

unhesitatingly that even such a system, built around the Person of Christ to the neglect of God the Father and God the Holy Spirit, is woefully lacking and therefore superficial. Any theological system which detracts from either of the three Persons in the Godhead, the place given to them in the Scriptures, is a perversion of the historical Christian position as recorded in the Bible.

The doctrine of the Trinity is important because of the influence of the extreme liberal theology of Unitarianism. This man-centered religious philosophy was promoted by Jonathan Mayhew and William Channing in the eighteenth century. These men believed that their own reason was the final court of appeal for everything associated with religion, and this led them to reject those teachings in the Bible which were not compatible with human reason. Their influence led many members of the Congregational Church in New England to become anti-Trinitarian in their belief. The Unitarians are unable to accept what the Bible teaches about the Trinity because they do not accept the Bible itself.

In 1960, Mr. Mendelsohn, minister of the Arlington Street Church in Boston, published his book, *Why I Am A Unitarian*. He said, “Churches, Bibles and creeds are the creation of men who once exercised their freedom to create...The Bible is replete with inaccuracies, inconsistencies, and errors” (pp 34,125). Unitarianism is anti-Trinitarian because it rejects the Bible as the inspired Word of God (2 Tim 3:16) and the human penmen as holy men of God who were controlled by the Holy Spirit as they wrote (2 Peter 1:21).

The doctrine of the Trinity does not in any way detract from the *unity* of God. The Bible teaches both the Unity of God and the Trinity of God. It is not necessary to reject one in order to believe the other. The failure to accept this fact will lead to the rejection of the doctrine of the Deity of the Lord Jesus Christ. Unitarians, Jews, “Jehovah’s Witnesses” and all others who are anti-Trinitarian, do not believe that Jesus Christ is God. This fact in itself indicates the importance of the doctrine of the Trinity.

Dr. Loraine Bottner has well said:

Inscrutable, yet not self-contradictory, this doctrine furnishes the key to all of the other doctrines which

have to do with the redemption of man. Apart from it, doctrines such as the Deity of Christ, the Incarnation, the personality of the Holy Spirit, regeneration, justification, sanctification, the meaning of the crucifixion and the resurrection, etc., cannot be understood. It thus underlies the whole plan of salvation.

The Christian idea of the Trinity is necessary to the salvation of man, the enrichment of the Christian life, and the peace of mind that the human heart seeks. Faith in the death of God the Son, and the coming of God the Holy Spirit into the believing sinner’s heart, according to the plain teaching of Holy Scripture, provide the assurance of salvation and the forgiveness of sins. Herein lies the strength of the Trinitarian theology. If there were no Trinity, man’s state in sin would have been hopeless.

THE TRINITY AND THE SCRIPTURES

Because the doctrine of the Trinity is exclusively a truth of Divine revelation and not human reason, we will examine some of the scriptural evidence on which this doctrine rests. And let us pursue this study prayerfully so as to grasp truth for mind and spirit in order that we might increase in spiritual growth.

The God of the Bible is the only true God. “Thus saith the LORD the King of Israel, and His Redeemer the LORD of hosts; I am the first, and I am the last; and beside me there is no God” (Isaiah 44:6). “Thou shalt have no other gods before me” (Exo 20:3; Deut 5:7). “We know that an idol is nothing in the world, and that there is none other God but one” (1 Cor 8:4; see James 2:19).

The God of the Bible is the living God. “And Joshua said, Hereby ye shall know that the living God is among you” (Josh 3:10). “My soul thirsteth for God, for the living God” (Psalm 42:2). “But the LORD is the true God, He is the living God, and an everlasting King” (Jer 10:10; see Dan 6:26). Christians are said to be “the temple of the living God” (2 Cor 6:16), and those who “trust in the living God” (1 Tim 4:10).

The God of the Bible is a personal God. God is not an impersonal spirit but a living personality possessing self-consciousness and self-determination. God possesses perfect intellect and full knowledge, the scope of His knowledge being unlimited. “The eyes of the LORD are in every place, beholding the evil and

the good” (Pro 15:3). “Neither is there any creature that is not manifest in His sight: but all things are naked and opened unto the eyes of Him with whom we have to do” (Heb 4:13). God is the only One who can know the future: “Declaring the end from the beginning, and from ancient times the things that are not yet done, saying, My counsel shall stand, and I will do all my pleasure” (Isaiah 46:10).

The God of the Bible exists as three Persons. Within the Godhead there are three Persons; the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit, and these three are *one God*.

We see the plurality of Persons in the Godhead *in creation*. “In the beginning God created the heaven and the earth” (Gen 1:1). “And God said, Let *US* make man in *OUR* image, after *OUR* likeness” (Gen 1:26). It is noteworthy that the name for God (*Elohim*) is *plural* in both of these verses. The one speaking is addressing others who certainly cannot be angels because in the next verse we read, “So God created man in His own image” (v 27). In these passages we have conversation and counsel within the Trinity. Just as God the Father was active in creation, even so was God the Son (John 1:1-3; Col 1:15,16) and God the Holy Spirit (Gen 1:2; Job 33:4; Psalm 104:30). “Remember now thy Creator in the days of thy youth” (Eccl 12:1). The word “Creator” (*Boreacho*) is *plural*, and it means Creators. Remember now *thy Creators*. Remember now the Triune God.

The three persons in the Godhead are called God. The Father is God. “For Him hath God the Father sealed” (John 6:27); “Grace to you and peace from God our Father (Rom 1:7); “Paul, an apostle...by Jesus Christ and God the Father” (Gal 1:1); “According to the foreknowledge of God the Father” (1 Peter 1:2).

The Son is God. “In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God...And the Word was made flesh” (John 1:1,14). Jesus said, “I and the Father are one” (John 10:30). “For in Him [Christ] dwelleth all the fulness of the Godhead bodily” (Col 2:9). Thomas addressed Christ as “my Lord and my God” (John 20:28). “Looking for that blessed hope, and the appearing of the glory of our great God and Saviour Jesus Christ” (Titus 2:13RV). The Father called the Son God: “But unto the Son He [the Father] saith, Thy throne, O God, is for ever and ever: a sceptre of righteousness is the sceptre of Thy

kingdom” (Heb 1:8). When the eternal Son was born of Mary, “God was manifest in the flesh” (1 Tim 3:16).

The Holy Spirit is God. The attributes of Deity are ascribed to the Holy Spirit, such as eternity (Heb 9:14), omniscience (1 Cor 2:10,11), omnipotence (Luke 1:35), and omnipresence (Psalm 139:7-10). Peter said, “Ananias, why hath Satan filled thine heart to lie to the Holy Ghost?...Thou hast not lied unto men, but unto God” (Acts 5:3,4). “Now the Lord is that Spirit” (2 Cor 3:17).

We see the tri-personality of God in the baptismal formula, “baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost” (Matt 28:19); in the apostolic benediction, “The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, and the love of God, and the communion of the Holy Ghost, be with you all” (2 Cor 13:14); and in the work of the triune God, “The same Spirit...the same Lord [Christ]...the same God” (1 Cor 12:4-6).

The Trinity is in view in the announcement of our Lord’s birth. “Now the birth of *Jesus Christ* was on this wise...Mary...was found with child of *the Holy Ghost*...Now all this was done, that it might be fulfilled which was spoken of the Lord by the prophet, saying, Behold, a virgin shall be with child, and shall bring forth a son, and they shall call His name Emmanuel, which being interpreted is *God with us*” (Matt 1:18-23). “And the angel answered and said unto her, *The Holy Ghost* shall come upon thee, and the power of *the Highest* shall overshadow thee: therefore also that holy thing which shall be born of thee shall be called *the Son of God*” (Luke 1:35). Here at the miraculous conception and virgin birth of Jesus Christ all of the three persons of the Godhead were working.

When our Lord was baptized by John the baptizer, the fact of the Trinity was clearly set forth. God the Son was present in human form, for Matthew wrote, “And Jesus, when He was baptized, went up straightway out of the water.” He then added, “And He saw the Spirit of God descending like a dove, and lighting upon Him.” To this he concluded, “And lo a voice from heaven, saying, This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased” (Matt 3:16,17). We see all three Persons in the Godhead present and active at this significant event.

A point which has been made, and which must be emphasized is that the unity of God does not conflict with that which the Scriptures teach about the tri-

THE TRINITY



There are many things in the world which are true and important but which cannot be fully comprehended. Electricity was discovered by man. It is important and it is here to stay, but the real nature of electricity is not fully understood. Does its existence depend upon man's understanding of it? Certainly not!

God exists in three Persons, but the existence of a tri-personal God is not dependent upon man's understanding of Him. In almost every area of our existence we are called upon to accept facts which cannot be fully explained. Shall we lay aside the doctrine of the Trinity merely because man's finite mind cannot fully understand it? Unthinkable! The Trinity is a truth of Divine revelation and not of human reason. Here the finite comes to grips with the Infinite, therefore its depth is immeasurable.

THE TRINITY AND ITS IMPORTANCE

The doctrine of the Trinity is but one of the many-sided facets of the nature of the only true and living God. Its importance is seen in the fact that throughout the history of the Christian Church it has been believed and confessed. And whenever it has been abandoned, further apostasy has followed. Any departure from the doctrine of the Trinity is an apostatizing from "the faith" (1 Tim 4:1).

The importance of the doctrine of the Trinity is evidenced by its necessary relation to the work of God in creation and redemption. It is not possible to place in true perspective the work of God the Father, God the Son, and God the Holy Spirit apart from the trinitarian system of theology. Every religious or theological system which denies the Trinity has failed to give the Lord Jesus Christ and the Holy Spirit their proper place in the Divine plan of salvation, and history proves that all such systems tend to drift away from the Bible as the final authority. Each Person in the Godhead must be seen as He is presented in Scripture.

One group today calls itself "Jesus Only." Now I do not question their motives or intentions, but I state

personality of God. I have sometimes wondered why the enemies of the Bible attack the doctrine of the Trinity but never bother to do the same with statements like the following: "Therefore shall a man leave his father and his mother and shall cleave unto his wife: and they shall be one flesh" (Gen 2:24). Here it is stated plainly that two shall be "*one*." This does not mean that the husband loses his identity as a man and the wife hers as a woman. It does suggest that a composite intellectual, emotional and spiritual unity has been established between them in marriage. They are two persons and yet the Scripture says they are one.

In man there is both unity and plurality, the two basic components of the material and immaterial combining to form one individual. If unity and plurality are both essential in the creature, why should it be thought a thing incredible if unity and plurality are claimed for the Creator? Unity and plurality are not incompatible. The Christian is not in disagreement with the Jew, the Muslim, and the Unitarian in his belief in the unity of God, for he too insists that there is but one God. The Christian is in full possession of this truth, and infinitely more.

EXERCISES OF THE SACRED TRINITY

The Triune God has exercised Himself in giving the Holy Scriptures, all three Persons appearing in the activity of inspiration. Paul and Peter combine to make this fact clear. Paul wrote, "All scripture is given by inspiration of *God*" (2 Tim 3:16). Here the Father is in view. Peter wrote, "The prophets have inquired and searched diligently...searching what, or what manner of time the *Spirit of Christ* which was in them did signify, when it [He] testified beforehand the sufferings of Christ, and the glory that should follow" (1 Peter 1:10,11). Here God the Son is specifically mentioned. And then Peter added, "Holy men of God spake as they were moved by the *Holy Ghost*" (2 Peter 1:21).

The Triune God exercises Himself in the believer by His indwelling presence. *The Father* is dwelling in the believer, for there is "one God and Father of all, who is above all, and through all, and in you all" (Eph 4:6). *The Son* is dwelling in the believer, for "as many as *received Him*, to them gave He power to become the sons of God, even to them that believe on His

name" (John 1:12). To every child of God, the Son is "Christ in you, the hope of glory" (Col 1:27; see John 14:23). Likewise *the Holy Spirit* is dwelling in the believer. "Know ye not that ye are the temple of God, and that the Spirit of God dwelleth in you?" (1 Cor 3:16). "What? know ye not that your body is the temple of the Holy Ghost which is in you?" (1 Cor 6:19).

The Triune God exercises Himself in the matter of the Christian's security and safekeeping. The eternal security of the Christian is not in himself but in the Triune God. *The Father* exercises Himself to keep those who are His children. Christ said, "My Father, which gave them me, is greater than all; and no man is able to pluck them out of my Father's hand" (John 10:29). *The Son* exercises Himself to keep those who are His. He said, "I give unto them eternal life; and they shall never perish, neither shall any man pluck them out of my hand" (John 10:28). *The Holy Spirit* exercises Himself to keep those who are saved. Paul wrote, "Ye were sealed with that Holy Spirit of promise...And grieve not the Holy Spirit of God, whereby ye are sealed unto the day of redemption" (Eph 1:13; 4:30).

The Triune God exercises Himself in putting men into the ministry. The divinely called minister of the gospel can say of his heavenly *Father*, "Our sufficiency is of God; who also hath made us able ministers of the new testament" (2 Cor 3:5,6). Paul said of *Christ*, "And I thank Christ Jesus our Lord, who hath enabled me, for He counted me faithful, putting me into the ministry" (1 Tim 1:12). In his farewell address to the elders at the church of Ephesus, Paul said, "Take heed therefore unto yourselves, and to all the flock, over the which the *Holy Ghost* hath made you overseers, to feed the church of God, which He hath purchased with His own blood" (Acts 20:28). Every true minister of God's Word recognizes the effective work of the Trinity in his call to the ministry, so that his ministry is stamped with the authority of the Triune God: Father, Son, and Holy Spirit.

The Triune God exercises Himself in saving lost sinners. *Christ* said, "The Son of man is come to seek and to save that which was lost...I am the way, the truth, and the life: no man cometh unto the Father, but by me" (Luke 19:10; John 14:6). He also said, "All that *the Father* giveth me shall come to me" (John 6:37). "Therefore said I unto you, that no man can come unto me,

except it were given unto him of my Father" (John 6:65). When referring to *the Holy Spirit*, He said, "And when He is come, He will reprove the world of sin" (John 16:8), and to this Paul adds that we are saved "by the washing of regeneration, and renewing of the Holy Ghost" (Titus 3:5). All three Persons in the Godhead are active in delivering the sinner out of the depths of spiritual death into new life in Christ.

If the Bible did not teach the Trinity, then we would be justified in dismissing the whole idea once and for all. But because the Word of God does teach the Trinity, we should believe it. Do not be so foolish as to refuse to believe it because you cannot fully understand it. We all accept much that we do not understand. I never did understand trigonometry, and I have no desire to understand it now, but I will not take the ignorant position of denying that it is a true subject. Does the Word of God teach the Trinity? It most certainly does! Then we are left with no other choice but to accept and believe it whether we understand it or not.

Man is a trinity: spirit, soul, and body (1 Thess 5:23; Hebrews 4:12). Can you understand man? Can you fully explain man? We must confess that we do not understand ourselves. How then can we fully understand the Triune God? We will never completely understand Him. We are simply to believe Him, and bow before Him and worship Him.

To reject the Trinity is to be lost forever. The Bible states clearly that the only access to God is of necessity through the Trinity. "For through Him [*Christ*] we both have access by one *Spirit* unto the *Father*" (Eph 2:18). "How much more shall the blood of *Christ*, who through the eternal *Spirit* offered Himself without spot to *God*, purge your conscience from dead works to serve the living God" (Heb 9:14). □

—Adapted from the writings of Leham Strauss