
Doctrine of the Trinity

by: Ronald L. Dart

Some time ago, when we were attempting accreditation at Ambassador College, we gave some consideration to going to the "Association of Religious Schools and Colleges," rather than simply going to the Southern Association or the Western Association, the more traditional route for the accreditation of an educational institution.

The only thing that kind of held us back was a veiled concern that because we were quite different doctrinally, that we might hit a snag as far as some doctrinal requirement that they might have, as with religious schools and colleges.

We got information from them and I was pleasantly surprised at the doctrinal tolerance and when you think about it they would have to be fairly tolerant doctrinally because the Baptists differ essentially, in many ways, from the Methodists and the Methodists differ from the Catholics, even though I don't think that the Catholic Church was involved in that.

The Methodists, Lutherans and the whole gambit of religious denominations, religious academics and schools would have a lot of different doctrinal ideas that would have to be accommodated in that kind of thing.

My question was, is there any barrier, and if so, what is that barrier? When I got to looking over the requirements, I must say I was quite surprised, because the fact that we kept the Sabbath presented no obstacle; even the fact that we kept the Holy Days presented no obstacle. There was only one doctrine that stood between us and being accredited by the "Association of Religious Schools and Colleges," under their particular accreditation method, of course apart from any academic considerations, I am talking about religious considerations, it was not at all what I expected it to be.

As I read down through it, and I looked at the things that you had to believe, and I said, "we do that, we do that, we can do that, then I came to one that stopped me cold, you had to have a belief in the 'Trinity,' that God was found as one in three persons. I forget exactly how it was worded, but it seems to have turned out to be something of a pivotal or test doctrine, with many of the churches of this world, while they differ with one another, they still admit that the other churches are Christian Churches, but apparently you must believe in the Trinity in order to receive that recognition or to be a part of one of those organizations.

It was, as I said, not the thing that I might have thought were major considerations, like the Sabbath or the Holy Days, or clean or unclean meats or something like that, as a barrier, but the doctrine of the Trinity.

Preparing for this Topic

Now, in preparing this topic, on the doctrine of the Trinity, I went to an old standby, an old favorite source of mine that I probably consult more than any other of my books and research resources; it is the "International Standard Bible Encyclopedia." It is a good, conservative, scholarly work, on the Bible, with names, people and places, geography of the Bible, the Books, the history; just about anything you want to know about the Bible. If you can find it by means of a title or a name, it will be in the encyclopedia.

I would not have been too surprised not to have found the Trinity in here, in one way, because the name Trinity is found nowhere in the Bible, but I did find it, and it was an interesting experience because I had become used to, in going through this, not that I don't find errors, but I do find them to be scholarly, and I do find them to be consistent and I am usually impressed with the work that these men who prepared this encyclopedia have done.

When I came to the article on the Trinity, I almost at times found myself feeling sorry for them, and I think you will understand what I mean, as I go along, because of all the doctrines, this seems to be one of the most difficult in supporting.

It is interesting that it should be such a pivotal doctrine, it should be the one thing that stands between us in being able to work with an association, like the "Association of Religious Schools and Colleges," especially in view of the difficulty that is faced by Christian religions in supporting the doctrine.

I want to read some segments to you from a very long article, I won't read that much of it, but I do want to read some segments of it, to help you understand the approach that is taken by Protestant denominations as a whole, the more conservative ones, in explaining the doctrine of the Trinity.

This article is by Benjamin B. Warfield, titled: "Trinity" in the "International Standard Bible Encyclopedia."

"The term Trinity is not a Biblical term, and we are not using Biblical language when we define what is expressed by it as the doctrine that there is one only and true God, but in the unity of the Godhead there are three coeternal and coequal persons, the same in subsistence but distinct in substance. A doctrine so defined can be spoken of as a Biblical doctrine only on the principle that the sense of Scripture is Scripture."

Now, I imagine that there will be one or two places here, where you will not be entirely sure about what he is saying, and it does require a certain amount of thought to be sure you follow him through.

"And the definition of a Biblical doctrine justified in such un-Biblical language can be only on the principle that it is better to preserve the truth of Scripture than the words of Scripture." Did you hear that? Let me read it to you again. "And the definition of a Biblical doctrine, in such un-Biblical language can be justified only on the principle that it is better to preserve the truth of Scripture than the words of Scripture."

"The doctrine of the Trinity lies in Scripture in solution; when it is crystallized from its solvent it does not cease to be Scriptural, but only comes into clearer view." By that he means, he uses the analogy of taking salt or some substance and dissolving it in water so that it goes into a solution and you no longer see the salt, in fact, salt water is probably indistinguishable from clear. The doctrine of the Trinity; is in the Scripture in solution, it is dissolved, and you may not be able to see it, it is only when you crystallize it out, that you are able to see it, that it is there. "Or to speak without figure that the doctrine of the Trinity is given to us in Scripture, not in formulated definition, but in fragmentary allusions; when we assemble the dissecta membra into their organic unity; we are not passing from the Scripture but entering more thoroughly into the meaning of Scripture. We may state the doctrine in technical terms supplied by philosophical reflection, but the doctrine stated is a genuinely Scriptural doctrine. In point of fact, the doctrine of the Trinity is purely a revealed doctrine. That is to say it embodies a truth that has never been discovered and is undiscoverable by natural reason"

Understanding the Nature of the Godhead from the Creation.

Passing over a section to another paragraph.

"As the doctrine of the Trinity is undiscoverable by reason, so it is incapable of proof from reason. There are no analogies to it in Nature, not even in the spiritual nature of man, who is made in the image of God. In his Trinitarian mode of being, God is unique, and as there is nothing in the universe like Him in this respect, so there is nothing which can help us to comprehend Him."

Now that's kind of interesting, it reads well at least, but if you take your Bible and turn over to Romans chapter one, we need to test that statement by the Scriptures.

"For the wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men, who hold the truth in unrighteousness; {19} Because that which may be known of God is manifest in them; for God hath showed it unto them. {20} For the invisible things of him from the creation of the world are clearly seen, being understood by the things that are made, even his eternal power and Godhead; so that they are without excuse: {21} Because that, when they knew God, they glorified him not as God, neither were thankful; but became vain in their imaginations, and their foolish heart was darkened" (Romans 1:18-21.)

What Paul is saying, categorically is, that the nature of the Godhead, which according to the doctrine of the Trinity comprises the Father, Son and the Holy Spirit, the doctrine of the Trinity says you cannot understand it from nature, Paul says you can understand the nature of the Godhead from the creation.

There are natural analogies in which we can look in nature and understand. What are they? The most obvious one is the Father Son relationship. There is nothing more dominant in the Scriptures as far as a presentation of God than God as Father and God as Son. Jesus Christ continually referred to His Father, the Father when speaking of Jesus said: "This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased" (Matthew 17:5.) We have in the family unit, the model of the God family and of the relationship between the two members of the Godhead, Father and Son, so that, what can be understood of God, and the Godhead can be seen in the things that are made.

My question, which I would ask this gentleman is, then where is the Holy Spirit in the creation? He says it is not there, it cannot be understood in that way. So consequently I find from Paul's statement in Romans 1:20 something of a dent put in the idea of the Trinity, if indeed this man is correct that there are no analogies to it in nature, for there should be.

We go on down a little further, he begins to speak of another aspect of it. He says: *"The case is so much the same with the argument derived from the nature of love."* Now here he is trying to help us to grasp what the Holy Spirit is by an argument from love.

"Our sympathies go out to that old Valentinian writer, perhaps it was Valentinus himself - who reasoned, perhaps, he was the first so to reason - that "God is all love", "but love is not love unless there be an object of love."

OK, that's understandable *"and they go out more richly still to Augustine, when seeking a basis not for a theory of emanations, but for the doctrine of the Trinity he analyses this love which God is into the triple, implication of "the lover", "the loved" and the "love itself."* Now that's not too difficult. You can actually see three conceptualizations then of the Godhead, the one who loves, the one who is love and then we are giving an entity to the love itself. It is in this area as to where the whole idea of the Trinity begins to derive. When you have a lover, you have a person, when you have the one loved, you have a person, but love while it is an entity, while it does exist is not a person. This is where, I think, the entire thing begins to break down. If we pass on a little further, he goes on to say: *"It requires, however, only that the argument, thus broadly suggested should be developed into its details for its artificiality to become apparent. Richard of Saint Victor works it out as follows: "It belongs to the nature of amor that it should turn to another as caritas." This other, in God's case cannot be the world, since such love of the world would be inordinate. It can only be a person, and a person who is God's equal in eternity, power and wisdom. Since however there cannot be two divine substances."* That is an interesting question in itself. *"These two divine persons must form one and the same substance. The best love cannot, however, confine itself to these two persons; it must become condilectio by the desire that a third should be equally loved, as they love one another. Thus, love when perfectly conceived leads necessarily to the Trinity."* I don't know about that.

"And since God is all He can be, this Trinity must be real, etc."

You can begin to see some of the reasoning that has gone into it. He then talks about, later on, *"an infinitely holy and sacred energy arises between a Father and Son in mutually loving and delighting in each other."* I can see that. The interaction between a father and son, the love

that they have one for the other could be seen as creating a divine energy that grows up between the two of them, and you can see that as a manifestation or an analogy to the Holy Spirit.

A way of understanding the Holy Spirit, but not understanding the Holy Spirit as the third person in a Trinity, not from that.

Going on. *"So strongly is it felt in wide circles that the Trinitarian conception is essential to a worthy idea of God, that there is abroad a deep-seated unwillingness to allow that God could ever have made Himself known otherwise than as a Trinity. From this point of view, it is inconceivable that the Old Testament revelation should know nothing of the 'Trinity.' Accordingly, I.A. Durner, for example reasons thus: (quote:) 'If however - and this is the faith of universal Christendom - a living idea of God must be thought in some way after a Trinitarian fashion, it must be antecedently probable the traces of the Trinity cannot be lacking in the Old Testament, since its idea of God is a living or historical one.' (End quote.)"*

Trinity NOT in the Old Testament?

"Whether there really exists traces of the idea of the Trinity in the Old Testament, however, is a nice question. Certainly, we cannot speak broadly of the revelation of the doctrine of the Trinity in the Old Testament."

Listen to this quotation *"It is a plain matter of fact that none who have depended on the revelation embodied in the Old Testament alone have ever attained to the doctrine of the Trinity,"* Nor would they, nor would they, because the doctrine is not there. It can be read into the Old Testament from a precept position that says any worthy idea of God must retain a Trinitarian concept.

That is a major premise. The minor premise is that since the Old Testament contains an idea of God therefore it must be Trinitarian, in nature, and so you go back and begin, reading into segments of the Old Testament certain Trinitarian concepts.

Now some of the quotations that are offered in here, the citations from the Old Testament are scriptures for example like the one that says: "Let us make man in our image" (Genesis 1:26.)

Now they point out by saying that there is more than a unity in the Godhead, but for some reason they don't take you from that to show that scripture says anything about three, that you can have the Father and Son and have 'we' or 'us' without adding a third party to make it into a Trinity.

There is a little faulty reasoning that goes on and you have to read the article very carefully because the assumption seems to rise from somewhere that there is a Trinity and then one tries to read it into much of what you find in the Bible and apparently in some cases it has even been attempted to insert those concepts into the Bible rather than just reading them in.

Continuing: *"It is an old saying that what becomes patent in the New Testament was latent in the Old Testament. And it is important that the continuity of the revelation of God contained in the two Testaments should not be overlooked or obscured. If we find some difficulty in perceiving for*

ourselves, in the Old Testament, definite points of attachment for the revelation of the Trinity, we cannot help perceiving with great clearness in the New Testament abundant evidence that its writers felt not incongruity whatever between their doctrine of the Trinity" (but which is assumed) "and the Old Testament conception of God. The New Testament writers certainly were not conscience of being 'setters of strange gods'" as one would put it. What it is saying is this: no one ever, using the Old Testament alone ever attained to the doctrine of the Trinity, and the New Testament writers do not advance a new concept of God, and yet, they had somehow attained in the eyes of Protestant theologians to a doctrine of the Trinity.

It is clear later, he says in other words that *"as we read the New Testament, we are not witnessing the birth of a new conception of God. What we meet with in its pages is a firmly established conception of God underlying and giving its tone to the whole fabric."* That is absolutely correct. There is no new conception of God offered in the New Testament and not the Trinitarian concept either.

"The doctrine of the trinity," he says later "is not so much heard as overheard in the statements of Scripture. It would be more exact to say that it is not so much inculcated as presupposed. The doctrine of the Trinity does not appear in the New Testament in the making, but already made."

We have to say that as these people see it, it appears to them, you will have to decide as you study it whether it really appears to a person who had no preconceived ideas of it, whatsoever.

"The fundamental proof that God is a Trinity is supplied thus by the fundamental revelation of the Trinity in fact: that is to say, in the incarnation of God the Son and the outpouring of God the Holy Spirit. In a word, Jesus Christ and the Holy Spirit are the fundamental proof of the doctrine of the Trinity."

In other words, we know that Jesus Christ exists, we know that the Holy Spirit exists therefore there are three. There are indeed three but what are they? And what is the relationship? And is it a Trinity?

Later he says: *"what we mean by the doctrine of the Trinity is nothing but the formulation in exact language of the conception of God presupposed in the religion of the incarnate Son and outpoured Spirit. We may analyze this conception and adduce proof for every constituent element of it from the New Testament declarations. We may show that the New Testament everywhere insists on the unity of the Godhead; that it constantly recognizes the Father as God, the Son as God and the Spirit as God; and that it cursorily presents these three to us as distinct Persons. "*

Doctrine of the Trinity Enunciated

Continuing with his comments: *"When we have said these three things, then — that there is but one God, that the Father and the Son and the Spirit is each God, that the Father and the Son and the Spirit is each a distinct person — we have enunciated the doctrine of the Trinity in its completeness."*

So if you wanted to know what it was, there you have a pretty clear statement of it, and for your reference, if you didn't get it, I will read it again. This is the statement of the Doctrine of the Trinity: *"When we have said these three things, then — that there is but one God, that the Father and the Son and the Spirit is each God, that the Father and the Son and the Spirit is each a distinct person — we have enunciated the doctrine of the Trinity in its completeness."*

That's all I will take the time to read to you from the article: "Trinity" from the "International Standard Bible Encyclopedia."

Three Areas of Misunderstanding

The primary areas as I see them of misunderstanding or a lot of problems that people have regarding the doctrine of the Trinity, the primary sources where they are, are mainly three.

The first of these is the personification of the Holy Spirit in Scripture. A number of places where the Bible speaks of the Holy Spirit as though it were a person, for example, there is one Scripture that says, "grieve not the Holy Spirit" (Ephesians 4:30.) The idea being is that the Holy Spirit is one who could be grieved.

The Holy Spirit speaks to people, the Holy Spirit hears, or the Holy Spirit makes intercession (Mark 13:11, Romans 8:26.)

Personification

What I think is overlooked by many people is that all these references may be nothing more than personification. For those of you who have not studied English Lit, personification is simply a literary technique in which you give the characteristics of a person to something that is not a person.

A Biblical example: Cain kills his brother Abel, God comes to the garden and says: "Where is your brother?" And Cain says: "Am I my brother's keeper" and God comes back and corrects him and says, "the blood of your brother cries out to me from the ground" (Genesis 4:9-10.)

Can blood speak? No - blood cannot speak, but the very fact that the blood was in the ground, God knew it was there, the blood speaks to God from the ground, so God uses personification making the blood as though it were a person when it is not a person.

How do we know then that many of these references that we find in the New Testament, as to the Holy Spirit being grieved, for example, are not just simple examples of personification? Where you have something that is not really a person that is expressed or used as though it were a person.

Now you have to leave open the possibility that it was, from that alone, you can't arrive at a hard and fast conclusion from that, that it is.

As I mentioned, the blood crying from the ground (Genesis 4:10) is another example of that.

Satan is the Personification of Evil

Some people believe, for example, in the idea that there is no personal devil, the devil himself does not exist as a distinct viable person. Then when you try to ask those people, how do you explain in this Scripture, how do you explain the statements about Satan in this as though he were a person, they come back to you and say: Satan is the personification of evil. In other words, there is an evil force at work in the universe, evil exists, and that Satan in the Bible is a literary device or a figure of speech, a personification of evil.

This again explains to you of what I mean by personification.

Many of the Scriptures you read, that appear to sound like that the Holy Spirit might be a person, could possibly be understood in the way of personification.

Personification of the Holy Spirit

Now it is relatively easy. Turn back with me for a moment to Acts 13:1-2: "Now there were in the church that was at Antioch certain prophets and teachers; as Barnabas, and Simeon that was called Niger, and Lucius of Cyrene, and Manaen, which had been brought up with Herod the tetrarch, and Saul. {2} As they ministered to the Lord, and fasted, the Holy Spirit said, separate me Barnabas and Saul for the work whereunto I have called them." Now, when you come to something like that, a person could say, doesn't that look like the Holy Spirit is a person, well it is not difficult as I said to explain that by personification of it, you understand the Holy Spirit to be the mind of God or the power of God, then all you are saying is that as they ministered to the Lord and fasted, the mind of the Lord, that Holy mind, spoke and said, so, you don't necessarily have to come to that, and make that conclusion. As I said, you don't necessarily have to come to the concept of the Holy Spirit as a person from these personifications that you see. It is not so easy however to explain from a Trinitarian point of view, certain other passages of Scripture.

Who Called Saul?

"And as he (Saul / Paul) journeyed, he came near Damascus: and suddenly there shined round about him a light from heaven: {4} And he fell to the earth, and heard a voice saying unto him, Saul, Saul, why persecutest thou me? {5} And he said, Who art thou, Lord? And the Lord said, I am Jesus whom thou persecutest: it is hard for thee to kick against the pricks" (Acts 9:3-5.) Who called Saul? Who was the one who actually first spoke to him and called him, on the road to Damascus, it was Jesus, was it not? How could the Holy Spirit have claimed to have called Paul to a work (Acts 13:2), when it was Jesus of Nazareth who revealed Himself to Paul, it was Jesus of Nazareth who was with him in the wilderness (Galatians 1:17), it was Jesus who appeared to Ananias (Acts 9:10-13), it was Jesus who went to these men and revealed Himself and called Saul.

An Argument from Silence

I want you to turn back to Philippians first chapter assuming, for example that Paul was sent by the Holy Spirit, as that particular verse says he was (Acts 13:2.)

"Grace be unto you, and peace, from God our Father, and from the Lord Jesus Christ" (Philippians 1:2.)

Why does Paul not say, from the Father, and the Son and the Holy Spirit? It should be there. Now, I realize I am giving you an argument from silence, but an argument from silence can be valid if you can demonstrate that the silence is significant.

I have just read to you in Acts the statement that said, the Holy Spirit said: "Separate me Barnabas and Paul for the work unto I have called them" (Acts 13:2.) The Holy Spirit was the one that sent Paul and Barnabas into the field, yet when Paul represents himself to a church in the field, he represents himself as sent by the Father and by the Son and does not even mention in passing the Holy Spirit in that way.

Let's look at another of Paul's greetings: "Paul, and Silvanus, and Timotheus, unto the church of the Thessalonians which is in God the Father and in the Lord Jesus Christ: Grace be unto you, and peace, from God our Father, and the Lord Jesus Christ" (1 Thessalonians 1:1.)

No mention of the Holy Spirit. In fact, you can look at 1 Corinthians 1:1, Galatians 1:1 (typical of all of Paul's epistles) and every time Paul, not giving them a Trinitarian formula in his introduction, but the Father and Son, God and our Lord Jesus Christ, never bringing in the concept of the Trinity.

It is far easier, frankly to understand the Holy Spirit, those references which sound like a person, to be a literary personification than it is to understand how it is possible that the Holy Spirit was the agent called and sent Paul out on his journey, and Paul does not greet people in the name of the Holy Spirit at any time.

This is a little bit of a problem when you try to explain these things from a Trinitarian point of view.

The Totality of Who God Is

1 Corinthians 8:4-8 is another interesting case in point: "As concerning therefore the eating of those things that are offered in sacrifice unto idols, we know that an idol is nothing in the world, *and that there is none other God but one. {5} For though there be that are called gods, whether in heaven or in earth, (as there be gods many, and lords many,) {6} But to us there is but one God, the Father, of whom are all things, and we in him; and one Lord Jesus Christ, by whom are all things, and we by him. {7} Howbeit there is not in every man that knowledge: for some with conscience of the idol unto this hour eat it as a thing offered unto an idol; and their conscience being weak is defiled. {8} But meat commendeth us not to God: for neither, if we eat, are we the better; neither, if we eat not, are we the worse."*

The Holy Spirit is not mentioned in a passage where Paul is explaining the totality of who God is. Look at what He is saying, there are many that are called gods, there are all kinds of people that are worshiped, but there is ONE God (verse 4) and His Son Jesus Christ and that is all there is. That makes no sense from a Trinitarian point of view, because, as I said, the silence is

significant, because he is explaining to them what and who God is, and how much there is to the totality of the Godhead, and these other gods cannot be in it.

Therefore, it would be necessary for him, if the Holy Spirit were a person, and the Godhead were a Trinity, to bring that meaning of the Holy Spirit into this thing. If the Holy Spirit is seen as the power of God, as an extension of God, then it is not difficult at all, when you read these Scriptures, like it says, "grieve not the spirit by which you are called." It is that Spirit of God, that extension of God, the mind of God, the power of God, you are grieving, whenever you go contrary to His will and to His Law. It is God who speaks to you by the Spirit, not that the Spirit itself acts independently, as it were of the Father with a mind of its own.

'He' is the Second Area of Misunderstanding

A second area of misunderstanding relative to the Holy Spirit are the frequent references in the New Testament in the King James Version at least, to the Holy Spirit as 'He.'

People are reading along and they see a personification where the Holy Spirit seems to speak and see it referred to as 'He.' I have had a number of people come up to me and say: "It says 'He' did this, not 'It' did that. How can you say the Holy Spirit is not a person, how can you say it is just a substance or an essence when the Bible refers to it as 'He.'?"

Well that's simple, because it simply relates to a peculiarity of the Greek language. In Greek, pronouns must agree with nouns, regardless of whatever else might be taking place around them. The nouns in Greek have gender, nouns in English do not. In the English there is no way that you can tell from an ending of a noun whether it is supposed to be masculine, feminine or neuter gender. Table has no special ending that identifies gender, nor does the word chair. Woman has the same ending as man does in the English.

In the Greek there are various endings that take place in nouns that change according to the usage of them, but identify nouns as to being masculine, feminine or neuter. Nouns have specific gender.

For example: The word for "sand" in the Greek is "ammos" and it is masculine, because it ends in "os" which is one of the masculine endings. "Sapphire," a stone in the Greek is "sappheiros" which is masculine, "sackcloth" is "sakkos" which is masculine. The word for "safety" is feminine and the word for "senate" is feminine.

Now if you then use a pronoun to refer to "sand" you would say "the sand, he is granular." You would not say "the sand, it is granular."

A number of people have noticed this little peculiarity in the French referring to things as he or she that are obvious things that are inanimate.

The choice for the word is consistency neuter. It is not masculine. The word for "Father" is masculine, the word for "Son" in the Greek is masculine. All pronouns referring to them will always be masculine gender. Therefore, I would have to conclude that if the Holy Spirit were a

person, you would find an identification of either a masculine or feminine, as one person suggested to me that since God was a family and the Father was masculine and the Son was masculine, then there had to be in the Godhead, in order for it to be complete, a female element and the Holy Spirit was the feminine element. Unfortunately, it doesn't work, it does not structure out that way.

One would have expected a little different relationship, it seems that a neuter noun would be inappropriate for the third person in the Godhead, but that argument from linguistics might.

The fact of the matter is that French has no neuter gender. They have no way of expressing 'it' in French, only he and she. So, they do not express, nor look at items like chairs, even the articles that go before 'the' chair, 'the' table, 'the' window, these change in French, depending whether it is masculine, or it is feminine. Everything is either masculine or feminine in gender. The name itself is 'a man' or 'a woman,' you have to respond with that form.

Now what is interesting is, in Greek no man is ever referred to as feminine or neuter, you would never have a man's name with a feminine ending or a neuter ending. Nor would you ever have a woman's name with a masculine or neuter ending. Therefore, you kind of have to wonder, why it is that the Holy Spirit, the word for Spirit is a little on the thin side as you go along.

Third Area of Misunderstanding: Some Scriptures Not Inspired

The third source of misunderstanding which I have already alluded to earlier, is the Trinitarian formula that you find frequently in the New Testament, now some of these formulas don't belong in your New Testament at all.

Let's turn to, for example, 1 John 5:6-8, this always shakes a few people up, but you have to realize it is this way.

"This is he that came by water and blood, even Jesus Christ; not by water only, but by water and blood. And it is the Spirit that beareth witness, because the Spirit is truth. {7} For there are three that bear record in heaven, ..[1]... the Spirit, and the water, and the blood: and these three agree in one."

[Editorial Note [1]: "the Father, the Word, and the Holy Spirit: and these three are one. {8} And there are three that bear witness in earth," This additional text is not found in any Greek manuscripts prior to the 16th. Century. (N.I.V. Study Bible)]

You probably lost me there, didn't you? What I was reading to you is all that is in the early New Testament text. When I say early I don't mean all that early. If you had found a Greek text in the tenth century, it would have read, virtually every Greek text that you would have found would have read, essential as I have just read it to you here, all the way down to the fourteenth century. It was not until after the fifteenth century that verse 7 found its way into the Scriptures. Why? Well, as I have said before, as people try to read in an understanding of the Trinity into the Bible, even so, some people have actually inserted into the text itself, a reference to the Trinity.

Who Are We Baptized Into?

Now one of the more familiar Trinitarian formulas that you will find is in the twenty-eighth chapter of Matthew. Now this one is interesting, and I was not really aware of it until in more recent years, that this particular scripture, also, is somewhat in dispute.

Jesus said in Verse 19: "Go ye therefore, and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit: {20} Teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you: and, lo, I am with you always, even unto the end of the world. Amen."

Now apparently that Trinitarian formula is not in certain texts and some people have called it into question.

Now what is interesting about this, is that when you find the Trinitarian formula used, the Scriptures are not consistent in its use.

Turn to Acts the second chapter, a very familiar scripture, Verses 37 and 38: "Now when they heard this, they were pricked in their heart, and said unto Peter and to the rest of the apostles, Men and brethren, what shall we do? {38} Then Peter said unto them, Repent, and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins, and ye shall receive the gift of the Holy Spirit."

Now in one place we are told that people were to be baptized in the name of the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit and in the other place we are told to be baptized into Jesus Christ. Which is it?

Well, for years in the Church, right from the very beginning of my ministry, I was taught to baptize people **into** the name of the Father, and the Son and the Holy Spirit. In the name of, which means, by the authority of Jesus Christ, for the remission of sins.

So we have traditionally in the church, not baptized people **in** the name of the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit, the ministry was taught to baptize **in** the name of Jesus Christ, but we were told to baptize **into** the name of the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit, because we did not really know for sure how to take that particular verse in Matthew and of course we see two different approaches by Peter in one case and Matthew on the other and then one has to wonder just how critical it is to God as He sits on His throne and He hears a humble repentant sinner, and hears a sincere minister who is doing the best he knows how and one minister over here baptizes someone in the name of the Father, Son and the Holy Spirit, and the other one baptized in the name of Jesus Christ, does God give one His Holy Spirit and not the other? I doubt that very sincerely. I suspect that God gives His Holy Spirit to both of these people because of their approach, their attitude to their repentance and the fact that whichever way you go, you are baptizing in and by the authority of the Son of God who is the one which gives us, the ministry, the authority of whatever it is we do.

As I said, the Trinitarian formula is not consistent wherever you do find it. Even though you left all these statements in, left in the statement in 1 John 5:7, even if we left in the one in Matthew, which I think we should, leave that one in the Scriptures because it belongs there, but I don't know, even if they were left in, they still leave the nature of the Holy Spirit in question.

We have no problem admitting to ourselves that there are three, the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit. The question is, are they a Trinity of coeternal and coequal persons, and that is not established by any of the Trinitarian formulas that you read including every disputed Trinitarian formula in the New Testament. Nothing is said about the nature of the Holy Spirit.

Persona of the Father and the Son

Now how then should the Godhead be understood? First of all, the separate persona of the Father and the Son are clearly seen and understood, aren't they? We know that Jesus was begotten of the Father (John 3:16.).

We know that Jesus prayed to the Father, we know that when Jesus was hanging on the cross, the Father forsook Him, turned away from Him, turned His back on Him. All these things show us a clear, distinct identity of the Father and the Son.

There is no such relationship where the Holy Spirit is concerned. It is never made that clear in that way.

How then are we to understand the nature of the Holy Spirit?

I want you to turn back to a rather fascinating scripture in Luke 1. This has been brought into question by different people who ask: "What does this mean?" This is the account of the angel that appeared to Mary. "And the angel said unto her, Fear not, Mary: for thou hast found favor with God. {31} And, behold, thou shalt conceive in thy womb, and bring forth a son, and shalt call his name JESUS. {32} He shall be great and shall be called the Son of the Highest: and the Lord God shall give unto him the throne of his father David" (Luke 1:30-32.) Mary of course had seen an angel who told her about Jesus, He is going to be called great, the Son of the Most High, and as it says in Verse 32: "He will be the Son of the Highest."

Let's continue in verse 33: "And he shall reign over the house of Jacob forever; and of his kingdom there shall be no end. {34} Then said Mary unto the angel, how shall this be, seeing I know not a man? {35} And the angel answered and said unto her, The Holy Spirit 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." She had not slept with a man at all, therefore there was no way for her to be impregnated with a child.

Who is the Father of Jesus Christ?

New Testament writers usually use the term "God" to refer to the Father, the ultimate Supreme Being but the question that has to be asked here is, if the Holy Spirit came upon Mary, overshadowed her and begat Jesus then is not the Holy Spirit the Father of Christ? Well, if the

Holy Spirit is that which came upon Mary and begat Jesus, and if the Holy Spirit is a person, then the Holy Spirit is the Father.

Now as the gentleman who wrote the article in the International Standard Bible Encyclopedia pointed out, I think a very significant thing, but he did not go into it any further. He noticed the parallelism that is in this statement, and parallelism, by the way is a very common literary device; you see it in many, many places in the Bible, as the Biblical writers will state the same thing in different words in parallel. It is one of the ways you can understand things that you might otherwise not quite get.

Notice the parallelism in verse 35: "The Holy Spirit shall come upon you and the power of the Highest shall overshadow you." What he says, he was absolutely correct, is that this is two ways of saying precisely the same thing. In other words: "the Holy Spirit shall come upon you and the power of the Highest shall overshadow you."

What He didn't seem to realize is that in pointing out that parallelism, He also pointed out that the Holy Spirit is the power of God and power is not the same thing as a person. Power is amorphous. Power has no body, that is what amorphous means, power is not necessarily limited in location. One of the best analogies to power is electricity, which while it requires channels through which it must run, never the less, it is everywhere present, along those channels. If you flip the switch, instantaneously you have action, all over the building as far as light and power are concerned, and yet electricity is not present in a place. It is present everywhere where there is a conductor, connected to that particular power source, it is omnipresent along the area of its sphere of influence.

The Holy Spirit is not a person, but the power of God. This particular scripture in this little parallel couplet makes that really abundantly clear and you have to ask the question again, who is Jesus' Father? Is it what He referred to as the Supreme God, but if we have another person in the Godhead, then that other person in the Godhead is the one who begat Christ therefore that other person is Jesus' father.

Time Travel

You are left with a logical problem when you get to that. It reminded me of when I read that section with what I saw on Cosmos one night, where I think it was Isaac Asimov who was discussing "time travel" and the possibility of going back in time and he showed the utter impossibility of it by an interesting little analogy. He said, suppose I went back in time to Russia and I found there my father, who was before I was thought of or begotten, here stands my father over there against a tree. I come on the scene as a time traveler and I level a pistol at my father and I kill my own father. He dies. When he dies, he then could not have begotten me, therefore, I could not exist and poof, I disappear, but if I could not exist at some subsequent time, then I could not travel back in time and shoot my own father, therefore he did not die, he did live and begat me, so that I could come to life. You begin to see that you go around in impossible circles don't you.

It is a total logical paradox and that is what you fall into when you try to explain the Holy Spirit as a person, because of the things it is reputed to do which are things that are done by the Father or by the Son where as in actual fact, the Holy Spirit does them as an agent or part of the Father and of the Son.

Now, how further do we understand the Holy Spirit?

Turn to Matthew 12, this is a relatively simple little thing. Before verse 27, the Pharisees are accusing Jesus of casting out demons by Beelzebub, then Jesus says: "And if I by Beelzebub cast out demons, by whom do your children cast them out? Therefore they shall be your judges. {28} But if I cast out demons by the Spirit of God, then the kingdom of God is come unto you." How is He casting out demons? By the Spirit of God, now turn over to the same account in Luke 11:20 "But if I with the finger of God cast out demons, no doubt the kingdom of God is come upon you."

How are we to understand the Holy Spirit? We are to understand the Holy Spirit as a member of God, an extension of God, a digit, as you were, a finger of God, not as a completely separate entity from God. You cast them out by the Spirit of God, in another place, the writer uses the expression the "finger of God."

Now go back and think about the Ten Commandments written by the "finger of God." What were they written by? What was the agent that carved that in stone? It was probably the Holy Spirit.

What was it that wrote on the wall, the handwriting, as the hand appeared and wrote on the wall of the Assyrian palace on that night? The Holy Spirit, the finger, an extension, the power of Almighty God.

The suggestion was made, as I read earlier, that the three, that is "God the Father, God the Son and God the Holy Spirit, coeternal and coequal" but think about this for a moment. The Father sends the Son, doesn't He? Jesus said the Father is greater than I, He made that very clear, so he understood that He and the Father were not, emphatically not, coequal, the Holy Spirit begat Christ in Mary, "that which is in you is of the Holy Spirit," she was told. The Holy Spirit begat Christ in Mary, the Holy Spirit in that sense then would have been the Father, the progenitor of Christ. Christ then promised His disciples: "I will send the Holy Spirit to you" (John 14:26.)

The implications is that the Father, who is greater than Jesus, sent Jesus and Jesus who is greater than the Holy Spirit, sent the Holy Spirit, and so you do not have three coeternal and coequal beings, you have a layer of individuals if they are persons, the Father is the highest, then the Son is next and the Holy Spirit is third, and yet you have the Holy Spirit begetting Christ, and then being sent by Him, which again does not follow what the Bible really says as far as the relationships between individuals as to who is in authority.

The Holy Spirit is clearly subordinate to the Father and to Christ, so that is an important part about how we are going to understand him (or it.).

There are two modern analogies that have been drawn in recent years, which I think are very interesting in trying to help us to understand what we are dealing with.

Remember we asked the question earlier, in the encyclopedia article, the man pointed out that there was no analogy in nature to it. On the other hand, Paul says "NO - you can understand by the things that are made, the eternal power in the Godhead" (Romans 1:20.)

The Force Be with You

Science fiction writers are an interesting breed of cat, because they allow their mind to run in a channel, one of the things that they are interested in doing is trying to explain by some fantastic means, whatever their mind can dream up, some of the things that they see going on in nature.

In recent movies or productions certain concepts have been drawn, which I think many of you have become familiar with, perhaps the most familiar of all is 'Star Wars' which came up with a new idea called "the Force." It even found its way into a country and western song titled: "The Force Be with You." For those of you who didn't see the movie, the Force was some sort of force that existed throughout the universe, everywhere, there was no place where the Force did not exist, but not everyone could use the Force, only those who were in tune with it, and were aware of its existence, were responsive to it, had learned how to use the Force.

I think what the writers were trying to do in this situation was to draw a parallel to what the Holy Spirit would be in actual fact, they drew a far better analogy, in understanding that aspect of the Godhead than those who have attempted to see the Holy Spirit as a person, because in the process in doing so, in a way, I think they limit the work of what the Holy Spirit could do, but the Force, in 'Star Wars' was everywhere, as was energy, it gave power to those who were in harmony with it.

Another science fiction series, which I think many of you have seen, I don't know how you could avoid seeing it on television, it has been played so many times, is 'Star Trek'. You may remember Mr. Spock saying: "Captain it is pure energy," which was one of his favorite expressions about some of the encounters that they were involved in.

A rarity, I suppose in nature, but we find energy in different forms, such as light. His statement "pure energy" and the idea is that "pure energy" is directed by a remote intelligent source, it is able to affect matter but is unaffected by matter. In one episode I saw, there was this giant hand, at least it looked like a hand, that appeared in space and grabbed their star ship and held it and made it immobile, and they were helpless against it. They could not move against it, it affected them, but they could not affect it. Mr. Spock and his great wisdom said: "It is pure energy" but it was directed by some source otherwise, what seemed to be an intelligent source.

I think maybe in some of these things as people reach out trying to explain things, trying to hypothesize about how things might be, this particular one probably grew up from somebody's attempt to explain the ancient Greek myths of some of the gods and the effects of the gods and the things that they did, and so, I think probably in some of these things you have a far better analogy of the Holy Spirit than what many people have drawn otherwise.

How Does the Bible Represent the Holy Spirit?

The Holy Spirit, frankly in the Bible is represented to us as amorphous, it is not represented as having a body, it appears when it does decide to appear, the only other thing that could conceivably be used as the symbol, and interestingly enough I find it on the cover of the encyclopedia, they show an open book and a dove descending upon the book, one of the only bodily symbols that has ever been suggested for the Holy Spirit is the symbol of the dove, and yet the scripture does not say it looks like a dove, it simply says it descended like a dove would descend, and so apparently as to how it looked we are not really told. The only other two situations of a physical manifestation of the Spirit is in Acts 2: tongues of flaming fire and a sound as a rushing mighty wind. Whereas whenever angels, or the Father, or the Son would be made manifest, there would be a body. In an angel's case, a body resembling certain animal forms upon the earth, but in the case of the Father and the Son, looking only like man.

Remember that when even man was created, God the Father, and God the Son said to one another, "Let us make man in our image" (Genesis 1:26.) If there was a third party, in this Triumphant, that third party had to have the same image, otherwise saying Elohim, which is the Godhead, 'Let us make man in our own image,' they must all have the same image, and yet the Holy Spirit is never represented with the image as a man. Flame of fire, rushing wind, maybe something that might have resembled something like a dove at one time but nothing else.

So, when you see that, you have to realize that there is a problem with it.

The Holy Spirit is amorphous, that is it has no body, as such, it is also omnipresent, which means it is present everywhere at the same time, it can be tapped anywhere by any number of people. Also, it is represented to us as fluid, because people are, for example, filled with the Holy Spirit, the idea is that the Holy Spirit is like wind or breath, it blows, it can pass around and through various things.

The Holy Spirit is, in fact probably best seen in the words of Mr. Spock as "pure energy." Pure energy arising from the interaction of Son and the Father. Energy that may be manifested in multiple ways. Energy that may be directed to any end as the Father or the Son desires. Some energy that we see is absolutely harmless, it actually has little affect as far as doing anything, for example, "light." Light under normal circumstances just simply shines out and reflects off of things and enables us to see.

Light can actually become quite destructive, when light rays are brought into parallel by use of lasers and can actually be used to cut holes in things. They think it could be used to destroy objects from one space ship to another in space in the process of time.

Energy can be used in a lot of different ways, according to one scientific theory, energy can never be created nor destroyed, only changed in form. Perhaps energy is the best analogy by which we can understand the Holy Spirit.

In Acts 2:38 Peter said to these people: "Repent and be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins and you shall receive the gift of the Holy Spirit." Now we who have

repented and been baptized and have received the seed of the Holy Spirit have been put in touch, in which the writers of 'Star Wars' tried to portray as 'The Force'.

We have actually been put in touch with 'the Force,' we have the barest contact with the most awesome power of the universe. The power that was able to create a sun, to set it in motion, to create the planets and to put them in motion around the sun, the force or the power that was able to form atoms into clumps and to be able to create molecules and finally life forms and finally the structure that became man.

This was the power that God used and you and I have, when we go through the waters of baptism and we have received the seed of begettal, we have touched, we have brushed by, contacted the most awesome power of the universe, a power that was able to heal a withered hand, a power that was able to give sight to the blind, a power that was able to straighten limbs and to give strength to those limbs that had never been used before. To completely rearrange the neurons in a person's brain who had never walked so that he could run and leap and walk. We have, actually sampled, touched the interaction that exists between the Father and the Son, the deepest most profound love that ever could exist.

The only limiting factor that you and I have is the flesh. I want you to turn back with me, in conclusion, to 1 John 3:1-3: "Behold, what manner of love the Father hath bestowed upon us, that we should be called the sons of God: therefore, the world knoweth us not, because it knew him not. {2} Beloved, now are we the sons of God, and it doth not yet appear what we shall be: but we know that, when he shall appear, we shall be like him; for we shall see him as he is. {3} And every man that hath this hope in him purifieth himself, even as he is pure."

When you realize what you have been in touch with, and you realize what you can become, the only limitation you face now, and the use of that power is the flesh. May God hasten the time when we don't have that limitation.

The late Ronald L. Dart was a Christian evangelist whose teachings still inspire thousands of people around the world. His legacy spans decades. For more information about the teachings of Ronald L. Dart, visit RLDEA.com where you will find booklets, articles, sermons, Bible studies, and books by Mr. Dart.

Discussion Questions

1. Is there a way to have "truth of Scripture" without using actual Biblical Scriptures to back up a 'truth' that you are trying to prove?
2. Do you find it interesting that the idea: *In his Trinitarian mode of being, God is unique, and as there is nothing in the universe like Him in this respect, so there is nothing which can help us to comprehend Him,* can be disproved in Romans 1:20, yet many Christians today believe in this doctrine?

3. Are there more scriptures that prove this statement wrong?
4. What do you think the Holy Spirit is?
5. What scriptures do you use to back up what you believe?
6. If it is well known that if someone relied solely on the Old Testament, they would never 'see' the doctrine of the Trinity, then why ever create such a doctrine? The New Testament believers only had the Old Testament to study, therefore, wouldn't it be understood that they didn't believe in the Trinity?
7. Where do you think the idea of the Trinity started?
8. Why do you think it ever find its way into mainstream Christianity?
9. How would you explain the relationship between God the Father, God the Son, and the Holy Spirit?
10. Is there any reference in scripture where Jesus ever says He is One with the Father and the Holy Spirit, or is it only ever that He is One with the Father?