## Definition

“Scripture bears witness to a God who demands to be understood in a trinitarian manner.”

-Alister McGrath

## Is this illogical?

The doctrine of the Trinity is not illogical if we consider it properly. The triangle has three sides and 19 sides would be illogical. But to say the triangle has three sides and is red is not contradictory.

God is beyond us. If human beings cannot fully grasp Quantum Theory, we certainly should not expect to be able to fully grasp God. Yet, neither His existence, nor His Tri-Unity, break any law of logic. God is perfectly rational, even if we can not fully comprehend Him rationally.

Further, if the human mind could fully wrap itself around God, would he not be a smaller God than the God of Scripture?

## The Implications

God is Love. God does not change. We are now the direct objects of God's love (John 3:16), but before God created the world, He was still love. He was love within Himself. Thus, a fundamental reality of the Universe, is Love.

## **The Stone in the Shoe**

For an Atheist:

For a member of the Jehovah's Witnesses:

For a Muslim:

### **Recommended Resources:**

*Understanding the Trinity*, Alister McGrath

*What is the Trinity?* R.C. Sproul

The Defenders Class by William Lane Craig has an excellent lecture series on the Trinity. Available for free on YouTube.