

**The Trinity**  
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I. Observations about the Trinity

A. Definition of the Trinity: There is one God who eternally exists in three persons, the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit. God is one in nature and three in person. God is one substance and three in subsistence.

B. Observations on the Trinity

1. There are truths about God that can be discovered by reason, e.g., His existence. There are other truths about God that can only be known by God's revelation, the Bible, e.g., the Trinity.
2. The doctrine of the Trinity does not affirm a contradiction or anything irrational.
  - a. The doctrine may contain elements that are beyond our capacity to fully fathom.
    - (1) It is not a weakness of a position simply because it may contain elements beyond our capacity to fully fathom. After all, there are elements of theoretical physics that are hard to conceive or explain fully (e.g., the wave/particle duality of light)
    - (2) There is nothing about the doctrine of the Trinity that we do not fathom that is illogical or mathematically inconceivable.
  - b. The doctrine does not affirm that God is one and three in exactly the same sense.
    - (1) God is one in one sense and three in another sense.
    - (2) Traditionally, the doctrine says that God is one in nature and three in person.
    - (3) Even if we cannot fully understand how God is one in one sense and three in another, we do know that God is one in one sense and three in another.
3. Practically, the doctrines of the Trinity and the attendant doctrine of the two natures of Christ enable us to defend such seemingly problematic claims of the Bible.
  - a. Consider whether these arguments prove that Jesus is not God.

God is Spirit. (John 4:24)  
A Spirit has not flesh and bones. (Luke 24:39)  
Therefore, God has not flesh and bones.  
Jesus has flesh and bones. (Luke 24:39)  
Therefore, Jesus is not God.

or

God is not a man. (Numbers 23:19)  
Jesus is a man. (1 Timothy 2:5)  
Therefore, Jesus is not God.

- b. We know that the conclusions are wrong, though the arguments seem sound.
    - (1) The problem lies in the fact the arguments fail to take into account the Trinity (and the attendant doctrine of the two natures of Christ).
    - (2) Other problems such as "How could it be that Jesus did not know the time of His second coming (Mark 13:32) if He is God?" are resolved by a proper application of these doctrines.
- C. Erroneous options concerning the nature of the Godhead
- 1. Unitarianism - God is one. Jesus is just a good man filled with the mission of God. (e.g., Unitarian/Universalist Association)
  - 2. Modalism (Sabellianism) - The one God reveals himself in three modes. (e.g., United Pentecostal Church International, or "Jesus Only" Pentecostals)
  - 3. Arianism - There is one God (with a capital 'G'). Jesus is a god. (e.g., Jehovah's Witnesses)
  - 4. Polytheism - There is more than one God. The Father, Son, and Holy Spirit are three distinct Gods. (e.g., Mormonism)
  - 5. Pantheism - Jesus is God but so is everyone and everything else. (e.g., New Age Movement)
- D. The problem with analogies
- 1. For the most part, analogies about the Trinity convey the very elements or concepts that the doctrine of the Trinity was formulated specifically to deny.
    - a. The analogy of the cloverleaf - 1 leaf, 3 "leaves"  
  
Problem: Each of the three is only a part of whole. Jesus is not a "part" of God. ("In Him dwells all the fullness of the godhead bodily" Colossians 2:9)
    - b. The analogy of water - steam, water, ice  
  
Problem: This is Modalism. The three states or modes do not exist simultaneously.
    - c. The analogy of relationships - a man may be: a father to his children, a husband to his wife, a son to his parents

Problem: These three are merely relationships that the one person bears to three different people. The man is never all three at the same time to everyone. But God is Father, Son, and Holy Spirit at the same time to everyone.

2. For the most part, a discussion about the Biblical doctrine of the Trinity is not served by the use of analogies. This is not to say that philosophy is useless in examining the doctrine, only that most analogies fail to capture the essence of the doctrine.

## II. The Bible on the Trinity

A. There is only one God. Deuteronomy 32:39; Isaiah 44:6, 8; Isaiah 45:5, 21

B. The Trinity foreshadowed in the Old Testament

Shema: Hear O Israel . . . Deuteronomy 6:4 The 'one' is the same word as Genesis 2:24 where Adam and Eve become one flesh.; Genesis 1:26; 11:7; Isaiah 6:3, 8 "Let us . . ."; Elohim is plural

C. The Trinity in the New Testament

1. Matthew 3:16-17 Jesus baptized, Holy Spirit as a dove, Father speaking

2. Trinitarian formulas in the New Testament

a. Matthew 28:19

b. 1 Corinthians 12:4-6

c. 2 Corinthians 13:14

d. 1 Peter 1:2

D. The Biblical argument for the Trinity

1. The Father is God. 1 Peter 1:2; John 6:27; 1 Corinthians 8:6; 4:6

2. The Son is God. John 1:1; John 5:18; John 8:58; John 10:33; John 20:28; Philippians 2:5-11; Colossians 2:9

a. Jesus is to be served as God.

Serve only the Lord God. (Matthew 4:10)

Serve Jesus Christ. (Colossians 3:24)

Therefore, Jesus must be the Lord God.

b. Jesus shared glory with God.

God will not give His glory to another. (Isaiah 42:8)

Jesus had glory with God. (John 17:5)

Therefore, Jesus is God.

c. Jesus is savior as God is.

God is the only savior. (Isaiah 43:11)

Jesus is the savior. (Luke 2:11; Philippians 3:20)

Therefore, Jesus is God.

d. Both God and Jesus are said to be the The First and The Last, The Alpha and The Omega, The Beginning and The End

**Revelation 1:8** - "I am the Alpha and the Omega,"<sup>1</sup> says the Lord, "who is and who was and who is to come, the Almighty."

We see from this verse that the Alpha and the Omega is the Almighty. The word translated 'almighty' is the Greek word *pantokravtwr* (*pantokratōr*).

**2 Samuel 7:27** - "For You, O LORD of hosts, God of Israel, have revealed *this* to Your servant, saying, 'I will build you a house.' Therefore Your servant has found it in his heart to pray this prayer to You.

This verse tells us that the Lord of hosts is the God of Israel, the Creator. The word 'hosts' translates the Hebrew word *tsaba*. The Greek translation of the Old Testament<sup>2</sup> here translates *tsaba* with *pantokravtwr* (*pantokratōr*). Sometimes in the LXX *pantokravtwr* (*pantokratōr*) is translated 'almighty' in certain English versions such as the NIV. Thus, the Almighty is God. Since we have already seen that the Almighty is the Alpha and the Omega, then it follows that the Alpha and the Omega is God.

**Isaiah 44:6** - Thus says the Lord, the King of Israel, And his Redeemer, the Lord of hosts: "I am the First and the Last; besides Me there is no God."

This verse says that the Lord, the King of Israel (i.e., God) is the First and the Last. Therefore, God is the Almighty, the Alpha and the Omega, and the First and the Last.

**Revelation 22:12-13** - "And behold, I am coming quickly, and My reward is with Me, to give to every one according to his work. I am the Alpha and the Omega, the Beginning and the End and the First and the Last."

We see from these verses that the one who is Alpha and the Omega and the Beginning and the End is the one who is coming quickly. Since we have already seen that the Alpha and the Omega is God, then God is the one who is coming quickly.

<sup>1</sup> Some Greek manuscripts add the phrase 'the beginning and the end.' Some of these manuscripts were used in the translating of the *King James Version*, thus it includes this additional phrase.

<sup>2</sup> The Greek translation of the Old Testament was completed around 200 BC and was in use in New Testament times. It is known as the *Septuagint* which comes from the Greek meaning "70." It is often designated by the Roman numerals LXX.

<p><b>Revelation 22:16, 20</b> - "I, Jesus, have sent My angel to testify to you these things in the churches. . . . He who testifies to these things says, "Surely I am coming quickly." Amen. Even so, come, Lord Jesus!"</p>	<p>These verses tell us that the one who is coming quickly is Jesus. Therefore, Jesus is the Alpha and the Omega, the beginning and the end, the First and the Last. Since we know that these are referring to God, then we must conclude that Jesus Christ is God.</p>
<p><b>Revelation 1:17-18</b> - ". . . Do not be afraid; I am the First and the Last. I am He who lives, and was dead, and behold, I am alive forevermore, Amen."</p>	<p>Additionally, we see from these verses that He who is the First and the Last is He who was dead and is alive forevermore.</p>
<p><b>Romans 14:9</b> - For to this end Christ died and rose and lived again, that He might be Lord of both the dead and the living.</p>	<p>Jesus Christ is He who was dead and is alive again. Since this is the one is the First and the Last and we know that the First and the Last is God, then it follows that Jesus is God.</p>

1. The Alpha and the Omega is the Almighty. (Rev. 1:8)
  2. God is the Almighty. (2 Sam. 7:27)
  3. Therefore, God is the Alpha and the Omega. (from 1 & 2)
  4. God is the First and the Last. (Isa. 44:6)
  5. The Alpha and the Omega, the Beginning and the End and the First and the Last is coming quickly. (Rev. 22:12-13)
  6. Jesus is the one who is coming quickly. (Rev. 22:16, 20)
  7. Therefore, Jesus is the Alpha and the Omega, the Beginning and the End and the First and the Last. (from 5 & 6)
  - 8. Therefore Jesus is God. (from 3, 4 & 7)**
  9. The First and the Last was dead is alive forevermore. (Rev. 1:17-18)
  10. Jesus is the one who was dead is alive forevermore. (Rom. 14:9)
  11. Therefore, Jesus is the First and the Last. (from 9 & 10)
  - 12. Therefore, Jesus is God. (from 4 & 11)**
3. The Spirit is God.
- They lied to God. (Acts 5:3)  
They lied to the Holy Spirit. (Acts 5:4)  
Therefore, the Holy Spirit is God.
4. The Father is not the Son. Matthew 3:16-17
  5. The Father is not the Spirit Matthew 3:16-17

6. The Son is not the Spirit.

a. Matthew 3

b. Matthew 12:31-32 If blasphemy against the Son of Man can be forgiven yet blasphemy against the Holy Spirit cannot be forgiven, then the Son must not be the Spirit.

III. Conclusion: If there is only one God, and the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit are each regarded as that one God, and further, the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit are not each other, then it must be that within the essence or being of the one God, there is a distinction of persons. The formulation that there are three persons in one essence is exactly what the doctrine of the Trinity is saying.